LETTER TO LAODICEA

The final era of the Church of God in its historical setting

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INTRODUCTION

To make sense of what is contained in the following articles, readers will probably need to have a background in a Sabbath keeping Church of God. The main focus in these writings is on the teachings of the various Church groups that originated from the Worldwide Church of God, founded by Herbert W Armstrong (1892-1986).

The history of God's true Church, now almost 2000 years in duration, is foretold in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation and predicted there to comprise seven successive stages or eras. As an abundance of details show, we are currently living at the very end of the last of those seven eras.

It should be noted that when the term "true Church" is used here, it refers to a Church that teaches the Ten Commandments, including the seventh day Sabbath, as found throughout the Bible. The keeping of the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11) from sunset Friday until sunset Saturday (Gen 1:31-2:3, Lev 23:3,32, Neh 13:19) is an outward sign of God's true people (Ex 31:12-18). The breaking of the Sabbath is labelled by God "the mark of the beast" **(see "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST").**

The seven Church eras listed in Revelation 2 and 3 are symbolically represented by seven towns in ancient Asia Minor where congregations of believers were raised up in the first century AD. The final era of the Church takes its name from the town of Laodicea.

Here is Christ's message to the Laodicea era, as dictated to John the apostle (quoted from the New American Standard Bible [1995] - except where indicated):

Revelation 3:14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

17 Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing", and you do not know that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked **(NIV)**,

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door,

I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'**".**

It is the total failure of the Churches of God (COG) in our time to apply this message to themselves and their doctrines that this website seeks to address.

The following three pages, "THINGS THAT DON'T ADD UP", "DOCTRINAL ERRORS" and "FULFILLED PROPHECIES", list over 50 incorrect COG teachings.

In discussing the meaning of the Laodicea era message, my initial purpose is to counteract one of the most prevalent views held by true Christians of this time, i.e. that their salvation is linked to their allegiance to specific former or current Church leaders and their teachings. I intend to show that it is largely these very allegiances that have caused this final Church era to be labelled by Christ as "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked".

Already in the early days of the Church, the desire among brethren to have a human figurehead was emerging. Christians said, "I am of Paul" **or** "I am of Apollos"**, but Paul refuted this attitude as carnal (I Cor 3:3-4). Additionally, men who in the name of Christ wanted to elevate *themselves*,** "claiming to be someone great"**, also did not get a good report (Acts 8:9-23).**

The Scriptural rebuke of "Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence" **(III Jn 9) should be a warning to all who would follow in his footsteps.**

***It should also be a warning to all Christians who would follow such people*.**

Unfortunately, it hasn't been. Many Christians seem to think that if they are called by God through a certain person or organisation, they must remain loyal to that person or organisation. God, however, says "Cursed is the man who trusts in man" **(Jer 17:5). That includes trusting ministers, preachers and Church leaders.**

Certain men and women in God's Churches have made big claims about themselves. Some have professed to be apostles or prophets. Some, convinced they are prophesied about in Scripture, have called themselves "the end time Elijah" or "that prophet", or referred to their writings as "the Spirit of Prophecy".

Regrettably, the lesson that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" **(Lk 18:14) has not been taken to heart.**

How ironic that those claiming to be prophets have presided over a Church era that Christ labels as "blind"**!**

One aspect of this blindness concerns time-related Bible prophecies. This originally resulted from erroneous interpretations taking hold among Sabbath keepers at the beginning of the Laodicea era, around the middle of the 19th century.

Over time, the blindness has persisted, in spite of the fact that a total of 12 long-term, time-related prophecies have been fulfilled since the end of World War 2. The evidence for many of these fulfilments is overwhelming, as explained at length on this website.

God is *the* master Designer and Mathematician. He has laid out His plan right from the beginning in Genesis 1 and 2. The seven days of Creation are a "seven day blueprint", where each day pictures one thousand years of God's work with mankind.

Within this 7000 year framework, God has given us in Scripture a multitude of facts related to time: genealogical data, regnal years, statements of duration, number-based prophecies and types etc. The study of this information is called Bible chronology.

It is impossible to understand Bible prophecy without a thorough understanding of Bible chronology, because Bible chronology records man's time on Earth in *years*, and almost all of God's time-related prophecies involve *spans of years*.

God states in Isaiah 46:9-10, "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done"**. In verse 11 He adds,** "Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it"**. What we find in God's Word is that He has, within His timeframe of seven millennia, foretold an abundance of year-based timelines.**

Although crucial to understanding, Bible chronology rarely gets a mention in the end time Churches of God. As a result, we are largely in the dark regarding Bible prophecy.

Embarrassingly, the Laodicea era of God's Church proclaims great events to come which have long since been fulfilled. A thorough reading of the writings found on this website will prove that point to any open-minded reader.

This "letter" to the Laodicea era originally began with just a few articles and a chronological chart. However, because of the large number of doctrinal failings identifiable in our time, this body of work has grown considerably over the years and become more like a book, which seems to be an indictment in itself.

It is hoped that the issues discussed here will help the reader comprehend the serious level of error that exists in the Churches of God today.

Introduction to the Chart

The chart on the homepage, "Chronology of the Years of Man since Creation in Anno Mundi (AM) Years", is not just an overview of Biblical history; it contains many examples of time spans that fulfil Biblical prophecies. For example, the 2520 years of Israel and Judah's punishments, the 2300 years of Jerusalem's defilement, and the 490 years of the Seventy Week Prophecy can all be found here.

The column on the far left contains the outline of the seven consecutive thousand year periods which are figuratively foretold in Genesis 1 and 2. The fourth column contains the timelines and identities of the four "beast" **powers of Daniel 7, i.e. the Gentile powers that conquered and occupied Jerusalem over a period of 2520 years, including the usually overlooked Islamic powers that ruled the city of God for almost as long as all other Gentile powers combined. The chart also lists the** "ten horns" **of the fourth** "beast"**, as well as the three occasions on which the** "little horn" **of Daniel 7:8 overthrew one of the ten horns.**

Of course, the chart also shows the year we are in today. Keep in mind that Biblical years and Roman years differ in that the former start on Abib or Nisan 1 (in March or April), whereas the latter start on January 1. By my reckoning, the Roman year 2026 aligns on Abib/Nisan 1 with the commencement of the year 5995AM, i.e. the 5995th year since Creation. Years counted from Creation are termed by chronologists Anno Mundi or AM (year of the world).

You are welcome to download the chart, print it, or just study it in full on your own computer. I am more than happy to answer any questions it may raise. If you do print it, I recommend using paper that is 140GSM or thicker, otherwise lines may not print properly. Also, it is advisable to print the chart no smaller than A3 size, for the sake of legibility.

2

THINGS THAT DON'T ADD UP

If the reader's religious experience is anything like that of the author, having been called by God into His Church and having been taught so much about Him and the plan that He is working out here on Earth, then these writings are intended to be first of all a confirmation of those things that are true.

At the same time, however, they are meant to be a warning regarding teachings and practices that undeniably characterise this final Church era as *Laodicean*, as described in Revelation 3:14-22.

I can remember when I first began receiving Worldwide Church of God (WCG) publications, written mostly by Herbert W Armstrong (HWA), and being absolutely amazed by subjects like the Sabbath, the three days and three nights between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, the United States and Britain in prophecy, and the validity of God's law. Those were exciting times of learning about the one and only true Creator and the purpose for which He had made mankind.

After some time however, unsettling experiences began to occur.

In the beginning, I can remember keeping the Sabbath at home for some 18 months, usually waiting for the sun to go down on Saturday nights before venturing out to buy dinner. Once I was so impatient that I didn't wait, but felt so guilty afterwards that I resolved never to do that again. Nevertheless, I found myself breaking that resolution no more than a week or two after I began attending the WCG, when I was taken out for dinner by some of the other men after Sabbath services. To my amazement I found myself sitting in a restaurant with at least two hours left until sunset, feeling bewildered after all that I'd read about God's dedicated people who would rather lose their job, or in times past even suffer martyrdom, rather than transgress God's Sabbath. Upon enquiring about my unease one of the brethren reassured me, saying, "It's okay; Mr Armstrong said it's okay". That seemed to be the end of the matter; Scripture was not referred to.

After a few years of attending and counselling, the day of my baptism arrived. Just as my WCG minister was putting me under the water, he pronounced that he was baptising me "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". I was dumbfounded and remain so to this day. After everything I had read and heard concerning the erroneous doctrine of the Trinity, my minister was baptising me in the name of the Trinity!

I later learned that this was the custom in the WCG. I had never asked, but must have assumed, after reading about the fictitious I John 5:7, that Matthew 28:19 would also have been understood as a Catholic insert in Scripture. It wasn't until close to 25 years later that I learned the truth about this matter.

Over time, questions regarding the leadership of Herbert Armstrong became too serious to ignore. This was supposed to be the true Church of God (COG), yet it had the same leadership structure as the much maligned "great false church". The leader of that church was ridiculed because he claimed to be "infallible", and yet when it came to questions of Scripture or Church doctrine, "Mr Armstrong" was believed to be "God's apostle" who had "restored all things" and was held in similar reverence and awe.

True Church government was taught to consist of *one man* at the top and under him a council of elders, the apostle Peter supposedly being the first to occupy this "one man" role. The Scriptures, however, show that Christ appointed *twelve men* over the Church, and at no time in the New Testament are the other eleven apostles seen to be functioning as Peter's council of elders. Tellingly, *all twelve have the same rank*, that of apostle.

Another problem was that some aspects of prophetic interpretation didn't seem to add up, for example the timing of the last three "seals" **of the book of Revelation. The fifth seal was supposed to be a** "great tribulation" **lasting two and a half years, and the seventh seal was a** "day of the Lord"**, lasting one year. The combined time allotted to these events just prior to the return of Jesus Christ was three and a half years and yet the sixth seal was said to be somehow squashed in between, even though there is no time available for it. This never seemed like a plausible explanation. Also, the fact that prophetic numbers were sometimes taken literally, and at other times figuratively, was inconsistent and illogical.**

Teachings regarding the Church eras of Revelation 2 and 3, especially the identification of the Philadelphia and Laodicea eras, were also questionable. Even though in HWA's time the return of Christ was deemed to be imminent, the Church was still considered to be in the Philadelphia era. The Laodicea era was not expected to begin until the arrival of the "great tribulation"**, and it would only last for two and a half years! It never made sense that an** "era" **would be so brief.**

Clearly, God's people have been in the Laodicea era, described in Revelation 3:14-22, for a very long time. The Churches, however, have created a variety of theories to circumvent the reality of this highly corrective passage of Scripture. One such theory is that multiple eras run in parallel. Another theory is that one group is a "Philadelphia remnant", while all other groups are Laodicean. Some groups *deny the existence* of Church eras altogether. Men will do anything to get away from the sobering and frightening reality of the rebuke contained in the final Church message.

The Laodicea Church era is said by God to be in a "wretched" **state (Rev 3:17). This is because of the large number of major errors in the teachings and practices of the Sabbath keeping Churches of God. This website aims to show that the dismal spiritual condition of God's people in modern times is directly related to a lack of familiarity with God's Word, and a failure to use logic in putting the Scriptural information together.**

The following examples are meant to be a starting point for investigation and contemplation.

1) <u>How can the Churches of God expect to make sense of Biblical prophecies when their interpretation of prophetic *numbers* is inconsistent?</u>

The greatest piece of prophetic literature published by Herbert Armstrong was "The United States and Britain in Prophecy". It was based on J H Allen's "Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright" from 1902, which in turn was based on earlier publications on this same topic.

As indicated by the fulfilment of this prophecy, the Bible here uses the "day for a year" **principle, where a day in prophecy pictures a year in history. This concept is explained in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5-6, and also seen in Daniel 9:24-27.**

According to Leviticus 26, the Israelites were to be punished by God for a duration of "seven times" **if they disobeyed Him. The British Israel theory correctly interprets these** "seven times" **as seven prophetic *years* of 360 days each, making a total of 2520 days which picture a period of 2520 years.**

This time frame is shown to fit very well with the sudden increase in stature of the British Empire, the United States of America, and the Northern European democracies, 2520 years after the ten tribes of Israel went into captivity. All this is well known to the people of God and needs no further elaboration here.

Why then, with this very strong evidence of fulfilled prophecy in hand, do we not consistently apply this "day for a year" **principle to all other prophecies of duration?**

If "seven times" **means 2520 years, then** "time, times and half a time"**, found in both Daniel and Revelation, pictures 1260 years. If 2520 *days* means 2520 *years*, then 1260, 1290 and 1335 *days,* as also found in Daniel and/or Revelation, mean 1260, 1290 and 1335 *years,* and not literal days as is frequently taught in the COG's.**

In the "Seventy Week Prophecy" found in Daniel 9, seventy weeks picture 490 years. Here the Churches of God again accept and apply the "day for a year" **principle.**

However, if we were to be consistent, wouldn't that logically also mean that a prophecy about five months (Rev 9:5,10) would involve 150 years, and a prophecy about 42 months (Rev 11:2, 13:5) would involve 1260 years?

People may point to the Creation account in Genesis where a day pictures *a thousand years*, as reiterated in II Peter 3:4-8. However, the seven days of Creation are much more than a prophecy; they picture the entire foundation of time within which God is doing His work of reproducing Himself through man. I refer to the Creation week as a *seven day blueprint* (see the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT" for more information).

Within that 7000 year framework, almost all *number-based* prophecies that involve duration of an event use the "day for a year" **principle. From where we stand in history today, many fulfilled prophecies clearly bear this out.**

The only exceptions are prophecies that mention "days" **and** "nights" **together. The** "three days and three nights" **that Christ spent in the grave (Matt 12:39-40), and the** "forty days and forty nights" **of rain in Noah's time (Gen 7:4) show that God uses this particular wording in prophecies that involve *literal days*.**

Our failure to apply the "day for a year" **principle has led to major misunderstandings regarding the timing of many prophecies. Worse, it has led to the COG's repeatedly proclaiming as *future events* prophecies that have already been fulfilled.**

Please see "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" and the chart on the "HOME" page for a lot more information on this.

2) Why are the Churches of God not able to correctly identify the "Beast" powers?

The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation list a total of 18 powers that are collectively called "a beast" **in Revelation 13:1. These powers consist of seven heads, ten horns and a little horn that becomes an eighth head. The Scriptures identify these as powers that conquer the land of Judah and *rule over Jerusalem.* The first of these was Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. The three times that the** "little horn" **is prophesied to overthrow one of the ten horns were the three occasions in history when "Christian" forces dislodged an Islamic power occupying Jerusalem. The last "Christian" power to do so was the British Empire.**

The Churches, however, have not recognised that Islam is the fourth beast of Daniel 7, even though it is well known that Muslims ruled Jerusalem for some 1200 years! The misidentification of a number of the "Beast" powers on the part of the COG's has resulted in them proclaiming a significantly erroneous prophetic message.

For more on this please see "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" and "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS".

3) Why do the Churches of God still proclaim a coming European resurrection of the "Beast", when this does not fit the parameter of duration assigned to the "Beast" powers?

In Daniel 4, the "Beast" powers are, by typology, assigned 2520 years, which fits perfectly with the prophecies of Leviticus 26. Their power involved *control of Jerusalem*, as confirmed by Christ when He said, "They will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" **(Lk 21:24). This period of 2520 years came to a dramatic end in 1945 with the conclusion of World War 2, after which the Jews regained sovereignty over their country and their capital city Jerusalem.**

Please see "THE TWO WITNESSES" and "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more on this subject.

4) Why are the Churches of God silent about the chronological and prophetic significance of World War 2 and the Holocaust?

The Scriptures abound with details about the *beginning* of the 2520 years of Judah's punishment. Three of the four major prophetic books of the Old Testament, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, were written around this time. Therefore it is only logical that the *end* of this period would also be addressed in the Scriptures. And indeed there are detailed prophecies that speak about it at length.

However, little to nothing is known about this among the people of God.

See "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)" and "JACOB'S TROUBLE" for more information.

5) <u>Why are the Churches of God not able to see that the current demise of the Christian democracies is a fulfilment of the prophecy of Revelation 18?</u>

After many decades of the abandonment of God's laws, the Western democracies are weakened to the point of being on the brink of collapse. Crime and violence are escalating, and law enforcement is limited to only the most serious of transgressions. The moral decay as a result of the departure from Christian standards has had frightening consequences, robbing the nations of what moral strength they had and often leaving authorities too weak and too fearful to act.

All this was foretold in the Bible, which describes this world's form of Christianity as "Babylon"**.**

Revelation 18:2 says, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit"**. This is the point in history we are at right now.**

Please see "BABYLON IS FALLEN" for more on this.

6) <u>How can the Churches of God in general still adhere to the position that the fulfilment of the Seventy Week Prophecy of Daniel 9 begins with an edict of Artaxerxes Longimanus, rather than the edict of Cyrus, when the former is clearly a chronological impossibility?</u>

This mistaken belief adds almost 50 years to the chronology of the Persian Empire, so that today it incorrectly places us well past the year 6000 from Creation. The problem here is that the clear teachings of Scripture have been twisted in order to reconcile the Biblical account with the questionable records of man, in this case astronomer Claudius Ptolemy. To circumvent this problem some COG's have erred even further by cutting years away from various periods of Biblical history to make their chronology fit within the 7000 year time frame God foreshadows in Genesis 1 and 2, where the seventh 1000 year period pictures Christ's rule on Earth.

As a number of Bible commentaries testify, but unknown to most brethren, the belief that the above-mentioned edict was given by Artaxerxes Longimanus requires the historical existence of TWO leaders called Ezra and TWO leaders called Nehemiah, to harmonise the accounts in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah with the records of Ptolemy. It also requires other far-fetched explanations.

See "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY", "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT" and the chart on the "HOME" page for more details.

7) <u>How can the Church era prior to the emergence of Herbert W Armstrong have been the "dead" Sardis era of God's Church, supposedly covering more than 350 years, when this was a "Golden Age", both in the history of man and the Church?</u>

The years from the Reformation in the 16th century up until the second half of the 19th century undoubtedly

witnessed the highest standards man has ever achieved in the areas of literature, art, music composition, architecture, construction, craftsmanship etc, as well as in general conduct and manners. It was also a period of great Biblical awakening. The invention of the printing press and the widespread translation of the Scriptures brought about, for the first time, the opportunity for ordinary people in many countries to read God's Word in their own language.

From the early 1600's, Sabbath keeping congregations began emerging all over Britain, and subsequently the United States. In Britain these brethren endured considerable opposition from both church and state authorities, but most stood firm in the face of persecution and even imprisonment.

This period spanned the years from the courageous and inspirational reign of Queen Elizabeth I, who liberated England from Catholic oppression, until the splendour of Queen Victoria's time. This was an era that saw the emergence of the greatest empire of all time, i.e. the British Empire, as well as the greatest single nation of all time, i.e. the United States of America. It was the period in history when the Israelite nations received Abraham's blessings and were truly at their peak.

Identifying this period as "Sardis" does not add up, because it saw a proliferation of people walking with God, and so was not a period of spiritual decline or death, as Sardis is depicted in Scripture.

See "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" for more on this.

8) <u>How can the 20th century have produced the Philadelphia era of God's Church, when during this time both the world and the Church experienced great turmoil and witnessed an enormous decline in standards and attitudes?</u>

The 20th century saw the advent of the First and Second World Wars, the two bloodiest wars in history, which caused the death of some 100 million people. From that point on, mankind's departure from God's values went into freefall.

Today, as man's 6000 years of self-rule are coming to an end, the moral deterioration of the world is at a level that would equal or surpass that of Sodom and Gomorrah. There has never been a more self-righteous, self-centred and perverse generation on this Earth. The final days of man prior to the return of Christ have seen the normalisation of depravity, and the legalisation of the violation of many of God's laws.

The printing and distribution of the Scriptures that began in the 15th century, and the Reformation that followed, led to a high level of awareness and appreciation of all things pertaining to God which lasted for two or three centuries. In the 19th century however, a distinct reversal began to be attested to by writers of that time. Since then, there has been a rapid decline in godliness in the "Christian" nations, with every generation becoming progressively worse.

As explained in the article "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS", the world and the Church mirror one another.

Therefore, the slide in standards in the world has also been clearly observable in the Church, which has witnessed a serious decline in Bible knowledge, a casual attitude towards Sabbath observance, a lack of interest in spiritual matters, and the embracing of self-professed prophets.

For a world in terminal decline over the last hundred or so years to have coincided with the highly praised Philadelphia era, does not add up.

9) Why has the Church of God in the end time been told repeatedly that the Church prior to HWA's time had lost most of God's truth?

A close examination of the writings of earlier Sabbath keeping brethren shows this to be the exact opposite of the truth. The era prior to HWA was one of growth in knowledge through the widespread availability of the Scriptures. People of that era were not distracted by worldly pastimes and pleasures in the way that we are today, and so God and His Word were far more in the forefront of their lives.

These earlier writings reveal around 40 significant beliefs held by the Church prior to Herbert Armstrong's time that *he continued to teach throughout his ministry.*

The article "THE END TIME ELIJAH" elaborates on this.

10) Herbert W Armstrong claimed he was "the end time Elijah" who "restored all things". If he was, and if he did, how could he teach that it is not a transgression of God's law to do business on the Sabbath, i.e. visit restaurants, when this is a direct contradiction of the Word of God as recorded in Nehemiah 10:28-31 and 13:15-22?

Every prophet sent by God brought His rebuke for the transgressions of His law. For a man who called himself a prophet to actually lead people in the transgression of the fourth commandment, God's test commandment, is alarming.

Please see "TEN BROKEN COMMANDMENTS" for more on this crucial subject.

11) If Herbert Armstrong "restored all things", why did he, contrary to New Testament example, install "one man rule" as the form of government in the Worldwide Church of God?

Jesus Christ appointed 12 apostles, not one. One man rule is the form of government employed by the "great false church". Far from restoring all things, one man rule brought the WCG to its knees after the death of HWA.

God the Father and Jesus Christ live in perfect harmony as two Beings. They plan, create and sustain Creation in total accord with each other, as expressed in the mindset of "let us make man in our image" **(Gen 1:26).**

On the other hand, who wants to govern as sole spiritual ruler, taking all power to himself? Who has throughout history inspired evil human dictators to do likewise, bringing much pain and misery to many people? It is Satan the devil.

Read "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD" for a detailed explanation.

12) <u>If Herbert Armstrong "restored all things", meaning all things that the early Church taught, why did he teach and practise baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" when the New Testament only records baptisms in the name of the One who died for our sins, Jesus Christ?</u>

For at least a hundred years, significant incriminating information has been available showing that the above-mentioned baptismal formula was inserted into Matthew 28:19 by believers in the Trinity.

Within Catholicism there is debate about whether the threefold baptismal formula was used from the outset or introduced later:

In a footnote to Matthew 28:19 in the Pope Pius XII inspired Jerusalem Bible it says the following: "It may be that this formula, so far as the fullness of its expression is concerned, is a reflection of the *liturgical usage established later* in the primitive community. It will be remembered that the Acts speak of baptising "in the name of Jesus". But whatever the variation in formula, the underlying reality remains the same" (The Jerusalem Bible, 1966, p64 - NT).

The Catholic Encyclopedia, whilst resolute in advocating the trinitarian baptismal formula, can only offer this in regard to the formula used by the apostles and recorded in the book of Acts: "The most probable opinion, however, seems to be that the terms "in the name of Jesus" (and) "in the name of Christ" either refer to baptism in the faith taught by Christ, or are employed to distinguish Christian baptism from that of John" (see oce.catholic.com, article "Baptism", under the heading "Form").

When the late Australasia and Africa Regional Director of the Philadelphia Church of God, Max Rumler, learned the truth of this matter, he privately told the author of this website:

"Every time I've baptised someone, something in the back of my mind was telling me something was wrong".

The article "BAPTISM INTO THE TRINITY" explains this subject in detail.

13) How can Herbert Armstrong have been the "end time Elijah" when he advocated the Old Covenant practice of circumcising baby boys?

The Oct/Nov 1966 Good News magazine states that "Generally speaking, we urgently recommend circumcision of newborn infants for health and sanitary reasons" ("Are you circumcised? If not, are you breaking Gods law?", page 15-16).

Circumcision was the symbolic ritual which identified males as being part of God's nation of Israel. The Acts 15 Church conference was held mainly to address concerns about this rite under the New Covenant. As a result, the early Church stopped physical circumcision and instead taught spiritual circumcision only.

In Galatians 5:2-3, the apostle Paul says that a person who believes he needs to be physically circumcised in order to receive salvation places himself under the Old Covenant and is obligated to keep God's law perfectly.

Herbert Armstrong's reasoning was that circumcision was advisable for hygienic reasons. However, what if someone doesn't clean properly between their toes or behind their ears? Do we cut them off as well? There is nothing wrong or unhygienic with what God created. What He created was, and remains, "good" (Gen 1:31).

The Old Covenant had physical sacrifices, a physical High Priest who atoned for the people's sins once a year, a physical Temple, physical circumcision etc. The New Covenant has *spiritual* sacrifices and a *spiritual* High Priest who made atonement for the people once for all time. The Church is the *spiritual* Temple and requires *spiritual* circumcision *of the heart.*

14) Herbert W Armstrong learned about the keeping of God's holy days from former Seventh Day Adventist minister G G Rupert, who believed that he himself was the Elijah prophesied in Malachi 4. After Rupert's death, Herbert Armstrong also began keeping these days and claimed that *he* was the one who had restored them to the Church. However, if he was restoring a first century practice, why did he not reintroduce the first century method of determining these holy days, i.e. a calendar based on observation of the moon?

The writings of the Pharisees, known as the Mishnah, written at the end of the second century AD, show in numerous places that the calendar was, even at that time, still kept by observation, not by the much later invention of the "Hebrew Calendar".

In Old and New Testament times, God's Calendar was used, rather than the Hebrew Calendar. God's Calendar and the Hebrew Calendar are not the same: the first is determined by observation; the latter is fixed by calculation.

In Emil Shurer's 1890 "A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ" we read "they did not in the time of Jesus Christ possess as yet any fixed calendar" and "they began a new month with the appearing of the new moon" (First Division, Vol. 2, p366).

If Herbert Armstrong "restored all things", how could he neglect to restore the original method of determining the holy days, which was by observation? This does not add up.

Read more about this in the article "THE CALENDAR OF GOD".

15) <u>One of the most audacious acts in the Church of God is the end time phenomenon of both Gerald Flurry (Philadelphia Church of God) and David Pack (Restored Church of God) identifying themselves as</u> "that Prophet"**<u>, mentioned in John 1:21,25 (KJV), and referring back to Deuteronomy 18:15. Knowing that Christ warned repeatedly about deceivers coming in His name, and with John 6:14 clearly identifying Jesus Christ as the</u>** "Prophet" **<u>in question, how can people still go along with such deceptions?</u>**

Why are some men so eager to elevate themselves over other men? Why are some men so desperate to turn other men into idols, rather than worship the invisible God?

In the final era of God's Church, many brethren have turned their favourite Church leader, be he dead or alive, into their own personal "golden calf"**.**

Please see "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD" and "THE END TIME ELIJAH" for more information.

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The points listed above only begin to describe the "wretched" **state of the Laodicea era of the Church of God. The next two articles, "DOCTRINAL ERRORS" and "FULFILLED PROPHECIES", will further show how far removed from the truth the people of God have become.**

DOCTRINAL ERRORS

In the Church era message addressed to Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22, God states that His own people at the time leading up to the return of Jesus Christ will, among other things, claim to be "rich"**. This means they strongly believe that they possess much spiritual wealth, or in other words, Bible knowledge.**

However, God says in this same passage of Scripture that the opposite will be the truth: He states that in reality the people of this era will be "poor" **in knowledge of Biblical matters.**

Somewhat ironically, a United Church of God (UCG) minister declared to the author of this website at the Feast of Tabernacles a few years ago, "We can't be Laodicean - we don't say we're rich".

And yet, in message after message, year after year, Church of God sermons are laced with grandiose statements that are prefaced with proclamations such as "We understand", "Now we know", "God has shown us" etc etc.

Very often these statements are followed by Biblical interpretations that are, upon closer examination, dubious, if not plainly incorrect.

The Laodicea Church era receives a highly critical rebuke from Christ, yet the Philadelphia era that precedes it is highly praised. How can this be? What caused such a change in the Church?

As explained on the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS", the Philadelphia era was brought to life with the invention of the printing press and the subsequent printing of the Bible, which began in the 15th century. The translation and widespread distribution of the Scriptures gave people access to the Word of God on a scale previously unimaginable. This played a great part in bringing about the Protestant Reformation, which caused enormous religious and political upheaval in Europe in the 16th century.

At the same time, this exposure to the Scriptures also led to large numbers of Sabbath keeping congregations being raised up in England, continental Europe, and later the USA. Writings of these brethren show them to have been God-fearing people who were well schooled in the Bible. God highly commends them in Revelation 3:8 saying, "you .... have kept My word"**.**

In the middle of the 19th century however, this situation drastically deteriorated. Although the Scriptures

nowhere predict the rise of any specific prophet after the completion of the New Testament, in the 1850's an American woman named Ellen G White, who claimed to receive visions from God, began to be accepted as a prophetess by large numbers of Sabbath keeping brethren. Whereas for centuries the focus of the vast majority of true Christians had been God and His Word, that situation changed within a few decades.

The people of God at this time became the Laodicea era, as the focus of most brethren began to be placed on human intermediaries between themselves and God. This occurred in spite of the fact that God had warned the Philadelphia era of this very danger, by saying "hold fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" **(Rev 3:11 - KJV).**

This deplorable situation persists to this day, and it is from this ominous decline that we can trace the spiritual state of today's Sabbath keeping Christians, a state that God in His Word describes as "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" **(Rev 3:17 - NIV).**

Following is a list of some of the "poor" **qualities and teachings found commonly in the Churches of God, with references to other articles on this website for further explanation.**

1) <u>Idolatry</u>

The erroneous belief that in post-apostolic times a human leader is given special revelation from God leads to the presumption that following that person equates to following God. This inevitably turns such people into idols. What *they* say is taken as gospel, and what the Scriptures say becomes secondary. In Revelation 3:20, Christ portrays Himself as standing outside the final Church era, knocking on the door, trying to get His people to study His Word. This is the reality of our current collective spiritual condition.

The Laodicea era has produced two massively influential human idols: Ellen G White (EGW) and Herbert W Armstrong (HWA).

Many lesser idols have also arisen, but none like these two. Long after their deaths, many of their erroneous interpretations are still taught, because of the pedestal these leaders have been placed on.

In other cases, instead of idolatry of an individual, it is a Church organisation that is idolised, meaning that the pronouncements of "the Church" outweigh those of the Scriptures.

See the article "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD" for more information.

2) Incorrect Prophetic Interpretations

The first result of idolatry is the unquestioned acceptance of the viewpoint of one's idol. In the Churches of God this is nowhere more discernible than in the case of prophetic interpretation. Here are some examples:

**** The Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA) believes that its interpretation of the** "two thousand three hundred days" **prophecy (denoting 2300 years), recorded in Daniel 8:14, is of foundational importance. More than a hundred years after EGW's death, her explanation of this prophecy, with its end point in the year 1844, is still taught. However, the passage of time has revealed that the 1967 Six Day War ended a 2300 year period during which the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was defiled by foreign military forces, which had begun with Alexander the Great's capture of the Holy City in 333BC. This explanation is both logical and measurable. See "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY" and "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS" for more information about this.**

**** Herbert Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), proclaimed himself to be "the end time Elijah" who "restored all things", imagining there was a prophecy pertaining to himself in Matthew 17:10-11. However, as explained on the page "THINGS THAT DON'T ADD UP", this cannot be the truth. Nevertheless, many Church of God (COG) groups still hold to this fallacy. Additionally, HWA taught that the words** "one is" **in the phrase** "five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come"**, in Revelation 17:10, was referring to his time (the 20th century), when *he* would understand the prophecies of Revelation!! Most COG's still adhere to this grievous delusion as well. Please see "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" and "BABYLON IS FALLEN" for a far more plausible explanation.**

**** One of the most detrimental prophetic errors taught by the COG's is the identification of the fourth** "beast" **of Daniel 7 as Rome, when in actual fact it is Mecca/Medina (Islam). This error is not unique to God's people; it is taught almost universally in "Christianity" and Judaism. See "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" and "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS" for more details.**

This website contains numerous explanations that counter the poor prophetic interpretations proclaimed by the Churches of God in this final Church era. Please see the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES" as a starting point.

3) Trinitarianism

One of the foremost doctrines of false Christianity is the belief in a Godhead composed of three beings, known as "the Trinity". The Scriptures, however, reveal two beings in the Godhead, i.e. God and The Word (Jn 1:1), who became God the Father and God the Son at the time of Christ's conception as a human being. The holy spirit, considered by Trinitarians to be a third person in the Godhead, is shown in the Bible to be the spirit of God and Jesus Christ (Rom 8:9-14, II Cor 3:17). The worship of a threefold godhead is one of many practices that false Christianity adopted from pagan religions.

Although not originally trinitarian, both the Seventh Day Baptists and the Seventh Day Adventists adopted this doctrine during the course of the 20th century. Most Messianic Jews adhere to this belief as well. Five years after the death of Herbert Armstrong in 1986, the Worldwide Church of God also began to teach the Trinity. There are a number of reasons why the Trinity doctrine does not stand up to scrutiny:

***** The concept of a triune God is not supported by the Scriptures.**

***** There are two verses in the Bible that have been tampered with in order to insert the doctrine of the Trinity: Matthew 28:19 and I John 5:7. If this was a doctrine already taught in Scripture, no such insertions would have been deemed necessary.**

***** The virgin Mary was** "found with child of the holy spirit" **(Matt 1:18,20). If the holy spirit was a person, then Christ would be the son of the holy spirit, rather than the Son of the Father.**

***** The letters identified as being written by the Apostle Paul commence with a greeting from God the Father and Jesus Christ. The holy spirit is not mentioned in these greetings.**

***** The Bible makes it very clear that God is a family that currently consists of God the Father and God the Son, and will in the near future also include a wife and children (Rev 19:7, Gal 3:26). The holy spirit is not a separate person, because it is not given a family title.**

Acceptance of the seriously erroneous doctrine of the Trinity largely invalidates a true Church of God.

4) Baptism into the Trinity

Following on from the previous point, another aspect of the poor state of the end time Church of God is the unquestioning acceptance of the trinitarian formula used for baptising new members. These words, inserted in Matthew 28:19, can be shown to be of Catholic origin, in the same vein as I John 5:7. The five Biblical examples we have of baptisms are all performed in the name of Jesus Christ alone. Please see the page "BAPTISM INTO THE TRINITY" for more information.

5) Church Government

Christ established His Church with Himself in charge and a body of 12 apostles under Him. In Old Testament days this was already seen in type with the leadership of Moses and 12 tribal leaders serving under him. Very few of the Sabbath keeping Churches of God employ this model of government, especially since they allow supposed prophets to dictate from the grave. Instead, many if not most Churches of God espouse a "one man rule" model, often claiming to follow the example of Moses. However, the role that Moses and others held when they led physical Israel in Old Testament days is in the New Testament era filled by Jesus Christ. For

anyone to take on this position in the Church is a usurpation of the role of Christ, and a blatant sin of which the great false church of Rome is also guilty. See the page "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD" for more information.

6) The Sabbath

The fourth commandment enjoins man to keep God's Sabbath holy. However, in this final Church era some leaders have determined that doing business on this day, like visiting coffee shops and restaurants, does not constitute a transgression. At annual Feasts, restaurant meals are shamelessly organised on days that the Churches themselves declare to be holy. It is hard to imagine that any generation of Sabbath keepers has ever treated God's holy days in such a lukewarm manner. See "TEN BROKEN COMMANDMENTS" for more on this.

7) Futurism

The widespread application of the Jesuit-designed method of interpreting prophecy known as Futurism is one of the most damaging blows to have ever been dealt to the Church. Whereas the Philadelphia era espoused Historicism, over time Futurism has more and more taken over the Church in the Laodicea era, so that today we witness a wholesale poverty of prophetic understanding as a result. See "REVELATION IS HISTORY" and "TRUTHS LOST IN LAODICEA" for more.

8) Duality in Prophecy

Another poor explanation of Scripture, pervasive in this final era of the Church, is that prophecies can have more than one fulfilment. This erroneous belief results in a situation where we can never claim that God has fulfilled His predictions, because there are always further fulfilments possible. There is not one verifiable example of a prophecy having been fulfilled twice. The "end time Elijah" doctrine is a well-known example of this error. Another example is the dual application of the Olivet Prophecy. Please see the pages "THE END TIME ELIJAH" and "THE OLIVET PROPHECY" for a full explanation. Duality in prophecy should not be confused with typology, with which the Scriptures abound.

9) Apostolic Succession

A belief exists in the Churches of God that there has been an unbroken line of ordained ministers of God throughout history, all deriving their ordination from a previous Sabbath keeping minister. This belief

emboldens the "we can't be wrong" attitude so prevalent in the final Church era. However, as explained in the article "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS", the founder of the Church of God (Seventh Day), Gilbert Cranmer, was a minister ordained by a Sunday keeping church long before he switched to Sabbath keeping after reading a magazine article on that subject. He was not ordained by a Sabbath keeping minister, and yet the WCG and its founder HWA traced their ministerial lineage through him.

10) Christ Places His Doctrines in the Church

Another sign of the "poor" **Laodicea Church era, with dangerous ramifications, is the belief that Church doctrines are correct because Christ has placed them in the Church. However, anyone with a little bit of knowledge of Church history knows that doctrines have changed over the years. How is that possible if Christ placed them there in the first place? Why would they need to be changed? For instance, the WCG kept Pentecost on Monday for over 40 years. Then it was switched to Sunday. Which doctrine did Christ place in the Church? Proverbs 25:2 tells us how true doctrine should be established, i.e. by searching the Scriptures.**

11) Private Interpretation

The previous point leads to the matter of individual Bible study, something not generally encouraged in the Churches of God. As Church leaders believe that Christ gave them their doctrines as well as their positions, there is no need, according to them, for individuals to study God's Word for new truths or doctrinal correction. This is scoffed at as "private interpretation"**, a term which comes from II Peter 1:20-21.**

However, this passage of Scripture refers not to the *study* of God's Word, but rather to its origin: men of God wrote the Scriptures by inspiration of God's spirit rather than from their own *private interpretation*. A Church era that discourages people from reading the Word of God for "correction and instruction in righteousness" **(II Tim 3:16) is a poor one indeed. Please see the page "PRIVATE INTERPRETATION" for more on this.**

12) Growth in Knowledge

The Scriptures command us to grow in knowledge. In II Peter 3:18 it says, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"**. This is only logical, seeing we are born with no understanding, and have to gradually acquire knowledge throughout the years we are given. However, COG ministers have stated from the pulpit such things as "We are not seeking new truth". This lamentable situation fits perfectly with a Church era that believes it did already** "restore all things" **(Matt 17:11) and so has** "need of nothing" **(Rev 3:17). Together with points 10 and 11 above, this reflects the** "pitiful" **(Rev 3:17 - NIV) lack of zeal toward the study of God's Word that is prevalent in our day.**

13) The "Gap Theory"

Another erroneous teaching espoused by HWA and his successors is that between Genesis 1:1 and 1:3 a gap in the narrative exists that might be billions of years long. This theory is relatively modern and is meant to incorporate the evolutionist idea that the Universe has existed for a vast amount of time. This belief, however, contradicts God's clear statement in Exodus 20:11: "for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them"**. It also does not allow for the commencement of the nighttime portion of the first day, even though Genesis 1:5 plainly states that** "the evening and the morning were the first day"**. Additionally, this theory defies the logic of seven literal days of Creation picturing God's 7000 year plan on Earth. See the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT" for an explanation of this plan.**

14) Chronological Errors

Because the Churches of the Laodicea era do not take much interest in the fascinating topic of Bible chronology, many chronological errors are taught. For instance, it is common to hear said that Israel spent 430 years in Egypt, which any serious Bible student knows is not correct. Also, it is very common to hear dates like 586BC for the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, and 538BC for the first year of Persian king Cyrus. These two dates are derived from secular sources and are not compatible with the Biblical data. Lamentably, it is even claimed by some that more than 6000 years have elapsed since Creation. See the article "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY" for further information, and the chart on the "HOME" page for a more accurate chronology of Biblical events.

15) "Agape" Love

A long-cherished teaching in the Churches of God concerns the Greek word *agape*. It is taught that this word denotes God's spiritual love, which a person can only possess by the indwelling of the holy spirit.

However, Luke 11:42-43 shows this to be a poor explanation. Here Christ rebukes the Pharisees for lacking love ("agape") for God, and admonishes them, saying it is something they "should have practised"**. But how could these enemies of God have shown *agape* love for God, if it only comes by God's spirit? Even the disciples did not have God's spirit at this stage. Verse 43 goes on to show that the Pharisees in fact *did* have *agape* love. Christ said that they** "love **("agape")** the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces"**. Again, this contradicts what the Churches teach, a teaching handed down from HWA.**

The word *agape* is not only used for God's love, but for love in general. It is used interchangeably with *phileo*, another Greek word denoting love. In a concordance or interlinear Bible, compare the Greek words translated "love" **in Matthew 23:6 and in its parallel passage Luke 11:42-43.**

16) The Word "Ekklesia"

Another poor explanation of a Greek word involves "ekklesia", the word usually translated as "church" **in English Bibles. The word simply means "assembly". The Churches of God however, following HWA, persistently maintain that this word actually means "called out ones" and that it refers to Church members called by God. However, Acts 19 contains an account of a riot caused by an idolatrous mob attacking Church members, where the word *ekklesia* is used three times (vv 32,39,41), twice referring to the mob, and once to a court of justice where the dispute could have been settled. Clearly the references in Acts 19 are not to "called out ones" of God.**

17) Ezekiel did not Preach to Israel

It is common to hear in the Churches of God that the prophet Ezekiel did not deliver his message to the people of Israel as instructed by God, but only to the Jewish captives in Babylon. Instead, they say the message was delivered to Israel in modern times by HWA, or it is being delivered to Israel by their Church today.

Indeed, Ezekiel 8:1 says, "And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me .....".

However, Ezekiel 14:1-4 states, "Some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat down in front of me. Then the word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all? Therefore speak to them and tell them ....."".

And Ezekiel 20:1-2 confirms this: "In the seventh year, in the fifth month on the tenth day, some of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and they sat down in front of me. Then the word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them ....."".

18) A Third Temple to be Built Before Christ Returns

It is taught by some of the Churches of God that another physical temple will be built on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem before the second coming of Jesus Christ. They say that physical sacrifices will once again be offered there, and boldly assert that Christ can't return until a temple-based sacrificial system has been resumed. This is based on their interpretations of Daniel 9:27 and 12:11, as well as Matthew 24:15, which they believe to be referring to future events.

However, as clearly explained on the pages "FULFILLED PROPHECIES" and "THE OLIVET PROPHECY", the Seventy Week Prophecy of Daniel 9 and almost all of the Olivet Prophecy of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 were fulfilled in the first century when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

Daniel 12:11 pertains to the banning of the prayers of non-Muslims on the Temple Mount when it was turned into an Islamic "holy site" in the 7th century AD. Therefore, this too is a prophecy that has already been fulfilled. Please see the page "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" for further explanation.

19) The "Ezekiel Temple"

It is commonly taught in the COG's that the Temple described in Ezekiel 40-46 is to be built after Christ's return. However, as Ezekiel's Temple description includes the offering of animal sacrifices, it cannot pertain to the future, since Christ by His own perfect sacrifice brought these to an end (Heb 10:12). Also, Hebrews 9:1-2 states that an "earthly sanctuary" **was part of the** "first covenant"**, which Hebrews 8:13 says is now** "obsolete"**. This is why God destroyed the Jerusalem Temple, and why He has not allowed a replacement to be built.**

Revelation 21:22 plainly states that there is to be no physical Temple in the millennial New Jerusalem. See the page "GOG IN EZEKIEL 38 & 39" to learn why God gave Ezekiel the vision of this Temple.

20) The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

The New Testament provides two different genealogies which have been interpreted as belonging to Christ. These genealogies are found in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Although the COG's in general maintain that Christ's actual line of descent is recorded in Luke, and that of His stepfather Joseph is recorded in Matthew, the opposite is in fact the truth. Many proofs exist to show this. See the page "THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST" for more information.

21) The Term "Day of the Lord"

Wherever the phrase "day of the Lord" **appears in Scripture, Church of God ministers will almost always say it refers to the time of Christ's return. However, a careful analysis of the relevant passages shows that this phrase is used for various cataclysmic interventions on the part of God in the affairs of nations.**

The fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (Lam 2:22), the overthrow of Babylon by the Medes (Isa 13:1,6,17),

Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Egypt (Eze 30:3-12, Jer 46:1-10), and the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem (Mal 4:5, Joel 2:31, Acts 2:20) are all examples of events called a "day of the Lord" **in Scripture. See the page "THE END TIME ELIJAH" for more on this.**

22) <u>The Terms "End" and "Time of the End"</u>

Much like the previous point, when modern COG expositors see these terms in a prophecy they almost always assume that they mean the time just prior to Christ's second coming. This blanket explanation leads them to misinterpret many passages of Scripture. The pages "FULFILLED PROPHECIES" and "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" elaborate on this.

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This list of errors taught in the Churches of God is by no means exhaustive, and many other examples can be found on the pages "THINGS THAT DON'T ADD UP" and "FULFILLED PROPHECIES".

It is clear that God correctly predicts that His people in the final era of the Church will claim that they are "rich" **in Bible knowledge. He also states that in truth, matters will be quite the opposite.**

Many Churches of the Laodicea era have invented theories by which they either claim to be the Philadelphia era, or a "Philadelphia remnant", or they assert that the message is applicable to others, but not to them or their group. Some even apply the era message to the world rather than to the Church!

In some Churches the ministers believe the problem is related to the regular members of the Church, but not to the ministry or the Church as an organisation. Indeed, in a direct reference to the wording of the final Church era message, the author has heard a leading UCG minister proclaim that Church members who do not believe the core UCG doctrines are going to be spewed out of Christ's mouth.

Astonishingly, the Churches of God across the board are denying that they have a problem at the same time that God is labelling all of them "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked"**!**

Ignoring Christ's severe warning to the final era of the Church, as recorded in Revelation 3:14-22, has *eternal* consequences. Please read the article "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" to get a better understanding of Church history and the current state of the Church.

4

FULFILLED PROPHECIES

In a very short time, Jesus Christ is going to return to Earth as He promised. In the past I've always thought that this would be a positive event for those who constitute His Church. In recent times, however, I have begun to see this in a different light.

For many years the Churches of God have been predicting a whole range of events they expect to occur before Christ returns. These predictions are largely based on erroneous interpretations of Biblical prophecies, using the interpretation method known as "Futurism", which was devised by Catholic Jesuit priests as part of the Counter-Reformation in the 16th century.

Many Churches have made TV programs heavily laden with Futurist ideas, with titles such as the United Church of God's "Seven Prophetic Signs Before Jesus Returns", the Living Church of God's "Five Prophecies for the Middle East", and the Philadelphia Church of God's "Revealing the Two Witnesses". Church ministers dogmatically state that "Christ can't return yet" until a whole host of their imaginary ideas first come to pass.

Time and again they refer to the same list of events that they believe must first happen, such as "the Great Tribulation", "Armageddon", the "Ten Toes" of a European power, and the "Two Witnesses", to name but a few.

I fear that if Christ were to return today, many members of the Church of God (COG) would say: "This is a hoax" or, worse still, "this must be the Antichrist", based on all the prophetic interpretations they have been hearing during the Laodicea era of the Church.

The simple question must be asked: How will those who are caught off guard by Christ's return, *because of their inadequate study of the prophecies of the Bible*, be viewed by Christ at that time?

Could this be something He is warning us about in the parable of the ten virgins of Matthew 25, where those who aren't ready for His return are shut out of the Kingdom? Is this also what He is referring to when He warns the final Church era in Revelation 3:17 that it is "blind"**?**

When Christ came to Earth some 2000 years ago, His own *physical* people by and large did not understand the Scriptures concerning His first coming.

When Christ soon returns, will the same apply to His *spiritual* people?

Let's look at a list of prophecies that according to the general consensus of the Churches of God are still in the future, but which can be shown upon closer examination to have already been fulfilled in history.

1) The Great Tribulation

This event is described in the "Olivet Prophecy" of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. A perusal of Bible Commentaries written in centuries past reveals that the general understanding in former days was that this prophecy was for the most part fulfilled in first century Judea. It is only in the last 150 or so years that the "great tribulation" **has commonly been projected into the future, and also viewed as a worldwide event.**

The "great tribulation" **occurred in the time period from 67 to 73AD, and is usually referred to as "The First Jewish Revolt" or "The First Jewish-Roman War".**

In 67AD a large Roman army led by general Vespasian attacked Judea, conquering a vast number of towns and killing many of their inhabitants. Subsequently, Vespasian's son Titus took command and oversaw the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70AD. This was 40 inclusive years after the Jews had rejected and killed Christ. The final battle of this seven year war was the 73AD conquest of the fortress of Masada in the south-east of Israel near the Dead Sea.

Whereas Matthew's account of the Olivet Prophecy uses the term "great tribulation" **(Matt 24:21), Luke calls it** "great distress" **(Lk 21:23). Luke says that the *great distress* would affect** "the land" **(Judea) and** "this people" **(the Jews), and would result in *this people* being led captive, after which** "the times of the Gentiles" **(v24, i.e. 2520 years of Jerusalem being trodden down by Gentiles - Lev 26:24) would *continue* until they came to their appointed end.**

All of this fits exactly with what happened to the Jews at the hands of the Romans in the first century. Some people want to explain this passage by appealing to the concept of duality, thinking there is a second, end time fulfilment in addition to the original first century fulfilment. However, Christ said *the exact opposite*. He said "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be"**. How can that be dual?**

Much is made of Matthew 24:22 which states "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened"**. The phrase** "no flesh" **is explained by the COG's as applying to the whole world. As noted above, however, Luke 21:23 shows that this calamity was to befall** "the land" **(Judea) and** "this people" **(the Jews), not the whole world. All people had to do to escape this calamity was to leave** "Judea" **and** "flee to the mountains" **(Matt 24:16), which is exactly what the Christians did when an initial Roman assault on Jerusalem in 66AD was rebuffed, giving them time to save their lives.**

Great confusion also results from misinterpreting the word "end" **in Matthew 24:14, which states** "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come"**. The commentaries of Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, and Jamieson, Fausset & Brown all agree that this verse is about the *New* Covenant gospel *beginning* to become established, and going out into the world by the preaching of the apostles, after which all things associated with the *Old* Covenant in Jerusalem were destroyed and came to an** "end" **in 70AD.**

Hence Christ logically continues in the next verse "therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" **(Matt 24:15), i.e.** "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" **(Luke 21:20),** "then know that its destruction is near" **(rest of verse 20).**

Even if one were to argue that the prophecy requires the gospel to have first been preached to an audience called "all the world"**, note that the Biblical writers already in their time considered the gospel to have gone** "throughout the whole world" **(Rom 1:8), been** "made known to all nations" **(Rom 16:26),** "in all the world" **(Col 1:6), and been** "preached unto every creature under heaven" **(Col 1:23). This shows that *our* understanding of the terminology used in Scripture may not necessarily be the same as what the authors had in mind.**

Another verse in the Olivet Prophecy that causes modern interpreters to fall into error is Matthew 24:34: "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place"**. The term** "this generation" **is usually, incorrectly understood to mean our generation today.**

In fact, what we find is that apart from the Olivet Prophecy the Gospels record 23 additional occurrences of the word "generation"**, and *every one of them pertains to the people Christ was talking to in His day*. In Matthew alone the word is used ten times. See the page "THE OLIVET PROPHECY" for a whole lot more on this topic.**

In addition to all the above information, the text of Luke 21:23-24 says that the "great tribulation" **or** "great distress" **happens before the** "times of the Gentiles" **come to an end. As the** "times of the Gentiles" **came to an end in the 20th century when the Jews got their country back, the** "great tribulation" **cannot still be in the future. See "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more information.**

2) <u>The Ten Toes</u>

This is a prophecy based on Daniel 2 and Revelation 17. The COG's believe this is about a still future power bloc of ten nations to emerge in Europe. Please see the page "THE TWO WITNESSES" which lists ten successive Islamic dynasties that ruled Jerusalem over a period of almost 1300 years, and which are the true fulfilment of the "ten toes". See also "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS".

3) The Two Witnesses

Rather than two individuals yet to emerge, the "two witnesses" of Revelation 11:3 are the people of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (a.k.a. the Jews) who stood up on their feet after WW2 and got their land back after 2520 years of punishment, as prophesied by God in Leviticus 26. This is clearly shown in detail in the description of the sixth trumpet in Revelation chapters 9 to 11. This also fits perfectly with the British Israel explanation of the "lost ten tribes" of Israel. The Two Witnesses are simply the other two tribes of the original 12 tribes of Israel, i.e. the ones that were *not* lost to history. See the page "THE TWO WITNESSES" for a full explanation.

4) Six of the Seven Trumpets

Six of the seven trumpets of Revelation 8 to 11 have been fulfilled. The seven trumpets picture seven major events to befall Jerusalem from the time that this prophecy was given, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD, and ending with the soon coming return of Christ to Jerusalem. See the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)".

5) The Kings of the North and the South

These powers, described in Daniel 11, denote the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Seleucid Empire which arose after the time of Alexander the Great and preceded the emergence of the Roman Empire, prior to the first coming of Christ. There are no remaining unfulfilled prophecies concerning these powers. See "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" and "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH".

6) The Mark of the Beast

This is a prophecy described in Revelation 13 and subsequent chapters of the same book. The "mark of the beast" is Sabbath breaking, something common to all "Beast" powers. The Papacy and traditional Christianity, however, took this "mark" a big step further, banning Sabbath keeping and replacing it with Sunday worship instead, until their power to do so subsided in recent centuries.

Obviously, this is not a prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled. See "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST".

7) <u>The Man of Sin / Antichrist / False Prophet</u>

The "man of sin" **is a prophecy found in II Thessalonians 2 which foretells the rise of the Papacy, not something, or someone still in the future today. The man of sin is also described as** "the antichrist" **in I John 2:18 and** "the false prophet" **in Revelation 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10. See the page "THE MAN OF SIN".**

8) <u>The "Daily Sacrifice" and the "Abomination of Desolation"</u>

Many of the Churches of God believe that a physical temple will be built in Jerusalem before Jesus Christ returns. The perceived need for this is based on Daniel 12:11 which says that "the daily sacrifice shall be taken away"**, after which the Churches believe** "the abomination of desolation" **will be set up. The assumption has been made that this passage is talking about literal, physical sacrifices in a literal, physical temple.**

However, this prophecy was fulfilled when non-Muslims were banned from praying (i.e. offering *spiritual* sacrifice) on the Temple Mount at the time that it was turned into an Islamic place of worship when the *Dome of the Rock* was constructed in the late 7th century.

Until very recently, non-Muslims remained banned from praying on the Temple Mount, which is why the Jews have customarily prayed at the Wailing Wall instead.

See the chart on the "HOME" page for the Daniel 12 timelines related to the Dome of the Rock which use the "day for a year" **prophetic interpretation method.**

9) <u>Armageddon</u>

This refers to the Battle of Megiddo that was fought in September 1918, leading to the defeat of the Ottoman Empire's Islamic forces. This was a momentous historical milestone, as, with the exception of about 100 combined years of Crusader rule, Islamic dynasties had ruled the Holy Land since 638AD, a period of almost 1300 years! Read a brief description of the Battle of Megiddo here:

<u>https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/battle-megiddo</u>

Also see "THE REAL SEVEN PLAGUES", in particular the sixth plague.

10) The 200 Million Man Army

This number of military personnel is mentioned as part of the sixth trumpet of the seventh seal in the book of Revelation (Rev 9:16). In general, the COG's see in this a coming conglomerate of forces made up from a variety of nations. However, they fail to notice that World War 1 had over 70 million combatants and World War 2 had just under 130 million, making a total of 200 million. These two wars together led to the defeat of the Gentile powers that ruled the Holy Land, and the end of "Christian" state persecution of the Jews, exactly when the Jews' 2520 years of punishment came to an end. This in turn facilitated the return of the Jews to their country, an event frequently prophesied about in Scripture. Please see "THE TWO WITNESSES" and "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS) for more information.

11) The Seventy Week Prophecy

Most branches of the Church believe that a portion of this prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 is yet to be fulfilled. Some think that there are seven years still remaining, but three and a half years seems to be what most COG's are anticipating.

God gives the duration and the purposes of this prophecy in verse 24.

This verse says (with my comments in brackets, as found throughout these writings), "Seventy weeks **(490 years - see "Days, Weeks, Months, Years and Times")** are determined upon thy people **(the Jews)** and upon thy holy city **(Jerusalem)**, to finish the transgression **(bring the transgressions of the Jews to a climax, by their rejection of their Messiah)**, and to make an end of sins **(lit. "sin" - to bring to an end the reign of sin, and its resulting consequence, death)**, and to make reconciliation for iniquity **(to pay the death penalty for repentant sinners)**, and to bring in everlasting righteousness **(to create the pathway to eternal life through the establishment of the New Covenant)**, and to seal up the vision and prophecy **(to complete the Old and New Testament Scriptures)**, and to anoint the most holy **(to anoint the children of God with the holy spirit)".**

In a nutshell, the 490 years that this prophecy covers can be identified as follows:

Daniel 9:25 states, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times"**. The first seven weeks (49 years) run from the edict of Cyrus until the end of the Ezra/ Nehemiah period, during which Jerusalem and its Temple were restored, and the Old Testament Scriptures were completed. In the 49th year, Nehemiah and the small number of Jews who had returned from Babylon renewed their covenant with God (Neh 9-11), typifying the New Covenant Christ would go on to make.**

Then there follow 62 weeks (434 years): "And after the sixty-two weeks shall the Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing" **(Dan 9:26 ASV, NIV). Thus, in the year** "after" **the end of the 434 years, Christ was** "cut off" **from his position in the Godhead and begotten in Mary's womb, leading to His birth the following year. This may have occurred around the Feast of Pentecost, as it was in the sixth month of the year that Mary had been told she would conceive Christ (Lk 1:26).**

Through all this we can see that the Seventy Week Prophecy bridges the time gap between the OT and NT Scriptures.

Numbers 4:3 stipulates that those who enter the service of the house of God must be "from thirty years old and upward"**. Christ lived a full 30 years before He began His three and a half year ministry in His 31st year (Lk 3:23). This ministry succeeded in its ultimate goal when Christ brought into effect the New Covenant by the shedding of His blood. After Christ's resurrection there followed a 40 year period for the Church to become established, and for the unrepentant Jews to** "finish the transgression" **(v24) which would lead to their destruction (Eze 4:6).**

Towards the end of this period, the Roman "prince that shall come" **(first Vespasian, then his son Titus, and two more rulers after Titus) attacked** "thy people **(the Jews living throughout the Holy Land)** and thy holy city", **and went on to** "destroy the city and the sanctuary" **(Jerusalem and the Temple) and about two thirds of the people (Zech 13:7-8, Rev 8:7 NIV) in a seven year campaign that started in 67AD and ended in 73AD. This fulfilled the 70th week of the prophecy (**"he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week")**. All quotes are from Daniel 9:24-27.**

In 70AD, the middle year of this seven year war, Titus' army demolished God's Temple ("in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering" **- Dan 9:27). This destruction of the centrepiece of <u>Old Covenant</u> practice did, at the same time,** "confirm" **the <u>New Covenant</u> that had been instituted by Christ on the day of His death (**"this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you" **- Lk 22:20).**

In Matthew 24:15-16 and Luke 21:20-21, Christ warns his followers to flee before the final "week" **or seven year Roman campaign that was to begin in 67AD. He does this based on the second half of Daniel 9:27. Correctly translated, this reads** "And on the perimeter **(of Jerusalem)** abomination of desolation **(Jerusalem surrounded by armies - Lk 21:20)**, before the end which is decreed is poured out on the desolate"**. This surrounding of the city was carried out as part of the initial unsuccessful assault on Jerusalem in 66AD by Cestius Gallus and his forces, and Josephus tells us that the warning to flee was indeed heeded by many ("The Jewish War" 2:20:1).**

The destruction of the Temple also fulfilled Hebrews 8:13 which states (having been written prior to the 66-73AD events) "in that He says, "A new covenant", He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away"**.**

The entire Seventy Week Prophecy has therefore been fulfilled, and Christ has forever become the door for repentant sinners to enter and attain "everlasting righteousness" **(Dan 9:24).**

Please see the chart on the "HOME" page, and the "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY" page to gain a better understanding of the timeline of the Seventy Week Prophecy.

12) "Gog" in Ezekiel 38 & 39

The identity of "Gog of the land of Magog" **in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, leader of the Seleucid Empire in the second century BC. Major Bible commentators came to this conclusion hundreds of years ago, and many facts attest to this identification. So much for all the wild ideas held by Futurists regarding this prophecy today. For more on this please see the page "GOG IN EZEKIEL 38 & 39".**

13) "Babylon is Fallen"

Rather than describing some future event, as believed by the Churches of God, the phrase "Babylon is fallen" **found in Revelation 18 concerns the current state that the formerly "Christian" nations of the Western world find themselves in. Having almost totally departed from the values of their Judeo-Christian heritage, they have increasingly embraced the most abominable perversions. At the same time, making no distinction between true and false religion, they have allowed themselves to be overrun by millions of people who embrace false gods. Please see the page "BABYLON IS FALLEN" for more on this.**

14) Jacob's Trouble

The prophecies found in Jeremiah 30, which in verse 7 refer to "Jacob's trouble"**, can be explained by the suffering that people from all Israelite countries endured in World War 2. This is not a future event, as is commonly taught in the Churches of God. Please see the page "JACOB'S TROUBLE" for a detailed explanation.**

15) The Psalm 83 "Alliance"

Some of the Churches of God see in Psalm 83 a conglomerate of nations aligning themselves against Israel at some point in the future. Much speculation is made about who might be involved, and when this will come to pass. However, II Chronicles 20 describes a group of nations gathering against the Kingdom of Judah in the days of King Jehoshaphat that adequately fits with the details of Psalm 83. At least four major Bible Commentaries, those of Adam Clarke, Matthew Henry, Keil & Delitzsch, and Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, attribute this prophecy to the major events described in II Chronicles 20. The descendant of Asaph who was used by God to prophesy

to Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah at that time is mentioned by name in II Chronicles 20:14, and it is most probable that God inspired him to write Psalm 83 as a memorial of this event. See Clarke's Commentary: https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/acc/psalms-83.html

16) Twelve End Time Prophecies Involving Duration

In the year 1945 six Biblical prophecies involving duration were fulfilled. These are:

1) Lev 26:24 - "seven times" **or 2520 inclusive years from the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem in 575BC. See "THE TWO WITNESSES" for more on this.**

2) Dan 4:16,23,25,32 - "seven times", **by typology, 2520 inclusive years of the "Beast" powers trampling down Jerusalem and the Jews - same time period as above. Please see "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" and "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more information.**

3) Dan 7:25 - "a time, and times and half a time" **or 1260 inclusive years of the Jews being persecuted by the** "little horn"**, i.e. the Papacy/false Christianity. This period began in 686AD, when the Papacy became independent from the Roman Empire. See "THE TWO WITNESSES" for more on this.**

4) Rev 11:3 - "1260 days" **or 1260 inclusive years during which the** "two witnesses"**, i.e. the Jews, fulfilled the time period of Daniel 7:25, starting in 686AD.**

5) Rev 13:5 - "42 months" **or 1260 inclusive years of the Papacy/false Christianity being given authority in 686AD. Note that points 3, 4 and 5 all apply to the same period of time. See the page "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST".**

6) Rev 9:15 - "a day, and a month, and a year" **or 32 inclusive years, from the beginning of WW1 in 1914 until the end of WW2 in 1945. See "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" and "THE TWO WITNESSES" for more information.**

Since 1945, six more Biblical prophecies involving duration have been fulfilled. These are:

7) Rev 11:11 - "after the three and a half days **(three and a half years)** the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet"**. This was fulfilled in 1948 as a result of the First Arab-Israeli War. See "THE TWO WITNESSES".**

8) Dan 12:7 - "it would be for a time, two times, and half a time **(1260 years)**; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished" **(RSV). This was fulfilled by the restoration of sovereign Jewish governance in Jerusalem and the issuing of the "Law of Return" in 1950, which was 1260 inclusive years since the Dome of the Rock was built in 691. See point 11 below.**

9) Lev 26:28 - "seven times"**, or 2520 inclusive years, since the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 564BC until the Second Arab-Israeli War in 1956. This is elaborated on in the article "THE TWO WITNESSES".**

10) Dan 8:14 - "And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days **(2300 years)**; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"**. This period ran from Alexander the Great's 333BC conquest of the Holy Land until the Third Arab-Israeli War in 1967. See the page "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY" for more on this.**

11) Dan 12:11 - "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days" **(1290 years). This period ran from the construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in 691 until the issuing of the "Jerusalem Law" in 1980. The** "daily sacrifice" **refers to the prayers of God's people, which were banned from the Temple Mount when the Dome was built. See below.**

12) Dan 12:12 - "Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days" **(1335 years). This period ran from 691 until 2025/26 (the Biblical year begins on Abib/Nisan 1, not January 1). This has been fulfilled by the restoration of Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount; the downfall of Iran, the final, leading power of the seventh head of the "Beast", i.e. Islam; the widespread assassination of Islamic leaders in the countries currently at war with Israel; and *the rise of Israel as an invincible military force*, of which it is prophesied that "**a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword" **(Lev 26:8). For an explanation of points 8, 11 and 12, see the page "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" (the latter part of the article).**

As far as I know, none of the 12 fulfilled prophecies listed here are understood by the Sabbath keeping Churches of God. Former Worldwide Church of God writer William Dankenbring did publish an article in the 1980's about the 2300 year prophecy that contained the correct beginning and end points, but it incorporated many other errors. There are also a few among the churches of this world that have some knowledge of this Daniel 8:14 fulfilment, e.g. the Christadelphians, but that's about all.

In conclusion, considering the large number of fulfilled prophecies that are identifiable in our time, we can see that the final Church era is called "blind" **for good reason (Rev 3:17).**

5

THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT

In all things our Creator shows Himself to be methodical. The complexity of His work is beyond searching out, and the more we see and learn, the more we realise that a Master Designer and Master Mathematician is responsible for all that has been made.

This also applies to the concept of time.

The book of Genesis begins with the Creation account and immediately we are shown structure and order in relation to time. Many students of Scripture, including the author, have come to believe that the seven days of Creation picture a *7000 year plan* being worked out here on Earth.

Sabbath keepers have traditionally believed that the millennial rule of Jesus Christ mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6 is foreshadowed by the Sabbath. In the same vein it is believed that the six days on which man is told he must labour, picture 6000 years that precede Christ's rule.

However, based on the numbers usually given, and adhered to by many of the Churches of God, we appear to have passed the year 6000.

How can this be? Is God imprecise? Or not fully in control? Is there any reason to believe from the Scriptures that we have gone past the year 6000?

Human builders plan their work by first making a blueprint. So does God.

The seven days of Creation found in Genesis 1 and 2 are the blueprint of God's 7000 year work with mankind.

Let's look at Genesis 1 and 2 day by day to get the details of the blueprint, i.e. the framework of time within which God is working. We will see that each day pictures a one thousand year period and foretells a major stage in God's plan that occurs during that millennium.

Day One - Genesis 1:1-5

The creation of the Heavens and the Earth, and the daily cycle of night and day

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day".

On the first day of Creation God created what He calls "the heavens", **and our planet which He calls** "the earth"**. It is stated in II Corinthians 12:2-4 that God dwells in** "the third heaven"**. As He has existed eternally, His dwelling place must have as well. Therefore** "the heavens" **created on this first day must be the universe, which is the second heaven, because the first heaven was created on the second day of Creation, as shown below.**

On the first day God also created the cycle of "night" **and** "day" **(see Isa 45:7). The night is described as** "darkness"**, while the day is described as** "light" **and pronounced by God to be** "good"**. Why did He create this contrast? What is pictured by light and darkness?**

In I John 1:5 we are told that "God is light"**. In John 8:12 Christ says,** "I am the light"**.**

What are we told about darkness? Acts 26:18 gives us the perfect answer. Here Paul recounts how Christ appeared to him and directed him to go to the Gentiles "to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God"**.**

Further into the Creation narrative in Genesis 2, we find these concepts being explained to Adam and Eve where God shows them two trees, one being representative of His way, the other of the way of Satan.

So we see that day and night represent these two totally opposite ways of life: good and evil, right and wrong, lawfulness and lawlessness, life and death.

The first day of Creation pictures the contrast between God and Satan, and shows their influence on man from the very beginning of the first millennium.

Day Two - Genesis 1:6-8

The separation of the Waters

"Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters **(an atmospheric expanse between the earth's surface and the clouds)**, and let it divide the waters from the waters". Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament **(the seas)** from the waters which were above the firmament **(the clouds)**; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven **(the first heaven)**. So the evening and the morning were the second day".

What is pictured by the waters?

In Revelation 13:1 and 17:1,15 the nations are pictured as waters. Revelation 17:15 says "the waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues"**. We can't ask for a clearer explanation than that.**

What happened in the second millennium that might be pictured by the separation of the waters?

In the year 1656AM (AM = anno mundi, i.e. year of the world) God brought the Flood upon the Earth, saving only Noah and his three sons, and their wives – eight people in all. Through Noah's sons the world was then repopulated. In the passage of Scripture known as the Table of Nations (Gen 10), we see these descendants of Noah *divided into nations* due to the incident of the Tower of Babel.

Putting together Genesis 10:25 and 11:8,18,19 we learn that this separation of the nations occurred in the lifetime of Peleg (which in Hebrew means "division"). Peleg was born in 1757AM, and died in 1996AM, so the division of nations took place late in the second millennium.

The second day of Creation foreshadows the separation of the nations in the second millennium.

Day Three - Genesis 1:9-13

The separation of the Earth from the Seas and the creation of Vegetation

"Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day".

What is meant by "earth" **and what does it picture?**

Earth is the Hebrew word "eretz" (776 in Strong's Concordance) which in most cases means "land". See for instance Exodus 12:12 which says "eretz Mizraim" (land of Egypt), or Ezekiel 40:2 which says "eretz Yisrael" (land of Israel).

What happened in the third millennium?

Abraham was born in 2008AM. When he was 75 years old, he was commanded by God to leave the nation of his birth, and informed that God would build a new nation from his descendants. In the account of these things, found in Genesis 12:1-7, God also promises that He will provide Abraham's descendants with a "land" **("eretz").**

Which "land" **is God referring to?**

When Abraham was first led by God to the land that his descendants were to inherit, it was called "the land of Canaan"**. It was filled with various Gentile nations. God, however, took the land from these Gentiles, because of their wickedness, and re-designated it as** "the land of Israel"**.**

In the third millennium therefore, we see the separation of the land of Israel (the earth) from the Gentile nations (the seas).

Abraham was also promised that he would become a great people through his son Isaac, referring specifically to the nation of Israel. This is pictured in the creation of vegetation, and so in Scripture we see Israel pictured as a vine, a fig tree, an olive tree etc. Individuals are as well. For example:

Psalm 1 states, "He shall be a tree that grows, planted by the riverside ..... "**.**

In Psalm 80:8-11,14-15, Israel is depicted as a vine. Also in Isaiah 5:7.

In Jeremiah 11:16-17, Israel is compared to an olive tree.

In Luke 13:6-7, Israel is compared to a fig tree. Christ cursed a fig tree, foreshadowing the destruction of the Jewish nation at the hands of the Romans.

When was the nation of Israel created?

The nation of Israel was raised up and planted in their designated place in the third millennium. They came out of Egypt in 2513AM and, after 40 years of wandering, were led by God into the Promised Land.

As this millennium neared its end King David captured Jebus, the city of the Jebusites, re-naming it Jerusalem, and moved his seat of government there. His son, King Solomon, built the first Temple in Jerusalem, dedicating it in the final year of the third millennium, as shown on the chart on the "HOME" page.

The third day of Creation foreshadows the raising up of the nation of Israel, and the separation of Israel's land, including Jerusalem, from the land of all other nations, in the third millennium.

Day Four - Genesis 1:14-19

The creation of the Greater Light and the Lesser Light and the Stars

"Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light **(the sun)** to rule the day, and the lesser light **(the moon)** to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the fourth day".

Who or what is pictured by the greater light?

In Isaiah 9 we find the well-known prophecy foretelling the coming of Christ. Verse 2 says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined"**.**

In Matthew 4:12-16 we see this passage from Isaiah quoted and applied to Jesus' manifestation in the Galilee region, when He began His ministry.

Clearly the "greater light"**, the sun, depicts Jesus Christ.**

Other Scriptures support this, e.g. "the Lord God is a sun" **(Ps 84:11) and Christ's description as** "the sun of righteousness" **in Malachi 4:2.**

The "lesser light"**, the moon, depicts Christ's wife. Christ is in many Scriptures portrayed as a husband, with Israel or the Church as His wife (e.g. Isa 54:5, Eph 5:23-24, Rev 19:7). Just as the moon of itself contains no light, but reflects the light of the sun, so Christ's wife reflects His light. The monthly cycle of the moon mirrors a woman's monthly cycle, and confirms the procreative role of the wife of Christ. The** "stars" **picture the children of the family of God (Gen 15:5, 22:17).**

We see this depicted in Genesis 37:9-10, where the patriarch Joseph has a dream about the sun, the moon and the stars. These are interpreted by Joseph's father, Jacob, as applying to himself as the sun, his wife Rachel, Joseph's mother, as the moon, and Joseph's siblings as the stars.

Did "the greater light"**,** "the lesser light" **and** "the stars" **appear in the fourth millennium? Yes they did.**

Putting all the Biblical data together, we see that Christ was born in 3965AM and died at Passover in 4000AM, the last year of the fourth millennium. The Church was founded in the same year as Christ's death, commencing the spiritual family of God. These dates can be seen on the chart on the "HOME" page.

The appearance of the "lesser light" **is of crucial chronological importance:**

The Creation account says that the lesser light was made on the fourth day and therefore the Church must have come into existence by the end of the fourth millennium, otherwise it wouldn't be the fourth day anymore, but rather the fifth.

Conventional chronology places the death of Christ and the start of the Church around the year 4030AM, or in other words, well into the fifth millennium. This error has occurred because of an incorrect starting point being assigned to the Seventy Week Prophecy of Daniel 9. This is explained in detail on the page "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY". The seven day blueprint of Genesis 1 and 2 shows us the framework of the true chronology.

The fourth (i.e. middle) day of the week pictures Christ's centrality in the plan of salvation. It was in the fourth millennium that He came to Earth to establish the New Covenant and to die for the sins of mankind.

The fourth day of Creation foreshadows the manifestation of Jesus Christ, the Church and the family of God in the fourth millennium.

Day Five - Genesis 1:20-23

The creation of Marine Life and Birds

"Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens". So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth". So the evening and the morning were the fifth day".

As well as marine life in general, the NKJV quoted above states that on the fifth day God created "great sea creatures"**. The KJV renders this as** "great whales"**. The RSV and NASB, however, translate it as** "sea monsters"**, and for good reason. The Hebrew word here is "tanneen". Let the Bible explain itself:**

In Ezekiel 29:2-3 Pharaoh king of Egypt is called "tanneen", which most Bible versions translate as "monster" **or** "dragon"**. In Isaiah 27:1 the mysterious** "Leviathan" **is mentioned twice, before being given the alternative name "tanneen", again usually translated** "dragon" **or** "monster"**.**

The comparison with Pharaoh is especially telling, as the office of Pharaoh has long been equated with Satan, while Egypt is a Biblical type of sin. "Dragon" **is a word also associated with Satan in Scripture (Rev 12:9).**

Colossians 2:14-15 tells us that Christ was victorious over death and "spiritual principalities"**, the chief of which**

is Satan. Christ conquered Satan when He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Foreseeing this, Christ states in John 12:31, "now shall the prince of this world be cast out"**.**

As a consequence, Revelation 12:10 says "the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down"**. Before Christ died for the sins of mankind, Satan could accuse God's people of wrongdoing before God, but since that time his accusations against repentant believers are futile, because** "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" **(Ps 103:12).**

The obvious conclusion is that, after Christ's victory over him at the end of the fourth millennium, Satan was no longer able to come into the presence of God, a situation that most likely came into effect early in the fifth millennium (Deut 24:5). Where once Satan did have this ability, for instance in the time of Job (Job 1:6-12), he now had lost it.

Knowing that Christ would conquer Satan in the fourth millennium, God foretold in the account of the fifth day of Creation that Satan and his demons would be permanently excluded from His presence in the fifth millennium.

A separation was going to occur between the righteous and unrighteous spirit beings. This is typified by the birds and the large sea animals. Earth's atmosphere, where birds fly, is a type of Heaven, the dwelling place of God and His angels. The seas, where the "sea monsters" **abide, are a type of the Gentile nations (Ps 65:7-8, Rev 13:1, Rev 17:15), of whom Satan is god and ruler. See "REVELATION 12 - THE WOMAN" for more about this event, including its timing.**

The fifth day of Creation foreshadows the permanent separation of God and His angels from Satan and his demons in the fifth millennium, after Christ's victory over Satan.

Day Six - Genesis 1:24-31

The creation of Land Animals and Man

"Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth". So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth". And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day".

The sixth day began with the creation of the land animals. Then God revealed *the purpose of His 7000 year plan on Earth* by stating, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" **(v26). Here God made known His intention to reproduce Himself through mankind. This work began on the sixth day with the creation of the first humans, Adam and Eve, made *physically* in the likeness of God. This foreshadows the next major event in God's plan, i.e. the birth of the firstfruits of salvation, made in the *spiritual* image of God.**

In I Corinthians 15:42-44,52 and Revelation 14:1,4 this event is predicted to occur at Christ's return, which Revelation 20:4 shows is *before* the start of the seventh millennium, i.e. before Christ's rule on Earth commences. This of course is logical, for, if the first physical humans were made of <u>flesh</u> on the sixth *literal* day, the first to enter God's family will be born of <u>spirit</u> on the sixth *millennial* day.

In his physical state man was made "for a little while lower than the angels" **(Heb 2:7 RSV), but at the resurrection man will become part of God's family and will be distinctly higher than the angels. Man's** "dominion" **(v26) over the animals pictures the dominion man will ultimately have over angels.**

As these major events of the sixth millennium have not yet occurred, we cannot have passed the 6000th year since Creation, as many mistakenly believe.

The sixth day of Creation foreshadows the birth of the first humans into the family of God in the sixth millennium.

<u>Day Seven - Genesis 2:1-3</u>

The creation of the Sabbath

"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made".

The Sabbath day pictures Jesus Christ's 1000 year rule on Earth, and man's deliverance from 6000 years of turmoil under Satan's rule. When stating the Sabbath commandment in Deuteronomy 5, God compares the keeping of the Sabbath to coming out of Egyptian slavery (v15). As already explained, in Scripture Egypt is equated with sin, and the office of Pharaoh is equated with Satan.

When it says, "on the seventh day God ended His work"**, it is referring to God completing the work of building His family, during the seventh millennium. See the section "The Annual Sabbaths or Holy Days" in the article "THE SANCTITY OF THE SABBATH" for an explanation of the plan of salvation God is working out here on Earth.**

Just like Nehemiah closed the city gates as the Sabbath drew on (Neh 13:19), a believer who faithfully keeps this commandment shuts himself off from the world on the seventh day and assembles with likeminded

brethren, as per God's command. In so doing he expresses his desire to come under the rule of Jesus Christ.

The seventh day of Creation foreshadows the rule of Christ and the Kingdom of God in the seventh millennium.

****

Clearly, the Creation account in Genesis 1 and 2 gives us a blueprint.

Looking back in time from where we stand today, there can be no doubt that this is correct. It is evident that throughout the course of history this blueprint has been followed precisely. Now, who could possibly have brought this about?

Only God could have. Therefore, we can be certain that those things still prophesied to occur will indeed come to pass exactly as foretold.

Some Final Observations

Following is an important passage of Scripture regarding a day of Creation picturing a thousand years:

II Peter 3:3 "Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,

4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation".

5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old **(on the first day of Creation)**, and the earth standing out of water and in the water **(on the third day of Creation)**,

6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water **(in the second millennium)**.

7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men **(in the sixth millennium)**.

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day".

Here we are told *in the specific context of the Creation* that a day pictures a thousand years.

The Scriptures teach that in a *prophecy of duration* a day pictures a year (e.g. Num 14:34, Eze 4:6). However, this passage in II Peter explains that *a day of Creation* pictures *a thousand years*, and history has proved this to be the case. See "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" for a full explanation of this.

There is one more amazing detail with regard to the seven days of Creation: In the Biblical narrative we can identify a number of instances where God has brought about certain important events on *particular days of the week* because of what those days picture in the Creation account. Here are some examples:

**** On the *first* day of Creation God showed the clear distinction between Himself and Satan. Likewise, Christ's entry into the Most Holy Place in Heaven as a living sacrifice on the day of the Wavesheaf, and the firstfruits' begettal into the family of God through receipt of the holy spirit on the day of Pentecost, contrasting both Christ and the Church from Satan, occurred on the *first* day of the week.**

**** On the *fourth* day of Creation the manifestation of Christ was pictured. Likewise, Christ was manifested on the cross as the Saviour of mankind on the *fourth* day of the week at Passover.**

**** On the *fifth* day of Creation the permanent separation of righteous and unrighteous spirit beings was pictured. Christ's ascension into Heaven forty days after His resurrection, which separated Him from Satan's domain, also took place on the *fifth* day of the week.**

**** On the *seventh* day of Creation the millennial rule of Christ was foreshadowed. Likewise, Christ was resurrected on the *Sabbath*, making His rule possible, along with the resurrection of all mankind.**

Please read the page "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY" to understand why most Churches of God mistakenly believe that we have passed the year 6000AM.

THE TEN WORDS

One of the most catastrophic errors of false Christianity is the teaching that under the New Covenant God does not require all His Ten Commandments to be kept in their original form. Many churches even teach that they have been abolished altogether.

As discussed on the page "TEN BROKEN COMMANDMENTS", even the Churches of God struggle to understand how these laws should be kept.

When Christ stated, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" **(Matt 5:17), many theologians of mainstream Christianity take this to mean that Christ kept God's law, summed up in the Ten Commandments, on man's behalf, then died on the cross to pay the penalty for man's transgressions of that law, and in so doing abolished the necessity for man to keep God's law in order to be saved.**

These people contend that the Ten Commandments, recorded in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, were temporarily instituted alongside a whole host of other laws as part of the Old Covenant made between God and the nation of Israel at Mt Sinai. They reason that, from the time of Christ and the making of the New Covenant, only belief in Christ is required to obtain salvation, and hold various opinions as to what laws should be observed by Christians.

In the Scriptural account however, the Ten Commandments are given an exceptional status. From Mt Sinai God thundered out these laws, and these laws only, to all Israel. He then proceeded to write them with His own finger on two tablets of stone.

Subsequently, these "tables of testimony" **(Ex 31:18) were placed, at God's direction, in the Ark of the Covenant, which was kept in the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple (Heb 9:3-4).**

***No other laws ever received such special treatment from God throughout His dealings with man*.**

Whatever is written in stone is considered permanent.

The Scriptures make it clear that God intended the Ten Commandments to be man's perpetual guide in life.

Prior to Mt Sinai

The Word of God shows that the Ten Commandments did not originate at Sinai. Rather, they were already in place from Creation week. Near the very beginning of the Biblical narrative, we read that the first humans, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and sinned. In I Timothy 2:14 we are informed: "the woman being deceived, fell into transgression"**. From I John 3:4 we learn that** "sin is the transgression of the law"**, or simply,** "sin is lawlessness"**. Therefore, laws must have been given to Adam and Eve for there to be transgression on their part, because** "where there is no law there is no transgression" **(Rom 4:15).**

When God made a covenant with Israel at Mt Sinai, He added to the code of law that man had already been given up to that time. We read in Galatians 3:19: "What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come"**. This refers to the entire legal administration that was added to regulate the nation of Israel, including animal sacrifices, but this was, as stated,** "because of transgressions". **Therefore, Sinai can't have been the origin of the fundamental laws God gave to man. Otherwise, what law had been transgressed *prior* to Sinai?**

Let's briefly look at some examples showing that the Ten Commandments were given to man from the beginning of his existence.

Genesis 2:2-3 states, "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it"**. To sanctify something means to set it aside as holy. So we see here that on the seventh day of Creation God made the Sabbath. Therefore, when the fourth commandment states,** "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"**, it is referring to something that already existed. We also see this in Exodus 16, where we read of God testing Israel on their obedience to this commandment *before* He spoke the Ten Commandments from Mt Sinai, which is recorded four chapters later.**

In Genesis 3:2-4 we find Satan calling God's truthfulness into question by saying to Eve, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" **and** "You will not surely die"**. Here, Satan broke the third commandment,** "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain", **and the ninth commandment,** "You shall not bear false witness"**.**

In Genesis 3:6 we read of Adam and Eve's first sin, i.e. the taking of the fruit that had been forbidden by God. In doing so they transgressed the eighth commandment, "you shall not steal"**, and the tenth commandment,** "you shall not covet"**.**

In Genesis 4:8-9 we read about the murder of Abel at the hands of his brother Cain. In doing this Cain transgressed the sixth commandment, "you shall not murder"**.**

In Genesis 9:20-24 we read an account of the sons of Noah, with one transgressing and the other two obeying

the fifth commandment, "you shall honour your father and your mother"**.**

In Genesis 13:13 we read that "the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful"**, and chapter 19 relates the grave sexual sin that was common among them, which clearly ran counter to God's design for marriage between a male and a female.**

On the same topic, in Genesis 20:3-9 we see that God prevented Abimelech from sleeping with Abraham's wife, Sarah, which would have been "a great sin" **(v9). These two cases show that the seventh commandment,** "you shall not commit adultery"**, which confines sexual intercourse to a man and a woman within marriage, was already in place well before Sinai.**

Genesis 31:30-35 gives us the account of Jacob's wife, Rachel, hiding "household idols" **in her tent. From Genesis 35:2-3 we understand that these objects were forbidden by the second commandment,** "You shall not make unto you any graven image"**.**

In Joshua 24:2 we read concerning the ancestors of Israel, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods"**. This was exactly what God had called Abraham away from, it being a violation of the first commandment,** "You shall have no other gods before me"**.**

Many more examples could be given to show that all of the Ten Commandments that God gave to Israel at Mt Sinai were already in effect prior to that time and had been since Creation.

From Mt Sinai to the Time of Christ

At Sinai, as part of the covenant God was making with Israel, He loudly proclaimed to them the Ten Commandments (literally "ten words" **- Ex 34:28, Deut 4:13 and 10:4), here listed in an abbreviated form:**

1) I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before Me

2) You shall not make for yourself a carved image; you shall not bow down to them

3) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

4) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God

5) Honour your father and your mother

6) You shall not murder

7) You shall not commit adultery

8) You shall not steal

9) You shall not bear false witness

10) You shall not covet

These commandments were the foundational laws that God gave to Israel to govern their nation, and, as we have seen, they were laws that were already in existence. In regard to these laws, Deuteronomy 4:6 says, "Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'" **and** "what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?" **(v8). God's purpose was to bless the nation of Israel with His law, but also to use them as an example for other nations to follow.**

In Deuteronomy 5:10 God equates loving Him with keeping His commandments: "showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments"**. In Deuteronomy 7:9 Moses reiterates this by declaring,** "Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments"**.**

And again, in Deuteronomy 10:12-13, "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"**. Note that God gives His law** "for your good"**.**

After making His covenant with Israel at Sinai, God, through His prophets, conveyed the same consistent attitude towards the commandments that the covenant was based on. Time and again God sent prophets to rebuke Israel when they transgressed His law, to exhort them to repent.

Ultimately, both the House of Israel and the House of Judah were driven from the land that God had given them and went into captivity because of their failure to keep these commandments.

At the same time, we consistently see that people who found favour in God's eyes in Old Testament times were those who obeyed His commandments.

In Psalm 1 we find its author praising God's law: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord ..... and in His law he meditates day and night" **(Ps 1:1-2).**

Psalm 119 contains 176 verses that from beginning to end praise God and His law.

There can be no doubt that from Mt Sinai until the time of Christ, the Ten Commandments were the foundational law that God intended His people to live by.

Christ's Teachings

Throughout His ministry, Christ magnified the Ten Commandments, as predicted by the prophet Isaiah: "He will exalt the law and make it honorable" **(Isa 42:21). Christ consistently taught the need to look beyond the letter of the law and strive to also keep the spirit of the law.**

Look at Christ's teaching about murder in Matthew 5:21-22: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment'. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment"**.**

Likewise, His teaching on adultery in Matthew 5:27-28: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery'. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"**.**

These are not the words of someone who intends to abolish the Ten Commandments. Quite the contrary.

Consider also Christ's obedience to the Sabbath commandment. He kept the Sabbath as His custom (Lk 4:16) and taught on the Sabbath. But He also went well beyond the letter of this law. Christ knew that the seventh day of the week pictured the seventh millennium, when He will rule the world. Therefore, Christ's Sabbaths saw Him healing the sick, driving out demons, restoring sight to the blind, restoring hearing to the deaf and making the lame walk. These were all a symbolic foretaste of His rule, when Satan and his deceptions will be removed, and all people will acknowledge Christ and be able to understand His truth and walk in His ways.

In Matthew 19:16-19 a rich young man asks Christ, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"**. Christ answers him,** "if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments"**. When the man asks,** "Which ones?"**, Christ responds by listing five of the Ten Commandments:** "'You shall not murder', 'You shall not commit adultery', 'You shall not steal', 'You shall not bear false witness', 'Honor your father and your mother'" **and quoting Leviticus 19:18,** "'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'"**.**

It would be foolish to argue that only five of the Ten Commandments now need to be kept. In that case we would be free to worship other gods and bow down to idols! Christ Himself had loudly proclaimed the Ten Commandments from Mt Sinai and had written all ten with His own finger on stone tablets. Clearly, He knew they were one body of ten laws. Mark 10:19 adds the fact that Christ, before listing the five commandments, states "You know the commandments"**. The man undoubtedly knew that they were ten in total and claimed that he had kept them all from his youth.**

Jesus' reference to Leviticus 19:18 shows His practice of emphasising the spirit of the law and not merely the letter.

In the Church era messages Christ also upholds God's law. He describes the brethren of the Laodicea Church era as "naked" **(Rev 3:17), and counsels them** "to buy from Me ….. white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed"**. In the Scriptures, nakedness is associated with sin, white garments are symbolic of the righteousness of God's people (Rev 19:8), and righteousness is defined by *God's commandments* (Ps 119:172). Christ urges the Laodicean brethren to repent and turn to His Word and His law so that their sinful, *naked* state can be covered with the righteousness of God.**

The necessity for Christ to die for man's transgression of God's commandments speaks louder than any words ever could. God does not compromise with His law, but requires the penalty for all sin to be paid. Christ, who was the Creator of all mankind, never broke God's law, so His innocent death was accepted by the Father as payment for the transgressions of all mankind (II Cor 5:21, I Jn 2:2).

The Apostles' Teachings

The keeping of the Ten Commandments is taught throughout the apostolic writings. Here is one example for each of the ten, but many more instances could be given:

1) In Acts 14:8-15 we find the apostles Paul and Barnabas preaching to some Greeks who, upon witnessing a miracle, attempt to worship Paul and Barnabas as if they were gods. The two apostles immediately put a stop to this, making it very clear to these people that they should instead worship "the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them"**.**

2) In Acts 17:16 Paul encounters many idols in the city of Athens: "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols"**. So, he instructs the Gentiles of that city in no uncertain terms,** "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" **(Acts 17:29-30).**

3) In Revelation 13 and 17 the apostle John is shown a "beast"**, which symbolises the succession of Gentile nations, hostile to God, that conquered God's Holy City and persecuted His people for 2520 years:** "So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns"**. These Gentile nations have in common that they all worship false gods and are therefore guilty of the** "blasphemy" **of misrepresenting the true God, i.e. taking His name in vain.**

4) The author of the book of Hebrews states unequivocally, "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest **(enters God's Church)** also rests from their works **(every Sabbath)**, just as God did from his **(on the Sabbath) (Heb 4:9-10 NIV)".**

5) In Ephesians 6:1-2 Paul instructs, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother", which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth"**.**

6) In I John 3:15 John warns, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him"**.**

7) In I Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul clearly upholds four of the commandments, including the prohibition of adultery, and adds that the keeping of these commandments is required to receive eternal life: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God"**.**

8) In Ephesians 4:28 Paul teaches about the eighth commandment, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need"**.**

9) In Revelation 21:8 John writes about at least five of the commandments, including the prohibition of bearing false witness: "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"**.**

10) In Ephesians 5:3-5 Paul writes regarding covetousness and other sins: "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God"**.**

So we see that all the Ten Commandments are taught throughout the New Testament. Also see Romans 13:9 where Paul mentions five of them in one verse. Revelation 14:12 describes God's true "saints" **as** "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus"**.**

Paul shows the importance of God's commandments in Romans 7:7-12: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet". But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived **(sprung up)** and I died. And the

commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good**". Note that the commandments are** "to bring life"**.**

Paul also makes clear in Romans 3 that faith in the sacrifice of Christ is required for salvation, but that this does not do away with the need to keep God's commandments: "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law" **(Rom 3:31).**

Much of traditional Christianity claims that Christ abolished the need to keep God's commandments, and as "proof" will point to Scriptures like "But now we have been delivered from the law" **(Rom 7:6),** "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" **(Rom 6:14), and** "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" **(Rom 10:4).**

However, what they fail to see is that Christ, by His death, delivered us, not from the law but from the *penalty* of the law, i.e. the death penalty. It is for this reason that we, as repentant Christians, are no longer *under the law*, with the law standing over us and claiming its penalty. They also fail to understand that Christ is not the end of the law, but rather the end of the law *for righteousness*, i.e. the end of the Old Covenant under which the Jews had come to believe they could attain righteousness by their own keeping of the law.

Paul deals with these same assertions after stating in Romans 6:14 that we are not under law but under grace: "What then? Shall we sin **(transgress God's commandments)** because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!" **(Rom 6:15).**

A well-known Scripture that has commonly been misunderstood to mean that we are saved by faith alone, is found in Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"**. This tells us that salvation is a gift from God that we can't earn. However, we only need to read the next verse to learn that good works are still required of us:** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" **(v10).**

James 2:17-18 confirms this: "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works"" **to which James replies** "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works"**. Doing "good works" means keeping God's law in letter and spirit, and is motivated by love for God and man. Christ Himself says with regard to the commandments,** "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" **(Matt 22:37-39). Romans 13:10 likewise states,** "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law"**.**

Another example where Scripture has been misunderstood as doing away with God's commandments is Ephesians 2:14-15: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both **(Jews and Gentiles)** one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of

commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace"**.**

The truth is that this passage is referring to the *enmity*, caused by the physical application of certain of God's laws, being abolished, not any law. Verse 12 states that prior to Christ the Gentiles were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise"**, because the legal framework of the Old Covenant favoured the physical people of Israel. Now, under the New Covenant, all people, regardless of ethnicity, can be** "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" **(Eph 2:19).**

An example of legal differentiation between Israelites and Gentiles under the Old Covenant concerns slavery. Exodus 21:2 states, "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free"**. However, Gentile slaves could be kept for life and even be passed down as an inheritance:** "Moreover you may buy the children of the strangers who dwell among you, and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they shall become your property. And you may take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them as a possession; they shall be your permanent slaves. But regarding your brethren, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with rigor" **(Lev 25:45-46).**

Another law that displays this differentiation is Deuteronomy 14:21: "You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a holy people to the Lord your God"**.**

We also see this in Deuteronomy 15:1-3: "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lord's release. Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother"**.**

Likewise in Deuteronomy 23:19-20: "You shall not charge interest to your brother - interest on money or food or anything that is lent out at interest. To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that the Lord your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess"**.**

So we see that all nations were not equal under the Old Covenant, but rather those called by God to be in a relationship with Him were viewed differently from those who were not. Under the New Covenant established by Christ, this "wall of separation" **between physical Israelites and Gentiles has been** "broken down"**. The distinction now applies spiritually, between believers and unbelievers (II Cor 6:14).**

The author of Hebrews, quoting Jeremiah 31:33, shows the importance of God's law under the New Covenant: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them" **(Heb 11:16).**

This is speaking about what happened on the Pentecost after Christ's death, and confirms the crucial importance of God's law. Whereas the Ten Commandments were given to physical Israel at Mt Sinai on the day of Pentecost after the Passover and the Exodus from Egypt, the Church was given God's holy spirit, *as the means of keeping the Ten Commandments*, on the day of Pentecost after Christ's death at Passover, enabling man's exodus from sin.

When Christ lives in us through the indwelling of His holy spirit, we love God's law and strive to keep it, and sincerely repent when we fall short.

The Kingdom of God

Although we only "know in part" **(I Cor 13:12), we are given some insight into what Christ's rule in His millennial Kingdom will be like. This includes its laws.**

Micah 4:2 says of that time, "Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths". For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"**.**

The Kingdom of God is called the Kingdom of Heaven in the gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 5:19 Christ says, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"**. Here Christ is stating that commandment keeping is an essential part of His Kingdom.**

The New Covenant that Christ initiated at His first coming will remain the covenant by which people will live and be judged. This is the only means by which a person can "enter into life" **which, according to Christ, requires a person to** "keep the commandments" **(Matt 19:17).**

In the final chapter of Isaiah, we read that under the New Covenant "from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me, says the Lord" **(Isa 66:23).**

In the very last chapter of the Scriptures, where God's 7000 year work with mankind is pictured coming to fruition, we are told "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" **(Rev 22:14). The** "tree of life" **is symbolic of eternal life. The** "city" **is the New Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God.**

So from the very beginning until the very end of God's 7000 year redemptive work with mankind we see the Ten Commandments at the heart of His plan.

The Great Purpose of the Ten Commandments

Why are the Ten Commandments crucial to God's plan? God is composed of two spirit Beings. John 1 refers to them as God and the Word. In Genesis 1:26 these two Beings reveal their plan to create mankind: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness"**.**

After the Word's birth as a human baby of the virgin Mary, the two Beings are called the Father and the Son. These are family titles that indicate their intention of creating a family of likeminded beings.

In Revelation 1:10-18 John sees a vision of the resurrected Christ as a God being. He describes Christ as having a head, hair, a face, eyes, a mouth, a chest, hands and feet. Other Scriptures also show God the Father as having these attributes (Dan 7:9, Rev 5:1,7). Christ, as the God of the Old Testament, wrote the Ten Commandments with His finger (Ex 31:18). Therefore we can conclude that physical man looks like God.

However, our creation as physical human beings is just the first stage of God's work. John 4:24 states that "God is a spirit"**. Physically we have been made in God's likeness, but God intends us to also acquire His *spiritual* image. This is why He gives a portion of His holy spirit to repentant believers upon baptism. By the giving of the holy spirit God places His spiritual seed in a believer, begetting them as a spiritual child of God (I Pet 1:23 ASV, YLT), i.e. a spiritual embryo in the "womb" of the body of believers, the Church, which Paul refers to as our spiritual** "mother" **(Gal 4:26, Heb 12:22-23). Through a lifelong process of spiritual growth, they then become ready to be born as a spirit being, into the family of God.**

Whereas before our conversion we are dismissive, and even hostile towards God, when His spirit begins to work with us, we see Him in a different light and grow to love His Word and His law (Ps 119:97). Therefore, our values gradually become the same as His values. This change in attitude doesn't come from us, rather it comes from God's spirit living in us and converting us.

This is where the importance of the Ten Commandments becomes apparent. Psalm 19:7 says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul"**. Other translations say** "restoring" **or** "reviving" **the soul. The keeping of God's law, by a person led by God's spirit, converts their carnal human nature into God's nature.**

Romans 8:1-14 sums up this entire process of conversion and salvation, including the paramount importance of God's law:

1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit**. 2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death**. 3** For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit**.**

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit**. 6** For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace**. 7** Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be**. 8** So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God**.**

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His**. 10** And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness**. 11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you**.**

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors - not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh**. 13** For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live**. 14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**".**

These 14 verses in the book of Romans reveal the purpose God is working out with mankind, as well as the method He is employing. Through repentance and faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of our transgressions of God's law is made possible. After baptism and the receipt of the holy spirit, man, now begotten as a son of God, is led to fulfil "the righteous requirement of the law"**.**

It is true that no one apart from Jesus Christ will ever be perfectly sinless in this life. All believers instead must fight a daily battle against sin. As the Scriptures state: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" **(I Jn 1:8-9).**

This brings us back to what Christ tells the rich young man who asks, "what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"**, to which Christ replies,** "if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" **(Matt 19:16-18).**

The Ten Commandments were given to man for him to develop the spiritual image, or nature of God.

This is *the* major reason why the belief that Christ abolished these laws is so wrong: it takes away the vehicle by which God fulfils His purpose for mankind.

Ten Fingers and Ten Toes

God gave man ten fingers and ten toes. Man was made in God's image; therefore we know that God also has ten fingers and ten toes.

Just like God, we work with our hands, and we walk with our feet. And to work and walk like Him, all ten digits on our hands and our feet must play their part and be coordinated by our minds.

Regarding the commandments, God instructed the Israelites to figuratively "Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads" **(Deut 6:8), and in Psalms we read** "Your word is a lamp to my feet" **(Ps 119:105).**

The Hebrew word *dabar*, translated in this verse as "word"**, is the same word translated** "commandment" **in the Ten Commandments.**

The ten fingers and toes can therefore be seen as representing ten all-encompassing spiritual principles.

These are eternal principles (Jn 17:24) that define the character of God, and constitute the foundation of the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Words

The ten spiritual principles or laws can all be found in the Scriptures. Christ refers to them as "the weightier matters of the law" **in Matthew 23:23. In this same verse, He mentions** "justice and mercy and faith"**. The parallel account in Luke 11:42 adds** "the love of God"**, meaning the love that God possesses. In I Corinthians 13:13 *hope* is included in this category as well:** "now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love"**.**

Note that there is an order in these principles; some are said to be greater than others. We see this in James 2:13 as well, where it states that "mercy triumphs over judgement"**. The Greek word translated here as** "judgement" **is the same word found in Matthew 23:23, commonly translated as** "justice"**.**

These Scriptures therefore give us five major spiritual laws, the order of which is: love, faith, mercy, justice and hope. We will see that these are the principles at the foundation of the last five commandments, numbers six to ten. One could think of them as the left hand, or left foot, principles.

The *first* five spiritual principles are indicated by key words used in the first five commandments: God, image, name, work and honour. They are the right hand, or right foot, principles.

To understand the ten spiritual principles behind the literal wording of the Ten Commandments,

let's look at them one by one in Exodus 20:

1) "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me"**.**

This commandment instructs us to acknowledge the true Creator God as supreme. Consequently, we must accept the underlying principle that the display of godly authority on our part, by first and foremost taking charge of our own personal lives, and acquiring moral strength, is crucial to all righteous living. If we abide by this law, we will seek to develop this paramount godly quality.

2) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments"**.**

This commandment not only prohibits worshipping a *false image* of God, but it instructs man to love His *true image*. This requires continually growing in knowledge about God and love of His righteous nature.

3) "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain"**.**

This commandment not only prohibits the misuse of God's name, but requires us to glorify His name and to accurately represent Him. As we, who are called Christians, take Christ's *name*, we must think, speak and act as He does. This is a logical progression from the second commandment, because if we love God's nature, or image, we will seek to imitate it.

4) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it"**.**

After six days of the *work* of Creation, God rested on the seventh day, making the observance of the Sabbath a sign between Himself and man (Ex 31:16-17). As Creator and Sustainer, He directs man to follow His example by emulating His work ethic and creative accomplishments on the first six days of the week, and resting every seventh day.

In all our works He instructs us: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" **(Ecc 9:10).**

The Sabbath day was made for man (Mk 2:27) as a day of physical rest (Ex 23:12), spiritual rejuvenation, and assembly (Lev 23:3), maintaining a balance between work and rest. Obedience to the Sabbath commandment demonstrates a person's willingness to work with God, under His direction.

5) "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you"**.**

This commandment on the surface applies to man's responsibilities towards his physical parents. On a spiritual level it refers to bringing *honour* to the family of God.

During Christ's time on Earth, He consistently honoured His Father in word and deed (Jn 8:49) and was obedient to Him unto death (Phil 2:8). Through His teachings and His sacrifice, He made great honour possible for those who would constitute the Church, the spiritual mother of the children of God.

Upon His return Christ will confer tremendous honour upon the firstfruits of salvation, making them His Bride (Rev 19:6-8, 21:2), and allowing them to share His throne (Rev 3:21).

As Creator of all things (Jn 1:1-3), Christ bestowed great honour on the heavens (Ps 19:1), mankind (Ps 8:5), the animal kingdom (Job 12:7-10), plant life (Matt 6:28-30) and all the wonders of nature. All His works are of *the highest calibre*, as stated in Genesis 1:31: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good"**. He thereby sets the standard of quality that we also must aim for in all our achievements.**

6) "You shall not murder"**.**

This commandment forbids the unlawful taking of human life. However, Christ made it clear that even unjustified anger transgresses this commandment (Matt 5:21-24), and He adds that we should actually love our enemies (v44).

In doing so Christ identifies the spiritual law at the foundation of this commandment as *love*. In John 13:34 Christ instructs his disciples, and therefore all Christians, to "love one another; as I have loved you"**. Note that this law is about God's love (Lk 11:42), not man's idea of love.**

7) "You shall not commit adultery"**.**

This commandment prohibits all sexual relationships outside of marriage. The spiritual law at the foundation of this commandment is living *faith*, i.e. being faithful as God is faithful. James 2:20 states that "faith without works is dead"**. Romans 3:22 and Galatians 2:16,20 say, when correctly translated as in the KJV, that people begotten of God have the faith *of* Jesus, i.e. show their faith in God by their actions, as Christ did. Hebrews 11 is full of the faithful acts of those who were led by such faith.**

8) "You shall not steal"**.**

The eighth commandment forbids us to take what is not rightfully ours. The spiritual principle here involves giving, motivated by *mercy*. We read concerning God that "the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" **(Ps 103:8). The "good Samaritan" is commended by Christ as** "he that showed mercy" **(Lk 10:37), i.e. the desire to be benevolent and to help those in need.**

9) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour"**.**

The ninth commandment uses legal terminology. It speaks not only of being truthful, but also teaches the spiritual principle of *justice*. Matthew 12:18 speaks thus of Christ: "Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles"**. All who are led by God's spirit likewise** "declare justice"**. Acts 8:33 also says of Christ:** "In His humiliation His justice was taken away"**. How was His justice taken away? By bearing false witness against Him.**

10) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's"**.**

The tenth commandment speaks against one of our most carnal desires, i.e. to yearn for the physical things that belong to others. The spiritual mind, however, desires what is spiritual, which in Scripture is termed *hope*. This principle could be further described as vision, aspiration, passion, etc. Paul expresses this hope in Romans 8:23-24: "Not only that, but we also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves while eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For we are saved through hope" **(MEV). Paul also describes this as** "the hope and resurrection of the dead" **in Acts 23:6, and** "Christ in you, the hope of glory" **in Colossians 1:27.**

God's own hope is mentioned in Romans 8:21-22: "the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope" **(NIV).**

It is evident that our Creator exerts His authority as God, portrays His Image, upholds His Name, carries out His Work and bestows Honour, while pouring out Love, acting in Faith, showing Mercy, dispensing Justice and abiding in Hope.

For our part, we are to love God, worship His Image, glorify His Name, emulate His Work and bestow Honour as He does, while projecting His Love, His Faith, His Mercy, His Justice and His Hope toward others.

Christ states in Mark 12:29-31, "The first of all the commandments is **(quoting Deut 6:4-5)**: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength'. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this **(quoting Lev 19:18)**: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'"**. The inference is that Christ's** "first commandment" **is a summary of the first five commandments, and His** "second commandment" **is a summary of the second five.**

To some degree we can detect the ten spiritual principles in the ten major heavenly bodies in our solar system: the Sun and the nine planets. The Sun represents God, the first principle, as seen in Psalm 84:11: "the Lord God is a sun"**, and Christ's description as** "the sun of righteousness" **in Malachi 4:2. Christ is represented by the** "great light" **made in Creation week, as explained on the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT".**

The planets all revolve around the Sun and are kept in their orbits by the law of gravity, just as all life revolves around its Creator and is subject to His law. After Mercury and Venus, our planet Earth is the fourth major heavenly body. The fourth spiritual principle is work, and it is on Earth that God is conducting His amazing work of reproducing Himself through mankind.

In the solar system, the Sun is the biggest body, while Jupiter, the sixth heavenly body, is the second biggest of the ten. These symbolise the first and sixth spiritual principles, God and love, also pictured by our two thumbs and two big toes.

Additionally, the ten heavenly bodies are separated into two groups of five by an asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. This division mirrors the two groups of five spiritual principles as pictured in our two hands and two feet, and also in the two stone tablets that the Ten Commandments were originally written on.

In conclusion, I hope this article has conveyed to the reader how fundamentally important God's Ten Commandments are. God made this abundantly clear when He spoke these laws to Israel in a loud voice from Mt Sinai, wrote them on tablets of stone, and commanded them to be placed inside the Ark of the Covenant, which was symbolic of His presence.

These ten laws are derived from ten spiritual principles that can be simply expressed as *ten words*, and which fully define the perfect nature of God. The keeping of these laws and the adoption of these spiritual principles leads to the development of the nature or *image* of God, the very purpose for which man was created.

7

THE SANCTITY OF THE SABBATH

(including the annual Holy Days)

This website was initiated to address the Laodicean conditions witnessed in the Sabbath keeping Churches of God. However, over time more and more visitors here are not Sabbath keepers and are unaware of the importance of God's weekly holy day. Therefore, an article focused on this crucial law is highly warranted.

The fact that the Sabbath keeping Churches in the Laodicea era have been progressively watering down their Sabbath observance, as elaborated on the page "TEN BROKEN COMMANDMENTS", adds to the need to examine in depth what the Scriptures have to say about this great blessing from God. Our Creator states:

Exodus 20:8-11: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it"**.**

Deuteronomy 5:12-15: "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day"**.**

The Creation account shows, and other Scriptures confirm, that all days, including the Sabbath, begin and end at sunset, as seen in Leviticus 23:32: "from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath"**. Therefore the weekly Sabbath is to be kept from sunset on the sixth day of the week until sunset on the seventh day.**

The Origin of the Sabbath

We first learn of the Sabbath in Genesis 2:2, where God tells us that He rested on the seventh day, after having spent the first six days of the week on His works of Creation. The next verse states that God "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it"**. To sanctify something means to set it apart as holy.**

This is supported by the wording of the Ten Commandments given at Mt Sinai. In Exodus 20:8 God states, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"**. The word** "remember" **indicates that the Sabbath already existed, and the words** "keep it holy" **indicate that *it was already holy*.**

Exodus 20:11 confirms, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" **(NIV).**

The Sabbath as a Spiritual Picture

As fully explained on the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT", the seven days of Creation each picture a one thousand year period. The first six days picture 6000 years of man's toil on Earth, during which time Satan, "the god of this world" **(II Cor 4:4), who is hostile to God and His law, leads man to think and act the way he does. Man is in effect enslaved by sin through the influence of Satan. It is for this reason that the account of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5 mentions Israel coming out of Egyptian slavery as an additional reason for keeping the Sabbath. In the story of the Exodus, the Pharaoh of Egypt is a type of Satan, and Egypt is a type of sin.**

Thus the Creation account and the story of the Exodus both convey the same reality of coming out from under Satan's rule, and instead coming under the rule of God.

The Sabbath pictures Christ's soon-coming 1000 year rule on Earth (Rev 20:4) which will be in total contrast to the 6000 year period that precedes it. This underscores the difference between the Sabbath and the other six days of the week.

The habitual weekly observance of the Sabbath reminds believers of the fact that what we see in this world is not permanent, but will be superseded by something immeasurably better, at God's appointed time. As such, the Sabbath has always been a great sign of hope for the people of God.

The Position of the Sabbath in the Decalogue

Traditional Christianity will usually downplay the importance of the Sabbath. However, when we look at the numbering of the Ten Commandments, we see that the Sabbath is placed in the fourth position. This is no insignificant matter. In all of Creation we witness God's infinite attention to detail. He does everything with the utmost precision and purpose. Therefore, when God placed the Sabbath commandment ahead of such commandments as "you shall not murder"**,** "you shall not commit adultery" **and** "you shall not steal"**, clearly it was intentional.**

When God created the heavens, He made ten major heavenly bodies in our solar system. At the centre of the solar system is the sun, and the nine planets all revolve around it. The Scriptures show that the sun is a type of God. Psalm 84:11 states "the Lord God is a sun"**, Malachi 4:2 refers to Christ as** "the sun of righteousness" **and Revelation 1:16 says about Christ that** "His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance"**. God's first commandment is about our duty to Him, requiring us to put Him first above all things. Thus, our lives revolve around Him.**

The sun is therefore a type of God in the first position, and a type of the first commandment.

As the nearest to the sun, the planet Mercury is in the second position, then Venus and then in the fourth position is Earth. Earth is the only planet on which there is life, and is the one on which God is carrying out His work with mankind. The fourth *commandment* is also about work. It states, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work" **(Ex 20:9-10). So the fourth commandment is not just about resting on the seventh day Sabbath; it is also about working on the first six days of the week.**

Therefore we see a correspondence between the fourth heavenly body, where *God* is conducting His work, and the fourth commandment which instructs *us* to work.

Teachings from the Old Testament

In Exodus 16 we find instructions regarding the keeping of the Sabbath that predate the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt Sinai (Ex 20). After God led Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt, He fed them for forty years as they wandered in the desert. In Exodus 16:4 God states, "I will rain bread from heaven for you"**. This He did with a substance the people called** "manna"**, which they gathered up off the ground every morning.**

Crucially however, in Exodus 16:5 the Israelites are commanded to gather twice as much manna on the sixth day as they do on other days, in order to prepare for the seventh day Sabbath. In verse 23 Moses says, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning'"**. This principle of a preparation day still applies in New Testament times. Mark 15:42 mentions the** "preparation day" **for the first annual Sabbath at the commencement of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This shows that the principle applies to annual as well as weekly Sabbaths, although on annual Sabbaths it is permissible to prepare food that is to be eaten on those days (Ex 12:16).**

For an explanation of the annual Sabbaths, see "The Annual Sabbaths or Holy Days" further below.

Exodus 16:27 informs us that some Israelites disobeyed Moses' instructions and went looking for manna on the

Sabbath, but found none. God's rebuke is recorded in verse 29: "the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place **(to obtain food)** on the seventh day**".**

In Exodus 31:12-17 we find a remarkable passage about the Sabbath:

12 "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

13 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations **(throughout all time, including ours)**, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you**.**

14 You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death **(all who will be saved and enter eternal life will have been Sabbath keepers)**; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people**.**

15 Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any **(unwarranted)** work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death**.**

16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant **(still valid today).**

17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel **(physical and spiritual)** forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed'**".**

Here we see the "perpetual" **nature of this law of God. It has been called "the test commandment" in Church of God literature, and rightly so.**

Moving on to Exodus 35 we find a verse in Scripture that has caused much confusion. Exodus 35:3 states, "Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day" **(NIV). Strictly observant Jews have applied this as far as not even pressing a light switch on the Sabbath. But is this what God intends?**

We have already seen that God appointed the day preceding the Sabbath to be used as a day of preparation. Combining this information with what we find in Numbers 15:32-36 helps to clarifies the issue:

32 "Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day**.**

33 And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation**.**

34 They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him**.**

35 Then the Lord said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp"**.**

36 So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died"**.**

We see that the offender described here had shown contempt for God's Sabbath. The gathering of sticks or the chopping of wood to light a fire should be done before the Sabbath.

In John 18:18 we find the apostle Peter warming himself by a fire on the day of Passover. Are we to believe that on the following day, an annual Sabbath, Peter would have sat in the cold? This would have been in April, so well past the worst of winter. How would the people of Israel have got through January without heating on the Sabbath?

Indeed, what about people who live in very cold climates? Does God intend their Sabbaths to be cold and unpleasant? This wouldn't make sense from a logical and loving God. What does makes sense is that the command in Exodus 35:3 applies to proper Sabbath preparation, and should be understood as "Do not *begin* the process of lighting a fire on the Sabbath, but rather have all the wood you need for the Sabbath prepared and on hand, and if possible, light the fire before the Sabbath starts".

The book of Nehemiah gives us excellent insight into what God expects from His people in regard to keeping His Sabbath holy. In Nehemiah 9 and 10 we find the elders of the Jews who have returned from Babylonian captivity to the Holy Land recounting their history with God and then renewing their covenant with Him.

In the process, in Nehemiah 9:14, they state regarding their fathers, "You made known to them Your holy Sabbath"**. Therefore, under the conditions of this renewed covenant,** "If the people of the land bring merchandise or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or a holy day" **(Neh 10:31 - MEV).**

This is greatly elaborated on in Nehemiah 13:15-22:

15 "In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions**.**

16 Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem**.**

17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?

18 Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath"**.**

19 So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates

to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day**.**

20 Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice**.**

21 Then I warned them, and said to them, "Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!" From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath**.**

22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day"**.**

Nehemiah makes it abundantly clear that doing business on the Sabbath, including the buying of food, is a transgression of God's law. Interestingly however, the servants of Nehemiah and the Levites, who were guarding the gates on the Sabbath, were *working in service to God*. So there is a distinction between acceptable work that *can* be done and unacceptable work that *can't* be done on the Sabbath.

Teachings from the Major Prophets

The prophets always speak reverently of the Sabbath. The book of Isaiah proclaims that the Sabbath is intended for *all* people, not just Israelites. God states in Isaiah 56:6-7:

6 "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants - everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant,

7 Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer"**.**

And in Isaiah 58:13-14:

13 "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words,

14 Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken"**.**

In Isaiah 66:23 we find an important passage pointing to Sabbath observance under the New Covenant: "And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh **(Israelites and Gentiles)** shall come to worship before Me, says the Lord"**. For an explanation of the term "New Moon" in this verse see the article "THE 'NEW MOON' MISTRANSLATION".**

In Jeremiah 17:21-22 we read, "Thus says the Lord: "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers""**.**

In Ezekiel 20, just days before the Kingdom of Judah's fall to the Babylonians, God told the elders of the people that their Sabbath breaking was a major factor in their demise. In verses 23-24 He states:

23 "Also I raised My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness **(recorded in Lev 26)**, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries,

24 because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers' idols"**.**

So we see that the Old Testament from beginning to end speaks consistently about the Sabbath day, its origin, its meaning, and its present and future observance by all people.

Teachings from the New Testament Gospels

The spirit of reverence for God's Sabbath which permeates the Old Testament is also evident throughout the New Testament. Contrary to what "Christianity" generally teaches, no weekly day of worship other than the Sabbath is even mentioned, let alone commanded.

In John 1 we learn that the second personage in the Godhead, the Word, divested Himself of His divinity, and was born into the world as a human being – Jesus Christ. As a man, Jesus lived a life perfectly obedient to God's law. Therefore, unsurprisingly, we find that He was a Sabbath keeper. In Luke 4:16 we read, "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read"**. We see the same in Mark 6:2,** "And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue"**, and in Luke 13:10,** "Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath"**.**

Christ was often challenged regarding the legality of His works on the Sabbath, such as healing the sick and driving out demons. The religious leaders of His day had added many regulations to the law, turning the keeping of God's Sabbath into a burden. People have incorrectly interpreted the disputes that Christ had with these religious leaders regarding the Sabbath as indicating that He was against Sabbath keeping. On the contrary, He was attempting to show them how God really intended the Sabbath to be kept, with the emphasis on its spiritual meaning.

Let's look at Christ's teachings in Matthew 12:1-12:

1 "At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat**.**

2 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"

3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him:

4 how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?

5 Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?

6 Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple**.**

7 But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice', you would not have condemned the guiltless**.**

8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath"**.**

9 Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue**.**

10 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" - that they might accuse Him**.**

11 Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?

12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath""**.**

The time and place of the above discourse stand in complete contrast to our western world today. Our societies are increasingly secular, whereas the nation of Judea in Christ's day was very religious. The Jewish religious leaders were sticklers for detail and claimed that the disciples were technically breaking the law. Luke adds that "His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands" **(Lk 6:1). It is this** "rubbing" **that the Jews objected to most.**

However, Christ gave them a list of examples that demonstrate how a greater spiritual principle can override a physical law: David and his men who ate the showbread were famished; the priests at the Temple worked in the service of God; a sheep caught in a pit is in distress. These are all exceptional situations. Christ states that God desires "mercy" **(one of the "weightier matters of the law" - Matt 23:23) ahead of (physical)** "sacrifice"**, and adds that** "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath"**. This is also where *our* priorities should lie.**

However, exceptions don't create the norm. It has become the practice of many in the end time Churches of God to use examples like those found in Matthew 12 to take liberties with the Sabbath.

Other people want to be given a list of all the do's and don'ts of Sabbath keeping. But that is exactly what God doesn't give us. Rather, in various places throughout the Bible He gives us examples and guidelines, and then

requires us to learn to make honest judgements as situations arise in our lives.

The disciples who plucked and ate heads of grain on the Sabbath were declared "guiltless" **by Christ. Obviously these men had given over their lives to being taught by Christ, who declared that He was** "greater than the Temple" **where the priests worked. If those who served at the physical Temple under the physical high priest could work and feed themselves in that capacity on the Sabbath, so could those who served with Jesus Christ, the spiritual High Priest of the spiritual Temple. For some unstated reason the disciples had no food with them for the Sabbath and were feeling weak from hunger, so in the simplest of ways they took care of their need to eat.**

The account in Matthew 12 quoted above is also found in Mark 2. Mark elaborates on Matthew 12:8: "And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath"" **(Mk 2:27-28).**

This verse has been greatly misrepresented by many. It does not abolish the Sabbath, rather it upholds it, making clear the role of Christ as the ultimate authority on Sabbath observance. Christ, as Creator, *made* the Sabbath day, and therefore He is Lord of it.

A remarkable example of Sabbath keeping is found in the account of the women who prepared spices to anoint Christ's body after His death. Christ died on the day of Passover, which is followed by the annual Sabbath called the first day of Unleavened Bread. John verifies this by calling it a "high day" **(Jn 19:39). In Mark 16:1, we are told that the women bought the spices for Christ's burial *after* this high day Sabbath. However, Luke 23:56 tells us that these same women bought the spices and *then* rested on the Sabbath. It is from putting these two accounts together that we know there were two Sabbaths in the week Christ died. After He died on Wednesday, the women rested on the high day Sabbath on Thursday, bought and prepared the spices on Friday, rested on the regular Sabbath, and then went to Christ's tomb early Sunday morning.**

Some very important points should be noted in this account.

Firstly, these women continued to keep the Sabbaths after Christ died. Having prepared the spices on Friday they could have gone to the grave on the Sabbath, but they didn't. Here we see faithful observance of the Sabbath by people who had been in Christ's presence for years. The women's reverent attitude was a direct reflection of Christ's own attitude towards the Sabbath.

Secondly, Luke 23:56 states that the Sabbath observance of the women was "according to the commandment"**. This was written by Luke many years after the event, showing that the Sabbath was not "abolished on the cross" or "fulfilled in Christ" as many people claim. Luke doesn't say "according to the *former* commandment" or "according to the *Jewish* commandment" or "according to the *Old Covenant* commandment".**

God's Word plainly states, "And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" **(Lk 23:56).**

What an example for all of mankind!

Examples in the Book of Acts

In the book of Acts we find numerous instances of the Sabbath being kept by Christians.

In Acts 1:12 Luke uses the phrase "a Sabbath day's journey"**. How would this phrase have made sense, particularly to Gentile readers, unless they themselves were Sabbath keepers? Luke gives no hint whatsoever that this** "Sabbath day's journey" **was a regulation or unit of measurement that was no longer in use.**

Paul and his companions in their travels attended the synagogue on the Sabbath on a regular basis:

"But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" **(Acts 13:14).**

"So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" **(Acts 13:42).**

"On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God" **(Acts 13:44).**

Note that it was the Gentiles who wanted to hear more "the next Sabbath"**. Why the next Sabbath? Why not the next day? Because the next day was the first day of the week, and therefore a working day. The next day normally designated for religious gathering was the next Sabbath.**

In Acts 15 we read of a conference being held by the apostles regarding the preaching of the gospel message to the Gentiles. Decisions had to be made concerning matters of God's law that were of immediate importance to these people. In conclusion the apostles state: "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath"**.**

The inference is that all the additional knowledge the Gentiles would need to acquire would be made available to them when they attended the synagogues on the Sabbath days. There, the entirety of the books of the Law of Moses were read aloud in sections over a set period of time.

In Acts 16:13 we again find Paul and his companions meeting with other Sabbath keepers: "And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from

the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God"**.**

Likewise in Acts 17:1-2: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures"**.**

And also in Acts 18:4: "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks"**.**

Examples in the Epistles

We find an intriguing passage of Scripture regarding the Sabbath in Colossians 2:16-17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ" **(KJV). In the King James Version, the word** "is" **appears in italics because it has been added by the translators. The original Greek text just says,** "but the body of Christ"**. Most translators have added words to make this verse make sense to them, and in doing so they have altered the true meaning of the passage. For example, the NIV renders this** "the reality, however, is found in Christ"**. They have added the words** "the reality, however, is found in" **and left out** "but the body of"**.**

The true explanation of what the phrase "the body of Christ" **means is found in the most obvious place, i.e. in the verses that precede it. In Colossians 1:18 and 1:24 *Paul already uses these same words*.**

In Colossians 1:18 Paul states concerning Christ, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"**. Colossians 1:24 is even clearer:** "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church"**.**

Therefore, putting the opening and closing words of Colossians 2:16-17 together, the meaning becomes clear: "Let no one judge you …….. but the body of Christ" **(i.e. the Church).**

The Church in Colosse was a mostly Gentile congregation. They were new in the faith and therefore susceptible to outside influences. Throughout the New Testament we read of Jews, some who accepted Christ and some who didn't, introducing wrong ideas to the new converts (e.g. Acts 15:1-5, Gal 6:12, Tit 1:14). This was happening in Colosse as well, as can be seen in the rest of Paul's epistle to them.

What were some of the things the Colossians were being troubled about? Paul gives a list: "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days"**. In other words, in such matters as**

which foods were acceptable and which were not, and how to keep weekly and annual Sabbaths. Paul was telling them not to take their instructions from anyone but the true Church, of which he was a minister.

As explained on the page "THE 'NEW MOON' MISTRANSLATION", the Greek word "noumenia", rendered here "new moon"**, should be translated as "new month". Determining when to start a month is important for the proper keeping of God's annual Sabbaths according to the instructions given in Leviticus 23.**

The next part of the sentence is usually translated as "which are a shadow of things to come"**, which is not very logical. Green's Interlinear Bible renders this** "which is a shadow of things to come"**. This latter translation is more likely the correct one, meaning that the opposition the brethren were encountering concerning certain Church practices was only a small beginning of serious persecutions that were to come later.**

Therefore the correct translation is: "Let no man therefore judge you, in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new month, or of the sabbath day, which is a shadow of things to come; but the body of Christ"**.**

The last New Testament passage in this section is Hebrews 4:4-11:

4 "For He **(God)** has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works",

5 and again in this passage, "They shall not enter my rest **(spoken about the adult generation in the wilderness of Sinai who all died before the Israelites entered into Canaan - see Hebrews chapter 3)".**

6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it **(to enter the Kingdom of God, of which the physical land of Israel is a type)**, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience **(including Sabbath breaking - Eze 20:13-16)**,

7 He again fixes a certain day, "Today" **(any person's time of calling)**, saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts"**.**

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He **(God)** would not have spoken of another day after that**.**

9 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God;

10 For the one who has entered His rest **(entered His Church)** has himself also rested from his works **(on the Sabbath)**, as God did from His **(on the Sabbath).**

11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" **(the weekly seventh day points to the seventh millennium, i.e. the Kingdom of God. Faithful Christians show their desire to enter that Kingdom by keeping the Sabbath day holy) (NASB).**

Many, if not most translations of Hebrews 4:9 render the word *sabbatismos* as "rest"**. However, this Greek word actually means "a keeping of the Sabbath", and this is the only occurrence of it in Scripture.**

The Mark of the Beast

God's people are described in Revelation 12:17 as those who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"**. One of the commandments of God is Sabbath observance, and as we have already seen, God calls the Sabbath** "a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you" **(Ex 31:13).**

However, six passages in the New Testament, all from the book of Revelation, refer to a "mark" **that identifies the enemies of God. They do not believe in keeping God's commandments and are therefore transgressors of the Sabbath:**

**** Revelation 13:16-17,** "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name"**. The page "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST" explains how this mark is *Sabbath breaking* and how it was enforced by false Christianity.**

**** Revelation 14:9-11,** "Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name""**. The mark of Sabbath breaking mentioned here is elaborated on in the article "REVELATION 7 & 14 - THE 144000".**

**** Revelation 15:2,** "And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God"**.**

**** Revelation 16:2,** "So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image"**. The above two passages are explained on the page "THE REAL SEVEN PLAGUES".**

**** Revelation 19:19-20,** "And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone"**. See the article "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more about the final demise of the Sabbath breaking powers mentioned here.**

**** Revelation 20:4,** "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I

saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years"**. This ultimate reward is given to God's faithful Sabbath keeping saints, as discussed further on the page "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST".**

This same mark may also be found in Genesis 4 as *the mark of Cain*. The account of Cain and Abel bringing offerings to God is said in most translations to occur "in the course of time" **(Gen 4:5), but literally this phrase reads** "at the end of days" **and appears to be referring to the last day of the week, i.e. the Sabbath. The law given later at Mt Sinai stipulated particular offerings to be made on the Sabbath (Num 28:9-10). Abel on this day obediently offered of his best to God, but Cain did not offer of his best, reflecting a very different attitude. Cain's resentment and subsequent murder of Abel prefigure the persecution of Sabbath keepers by Sabbath breakers throughout history. God indicates that Cain, and by extension all unrepentant Sabbath breakers, are marked for death, not by the hand of man, but by God. Cain is to be** "cursed from the earth" **(v11), i.e. cut off from God's Kingdom, and a** "restless wanderer" **(v12 - NIV), meaning one who has** "no rest day or night" **(Rev 14:11), i.e. no Sabbath rest, because he has gone** "out from the presence of the Lord" **(v16). This echoes Hebrews 4:4-11 discussed above.**

So in example after example, the New Testament Scriptures uphold the sanctity of the Sabbath just as the Old Testament Scriptures do. The same spirit and the same message are evident throughout both the Hebrew and Greek writings of God.

The Annual Sabbaths or Holy Days

The Scriptures not only command a weekly Sabbath to be observed every seventh day, but also seven unique Sabbaths that each occur once a year, and are referred to as feasts (Lev 23) and holy days (Neh 10:31).

In the same way that the weekly Sabbath pictures the seventh millennium, i.e. the time of Christ's rule on Earth, the seven annual holy days together picture the plan of salvation God is working out with mankind over the whole 7000 year period that is pictured by the seven day week.

In Leviticus 23:1-2 God states, "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts"".

Leviticus 23:3 reiterates the weekly Sabbath command we have been looking at in this article. Then, from verse 4 onwards, this chapter details the seven annual Sabbaths that God also commands us to observe.

These seven annual holy days are to be kept according to Biblical instructions. They are days on which no regular work is done, and believers meet together in a sacred assembly.

The Biblical calendar that was used in ancient Israel to determine these days is explained briefly on the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" in the section on "Times", and at length on the page "THE CALENDAR OF GOD". Note that Biblical months are in sync with the moon, and therefore the first day of the month is the first day of each lunar cycle, the fifteenth day of the month is the fifteenth day of the lunar cycle etc.

The holy days in order of their occurrence through the year are:

1) The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is on the 15th day of the first month. This holy day commences a seven day festival (Lev 23:6-7).

2) The last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is on the 21st day of the first month (Lev 23:8).

3) The Feast of Harvest, or Firstfruits (Ex 23:16), a.k.a. the Feast of Weeks (Ex 34:22), or Pentecost (Acts 2:1), which occurs 50 days (seven weeks plus one day) after the Wavesheaf offering during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:9-22).

4) The Feast of Trumpets, which is on the first day of the seventh month (Lev 23:23-25).

5) The Day of Atonement, which is on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 23:26-32).

6) The first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a.k.a. the Feast of Ingathering (Ex 23:16), which is on the 15th day of the seventh month. This holy day commences a seven day festival (Lev 23:33-35).

7) The Eighth Day, or Last Great Day of the Feast, which is on the 22nd day of the seventh month (Lev 23:36, Jn 7:37).

These seven annual holy days sometimes coincide with regular weekly Sabbaths.

Leviticus 23 also commands two additional days to be observed that are not holy days. The first of these sometimes coincides with a regular weekly Sabbath, and the second sometimes coincides with an annual holy day:

1) The day of Passover, which occurs on the 14th day of the first month (Lev 23:5). This is the day that immediately precedes the first day of Unleavened Bread. Christ's death occurred on this day, making the salvation of mankind possible. Without Christ's atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind, no person could be saved, and so no holy day plan would exist. At the Passover observance in 31AD, before sharing the cup of wine with His disciples, Christ proclaimed, "this cup is the new covenant in My blood"**. His death later that same day sealed this eternal spiritual covenant which promises eternal life to all who accept and obey Christ. Passover stands alone as a unique day that is incomparable in importance. Every year, brethren commemorate Christ's death in a solemn Passover service, usually in the evening as the day commences.**

2) The day of the Wavesheaf, which occurs on the first day of the week during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:9-14). It pictures Christ presenting Himself to the Father on the day after His resurrection. This event is also to be commemorated every year.

There are therefore a total of ten designated days of worship listed in Leviticus 23: one weekly holy day, and nine annual days, seven of which are holy days when no regular work is done. Following is an outline of the meaning and observance of the annual holy days:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

After the commemoration of Christ's sacrifice on the day of Passover there follow seven days during which unleavened bread is eaten, and all yeast and other leaven is removed from believers' homes. Leaven pictures sin in this setting, and the lesson is that upon learning about God and His holy and righteous law, outlined in the Ten Commandments, and acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for our transgressions of that law, believers must remove sin from their lives and live a life of obedience to God.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread following His crucifixion, Christ was *dead*, whereas on the last day of Unleavened Bread He was *alive*, thus picturing the journey from "death" to "life" all believers must make. Christ fulfilled these two holy days in the year 31AD/4000AM.

This journey was also pictured by ancient Israel at the time of the Exodus. On the first day of Unleavened Bread they came out of Egypt (a type of sin and death). On the middle day of the feast they went through the Red Sea (a type of baptism). On the last day of Unleavened Bread they arrived at Marah, where the waters were bitter, but were made sweet (by casting a tree into the water) for the Israelites to drink (picturing death, the penalty of sin, being overcome by Christ's atoning death on the cross, making salvation possible). The lesson here is that upon learning and accepting God's truth, a believer's initial response must be followed by the forsaking of sin, and by baptism, in order to attain eternal life.

When Christ was resurrected, after three days and three nights in the grave, He became the first human being to be transformed to spirit life (I Cor 15:20). He died on a Wednesday, rose late on the Sabbath, and ascended to Heaven the following day (Jn 20:17) where His sacrifice for the sins of the world was accepted by God the Father. Christ then returned to Earth later on the same day. His ascension was pictured in ancient Israel by the waving of the Wavesheaf (Lev 23:10-11), which was a cluster of the first harvested grain, cut and presented to God during the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the day after the weekly Sabbath. As the Wavesheaf pictures the completion of God's work of creating the pathway to salvation, it must occur during the days of Unleavened Bread, because in God's plan this feast symbolises the transition from death to eternal life.

The Day of Pentecost

After the Wavesheaf ceremony the early grain harvest would begin in ancient Israel. This pictured the process of bringing the spiritual firstfruits of salvation to completion. From the day of the Wavesheaf offering, 50 inclusive days were counted until the Feast of Harvest (called the day of Pentecost in the NT), so that both the

day of the Wavesheaf and the day of Pentecost always occur on the first day of the week. Pentecost, which was held at the end of the harvest period, pictures the firstfruits harvest of 144,000 people who will make up the first resurrection at Christ's return (Rev 7 and 14), a group called and worked with by God during the course of six millennia. This group was pictured by two loaves of bread which were waved by the priest on the day of Pentecost, and which possibly signified the Israelite and Gentile components of the firstfruit harvest.

At Pentecost in 31AD, the eternal spiritual covenant Christ had made 50 days earlier at Passover was confirmed. As a unique manifestation of this, the apostles and other believers were given the holy spirit, i.e. a portion of the spirit of God, in a miraculous visible display, begetting them as children of God. This event fulfilled God's promises, given in Old Testament times, to pour out His spirit upon men (e.g. Joel 2:28-29, confirmed in Acts 2:4,17-18) and write His laws upon their hearts (Jer 31:31-33, Heb 8:10, 10:16). The holy spirit is still given to repentant believers today, but not in the same overt way.

On the day of Pentecost after the Exodus from Egypt, God restated His Ten Commandments to Israel at Mt Sinai. On the day of Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Christ, God gave His Church the holy spirit, enabling them to keep the Ten Commandments in their full spiritual intent.

The symbolic begettal of the first harvest of the children of God on the day of Pentecost in 31AD marked the fulfilment of the third annual holy day. As with Passover and the first two holy days that follow it, the fulfilment of Pentecost took place in Jerusalem. This is a strong indication that *all* the annual holy days, picturing the major steps in God's plan of salvation, are to be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

The begettal of the children of God places them symbolically in the womb of their mother, the Church, where they grow until they are ready to be born into the family of God. This birth will take place at the first resurrection (I Thes 4:16-17).

It is noteworthy that the Feast of Firstfruits/Pentecost normally occurs during a waxing moon. This is logical because the moon is a type of the firstfruits harvest, i.e. the Church (see "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT"), and therefore the moon being in a growing stage at the Feast of Pentecost symbolises the growth that the Church must undergo (Eph 4:13) before she "has made herself ready" **to be the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7), as pictured by the full moon.**

The Feast of Trumpets

The Feast of Trumpets has long been associated in the Churches of God with the second coming of Christ (I Cor 15:51-52, I Thes 4:15-17, Rev 11:15), which will fulfil this fourth annual holy day. One of the few times where the keeping of the Feast of Trumpets is recorded in Scripture is in the days of King Solomon. Solomon was a type of Christ, his kingdom was a type of God's Kingdom, and the Temple he built was a type of the spiritual Temple Christ is building, i.e. the Church. A full 19 chapters of Scripture are devoted to the planning and

building of this Temple by King David (here a type of God the Father), and his son, King Solomon (I Kings 5-8, I Chron 22-II Chron 7).

When Solomon had completed the construction of the Temple, he dedicated it at the Feast of Trumpets, extending the feast to a seven day celebration (compare II Chron 7:8-11 with I Kings 8:65). Solomon's heartfelt prayer at this ceremony is recorded in I Kings 8 and II Chronicles 6. This prayer mentions the Temple's relevance for both Israelites and Gentiles, prefiguring the makeup of the Church. At the dedication ceremony, the ark of the covenant, symbolising the presence of Christ, was brought into the Temple (I Kings 8:1-9). This is also pictured in the account of the second coming of Christ at the time of the "seventh trumpet", as seen in Revelation 11:19, which states, "Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple"**.**

Matthew 24:31, I Corinthians 15:51-52 and I Thessalonians 4:16-17 all associate the return of Christ with both the blowing of trumpets and the completion of the firstfruits harvest. As the firstfruits constitute God's *spiritual* Temple, it is fitting that the dedication of Solomon's *physical* Temple occurred on the Feast of Trumpets.

Paul mentions a "shout" **or** "loud command" **at Christ's return (I Thes 4:16). This fits well with the meaning of the Hebrew word *teruah*, translated "trumpets" in Feast of *Trumpets*, because it literally means *a loud piercing sound*. When Paul states that the resurrection will occur at** "the last trumpet" **(I Cor 15:52), he may be referring to the last of the series of trumpet blasts on the Feast of Trumpets when Christ returns. The page "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" gives six reasons why the year 2026AD/5995AM is likely to be the year this will occur.**

Christ's return to Earth is preceded by His coronation in Heaven (Dan 7:13-14, Rev 11:15-17). However, Christ will be coronated again on Earth before beginning His millennial rule, as typified by King Solomon who was also coronated twice (I Kings 1:38-40; I Chron 29:22-23). See the pages "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS" and "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" for the reasons why Christ's coronation in Heaven probably occurred in the year 2025AD/5994AM.

The Day of Atonement

The fulfilment of the Day of Atonement is the follow-on from Christ's atoning sacrifice made at Passover for the sins of mankind, with those sins being placed back on the one from whom they originated, i.e. Satan the devil, followed by his banishment for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3).

In Leviticus 16 we see this pictured in a ceremony involving two identical goats representing Christ and Satan. It is determined by lot which goat is to be killed as a type of Christ's sacrifice. The second goat, a type of Satan, with the sins of the people on his head, is sent away into the wilderness. The reason for casting lots is to depict the reality that only God can truly distinguish good from evil.

The typology of the two goats in Leviticus 16 can be seen to play out in the Temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. Here Christ overcomes Satan and compels him to depart.

This typology can also be witnessed in the events involving Jesus and Barabbas before the judgement seat of Pontius Pilate on the day of Passover when Christ is condemned to death (Matt 27:15-26). In this account, Barabbas, a murderer and seditionist, is a type of Satan, and it is the crowd in attendance that determines the lot. They choose Jesus to be put to death and Barabbas to be released.

The release of the goat into the wilderness, and Barabbas into a life of exile, both picture Satan's banishment to the "abyss" **(Rev 20:1).**

Christ's trial, as recorded in John 18-19, makes a connection between His victory over Satan and His coronation as King. Christ informs Pilate that He came into the world for the purpose of becoming a king. Pilate is anxious to release Christ and so he offers the crowd a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. They choose Barabbas and he is subsequently released. After Christ is scourged, the Roman soldiers place a crown of thorns and a purple robe on Him in order to mock His claim of being a king. Finally, Pilate orders a sign to be placed on His cross calling Him "The King of the Jews". Remarkably, these events all point to Christ's future coronation when Satan and his deceptions will be taken away and Christ will rule as King in his place.

As the Day of Atonement in every 49th year of a 50 year cycle (Lev 25:8-10) was the day on which the following year was proclaimed to be the year of Jubilee, it is very likely that Satan's banishment will be announced in the year 5999, which will be the 49th year of the 120th jubilee period since Creation.

The Jubilee was the year during which all land in ancient Israel was to be returned to its original owners. This would fit very well with Satan being "bound" **(Rev 20:2) and Christ being coronated in the year 6000, leading to** "the restitution of all things" **(Acts 3:21) and the beginning of His work with all mankind. Satan's banishment and Christ's taking up rulership of the Earth will fulfil the fifth annual holy day. Note that Christ's trial and death on Passover and the establishment of the Church on Pentecost occurred during a Jubilee year as well, i.e. the year 4000.**

The Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day

The Feast of Tabernacles is a seven day period during which Israel was commanded to live in temporary dwellings, or booths (Lev 23:41-43), to commemorate their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt. During that time, they were living in temporary dwellings (tents) before entering the Promised Land. This pictured the lifetime of growth of *all believers*, as they journey through their temporary physical lives, before they can enter the Kingdom of God.

This feast is also called the Feast of Ingathering (Ex 23:16), because it is a type of the second, and significantly larger, harvest of salvation. This second harvest of children for the family of God is made possible by "the marriage of the Lamb" **(Christ) and His** "bride"**, the Church (the resurrected firstfruits - Rev 19:7). It is likely that this marriage will fulfil the sixth annual holy day in the first year of God's Kingdom, 6001AM. This will lead to the outpouring of God's spirit (as in Acts 2) on the first children begotten of this union.**

During Christ's millennial reign, all people who have ever lived will be resurrected to physical life (Jn 5:28, Acts 24:15), and the true gospel of the Kingdom of God will be preached throughout the world without interference from Satan. As stated above, and foreshadowed in Revelation 20:11-15, this will lead to an enormous "ingathering" **harvest of people (Ex 23:16, 34:22), or second resurrection to spirit life of the** "rest of the dead" **in Christ, at the end of the seventh millennium (Rev 20:5a). This will fulfil the last of the seven annual holy days.**

The New Testament account of the Feast of Tabernacles found in John 7:1-10:21 typifies major elements of this feast's fulfilment. On the first day of the feast that year Christ remained hidden (Jn 7:10) and didn't show Himself until about halfway through the celebration (Jn 7:14). Then, on the Last Great Day, He cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" **(Jn 7:37). This pictures the family-building work of God that occurs with every individual person: Just as at the outset of a pregnancy the conception is hidden, but over time becomes evident and culminates in a birth, likewise, when God begins working with a person they are not yet aware of it, but over time He reveals Himself to them, and finally after a lifetime of overcoming, and at their designated resurrection, they are born of spirit into the family of God.**

Note that, whereas Pentecost occurs during a waxing moon, the feasts of Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles progress with a waning moon. The waning moon during these two feasts seems to indicate that more people will begin their journey with God than will successfully complete it (Matt 22:14, 25:31-46).

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In conclusion, we can see that the weekly Sabbath, the seven annual Sabbaths, and the two additional commemorative days together reveal the amazing plan God is working out with mankind.

Regarding the timing of the second coming of Christ, many theories exist that differ from the outline given above. Various annual holy days have been put forward as possibilities. A case could also be made for other Biblically significant days. The author has embraced a variety of such viewpoints over the years, but at the time of writing the scenario described above appears to be the most plausible. Zechariah 14:7 informs us that God determined the day of Christ's return long ago. Once this has come to pass, no doubt the timing will reveal all the reasons for which the particular day was chosen.

8

BIBLE CHRONOLOGY

Bible chronology is the record of the passage of time documented in the Scriptures. It is one of the greatest proofs of the existence of God. The Bible's time-related prophecies, as well as its historical data, demonstrate abundant evidence of design, and show the amazing way in which God has been directing man's history from the very beginning.

The seven days of Creation in the first chapters of Genesis foretell a 7000 year plan that God is working out here on Earth. Each day pictures 1000 years, with the final 1000 years being allocated to Christ's rule. This is fully explained on the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT".

However, one of the most baffling things believed by many in this end time is that we have supposedly passed the 6000th year since Creation. The most well-known chronologists, whose dating is generally accepted and used by many of the Churches of God, place Creation at or around the year 4004BC. Since we are now in the year 2026AD, we appear to have gone well past the year 6000, without Christ having returned and assumed rule.

How is this possible?

Let me say right from the start that the term "Bible chronology" is, in most cases where it is used, a misnomer. What do I mean by that? Simply that most chronologists have not used the Bible as the foundation of their work. Although they normally begin working with Biblical data, they will state that at some point the Biblical information ceases, and therefore they need to resort to non-Biblical sources.

However, this doesn't make sense.

The great Author of Scripture has told us that it is His glory to conceal matters, and ours to search them out (Pr 25:2). He has also told us that if we "seek", we shall "find" (Matt 7:7). By this, God can't mean seeking and finding among the records of this world, some of which will be inaccurate or even falsified. He must be referring to His own perfect writings. They must contain all the information that we need.

One clear sign that chronologists have not used the Bible as their main authority is when all the numbers on their chart or timeline, prior to the time of Christ, are listed as BC years. The Bible doesn't count backwards from Christ, nor does it command us to do so. Instead, the Bible counts *forward* from Adam's creation.

A chronology created by counting backwards will contain dates like 587BC, or something similar, for the date of the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, and 538BC, or thereabouts, for the first year of Cyrus as king of the Persian Empire. However, such dates are not derived from Biblical information.

Rather, when using Biblical information, and therefore counting from Creation, Cyrus' first year is shown to be around 3480AM (AM meaning "Anno Mundi", or "year of the world"). The Biblical data is in some places very complex and difficult to analyse, and therefore different interpretations are arrived at by different researchers. The main difficulties involve the co-regencies of several of the kings of Judah. The famous 17th century chronologist James Ussher placed Cyrus' first year at 3468AM. Personally, I believe it is 3481AM.

Either way, applying the method of *counting forward from the beginning of Creation*, to the best of one's ability, means using the data provided by God in His Word.

Using the BC method of counting backwards from Christ, on the other hand, is the mark of those who assume that the Biblical text alone is not sufficient to work out the chronology of the Bible.

I will state unequivocally that by giving us the number of years that the patriarchs lived, the years that the kings ruled, and a range of chronological statements and prophetic timelines, God has, in His Word, given us all the pieces of the puzzle required. As mentioned above, in addition to these pieces He has also provided us with the *framework* of the puzzle in Genesis 1 and 2, namely, seven days of Creation picturing seven one thousand year periods, each foretelling specific events.

For instance, on the fourth day of Creation God made the sun and the moon. The appearance of these two heavenly bodies on the fourth day pictures the first coming of Christ and the creation of the Church in the fourth millennium. If, when putting the pieces of the chronological puzzle together, we find that we have placed these events in the fifth millennium, we have failed to adhere to the given framework and therefore need to go back and investigate where we went wrong.

Almost all Bible chronologies that have been put forward by scholars have neglected to take into account the "seven day blueprint" found in the Creation narrative.

In addition to this blueprint, and all the specific chronological information provided in the Biblical text, God gives us long-term, time-related prophecies, which cover the entire period from Old Testament times up until our time today. These prophecies provide measurable time spans, mostly involving Israel, Jerusalem and the Jews, and serve as checks and balances that ensure we have put the Biblical data together correctly. Most of these timelines are shown in columns on the chart on the "HOME" page.

Here are two key examples, both fulfilled in the 20th century:

1) In Leviticus 26 we read that God was going to punish the Israelites for "seven times" **if they continually disobeyed Him, which is equal to 2520 years (see the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES"). This punishment, which indeed occurred, included Jerusalem being occupied and influenced by Gentile powers for that duration, a period described by Christ as** "the times of the Gentiles" **in Luke 21:24. From Jerusalem's capture by Nebuchadnezzar in 3395AM, until the end of WW2 in 5914AM (which equates to 1945AD), there were 2520 inclusive years. This specifically completed the** "seven times" **period of Leviticus 26:24. After the conclusion of WW2 and the Holocaust, a wave of Jews returned *en masse* from Europe to the Holy Land.**

2) From Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 3406AM, until the Suez Crisis/Sinai War in 5925AM (which equates to 1956AD), there were also 2520 inclusive years. At the end of this conflict the Jews were expelled from Egypt, followed in subsequent years by those in other Arab countries, and again large numbers of Jews returned to Israel. This specifically completed the "seven times" **period of Leviticus 26:28.**

These two crucial long-term prophecies provide dated anchor points both at their beginning, in the Old Testament Scriptures, and at their conclusion, in modern times. These periods began with the *captivity and removal* of the Jews from their country, and concluded with the Jews' *release and return* to their country.

This shows that no information from outside the Scriptures is needed to construct a Bible chronology.

Let me try to explain where chronologists usually go wrong:

The Year Jerusalem Fell to the Babylonians

Most of us will have seen the date 587BC, or something close to it, given as the year that Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. It might also be given as 586BC or 588BC, but almost always one of these three.

How are these dates arrived at?

The Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire under Darius III around the year 333BC. History does not seem to dispute this date. The books of the Maccabees, which use dating according to the age of the Seleucid Empire, are very helpful in establishing this date.

The commencement of the Persian Empire, on the other hand, is cloaked in uncertainty. The one historical source invariably quoted to determine the duration of the Persian Empire is Claudius Ptolemy, who lived in the second century *after* Christ. Ptolemy documented a complete list of rulers of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, all the way down to his own time. This list, known as Ptolemy's Canon, is where chronologists get their information from, and which they generally accept without question.

This identifies one of the main problems of Bible chronology: It is almost always by using Ptolemy's Canon that researchers depart from the Biblical data and instead switch to using non-Biblical data. For all practical purposes, their findings at this point cease to be a *Bible* chronology.

For the duration of the Persian Empire, from Cyrus the Great until Darius III, Ptolemy lists 10 successive Persian rulers, with the total of their individual reigns adding up to 205 years, until their defeat by Alexander in 333BC. For this reason, we commonly see the year 538BC given for the start of the rule of Cyrus, the first king of the Persian Empire, because 333 + 205 = 538.

In Jeremiah 29:10-14 God says that Judah would spend 70 years in Babylonian captivity before being set free (by Cyrus' decree in his first year of rule - Ezra 1:1-4) and allowed to return to their homeland. If, as determined above, Cyrus' first year was 538BC, then going back 70 years would take us to 608BC for the beginning of the captivity.

Although one might think that the 70 year captivity started when *all* the Jews had been removed from their country, this is not how chronologists have generally interpreted the data.

In Daniel 1:1-6 it is related that Nebuchadnezzar initially took only a small number of young Jewish captives, including Daniel, back to Babylon in the third year of Jehoiakim. *This* is when the 70 year captivity has generally been taken by chronologists to commence, and it is this third year of Jehoiakim that is equated to 608BC. Jehoiakim reigned 11 years, nine of which (the 3rd till the 11th) are counted as part of the 70 years of captivity, along with the 11 years of Zedekiah's reign. Therefore, a total of 20 years of the captivity (or something close to it) are counted between Daniel's removal to Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Consequently, moving forward 20 years from 608BC takes the calculation to the year 588BC, or thereabouts, for the supposed year of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The reason that chronologists resort to the above "solution" is *because the 70 years don't fit with Ptolemy's Canon*, which only allows about 47 years from the destruction of Jerusalem to the first year of Cyrus! Even then, the extra 20 years, when added to the 47 years, still don't produce 70 years, so the numbers are massaged somewhat further by those who adhere to this interpretation to make them into 70 years.

This is how the supposed year of the destruction of Jerusalem is arrived at. It is a combination of non-Biblical data (Ptolemy's Canon) and certain assumptions about when to begin counting the 70 year captivity.

However, as will be elaborated on below, these 70 years are also designated by God as *Land Sabbaths* (II Chron 36:21; Jer 25:9-11), which means that the land would have been completely at rest during this time, i.e. free from cultivation. This could not have occurred in the scenario described above.

The First Year of Cyrus

Let's look at the supposed first year of Cyrus, because this error is pivotal.

Incorrectly establishing 538BC, or something close to it, as the first year of Cyrus' rule over the Persian Empire, has created a chronological quagmire of which the average Bible reader is totally unaware.

For, using both AM counting from Creation, and BC reckoning by Ptolemy's Canon, Ussher, who is considered by many as the greatest authority on Bible chronology, designates 3468AM and 537BC as the first year of Cyrus. Consequently he equates 4005AM (3468 + 537) with 1 AD and therefore gives the year of Creation as 4004BC (4005 - 1).

As a result, many a Bible has been printed with chronological annotations that start with 4004BC as the year of Creation. As we are now in the year 2026AD, the reader can see that this would place us around 6030AM, i.e. well into the seventh millennium, which would violate the 7000 year plan found in Genesis 1 and 2.

It is only when we realise that this fundamental error has been made in conventional Bible chronology, that we can rectify the calculations.

The simple answer to the problem is that the reigns of the kings in Ptolemy's Canon ought not to be taken as *successive* in every case. The list of Persian rulers may well be accurate in regard to the names of the rulers, and even their lengths of reign, but must have included some *co-regencies*, thereby shortening the overall timeline of the Persian Empire.

Supposed Solutions by the Churches

Probably the most well-known chronologist of the 20th century was a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) scholar by the name of Edwin Thiele, whose findings are published in many Bible dictionaries. The SDA founder Ellen G White had originally thought that Ussher's chronology was mostly right, but as we have seen, it can't be, because it places us now past the year 6000AM. Thiele's chronology on the other hand places us today around the year 5980AM.

How did Thiele achieve this reduction of years? Did he revert to strictly using Biblical data? No! One of the main things he did was to shorten the overall reigns of the kings of Judah by 33 years, through the process of assigning co-regencies where they didn't exist.

The problem with this is that it violates internal Biblical timelines. When God sent Judah into Babylonian captivity, He said that the land would rest for 70 years, because the commanded Land Sabbaths had not been kept during all the years from when the kings of Israel began to rule until the entire population had been removed by the Babylonians. The Land Sabbath is one year in duration and occurs every seventh year, with a Jubilee year added in the 50th year. Thus, every 50 year period contains seven Land Sabbaths. Therefore, to accrue 70 unkept Land Sabbaths, a total of at least 499 years is required, but no more than 506 years. Nine of the 50 year periods provide seven Land Sabbaths each, and the seventh Land Sabbath of the tenth 50 year period is reached in its 49th year. Hence, 499 years yield 70 Land Sabbaths. In the 507th year one would reach 71 Land Sabbaths, which is too many.

If we look at the chart on the "HOME" page, we can see that there are 502 inclusive years from the first year of Saul's reign, 2909AM, until the last Israelites were deported to Babylon in 3410AM. Edwin Thiele's chronology, however, has only 469 inclusive years between these two points, which is 30 less than the minimum required, and 33 years less than what I believe is correct.

This isn't the only problem Thiele created. In Ezekiel 4, the prophet Ezekiel is told to lie on his left side for 390 days, picturing 390 years of sin of the whole house of Israel. This should be taken from the time when Solomon began his descent into idolatry, until the destruction of Jerusalem in Zedekiah's time. On my chronology chart I place the commencement of Solomon's idolatry in his 29th regnal year, which is 3017AM. From this year until Zedekiah's final year, 3406AM, there are a total of 390 inclusive years of sin, as predicted by Ezekiel.

By slicing 33 years off the reigns of the kings (counting only 345 inclusive years, instead of 378, between Rehoboam's first year and Zedekiah's last year), Thiele has left too few years to bridge this span of time. As Solomon hadn't entered into idolatry yet in his 24th regnal year, when God appeared to him after he had completed his building works (I Kings 9:1-10), not many years could be added by going further back from Solomon's 29th year, to start the 390 years. As the 390 years end in the capture of Jerusalem in Zedekiah's 11th year, no time at all could be added after this event. Therefore, the 390 years of Israel's sins don't fit in Thiele's model.

The Philadelphia Church of God (PCG) recently put out a revised chronology stating that we are probably somewhere between the years 5950 and 5960. Unfortunately, the author of the piece had relied mainly on Jewish data, and, following the Jews, said that Abraham's father, Terah, was 70 years old when Abraham was born. This would cut sixty years out of the Bible's chronology. The New Testament, however, makes it clear that Terah was 130 years old when Abraham was born. All this can be gathered by comparing Genesis 11:26, 11:32, 12:4 and Acts 7:4. So the net result is that the new PCG chronology, which was supposed to put us well back *before* the year 6000, in actual fact would have us today in about the year 6010 to 6020.

The United Church of God's Bible chronology, which can be gathered from graphs in the booklet "The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy", incorporates Ptolemy's years without question. To compress the number of years to make them fit the 7000 year plan, they, like Thiele, also reduce the period of the Kings to a duration that doesn't fit with Ezekiel's 390 years. Additionally, they make other incorrect adaptations, so that in 2007, when this booklet was last edited, it placed us around the year 5990AM. Nineteen years have passed since then, so that now, in 2026, according to this scenario, we find ourselves in the year 6009AM. Quite obviously, to a Bible believer, these numbers are problematic.

I hope the reader can see what I'm trying to get across. God says that the Scripture can't be broken (Jn 10:35). That includes its numbers. If the numbers aren't adding up, we need to first and foremost make sure we are interpreting the Biblical text correctly. What we certainly must *not* do is make extra-Biblical data override the Biblical data.

The Starting Point of the Seventy Week Prophecy

Now we come to another crucial error found in most Bible chronologies.

Daniel 9:24-27 contains the well-known Seventy Week Prophecy that predicts the timing of the first coming of Christ. This prophecy includes durations of 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week, which, using the Biblical "day for a year" **principle, foretell periods of 49 years, 434 years, and 7 years respectively, for a total of 490 years. This prophecy is fully explained on the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES".**

The decree that begins the fulfilment of this prophecy (Dan 9:25) has long been mistakenly regarded, by many scholars, as having been issued by the Persian ruler Artaxerxes Longimanus, and consequently they interpret Nehemiah 2, Ezra 7 and some other Scriptures as referring to him. The dilemma of which Persian decree begins the Seventy Week Prophecy arises in the first place because Daniel 9:25 predicts that a decree will be issued that will permit *Jerusalem* to be rebuilt, and this has been confused with a petition by Nehemiah to an "Artaxerxes" **(whom they identify incorrectly as Longimanus) to allow him to repair Jerusalem (Neh 2).**

In reality, the starting point of the Seventy Week Prophecy was a decree issued many years earlier by King Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4). However, because his decree refers to rebuilding *the Temple* rather than Jerusalem, it is considered by most scholars as being disqualified from fulfilling the Daniel 9:25 requirement.

The Scriptures in fact emphatically state that Cyrus would cause the city to be reconstructed. Isaiah 44:28 reads, "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid"**. Isaiah 45:13 also says that Cyrus will command the city to be built:** "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts"**.**

Additionally, Daniel 9:1-2 states (citing understanding Daniel would have gathered from Jer 29:1,10), "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans, in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem"**. The NIV reads,** "that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years"**. If the edict of Cyrus did not include the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the** "desolation" **of the city would have continued for longer than 70 years.**

Thinking about this logically, how is a command to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem *not* a command to rebuild Jerusalem? The Temple was the most important feature of that city!

Ezra 4:12-19 records the Jews' enemies complaining to "Artaxerxes" **(King Darius - see v23-24) about** "this city" **(6 times!) and** "Jerusalem" **being rebuilt, not just the Temple. However, they don't complain that the city is being built *contrary to Cyrus' command*. If the Jews were building the city contrary to Cyrus' command, why did their enemies not make an issue of this? Darius' response in verse 21 also specifically refers to** "this city"**.**

Josephus likewise states that Cyrus commanded the city to be rebuilt (Ant. 11, Book 3 chapters 1-3).

In addition to this, one has to consider how Cyrus' decree came into being. Surely someone like Daniel must have shown him the Scriptures of Isaiah 44 and 45, which mention Cyrus by name, and which must have made an enormous impact on Cyrus. The God of Israel had foretold Cyrus' name and the manner in which he would capture Babylon. Surely then it is extremely implausible that Cyrus would proceed to issue the decree he was prophesied to issue, but neglect to cover all the details. The prophecies in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:13 say that Cyrus would cause "the city" **to be rebuilt, but instead we are meant to believe that he issued a decree covering only the Temple?!**

When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem to repair the city wall and its gates, which had been damaged by the enemies of the Jews after Zerubbabel had finished rebuilding the Temple, it is clear that the houses in Jerusalem were already occupied. Various wall builders are said to be working "over against their house" **or words to that effect (Neh 3:23,28-30).**

This is exactly in line with all reasonable expectations. If the Temple was going to be rebuilt, surely a lengthy process, the workers would need houses to live in. Seeing the Temple was in Jerusalem and there were unoccupied, broken-down houses in Jerusalem, these would naturally have been repaired by the builders to live in with their families. So, under inspiration, Cyrus in his decree mentions only the Temple, as that was where the focus was meant to be, but implied within that decree is the undeniable fact that those builders would need somewhere close by to live. To travel miles in and out of Jerusalem each day for work wouldn't have made sense.

Thus, when Nehemiah came to Jerusalem to repair the city walls, there is no indication that the resettlement of the city following Cyrus' decree about 34 years earlier, and the unavoidable repair work involved, had been done contrary to any Persian command.

So why do chronologists reject Cyrus' decree as having begun the Seventy Week Prophecy leading to Christ? Is it because of genuine Biblical reasons? No!! The real reason they reject Cyrus is because according to Ptolemy's Canon, Cyrus' first year of rule over the Persian Empire was around 538BC. Therefore, according to them there are too many years between Cyrus and Christ for the prophecy to be able to fit.

In other words, the extra-biblical data is put ahead of the Scriptures, and the sure word of prophecy is made to play second fiddle to the records of man. This is why I stated at the outset that what is usually presented as "Bible chronology" is, upon closer inspection, no such thing.

As previously shown, counting AM years, i.e. counting from Creation and following the Biblical numbers, Cyrus' first year by my reckoning is 3481AM. After 69 "weeks" **or 483 inclusive years have passed, this places Christ's begettal in 3964AM and His birth in 3965AM, because Mary's impending pregnancy was announced to her** "in the sixth month" **(Lk 1:26) of the year 3964AM. As this takes us into the Roman period, where years can be quite accurately determined, I believe 3965AM corresponds with 5BC for the year of Christ's birth. This shows that the correct year for Cyrus' decree is 489BC (5 + 1 + 483 = 489) and not 538BC, or thereabouts, as is commonly taught.**

Therefore, the duration of the Persian Empire from the first year of Cyrus until its conquest by Alexander in 333BC (3637AM) was about 156 years, not 205 years as suggested by Ptolemy's Canon. This would mean that if Ptolemy's list of Persian rulers is correct as far as the names are concerned (which it probably is), then there must have been a number of co-regencies of Persian rulers to account for this reduction of regnal years. The reason that Ptolemy's list is probably correct in regard to the names of the Persian rulers, is because he records a total of ten such rulers, which corresponds with the ten silver fingers on the Daniel 2 statue of Gentile powers that ruled Jerusalem. See "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" for more on this.

Who is the Biblical Artaxerxes?

Adding to the confusion as to which decree starts the "seventy weeks" **period, is the title** "Artaxerxes"**, which loosely translates as "righteous ruler" or "great ruler". In Scripture, this appellation only occurs in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ptolemy's list of Persian rulers, however, includes four men with the title Artaxerxes. The earliest of these is Artaxerxes Longimanus, and so the Biblical references are generally assumed to be to him. However, in Ezra 4:7 and 6:14-15, a different Artaxerxes is mentioned, who ruled about half a century before Longimanus. The Jerusalem Temple is said to have been completed according to the command of, among others, this earlier** "Artaxerxes" **(Ezra 6:14).**

Clearly, the Temple cannot have been built according to the command of a king who wouldn't begin to rule until about 50 years after the Temple was completed. Some chronologists, like Sir Isaac Newton and Dr Floyd Nolen Jones, have gone to enormous lengths cutting and pasting God's Word, in an attempt to create acceptable chronologies to account for these Scriptures.

The incorrect identification of Longimanus as the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah 2 and Ezra 7, apart from pushing us currently past the year 6000, creates the additional problem that Ezra and Nehemiah would need to have lived extraordinarily long lives, or instead, as many sources actually believe, there would need to have been two leaders called Ezra and two leaders called Nehemiah!! (Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary, Companion Bible, Unger's Bible Dictionary, etc).

Ezra's father, Seraiah, was killed at the final capture of Jerusalem (II Kings 25:18-21, Ezra 7:1, I Chron 6:1-15), which means that Ezra must have been at least in his mid-seventies when first returning to Judea with Zerubbabel after the land had rested its 70 years. In the 7th year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7 - Artaxerxes being another name for Darius, the story just continuing from chapter 6), Ezra would have been in his mid-nineties when returning to establish the law; and in Darius' 20th year, when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, Ezra would have been nearing 110. If, however, 70 or so years (as per Ptolemy's Canon) are inserted between Ezra 6 and 7 to allow for the Artaxerxes of Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 2 to be Longimanus, Ezra would have been around 165 years of age when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem in Longimanus' 20th year! This would have been a phenomenal age for that time period.

However, if the Artaxerxes of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is identified as Darius I, a far more plausible flow of events can be established. It becomes clear that there is only one Biblical Artaxerxes, i.e. Darius I (Darius the Great).

The solution of the Darius/Artaxerxes identification was already put forward in 1913 by chronologist Martin Anstey in "The Romance of Bible Chronology", where he advocates that Ezra 6:14 should be translated as "Cyrus and Darius even Artaxerxes king of Persia" **(p244).**

This explains the narrative in the book of Ezra where the opponents of the Jews petition the newly installed king, Darius (Ezra 4:7), leading him to bring the work in Jerusalem to a halt (v23) either in his accession year or early in his first year of rule. In Darius' second year (v24) both Haggai and Zechariah begin to prophesy (Ezra 5:1-2), and the work on the Temple is resumed in the 6th month of that year (Hag 1:1-15).

Apart from the ages of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the fact that we now appear to have gone past the year 6000 by conventional reckoning, there are a number of other facts that confirm the identity of the Biblical Artaxerxes:

1) Among other lists, two specific registers of names are found in Nehemiah, one of which gives the names of the leaders who returned with Zerubbabel after Cyrus' decree (Neh 12:1-8), and the other of which gives a list of leaders who made a covenant with God, as directed by Nehemiah in his first year as governor, i.e. in Artaxerxes' 20th year (Neh 10:1-9). If Artaxerxes is Darius, these two events are about 34 years apart, which makes perfect sense. But if Artaxerxes is identified as Longimanus, these events are about 90 years apart, according to Ptolemy's Canon.

However, at least 15 or 16 of the leaders mentioned are on both lists!

According to these two lists, as well as the list found in Ezra 2, the names of these men are, apart from Ezra and Nehemiah themselves (Ezra 2:2): Seraiah, Jeremiah, Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, Meremoth, Ginnetho(n), Abijah, Mi(j)amin, Bilgai/Bilgah, Shemaiah, Jeshua, Binnui and Kadmiel. These constitute some 60% of the top leaders of the Priests and Levites at that time (15 or 16 out of the first 25 mentioned in Neh 10:1-9).

Although these men were already adult leaders at Zerubbabel's return, they would have been about 90 years older at the making of the covenant described in Nehemiah 9 and 10, if we hold to the belief that the Artaxerxes of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is Longimanus – this at a time when a lifespan was comparable to what it is today. For instance, most of the kings of Israel and Judah lived less than 70 years. This is the main reason why so many Bible dictionaries and commentaries say that there were, during this period, two leaders called Ezra, and two leaders called Nehemiah.

2) After Ezra's journey to Jerusalem in Ezra 7, he is almost immediately confronted with the problem of intermarriage. If this was Darius' seventh year, it would have been about the 21st inclusive year since Zerubbabel's return. This would make sense as Ezra 10:44 mentions the taking of foreign wives, "some" **of which unions had led to children being born. If, however, 70 or so years are inserted between Ezra 6 and Ezra 7 to allow Longimanus to be the Biblical Artaxerxes, Ezra would far more likely have been dealing with grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren, resulting from these unions. Also, more than *some* of these marriages would by then have led to offspring.**

3) If we assume that the lengths of the reigns of the Persian rulers recorded in Ptolemy's Canon are correct, the only Persian ruler who fits the Biblical parameters for being Artaxerxes is Darius. Nehemiah 5:14 and 13:6 say that Artaxerxes ruled for at least 32 years. According to Ptolemy, Cyrus ruled 8 years, his son Cambyses 7 years, Darius 35 years and his son Xerxes 20 years (Ptolemy actually adds 1 more year for each ruler as he includes accession years). If we accept that Longimanus is too late in history to fit the bill, Darius is the only ruler prior to him who ruled for the minimum required number of years.

The Importance of Cyrus

The name Cyrus has prophetic meaning. In the Persian language, Cyrus is Kurash or Kourosh, from which the Greek Kyrios or Kurios is derived, a word that frequently appears in the NT, and is usually translated "LORD" **or** "lord"**, depending on who it applies to. In the NT, Christ is frequently called "Kyrios". In Isaiah 45:1 Cyrus is called** "my anointed"**. So Cyrus appears to be a type of Christ.**

It is therefore very fitting that Cyrus, being the one who initiated the period covered by the Seventy Week Prophecy, has a name meaning "lord", since the prophecy leads to the coming of the one true "LORD", Jesus Christ. At the same time this explains why Scripture places so much emphasis on Cyrus (e.g. Isa 44 and 45).

As Chronicles is the last book of the OT, the last recorded words of the OT are Cyrus' decree. As Matthew is the first book of the NT, the first recorded words of the NT are the genealogy and birth of Jesus Christ.

From Cyrus' decree until the begettal of Christ there are 483 inclusive years or "69 weeks"**, plus one year, as will be explained below. Simeon (Lk 2:25-35), the prophetess Anna (Lk 2:36-38), the wise men (Matt 2:1-2), the Jewish rulers (Matt 2:5-6) and even Herod the Great (Matt 2:3-4) knew the timing of the coming of the Messiah**

from the Seventy Week Prophecy. Mary, Joseph, the shepherds in the field - none of them seem to have needed a lot of convincing.

The Seventy Week Prophecy perfectly, chronologically bridges the gap between the Old and the New Testament Scriptures.

This explains why Nehemiah repeated Cyrus' decree as the final words of the book of Chronicles, and therefore the final words of the Old Testament.

If, as I believe, the Seventy Week Prophecy began to be fulfilled with Cyrus' decree, an interesting explanation becomes apparent for the first "7 weeks" or 49 years, in that this would denote the length of time from Cyrus' decree until the completion of the Old Testament narrative.

The Biblical information supports the chronology of this theory: Nehemiah lists six generations of high priests from Jeshua down to Jaddua in Nehemiah 12:22 which, he explains, takes their genealogy down to "the reign of Darius the Persian" (i.e. Darius the Great), which must mean down to the *end* of Darius' reign. As Jaddua's father Johanan is stated to be employed in Temple duties (Ez 10:6) and therefore was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah, Jaddua must have been the last person in the high priestly line known to Nehemiah before Nehemiah died. This was the time when Darius' reign came to an end, the OT Scriptures were sealed, and the Ezra and Nehemiah era closed.

Nehemiah was governor in Jerusalem from Darius' 20th to 32nd year, during the last of which he travelled to see Darius in Persia (Neh 13:6). After "certain days", which must mean at least a year or two, judging by the events that had occurred in Jerusalem involving Tobiah and the Levites (Neh 13:6-12), Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem very close to the end of Darius' reign.

As Cyrus ruled the Persian Empire for 8 years, Cambyses for 7 (with one year probably in co-regency, thus reducing the total to 14) and Darius for 35; and Cyrus' decree was issued in his first year, while Nehemiah's work continued approximately until the end of Darius' reign, we see that a 49 inclusive year period fits very well here.

Therefore, it is most likely that the combined writings of Ezra and Nehemiah cover exactly 49 years, i.e. the first 7 weeks of the Seventy Week Prophecy.

Then 434 years or "62 weeks" are fulfilled, one year after which Christ is begotten, with His birth the following year. The beginning of the New Testament informs us about this in detail.

See the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES" for a full explanation of the Seventy Week Prophecy.

The Solution

In conclusion, to determine the solution of the chronological puzzle, all one needs to do is rely on the Word of God as the sole authority.

Using Biblical information alone, the equation from Creation until the year of Christ's death and the commencement of the Church can be summarised as:

1) Tally all chronological data from Creation until the removal of all the Jews to Babylon

then add

2) 70 inclusive years during which the land was prophesied to have rest (II Chron 36:21)

then add

3) 483 inclusive years (69 prophetic weeks) from Cyrus' decree, which begins the fulfilment of the Seventy Week Prophecy, until the year "after" **the 483 years end, at which time Christ is** "cut off and will have nothing" **(NIV), i.e. when He is conceived in Mary's womb (Dan 9:25-26, Lk 1:26)**

then add

4) Christ's birth year + 35 years of life until His death on the cross (Lk 3:23)

I arrive at the age of 35 for Christ's death because I believe that He lived 30 years before beginning His ministry halfway through His 31st year. If this is so, Christ preached for half of His 31st year and all of His 32nd, 33rd and 34th, dying early in His 35th year at Passover. Note that Biblical ages of people run concurrently with calendar years, as is seen with the years of Noah, and explained on the chart on the "HOME" page at the entry for the year 1656AM.

As point 2 is given (as 70 inclusive years), and points 3 and 4 add up to 520 inclusive years, the total of points 2, 3 and 4 is 590 inclusive years. Therefore, only point 1 remains to be determined. By my reckoning, all the point 1 information adds up to 3410 inclusive years (see the chart on the "HOME" page). Therefore, the equation is 3410 + 590 = 4000, meaning that Christ died in the 4000th year, i.e. the last year of the fourth millennium, which is also the 80th Jubilee year since Creation.

I believe that Christ died in the Roman year 31AD, which means that since the first month (Abib, i.e. March/ April) of the Biblical year that begins during 2026, 1995 years have passed since Christ's death in the year 4000, and the 5995th year since Creation has commenced.

*****

Some Fulfilled Time-Related Prophecies

The following examples can all be found on the chart on the "HOME" page. Some of these have been given above using AM years, but are repeated here using the corresponding BC/AD years.

***** From the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 575BC, until 1945, the final year of World War 2 when the Jews were liberated from Nazi concentration camps, there were 2520 inclusive years (of Jewish persecution and Jerusalem being occupied by Gentiles - Lev 26:24, Lk 21:24).**

***** From the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 564BC, until 1956, the year of the Suez Crisis/Sinai War, upon which the Jews were expelled from Egypt, there were 2520 inclusive years (Lev 26:28).**

***** Daniel 8 prophesies that Gentile forces would religiously defile Jerusalem for 2300 years. This period would begin with a** "male goat"**, identified in verse 21 as the Kingdom of Greece, with** "a notable horn between his eyes"**, referring to Alexander the Great, the first Greek ruler to conquer Israel. Josephus records that Alexander personally offered sacrifice in the Temple, which only priests of God were allowed to do (Ant. 11.8.5), thus defiling it. From Alexander the Great's 333BC capture of the Persian Empire (including the Holy Land), which commenced the religious defilement of Jerusalem by successive Greek, Roman and Islamic forces, there were exactly 2300 inclusive years until the 1967 Six Day War, when the State of Israel captured the remainder of Jerusalem that they had not captured in the 1948/49 War of Independence, and drove out the last foreign forces occupying it. Thereby** "the sanctuary **(was)** cleansed" **after** "2300 days"**, meaning 2300 years (Dan 8:14).**

It is interesting to note that well-known Bible commentator Adam Clarke, in his commentary written in the early 1800's, regarding the 2300 day prophecy, predicted that something major would happen in Jerusalem in 1966 (Dan 8:14 - "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"**). He based this prediction on Alexander having taken Jerusalem in 334BC, when the city actually came to be under Alexander's control in 333BC. Therefore the correct end point was 1967 (2300 years later).**

One of the most momentous chronological events predicted in Scripture is the building of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Daniel 12:11 foretells the appearance of an "abomination of desolation"**, which is a structure that shall be** "set up" **and dominate the Holy City for a specific period of time.**

The construction of the Dome of the Rock was commenced in 691AD, whereupon it became the dominant feature of Jerusalem's Temple Mount. The year 2025/26 marked its 1335th inclusive year (beginning in Abib/Nisan). This Islamic building has inscriptions on its interior walls that are blasphemous to Jesus Christ, denying that He is the Son of God. The fact that this edifice is located on the Temple Mount makes it truly a Satan inspired "abomination of desolation"**.**

***** From the construction of the Dome of the Rock in 691, until the re-establishment of sovereign Jewish government in Jerusalem and the issuing of the "Law of Return" in 1950, there were 1260 inclusive years (**"it

would be for a time, two times, and half a time; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished" **Dan 12:7, RSV). A** "time" **in a prophecy, as an element of duration of a prophesied event, is equal to 360 years. See "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" for more on this.**

Daniel 12:11 gives the starting point of this prophecy. When the Muslims built the Dome of the Rock, they declared the Temple Mount an Islamic "holy site" and banned non-Muslims, i.e. Jews, from praying there. Jewish morning and evening Temple sacrifices had long since been replaced by *prayers* at those times of the day. <u>The banning of Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount</u> was "the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away" **after which** "the abomination that maketh desolate"**, i.e. the Dome of the Rock, was set up.**

***** From the construction of the Dome of the Rock in 691, until 1980, there were 1290 inclusive years, as prophesied in Daniel 12:11, using the Biblical** "day for a year" **reckoning. In the year 1980 the Jewish government passed the "Jerusalem Law", which declared, among other things, that "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel", officially annexing the final ten percent of the city that had been captured in the Six Day War, including, crucially, the entire Old City with the Temple Mount. This event fulfilled Daniel 12:11, being the second stage of when** "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" **(Dan 12:7).**

***** From the construction of the Dome of the Rock in 691 until 2025, there were 1335 inclusive years as foretold in Daniel 12:12. In the year 2025 Israel brought Islam, the last remaining "Beast" power trying to capture Jerusalem, to its knees, and established itself as a military powerhouse, in total contrast to its enemies. This year also witnessed the return of government sanctioned Jewish worship on the Temple Mount. Thus the 1335 day/year marker saw the third stage of** "the shattering of the power of the holy people" **coming to an end.**

<u>Appendix</u>

I want to add a few words regarding the Bible chronology generally adhered to by the Jews. The nation of Israel today uses a calendar which is, by my calculations, 209 years out. They reckon the current year 5995AM to be 5786AM.

Without going into a lot of detail, here are the main reasons for their error:

The Jews say that Abraham was born when his father Terah was 70 years of age, rather than 130, which cuts out 60 years from the chronology. They also reduce the time that the Israelites spent in Egypt from 215 to 210 years, which loses another 5 years. In addition, 23 years are taken from the time the Jews spent in Babylonian captivity, a full 103 years are sliced off the period of Persian control of the Holy Land, and the Greek rule of Jerusalem is shortened by 18 years.

Although somewhat of an oversimplification, the equation 60+5+23+103+18=209 accounts for the discrepancy between the years 5786 and 5995.

There is a belief among some Bible scholars that the large reduction of the years of the Persian period did not come about by mistake, but instead was concocted by Jewish rabbis in the second century AD in order to hide the fact that the timing of Christ's appearance lined up with that given in the Seventy Week Prophecy.

DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES

Time related terminology is crucial to understanding what God is conveying to us in His Word. Unfortunately, in our modern era the Churches of God have been inconsistent in their interpretation of words associated with the measurement of time in prophecy. Consequently, they have failed to see that a large number of major Biblical prophecies were fulfilled in the 20th century.

It is common to hear it said that "days" **in prophecy can mean literal days, or years, or even thousand year periods, and that therefore we can't be sure what God means when His Word speaks of periods of days.**

But is this logical? God spent over 1500 years carefully putting His Scriptures together. He has seen to it that they have been preserved throughout time. II Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"**.**

This teaches us that it is possible, through proper study, to understand God's Word.

Yet, supposedly, we can't be sure of what His time related prophecies are saying?! Not only does this not make sense, it contradicts and even belittles God, by suggesting that He has been inconsistent in His Word. In effect it is saying that He didn't express Himself clearly enough to get His message across.

II Peter 1:19 speaks of the "sure word of prophecy"**. Yet we say that we can't be sure. It is unimaginable that the great Author of Scripture has put us in such a position.**

The day/week/month/year/time based prophecies in the Scriptures must be understandable, or God has wasted His time giving them to us.

As explained at length on the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT", a day pictures a thousand years *in the Creation account*. II Peter 3:3-9 mentions several aspects of Creation week and in that context says in verse 8 that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years"**. Here Peter confirms the 7000 year framework of time within which God is working out His plan on Earth.**

However, as we will see, a day picturing a thousand years only applies to the seven days of Creation. Within that 7000 year framework, a "day" **as a measurement of the duration of a prophecy always pictures one year.**

People may object and say that Christ spent three days in the grave, just like Jonah did in the belly of the whale. And so they may argue that a day in prophecy can mean a literal day in fulfilment. However, what we find is that God uses *different wording* in prophecies where the fulfilment involves *literal days*.

In the account of the Flood, God prophesies in Genesis 7:4, "I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights"**. This was fulfilled as forty literal days.**

In Jonah 1:17 we find that "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights"**, denoting three literal days. Christ prophesies in Matthew 12:40,** "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"**. So, Jonah's time inside the whale was a *type* of Christ's own time in the grave. As we know, this was also fulfilled as three literal days.**

Exodus 34:28 presents a similar example. Here Moses, a type of Christ, ascends Mt Sinai to draw near to God and to receive His law, and "was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water"**. In Matthew 4:1 we find Christ fulfilling this type as He also** "fasted forty days and forty nights" **to draw near to God, when He was tempted by Satan to *transgress* God's law. Obviously forty literal days are intended in both these instances.**

In other words, when God prophecies or typifies a certain number of *literal days*, the prophecy will express this as "X days and X nights".

A person might contradict this by pointing to Jonah 3:4 or Genesis 7:4 which respectively state, "Yet forty days ....." **and** "yet seven days ....." **and claim that these statements must therefore refer to years. The answer is that they are speaking of *literal days*, because the** "forty days" **and** "seven days" **do not refer to *the duration of the prophesied events*, but rather to when the events will commence.**

In Revelation 9:15 we are given a remarkable and detailed prophecy that confirms the terminology of time used by God in Biblical prophecy. It speaks here of "the hour, and day, and month and year" **(NKJV). The *hour* indicates that the prophecy will occur at a particular point in history chosen by God. The *day, month and year* denote the duration of the prophesied events. As fully explained on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES", this prophecy was fulfilled in recent history, so we know how long the period was: it was the period of the two world wars, which lasted for 32 inclusive years from 1914 until 1945.**

These two wars together saw the mobilisation of some 200 million soldiers and the killing of one third of the Jews in the world during the Holocaust. All the other details in the prophecy are shown to add up as well in the article mentioned above. We can see therefore that in Revelation 9:15 the "day" **pictures a year, the** "month" **pictures 30 years, and the** "year" **is counted as a year (1 + 30 + 1 = 32). See under "Times" below for an explanation of why a month *in a prophecy of duration* denotes 30 years.**

Many other examples confirm this reckoning of days, months and years in prophecy. It will become clear, as we examine these, that Scripture uses specific terminology for the duration of prophesied and typified events, showing that God is consistent.

Days

In a prophecy where a day refers to the duration of an event, that day pictures a year.

God gives us this principle in Numbers 14:33-34 where He states, "your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years"**.**

He repeats this principle in Ezekiel 4:5-6, saying, "I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year"**. The 390 inclusive years of Israel's iniquity began in the 29th year of Solomon's reign in 953BC, and ended when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 564BC. The 40 inclusive years of Judah's iniquity began with the death of Christ at the hands of the Jews in 31AD and ended with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD.**

In addition to the example concerning one "day" **in Revelation 9:15, as shown above, we see in Revelation 11:9,11 a prophecy about** "three and a half days"**, which refers to the three and a half years it took for the Jews to re-establish themselves as a nation in the Holy Land and Jerusalem after WW2, i.e. from May 1945 until November 1948. During this period other nations were reluctant to come to the Jews' aid. Again, see the page "THE TWO WITNESSES" for more about this.**

In Revelation 2:10 the brethren of the Smyrna Church era are told that they "shall have tribulation ten days"**. This refers to the enormously destructive ten year persecution unleashed by Roman emperor Diocletian in 303AD, which lasted until the Edict of Milan in early 313AD (Biblical years run from spring to spring. As the new year of 313 had not yet commenced when this persecution ended, the ten years ran from 303 until 312 inclusively).**

Likewise, the "1290 days" **and** "1335 days" **in Daniel 12:11-12 denote 1290 and 1335 years. These are related to the duration of the Islamic "Dome of the Rock" standing on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and the last two stages of the ending of** "the shattering of the power of the holy people" **(Dan 12:7, RSV), as explained on the page "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH".**

Also, the two periods of "1260 days" **mentioned in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6 both indicate 1260 years. These periods are respectively explained in the articles "THE TWO WITNESSES" and "REVELATION 12 - THE WOMAN".**

Lastly, in Daniel 8:13-14 we read, "How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"**. The literal text of this verse reads** "evenings and mornings" **instead of** "days"**. This phrase is also found in the Creation account in Genesis 1 where we are told that** "the evening and the morning were the first day" **and** "the evening and the morning were the second day" **etc. Therefore, this phrase is poetic language denoting 2300 days, which picture a 2300 *year* period of religious defilement of Jerusalem at the hands of foreign forces, commencing with Alexander the Great in 333BC, and ending with the liberation of the city from Gentile control in the 1967 Six Day War. For more on this see the page "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY".**

Weeks

In a prophecy where a week refers to the duration of an event, that week pictures seven years.

As it turns out, there is only one such prophecy, i.e. the Seventy Week Prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27. It does, however, refer to three separate periods, all described as weeks (7 weeks, 62 weeks and one week). During these periods the Jews were predicted to "restore and to build Jerusalem"**, to** "seal up the vision and prophecy"**, to endure** "troublous times"**, and to continue to descend into** "transgression"**, which God in the final period would bring to a** "finish" **by the destruction of Jerusalem. This would at the same time** "confirm the covenant" **that Christ made through His death.**

Although various interpretations of this prophecy exist, the fact that the seventy weeks picture a period of 490 years (70 x 7 = 490) is not seriously disputed in Christian circles.

What I believe to be the correct chronological interpretation of this prophecy can be found on the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES".

Months

In a prophecy where a month refers to the duration of an event, that month pictures thirty years.

As already mentioned above, the "month" **in the phrase** "the hour, and day, and month and year" **found in**

Revelation 9:15, denotes 30 years of the 32 year period between 1914 and 1945.

In Hosea 5:7 we read concerning the fall of the northern Kingdom of Israel, "now shall a month devour them with their portions"**. As Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Hos 1:1), and Samaria was conquered by the Assyrians in the 6th year of Hezekiah, this places the commencement of this 30 year progressive loss of territory by Israel in the 51st year of Uzziah. See the charts on the "CHRONOLOGICAL CHARTS" page for the details.**

Zechariah 11:8 states, "I dismissed the three shepherds in one month"**. This speaks of the last thirty years of Christ's life, as shown on the page "ZECHARIAH OVERVIEW".**

In Revelation 9:5 and 10 we find a period of "five months" **mentioned. As fully explained on the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)", this is a prophecy of the 150 years of Crusader battles over Jerusalem. This period ran from 1095, when the first Catholic crusade was launched to liberate Jerusalem, until 1244, when the last crusader battle of that era was fought over the Holy City.**

In Ezekiel 39:12 and 14 a period of "seven months" **is predicted, which refers to the time from the beginning of the Hasmonean Dynasty in 140BC, until 70AD, when the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem Temple. This 210 year period (7 x 30 = 210) saw virtually unrestricted practice of the Jewish religion in Jerusalem, and is fully explained on the page "GOG IN EZEKIEL 38 & 39".**

Revelation 11:2 states that Jerusalem "is **(lit. "was")** given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months"**. This is talking about the 1260 year period (42 x 30 = 1260) during which all seven heads of the Gentile "Beast" powers came to rule over Jerusalem.**

Revelation 13:5 says that the "Beast" powers were given "a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months"**. This is speaking of 1260 years of independent Papal power over the people of God.**

The last two points are fully explained on the pages "THE TWO WITNESSES" and "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST".

Years

In a prophecy where a year refers to the duration of an event, that year is a literal year.

As already stated, the "year" **in the phrase** "the hour, and day, and month and year" **(Rev 9:15) denotes one literal year of the 32 year period between 1914 and 1945.**

In Genesis 15:13, God tells Abraham, "thy seed shall be **(lit. "is")** a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years"**. As shown on the chart on the "HOME" page, this prophecy covers 400 literal years of affliction, from Ishmael's persecution of Isaac (Gal 4:29) until the year of the Exodus from Egypt.**

In Genesis 41:29-30, God tells Joseph, "Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. And there shall arise after them seven years of famine"**. The remainder of the chapter shows that this came to pass as prophesied, over two periods of seven literal years.**

In Jeremiah 25:11-12 it is prophesied, "this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations"**. These were 70 literal years of servitude to Babylon, as shown on the chart on the "HOME" page.**

Similarly, in Jeremiah 29:10 we find prophesied, "thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place"**.**

In addition, Daniel 9:2 says, "In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem"**.**

Also, II Chronicles 36:21 states, "The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah" **(NIV). See the chart on the "HOME" page for the exact details, as these periods of 70 years are not all the same. They do, however, all involve 70 literal years.**

Likewise therefore, when Revelation 20:2-4 tells us that Satan will be bound for "a thousand years" **and that Christ will rule for** "a thousand years"**, we can be sure that these mean literal years.**

Times

In a prophecy where a "time" **refers to the duration of an event, that** "time" **pictures 360 years.**

A "time" **is the Biblical unit of measurement that denotes future years on Earth.**

The method by which God instructs the measuring of time to take place is by observation of the sun and the moon (Gen 1:14). This is more fully explained in the article "THE CALENDAR OF GOD", but here is a brief overview:

A full rotation of the Earth around the sun is a solar year, which lasts just over 365 days.

The Biblical year begins in spring in the Northern Hemisphere (Ex 12:2). The sighting of the first crescent of the moon after the spring equinox begins the first month of the year. Then the moon is observed in order to determine the length of each month and the beginning of the following month. A year most often has 12 lunar months, but a 13th month is added if the 12th month cannot be clearly seen to have extended beyond the next spring equinox.

A full rotation of the moon around the Earth is a lunar month. Its length varies, but averages just over 29 and a half days.

We see in the account of Noah on the ark in Genesis 7-8 that 30 days per month should be counted when no observation of the new moon can be made. The Mishnah informs us repeatedly that this method was employed during the time of the second Temple.

Therefore, *until observation shows otherwise*, a future year has 12 months and a future month has 30 days.

Thus, a year that is yet future, i.e. a Biblical "time", consists of 360 days (12 x 30 = 360).

In Scripture we find the 360 day "time" **in the prophecy of Daniel 4, where Nebuchadnezzar gives an account of a troubling dream he has had. He is told that he will be driven away from human society,** "be given the heart of a beast" **and** "eat grass" **(v25). He is then told,** "seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men" **(v25,32).**

The way this is worded shows that it does not refer to the duration of a prophesied event, but rather to when an event will occur, i.e. when Nebuchadnezzar will "know" **that God is the one who determines who will rule. Therefore, it denotes 2520 literal days (360 x 7 = 2520). The story informs us that this Babylonian king lost his mind, began to graze like an animal, and grew his hair and fingernails long, until** "at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me" **(Dan 4:34).**

Nebuchadnezzar's 2520 *days* were to humble him in order to teach him the lesson that his power was not of

himself, but had been given to him by the God of Heaven. However, they also pictured something much bigger:

The king's 2520 days were a type of the total duration of the Gentile "Beast" powers trampling down God's people (pictured by the "grass"**, or vegetation). See the account of the third day of Creation on the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT" for more on this. As this type involves the *duration of an event*, the 2520 days are counted as 2520 years.**

Therefore, just we see that just as Ezekiel lay on his left and right sides for 390 days and 40 days respectively, to picture periods of 390 and 40 years (Eze 4:4-6), so the 2520 *days* of Nebuchadnezzar picture the 2520 *years* of "the times of the Gentiles" **(Lk 21:24). These were 2520 consecutive years that the Jews were to lose control of Jerusalem as it was conquered by a succession of Gentile powers, of which Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was the first.**

And since the first of these Gentile powers was Babylon, it is fitting that this prophecy was given to the king who ruled Babylon at the time of that first conquest of Jerusalem. Please see the chart on the "HOME" page, "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" and "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for a more detailed explanation.

In Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24 and 28, God states four separate times that Israel would be punished "seven times" **if they disobeyed Him, and so we see that the Daniel 4 typology ties in perfectly with Leviticus 26. The four prophecies in Leviticus 26 all involve duration of prophesied events, and therefore apply to four separate 2520 year periods:**

1) the break-up of Israel and Judah in the year of Solomon's death, causing the loss of Israel's "power" **(v19) for the decreed** "seven times"**.**

2) the fall of Samaria and the Kingdom of Israel in Hezekiah's sixth year, leading to Israel becoming "few in number" **(v22) until their fortunes were restored after their** "seven times" **had elapsed.**

3) the fall of Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year, causing Judah to be "delivered into the hand of the enemy" **(v25). This is the same 2520 years typified in Daniel 4, as described above.**

4) the destruction of Jerusalem in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year, after which God would "scatter you among the nations" **(v33) for 2520 years.**

All four of these prophecies, including their years of commencement and conclusion, can be found on the chart on the "HOME" page.

We find another example of "time" **in Daniel 7:25, which concerns a** "little horn" **into whose hands God's people** "shall be given ..... until a time and times and the dividing of time"**. More modern translations say** "time, times and half a time"**. This is half of** "seven times" **and so refers to 1260 years. Church of God brethren know, as did Protestants of old, that the** "little horn" **refers to the Papacy, whose long-term persecution of the people of God is prophesied here. The full explanation of the 1260 years can be found on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES".**

Daniel 12:7 also speaks of "time, times and half a time"**, which refers to the 1260 inclusive year period from the construction of the Dome of the Rock in 691AD until the restoration of sovereign Jewish government over Jerusalem, followed by the proclamation of Israel's "Law of Return" in 1950. At that point the first stage of bringing to an end** "the shattering of the power of the holy people" **(RSV) was accomplished. Two more stages were predicted to follow until the power of the holy people would be completely restored. See "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" for more on this.**

In Revelation 2:21 we read, "I gave her space to repent" **(KJV). However, the word** "space" **is the Greek word *chronos* which is usually translated** "time"**. As explained on the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS", this** "time" **is really** "a time" **and refers to 360 years of punishments inflicted on false Christianity by God, from the beginning of the first Crusade in 1095, until the first printing of the Scriptures in 1455. This period included the worst of the Inquisitions and the most destructive plague of all time, the Black Death.**

In Revelation 10:6 we find written, "And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that 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"**. This prophecy is part of the sixth trumpet narrative. It is announcing the end point of the** "seven times"**, i.e. 2520 years, of Judah's punishment. Therefore, at that precise moment in history, God says there will be** "time no longer"**. This occurred in 1945 and is more fully described on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES".**

And finally, Revelation 12:14 states, "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"**. This prophecy concerns the first 1260 years of the 2520 year period, commencing with Jerusalem's capture by Nebuchadnezzar, for the duration of which God protected His faithful people. See the page "REVELATION 12 - THE WOMAN".**

To summarise in brief:

In a prophecy or type that predicts the duration of a prophesied or typified event:

A day of Creation pictures a thousand years

"X days and X nights" indicates X days

A day denotes a year

A week denotes seven years

A month denotes 30 years

A year remains a year

A time (360 days) denotes 360 years

Therefore, for example, the "two witnesses" **of Revelation 11:3 did not prophesy only for a literal** "1260 days"**. If indeed they had, the text would have stated "1260 days and 1260 nights".**

Rather, they prophesied for 1260 years.

A thorough study of all the occurrences of the words "day/days", "week/weeks" etc in the Bible reveals only a few that may appear to challenge the rules stated above:

1) In Genesis 3:14 God states, "So the Lord God said unto the serpent, because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life"**.**

This kind of wording is not uncommon in Scripture. "Days" here are both days and years.

2) Exodus 16:4-5 says, "Then the Lord said to Moses, behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily"**.**

Are these literal days? Yes they are, because *no duration* of the event is stated. A seven day cycle is foretold that lasted as long as Israel was wandering in the wilderness.

3) Numbers 11:19-20 states in regard to the second occasion on which God promised to send quail, "You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you"**.**

Here we have a prophecy that does give the duration of the prophesied event. However, the literal Hebrew in this verse says, "a month of days"**. Does this phrase indicate 30 literal days? Possibly, as the account does not state whether the quail came for 30 days or 30 years. However, the wording seems to favour the latter. As this prophecy was given soon after the date stated in Numbers 10:11, the 30 years may well have stretched from the second year until the 31st year of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness.**

4) II Chronicles 21:15 prophesies regarding king Jehoram of Judah, "you will become very sick with a disease of your intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day"**. Verse 19 adds,** "Then it happened in the course of time, after the end of two years, that his intestines came out because of his sickness; so he died in severe pain"**.**

Does the phrase "day by day" **in this passage indicate a *general* progression of the sickness, or does it refer to a specific period of time that the sickness lasts? If it refers to a period of time, it must be two years, by the rules deduced from Scripture, which would then be confirmed by verse 19.**

5) Isaiah 34:8 reads, "For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion"**.**

This is speaking of a particular point in time at which God intervenes on Zion's behalf, not the duration of an event, and therefore not a "day for a year" prophecy.

6) Isaiah 61:2 says, "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God"**.**

Much like the previous point, this concerns the specific timing of particular events, not the duration thereof, and so not a "day for a year" prophecy.

7) Hosea 6:2 says, "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight".

The poetic device used here, called parallelism, is common in the Hebrew Scriptures. Another example is seen in Proverbs 6:16: "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him"**. This prophecy in Hosea does not indicate duration, and therefore refers to literal days. Both Christ (Lk 24:45-46) and Paul (I Cor 15:3-4) refer to this verse.**

8) Jonah 3:4 says, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"**.**

As explained in the introduction of this article, this is not a prophecy of duration, and therefore denotes 40 literal days. However, as with the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar eating grass for 2520 days, there is an example of typology here, where the 40 days foreshadow a period of 40 years. The explanation of this is given on the page "THE REAL SEVEN SEALS".

9) Luke 13:32-33 reads, "And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected **("reach my goal" - NASB, NIV)**'"**.**

Christ is here referring to individual days, rather than giving the duration of the whole period. Had He said, "I will perform cures for three days", it would have meant three years.

10) John 2:19 states, "Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"**.**

This refers to literal days, as it concerns a specified future time when the event prophesied will occur, rather than the duration of the prophecy.

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So we see that there are logical explanations for Scriptures that might initially appear problematic. The rules of prophetic interpretation are consistent, which is exactly what we would expect from the perfect Creator God who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" **(Heb 13:8).**

Knowing the principles of time found in prophecy enables us to understand God's stated intentions, and to appreciate how careful He has been in recording their precise details in His Word.

All the following pages that deal with prophetic interpretation employ the principles described in this article.

10

GOG IN EZEKIEL 38 & 39

The Biblical prophecies found in Ezekiel 38 and 39 are some of the most obscure that we are given. In this end time it is accepted almost without question in the Churches of God that the fulfilment of the events here described are yet in the future. However, in times past this was not the standard interpretation.

The greatest difficulty involves the name "Gog"**, the figurative name given to the villain of these chapters, who heads a combine of nations that makes war against Israel.**

Matthew Henry, whose commentary dates from the early 1700's, concludes that "Gog" **is the notorious ruler of the Seleucid Empire, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Likewise, Bible commentator Adam Clarke, writing in the first half of the 1800's, discusses the opinions held in his day, and comes to the same conclusion.**

Apart from the evidence presented by Henry and Clarke, some of which is included in the explanation below, two additional significant reasons justify their findings.

The first concerns the name Gog. In I Chronicles 5:4 we are told that the patriarch Reuben had a descendant called Gog. Reuben is infamous for having defiled his father Jacob's bed by having intercourse with Bilhah, one of Jacob's wives (Gen 30:4, 37:2). As Jacob is a type of Christ (Jn 4:12-14), the figurative picture is a usurpation of the position and rights of Christ. Israel as a nation is repeatedly depicted in Scripture as the wife of Christ. Christ, as the God of the Old Testament, declared to Israel in Jeremiah 3:14, "I am married to you"**.**

The book of I Maccabees describes how Antiochus Epiphanes attacked the Jewish people and tried to wipe out their religion and replace it with the pagan Greek religion. This Seleucid ruler defiled the Temple, forbade circumcision and Sabbath keeping, and compelled Jews to worship Greek gods, putting to death those who would not comply. As no other before him, Antiochus forced himself upon God's people with his own false religion, thereby usurping the place of Christ, to whom Israel belonged and with whom alone she was to have a religious relationship.

So it can be said that Antiochus was a descendant of Reuben in spirit, just as Gog was a descendant of Reuben in the flesh.

The second reason concerns one of the aspects of the duration of this prophecy. Ezekiel 39:12 states that the people of Israel would be burying the fallen soldiers of the armies of Gog for "seven months"**. Using the Biblical method of interpreting prophetic times, a month is counted as 30 days, while the** "day for a year" **principle (Num 14:34, Eze 4:5-6) shows us that those 30 days predict 30 *years* of time.** "Seven months" **therefore denotes**

210 years. (See the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" for more on these interpretation methods).

When the Jews had finally fought off the Seleucids and gained a measure of autonomy, a period in the Holy Land's history known as the Hasmonean Dynasty commenced in 140BC. During this time the Jews were able to administer *their religion* for the most part unopposed, which continued when they were taken over by Rome, all the way until the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70AD. Thus we have a 210 year period spanning these two dates.

Note that one of the hallmarks of ancient Judaism was its obsession with ritualistic cleanliness. Christ commented on this a number of times. It was the practice of the Jews to whitewash tombs with lime every spring, before Passover, to minimise the chance of becoming "unclean"**. Winter rains, just prior to Passover season, would also expose bones, which then needed to be reburied, and would certainly have included those of fallen Seleucid soldiers. The Scriptures indeed stipulate that coming into contact with a dead body makes a person unclean, but the Jews took this much further to include stepping on, or even hovering over, a grave. Either way, dealing with "**dead men's bones**" (Matt 23:27) was a serious ongoing issue. All in all, the 210 years of Jewish religious autonomy, from 140BC until 70AD, fits well with Ezekiel 39:12.**

Gog is said to be "of the land of Magog" **and** "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" **(Eze 38:2).**

Instead of "chief prince"**, some Bible versions render the Hebrew *nasi rosh* as** "prince of Rosh"**, but most translations have rightly rejected that interpretation. Ezekiel uses the same word *rosh* just a few chapters earlier, in Ezekiel 27:22, where it is translated** "chief"**,** "best" **or** "finest" **(of all spices). The word *rosh* appears hundreds of times in the OT and is most often translated** "head"**,** "top" **or** "chief"**.**

Magog, Meshech and Tubal were all sons of Japheth, one of the sons of Noah (Gen 10:2). Ezekiel 38:6 also mentions Gomer, another son of Japheth, and Togarmah, who was a grandson.

The descendants of all these, with the addition of the nation of Persia (Eze 38:5), made up the combine of nations that together inhabited the large band of territory to the north, north-west and north-east of Israel and constituted the Seleucid Empire. This empire covered most of modern-day Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran, and had its capital in Antioch, Syria. Ezekiel 38:6,15 and 39:2 state that the attack on Israel was to be from the north.

It should be noted that in the same way that Nebuchadnezzar is identified as the "head of gold**" in Daniel 2:38, but the Babylonian Empire as a whole is intended, so Gog refers firstly to Antiochus Epiphanes, but also to the entire Seleucid Empire.**

Support for the identification and location of the nations mentioned in connection with Gog can be gathered by

reading Ezekiel 27, which is a prophecy against Tyre, a coastal city situated to the north of Israel. This prophecy names many of the nations that traded with Tyre, which by implication were in its general vicinity. Many of the peoples mentioned in Ezekiel 27 *are also listed* in the Ezekiel 38 prophecy about Gog.

As well as Persia, Ezekiel 38:5 mentions the people of Cush (Ethiopia) and Put (Libya) as being aligned with Gog (very similar to what Ezekiel 27:10 tells us). Antiochus IV did briefly capture most of the Ptolemaic Kingdom in Egypt, and so he likely obtained slaves or mercenaries from these neighbouring regions to fight in his army. I Maccabees 6:29 indeed states that the Seleucids incorporated such fighters "from other kingdoms and from islands of the seas".

In regard to the timing of the attack by Gog, Ezekiel 38:8 says that this would occur "in the latter years" **(KJV). Futurists have taken this to mean our time today, but other translations say** "in future years"**, or** "in later years"**. In Daniel 2:28 the similar phrase** "in the latter days" **occurs, when Daniel explains Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him. The vision of Nebuchadnezzar covers 2520 years of history, and beyond, and so is not only about an event way off in the future. Likewise in Genesis 49:2 Jacob foretells what shall befall his children and their descendants** "in the last days"**, but many of these things can be shown to have come about after Israel first settled in their land.**

Another issue arises in verse 8 which speaks of the inhabitants of the Holy Land having been brought back "out of the nations"**. To many modern interpreters this can't mean the Jews who returned from Babylon, because they claim that these only returned from that one nation. However, in Jeremiah 29:10-14 God says that** "after 70 years be accomplished at Babylon" **He would bring the Jews back from** "captivity" **and that He would gather them** "from all the nations" **(plural) where He had driven them.**

With the above information in mind, let's look at Ezekiel 38 and 39 for the gist of this event concerning Gog, which occurred approximately 400 years after the prophecy was given to Ezekiel.

Note that the opponents of the Seleucids in Israel were the "Maccabees", a band of Jewish warriors who violently rebelled against the Seleucids who were trying to stamp out the Jewish religion. The main rebel leader was Judas Maccabeus, after whom the Maccabees are named. Their exploits are detailed in the apocryphal books of I and II Maccabees.

(My comments are in brackets).

Ezekiel 38:1 "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog **(Seleucid king Antiochus IV)**, (of) the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal **(the heart of the territory of the Seleucid Empire)**, and prophesy against him,

3 And say, thus saith the Lord God; behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords:

5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya **(conscripts, mercenaries and slaves from these regions)** with them; all of them with shield and helmet:

6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters **(all the northern lands that constituted the Seleucid Empire)**, and all his bands: and many people with thee**.**

7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them**.**

8 After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years **(at a future time)** thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword **(from Babylonian captivity)**, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste **("which had long been desolate" - NIV)**: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them**.**

9 Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee**.**

10 Thus saith the Lord God; it shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought **(an evil plan of eradicating God's true religion and murdering all who would not comply)**:

11 And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls **(as in Est 9:19)**, and having neither bars nor gates,

12 To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places **(they were desolate when Ezekiel was given this prophecy - II Chron 36:21)** that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land**.**

13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish **(Arabian traders)**, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil? **(I Macc 3:41 states, "When the traders of the region heard what was said to them, they took silver and gold in immense amounts and fetters and went to the camp (of the Seleucids) to get the Israelites for slaves").**

14 Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, thus saith the Lord God; in that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?

15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army:

16 And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days **(at a future time)**, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes**.**

17 Thus saith the Lord God; art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them **(Antiochus is also prophesied about in Dan 11:21-32 and Zech 9:13-16)**?

18 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face**.**

19 For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel **(intense warfare between the Seleucids and the Maccabees)**;

20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

21 And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother.

22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone **(through the Maccabean wars, God inflicted mighty defeats upon the Seleucids).**

23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord **(the miraculous victories of the greatly outnumbered Maccabees are still remembered more than two thousand years later. The Jewish festival of Hanukkah, a.k.a. the Feast of Dedication, commemorates these events every year, and Jn 10:22 records that Christ attended this feast in Jerusalem)".**

Ezekiel 39:1 "Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, thus saith the Lord God; behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal **(addressing the Seleucid Empire as a whole, Antiochus himself having died four years into this war)**:

2 And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee **(the Seleucid Empire was greatly reduced in size soon after this war)**, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel:

3 And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand.

4 Thou **(the Seleucid forces)** shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.

5 Thou shalt fall upon the open field **(the Seleucids were defeated in various battles in different parts of Israel)**: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.

6 And I will send a fire **(God's judgement)** on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord.

7 So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.

8 Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken.

9 And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years **(this likely refers to the duration of the war. Judas Maccabeus and his men waged a victorious guerilla war with the Seleucids over a period of seven inclusive years, from 167BC until 161BC. Judas then made a defence treaty with the Romans, and was subsequently killed in his next battle with the Seleucids in 160BC)**:

10 So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God.

11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog **(Seleucid soldiers)** a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers **(travellers**) on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it the valley of Hamon-gog.

12 And seven months **(as described earlier)** shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land.

13 Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God **(Christ frequently commented on the strict ritualistic practices of the Jews).**

14 And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after **(until)** the end of seven months shall they search.

15 And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog.

16 And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land.

17 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood **(animals and birds of prey devouring the corpses of Seleucid soldiers).**

18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.

19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.

20 Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God.

21 And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them.

22 So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward".

After the seven years of war between the Seleucids and the Maccabees came to an end, a period of approximately 20 years followed during which the Seleucids maintained control over Israel, and continued to occupy a fort in Jerusalem. During this time, the close presence of enemy soldiers made the Jews fearful of attending the Temple. However, as the Seleucid Empire's power waned, their territory was more and more reduced, until they eventually only controlled Syria itself. The Jerusalem fort, called the Acra, the last vestige of Greek power in Israel, was overrun in 141BC, when one of Judas Maccabeus' brothers, Simon Thassi, conquered it and assumed power in Jerusalem. Hence the beginning of the rule over Judah and Jerusalem by the Hasmonean Dynasty is generally placed at around 140BC.

This is where the "seven months"**, or 210 years, mentioned in Ezekiel 39:11-16, commence, as described above. This was the period during which the Jews were able to openly practise their religion at the Temple in Jerusalem, mostly without interference, until both of these were destroyed by the Romans in 70AD.**

So we see that the prophecies concerning Gog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 fit very well with the Antiochus/Seleucid explanation, contrary to Futurist expectations prevalent today.

The chapters following Ezekiel 38-39 have generally been misunderstood, resulting in wrong conclusions being drawn with regard to the timing of the Gog prophecy.

The common belief is that the Temple described in Ezekiel 40-46 is to be built *after Christ's return,* so the assumption is made that the Gog war must immediately precede it.

However, as Ezekiel's Temple description includes the offering of animal sacrifices, it cannot pertain to the future, since Christ by His own perfect sacrifice brought these to an end (Heb 10:12). Also, Hebrews 9:1-2 states that an "earthly sanctuary" **was part of the** "first covenant"**, which Hebrews 8:13 says is now** "obsolete"**. This is why God destroyed the Jerusalem Temple and no physical replacement for it was ever built. Revelation 21:22 plainly states that there is to be no physical temple in the millennial New Jerusalem.**

Ezekiel 40-46 contains a plan for a Temple that was to be shown to the exiles in Babylon (Eze 43:10-11). These people had recently gone into Babylonian captivity, and so God sent Ezekiel to them with a message of hope and encouragement for their future as His nation. If they would repent and obey His laws, He would renew His covenant with them. Then, upon their return to the land of Judah at the end of their period of exile, they could build this new Temple.

Ezekiel 43:10-11 states "Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider its plan, and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations" **(NIV 1984). Being** "faithful to its design" **means to build it according to the instructions given.**

As it turned out only a relatively small number of Jews returned after the Babylonian captivity and their heart was not fully in the Temple building work, and so a Temple of a lesser standard than envisaged in Ezekiel's prophecy was built.

Ezekiel 47 goes on to describe water emanating from the Temple and flowing toward the Dead Sea. This is figurative language concerning Christ's first coming (to the Temple foreshadowed in Ezekiel 40-46) and His establishment of the Christian Church (which is the spiritual Temple). Verses 9-10 speak of fishermen and fish, which are symbols, used also by Christ, of apostles and their converts (Matt 4:19; Mk 1:17). This refers to the Church age, which began on the day of Pentecost 31AD, and has today almost completed its course.

We see therefore a logical flow of events in Ezekiel 38-47, where the time of Antiochus and the Maccabean wars was followed by the Hasmonean period, which in turn was followed by the coming of Christ to the Second Temple and the commencement of the Church age.

Note that, in contrast with Ezekiel 38-39, the prophecy concerning "Gog and Magog" **in Revelation 20:7-9 occurs at the end of Christ's one thousand year rule on Earth and is therefore describing totally different events. The Ezekiel war is in fact a type of the war in Revelation 20, where the names are symbolic of all evildoers, be they Israelite (Gog) or non-Israelite (Magog).**

11

DANIEL 2 – INTERPRETATION ERRORS

One of the most well-known prophecies in Scripture is depicted by the statue of a man, revealed in a dream to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, as described in Daniel 2.

Throughout "Christianity" in general, as well as in the Churches of God, the interpretation of the symbols in this prophecy has been seriously deficient. Regrettably, little or no new thought is given to this important message from God in this final Church era, and therefore what was taught in the past keeps on being repeated without question.

The statue is almost always explained as depicting the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. But is this explanation accurate? And why does it matter?

It matters because the misidentification of the last of these powers has led to the Churches of God (COG) over many decades proclaiming a "prophetic" message that is erroneous and misleading. This in turn is counter-productive in trying to convince people of the validity of God's Word.

Babylon is identified by Daniel as the head of gold (Dan 2:38-39), as Daniel explains the meaning of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar. In Daniel 8:20-21 we see the next two empires identified by name: Medo-Persia and Greece.

Why are these particular empires represented by the statue? What makes them different from other empires? The simple answer is that they ruled over the land of Israel and specifically over Jerusalem.

People will point to Daniel 2:39 which says, "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth"**. What does** "earth" **mean in this verse? The Hebrew word "eretz", here translated** "earth"**, is throughout Scripture variously translated as** "land"**,** "country" **or** "earth"**.**

When it states in Genesis 1:1 that God created the earth, obviously meaning the entire planet, the Hebrew word used is "eretz". However, most often the word "eretz" in the Scriptures is translated as "land" **(more than 1500 times), and is used for instance to describe the *land* of Canaan, the *land* of Egypt, the *land* of the Philistines etc. The *land* of Israel is also translated from "eretz Yisrael".**

If we look at Isaiah 13, which is a prophecy about Babylon being defeated by the Medes, we see that in verse 5

the word "eretz" is used twice. The RSV translation says, "They **(the Medes**) come from a distant land **(eretz)** ..... to destroy the whole earth **(eretz)". This is confusing. The story is about Babylon being destroyed, and yet the RSV says** "the whole earth"**. Look at how the KJV renders it:** "They come from a far country **(eretz)** ..... to destroy the whole land **(eretz)". And the NIV says,** "They come from faraway lands **(eretz)** ..... to destroy the whole country **(eretz)".**

We see that in just one verse this same word is translated as earth, land, lands and country.

Another example is found in Zephaniah 1. In verse 18, the RSV states, "in the fire of his jealous wrath, all the earth **(eretz)** shall be consumed"**. That sounds like the whole *planet*. The KJV, however, renders it as** "the whole land **(eretz)** shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy"**. As verse 18 continues, the RSV says,** "a full sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth **(eretz)". The KJV, however, translates this as** "he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land **(eretz)". So what is Zephaniah 1 about? The context shows us that it is about *Judah and Jerusalem*, which are mentioned specifically in verses 4 and 12. Therefore we see that this prophecy is not about the *whole* earth. When we find the word** "earth" **in an English Bible, it very often is not speaking of the *entire* earth, but rather just *a portion* of it. Likewise, in modern day Israel a leading newspaper that goes by the name of Haaretz (or ha'aretz) is not primarily about *the Earth*, but rather about *the land* (of Israel).**

So we see that the context must dictate what is intended when the word "eretz" is used.

The simple truth is that no empire has ever ruled over the entire earth, or even anything remotely close to it. Even the British Empire in its prime only ruled over about a quarter of the planet. Clearly, the use of "eretz" in Daniel 2:39 cannot mean that these empires would rule over the whole earth.

What the Daniel 2 powers do have in common is that the territories they conquered and controlled included the land of Israel, and specifically its capital city, Jerusalem. This is not surprising, because Jerusalem is the city of God and *it is the primary focus of Bible prophecy*.

Christ confirmed this interpretation in His Olivet prophecy when He stated that "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" **(Luke 21:24). This is the story of the Daniel 2 statue in a nutshell. Please read the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more on this.**

Church of God explanations of the statue of Daniel 2 usually begin correctly as they follow the Scriptural outline, but then lose their way as they take their focus off Jerusalem. The fourth kingdom is usually identified, incorrectly, as being Rome, followed by its subsequent resurrections as the Holy Roman Empire in Europe.

The first big mistake involves the identification of the third empire, which is depicted by the bronze belly and

thighs. Daniel 8:21 says it denotes Greece. But what does Greece mean here? What are the parameters of the third empire?

In Daniel 7 the same powers depicted in the Daniel 2 statue are referred to as "four beasts"**, i.e. a lion, a bear, a leopard and an unnamed beast with ten horns. Daniel 7:6 states that the third empire, or** "beast"**, i.e. the leopard, had *four* heads. Daniel 8:8-9, however, mentions that this same empire, now presented as a goat, had *six* parts. The first part is called a** "great horn"**. Daniel 8:21 makes it clear that Alexander the Great is this great horn or** "first king"**, i.e. the first Greek king to conquer Jerusalem. In the two decades after his death, Alexander's dominion was split into four divisions, described in Daniel 8:8 as** "four notable ones"**. That makes five parts so far. Then it states in Daniel 8:9 that out of one of the four divisions a** "little horn" **emerged that grew** "exceedingly great"**. That makes six parts in total. But since the third empire is described in Daniel 7:6 as having *four heads*, what is the explanation?**

The COG interpretation of the four heads of the third beast is that they are the four divisions of the Greek Empire. However, this leaves Alexander's original empire, and the "little horn" **that grew** "exceedingly great"**, strangely unrepresented.**

In the Daniel 7 prophecy of the four beasts a "head" **depicts an independent power that rules over Jerusalem, while a** "horn" **is a power that emerges from a head, and rules over Jerusalem, but still remains attached to the head from which it emerged. However, in the Daniel 8 prophecy of the ram and the goat, it is the horns alone that are used to depict the powers, and not the heads. The six horns on the goat depict the totality of the Greek powers, but only four of these ruled over Jerusalem, and *these four correspond to the four heads of the third beast of Daniel 7* (the leopard).**

Alexander's united Greek Empire became the first of the four heads of the third beast when it conquered Jerusalem. Of the four divisions after Alexander, only two, the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Seleucid Empire, became heads at such time as they too became rulers over Jerusalem. After them the "little horn"**, i.e. the little city-state of Rome, originally founded by Greek colonists,** "which grew exceedingly great"**, i.e. which over the course of many centuries had grown into the Roman Republic, came to prominence. See "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS" for more about this.**

Rome conquered the westernmost Greek territories of Macedonia and Epirus in 168-167BC and, branching out from there "toward the south, and toward the east"**, conquered the remaining divisions of the Greek Empire in the following century. It also captured** "the pleasant land"**, i.e. Jerusalem and the Holy Land, by which it became the fourth and final head of the third beast (all quotes from Dan 8:9).**

Therefore, the identification of the bronze third power of the Daniel 2 statue as Greece must be understood in the sense that this third power had *four heads,* as per Daniel 7:6, meaning four separate powers that consecutively ruled Jerusalem, and that these four heads were 1) Alexander's Greek Empire, 2) the Ptolemaic Kingdom, 3) the Seleucid Empire, and 4) the Roman Empire.

So Rome is not depicted in Scripture as a totally new empire (requiring a separate beast), but rather as an offshoot of the Greek Empire. Therefore the bronze portion of Daniel's statue represents the entirety of the Greco/Roman empires that ruled over Jerusalem.

The bronze belly and hips of the statue should be seen as representing Alexander's Greek Empire and the two Greek powers that subsequently also occupied Jerusalem, i.e. the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Seleucid Empire. The two bronze thighs should be seen as representing the Roman extension of the Greek Empire that next ruled over Jerusalem, with one thigh picturing Rome and the other Constantinople.

It is noteworthy that both the Greek and Roman cultures made heavy use of bronze in the art of sculpture. Also, the vast majority of Roman coins were made of bronze.

The combined Greco/Roman empires ruled over Jerusalem from 333BC until 638AD, when the fourth power, depicted by the iron (lower) legs of Daniel's statue, conquered the Holy City. In Revelation 17:10 it says that this power will rule but for a "short space"**. This has caused much confusion, but the answer is simple:**

The power that defeated the final remnant of the Greco/Roman empires in Jerusalem was Islam. It is the fourth beast of Daniel 7. The lower parts of the two legs in the Daniel 2 statue, which are made of iron, picture Mecca and Medina, the two "holy cities" of Islam, in Arabia.

As a unified power, Islam ruled Jerusalem for only a *short time*, from 638AD till 661AD, before infighting among different factions saw the first of ten successive Islamic dynasties begin its rule over Jerusalem. These ten dynasties are pictured in Daniel 2 by the feet and ten toes of the statue, which are composed of iron and clay. They are also pictured in Daniel 7 by the ten horns of the fourth beast which is said to have "great iron teeth" **(v7).**

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The Muslims were a people who ruled by the sword. Their swords were made of iron, but not just any iron. They had finely developed iron making technologies that, pardon the pun, gave them an edge over their opponents. See the excerpt below from the Wikipedia article "Ferrous Metallurgy":

"Iron technology was further advanced by several inventions in medieval Islam, during the Islamic Golden Age (8th till 13th century). These included a variety of water-powered and wind-powered industrial mills for metal production, including geared gristmills and forges. By the 11th century, every province throughout the Muslim world had these industrial mills in operation, from Islamic Spain and North Africa in the west to the Middle East and Central Asia in the east. There are also 10th-century references to cast iron, as well as archaeological evidence of blast furnaces being used in the Ayyubid and Mamluk empires from the 11th century, thus suggesting a diffusion of Chinese metal technology to the Islamic world.

"Geared gristmills were invented by Muslim engineers, and were used for crushing metallic ores before extraction. Gristmills in the Islamic world were often made from both watermills and windmills. In order to adapt water wheels for gristmilling purposes, cams were used for raising and releasing trip hammers. The first forge driven by a hydropowered water mill rather than manual labour was invented in 12th century Islamic Spain.

"One of the most famous steels produced in the medieval Near East was ***Damascus steel*** used for swordmaking, and mostly produced in Damascus, Syria, in the period from 900 to 1750. This was produced using the crucible steel method, based on the earlier Indian wootz steel. This process was adopted in the Middle East using locally produced steels. The exact process remains unknown, but it allowed carbides to precipitate out as micro particles arranged in sheets or bands within the body of a blade. Carbides are far harder than the surrounding low carbon steel, so swordsmiths could produce an edge that cut hard materials with the precipitated carbides, while the bands of softer steel let the sword as a whole remain tough and flexible".

The "Damascus steel" technique is still used in blade manufacture today, resulting in bands or layers of steel that produce a stronger, sharper, more durable blade.

So the renown that the Muslims had for ruling by the sword, and the ease with which they cut off people's heads, is not without scientific foundation. It also becomes clearer why they are depicted as *iron* in Daniel's statue, although the descending value of the materials should also be seen as indicating an ever-deteriorating standard of nobility and culture in the sequence of empires.

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In 661AD, the first of the ten Islamic factions, the Umayyad dynasty, began its rule over Jerusalem.

One of the critical mistakes many end time Church of God expositors have made regarding Daniel's statue concerns the ten toes mentioned in Daniel 2:41-42. They commonly identify them as *a final ruling combine* of ten entities. However, when we make the logical comparison with the ten *fingers* of the statue, we immediately see that this interpretation is erroneous.

The hands and ten fingers of the statue are part of the silver empire, Medo-Persia. A quick perusal of history shows that during the time this empire ruled Jerusalem, from Cyrus the Great until Darius III, *ten* kings ruled successively in Medo-Persia. A few other Persian rulers are mentioned in the annals of history regarding this time period, but the lengths of their reigns are measured in days and months, and so no *regnal years* are credited to them. These short reigns occurred during times when a long-ruling monarch had died and a power struggle ensued over who was the legitimate successor to the throne.

We see therefore that the ten silver fingers are indicative of ten Medo-Persian rulers whose rule constituted *the entire duration* of this empire's dominion over Jerusalem. Therefore, logically, the same should apply to the ten *toes*. History indeed shows that after Caliph Omar's initial capture of Jerusalem a total of ten Islamic

dynasties seized control of the city, the first being the aforementioned Umayyad dynasty and the last being the Ottoman Empire which was dislodged from Jerusalem in 1917.

Daniel 7:7 depicts these same ten toes as ten horns. Verse 8 says that a "little horn" **would uproot three of the ten horns/toes, which is exactly what happened! It is well established that this** "little horn" **represents the Papacy/false Christianity, and indeed we see in history a total of three occasions when a "Christian" crusade succeeded in overthrowing an Islamic dynasty ruling over Jerusalem.**

The ten Islamic dynasties and the three "Christian" defeats of Islamic dynasties are listed by name on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES", as well as on the chart on the "HOME" page.

The fact that the ten toes *do not* denote an end time combine of ten powers, can also be deduced from the description in Daniel 2:41: "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay**".**

We see here that the *feet and toes* of iron and clay are *together* used to depict the continuation of the fourth kingdom's rule over Jerusalem, the commencement of which is pictured by the two legs of iron. The toes are therefore not just a tiny portion of time at the end of the kingdom's rule.

This is further confirmed by Daniel 2:34 which states that the end of the rule of these Gentile kingdoms is brought about by a rock (Christ) striking the *feet* of the statue, rather than the *toes*.

Where verse 41 uses the terms "iron" **and** "clay" **to portray the kingdom as** "divided"**, it is depicting the inherent animosity within Islam. This applies to the two main branches of Islam, namely *Sunni* and *Shia*, which profess differing beliefs and practices, and which both claim to be the legitimate version of this religion.**

Verse 42 mentions only the toes, not the feet, and states that they were to be "partly of iron and partly of clay"**, most likely meaning that some toes were iron and others were clay. It also states that they would be** "partly strong and partly brittle"**, or** "weak"**, as some translations say. This is seen in the fact that some of the dynasties were very strong and ruled for centuries, whereas others were much weaker and only ruled for short periods.**

Verse 43 says that these powers will "mingle themselves"**, but that they, like iron and clay,** "will not cleave one unto another"**. This indicates the various ethnicities making up the ten Islamic dynasties, which do not get on particularly well with each other: Arab, Egyptian, Syrian and Turkish, among others. It also applies to the many tribal factions within these ethnicities. The fact that after Omar's initial conquest there were ten Islamic dynasties that ruled over Jerusalem, and that this rule was usually obtained through warfare among these various groupings, bears witness to this division.**

The COG's generally teach that the ten toes picture a yet to be formed power bloc located in Europe that will be composed of ten separate nations or kings. Herbert Armstrong taught this message without ceasing, from the end of WW2 until the time of his death in 1986.

So we see that the misidentification of the iron power in Daniel's statue, which is the fourth beast of Daniel 7, is a major error. However, the error becomes compounded when the book of Revelation is thrown into the mix. It is generally understood that Daniel 2 and 7 as well as Revelation 13 and 17 all refer to the "Beast" powers. What has generally not been understood is that these chapters complement one another, each adding a variety of information to create one overall picture.

Amazingly, the WCG teaching on the "Beast" powers of Daniel 7 and Revelation 17 was that there are *two* sets of seven heads, and *two* sets of ten horns depicted. This convoluted "explanation" can be found in the old WCG publication "Who or What is the Prophetic Beast". Many COG's have continued in this teaching.

The centrefold chart in the above-mentioned booklet claims that the *fourth horn* of Daniel 7 corresponds with the *first head* of Revelation 17, the *fifth horn* of Daniel 7 corresponds with the *second head* of Revelation 17, and the *sixth horn* of Daniel 7 corresponds with the *third head* of Revelation 17 etc. This confusion turns what is a relatively easy picture into something incomprehensible.

It is also evident on this chart that, according to the common COG explanations, significant time gaps exist between certain of the ruling powers said to be represented by the horns. From the demise of Napoleon's kingdom in 1815, the supposed eighth horn, until the unification of Italy by Garibaldi in 1871, the beginning of the supposed ninth horn, there are more than 50 years without a ruling "horn"**. From the demise of Hitler in 1945, the end of the supposed ninth horn, until the presumed imminent tenth horn, there are now some 80 years without a ruling** "horn"**. This unconnected line of powers cannot be a satisfactory explanation of Daniel's prophecy.**

The simple meaning of the statue of Daniel 2 is that rulership of Jerusalem would be taken from the Jews, and the city would be trodden down by a series of Gentile powers. These same Gentile powers are depicted in Daniel 7, as well as in Revelation 13 and 17, as beasts with a total of "seven heads" **and** "ten horns"**, three of which are overthrown by a** "little horn"**, also described as a** "mouth speaking great things and blasphemies" **and a** "great whore"**. That's it - full story! Christ would then bring these** "times of the Gentiles" **to an end and re-establish the rule of the Jews over Jerusalem, until His own return to rule the Kingdom.**

One specific misunderstanding that needs to be cleared up relates to Revelation 17:12: "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast"**. Herbert Armstrong believed that the ten horns of Revelation 17, which equate to the ten toes of Daniel 2, would all rule together at the same** "hour" **in history, meaning a *short period* just prior to Christ's return.**

However, an "hour" **in prophecy indicates a designated period, but of non-specified duration. The passing of**

time has shown that each of these ten powers was to have their own particular period, or *hour*, in history, some for a short period and others for much longer, during which they would "make war with the Lamb **(Christ)" (v14), or in other words conquer and occupy His city, defile it with false religion, and oppress God's people. Note that while most translations of Revelation 17:12 say "for one hour", the word "for" does not appear in the original Greek text and so the passage could just as easily be rendered "at one hour".**

There are three major problems with the generally accepted explanation of the ten toes being an end time European power:

1) It takes the focus of the prophecy off Jerusalem.

2) It fails to recognise a place in the Daniel 2 statue for the Islamic powers, even though they ruled Jerusalem for a total of almost 1200 years.

3) It fails to fit the *parameters of time* as set by Daniel's prophecies.

Daniel 4 indicates by typology that the length of time given to the Gentile powers to trample down God's people was 2520 years, a period already foretold in Leviticus 26. *Those 2520 years have come to an end.* This is fully explained on the pages "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" and "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES".

As stated above, the identification of the bronze power of the Daniel 2 statue as Greece must include the understanding that this third beast had *four heads,* as per Daniel 7:6, meaning four separate powers that consecutively ruled Jerusalem, and that these four heads were:

1) the Greek Empire

2) the Ptolemaic Kingdom

3) the Seleucid Empire

4) the Roman Empire

The traditional, incorrect, COG explanation has been to interpret the four parts of Alexander's kingdom that were distributed among four of his generals, as the four heads of Daniel 7:6. It also holds Rome to be the fourth beast of Daniel 7, and the iron in the Daniel 2 statue, and consequently considers Rome to be the *seventh* head of the combined four beasts.

However, Revelation 17:10, talking about the seven heads of the "Beast", contradicts this view by stating that at the time John wrote Revelation, when Rome ruled Jerusalem, "five have fallen" **(Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Seleucid Empire),** "one is" **(Rome),** "and one is yet to come" **(Mecca/Medina - Islam).**

The COG view is also negated by the fact that one of the four divisions of Alexander's Greek empire was Thrace/ Asia Minor, ruled initially by Lysimachus. Did this division of Alexander's empire ever conquer Jerusalem? It never did. Did it control large portions of the world? It did not. How does it qualify to be reckoned among the heads of the "Beast"? It doesn't - not by any yardstick. Please see the page "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS" for more information.

There is an additional proof that the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is Mecca/Medina (Islam), and not Rome. This fourth beast is described in Daniel 7:19 as having "nails of brass" **or** "bronze claws"**. In other words, the power described as being made of iron and clay, Islam, has a portion of the substance of the *previous* power in it, i.e. the bronze of the Greco/Roman empires.**

This fits perfectly with what we have already seen, and what history confirms: the bronze claws (also depicted as the "little horn" **in Dan 7) picture the times that Roman Catholicism/"Christianity" was able to *claw back* rulership over Jerusalem, interrupting and eventually ending the rule of the Islamic dynasties. Roman Catholicism/"Christianity" in that process became the eighth head of the "Beast" mentioned in Revelation 17:11, but is** "of the seven" **in that it is actually a reconstitution of the sixth head of the "Beast" - the Roman Empire.**

So we see that the "little horn" **and the** "bronze claws" **on the fourth beast actually represent the *third* beast, since it is from the third, bronze power that Roman Catholicism/"Christianity" later emerged. The description of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 therefore shows that it is a composite. Whereas the first beast (the lion) pictures Babylon, the second beast (the bear) pictures Medo/Persia, and the third beast (the leopard) pictures Greco/ Rome, the fourth beast pictures the long rule of Islam as well as the forces of "Christianity" that three times displaced it in Jerusalem.**

The fact that the fourth beast is a composite is one reason why Daniel describes it as "different from all the others" **(Dan 7:19). Another reason is that while the first three beasts are defined by ethnicity, the fourth beast depicts religious affiliation.**

In conclusion, identifying the fourth power of the Daniel 2 statue (the lower legs of iron, and the feet of iron and clay) as Rome is a poorly thought through explanation. Embarrassingly, as Church media output over numerous decades has proclaimed this misidentification without ceasing, this final era of the Church is showing the blindness it was prophesied to have in the Laodicea Church era message.

There is still time to right the wrong, but it might be wishful thinking to expect that those who have beaten this drum for so long will reconsider the evidence and admit their error.

DANIEL 7 & 8 – JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS

Daniel 7 and 8 give us an overview of the Gentile powers that conquered and controlled Jerusalem from the year that Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar captured the city until the time that it returned to Jewish control after World War 2. These powers are depicted as a series of beasts.

In Daniel 2 the same Gentile conquerors are depicted in the statue of a man, as revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. These powers are almost always identified as the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. See the page "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" for a detailed explanation as to why this interpretation is *only partially correct*.

Leviticus 26, in verses 18, 21, 24 & 28, predicts four 2520 year periods of punishment that Israel would endure if they continually disobeyed God. Ultimately all these predictions came to pass. The first of these periods commenced with the division of the nation of Israel after King Solomon's death, and the second with the subsequent demise of the northern Kingdom of Israel. The third and fourth periods began with the conquest of the southern Kingdom of Judah, which occurred in two stages. See the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" for more about these periods of time.

The first Babylonian capture of Jerusalem, the capital of the Kingdom of Judah, and its people, the Jews, commenced the period referred to in Leviticus 26:24. As shown on the chart on the "HOME" page, from 575BC, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, until the last year of the Second World War and the Holocaust in 1945, there were exactly 2520 inclusive years.

Let's look at Daniel 7 and 8 and we will see that the Gentile powers described in these chapters are perfectly aligned with those of Daniel 2. My comments are in (brackets):

Daniel 7:1 "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 **(the sea is symbolic of the nations, i.e. unbelieving Gentiles (Rev 17:15). The nations represented by the four beasts successively conquered the "earth", or land of Israel (see verse 4) and specifically Jerusalem. These four were given great strength in warfare through demonic influence)**, diverse one from another **(here in Dan 7, four separate beasts are described with a total of seven heads, while in Rev 13 and 17 these four beasts are presented as one beast with seven heads).**

4 The first **(Babylon, which was the first "Beast" power to conquer Jerusalem)** was like a lion, and had eagle's wings **(symbolising the Babylonian Empire taking the Jews into captivity)**: I beheld till the wings thereof were

plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth **(its power over the Jews and the land of Israel was taken away)**, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it **(it became an ordinary nation again).**

5 And behold another beast, a second **(Medo-Persia)**, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side **(its Persian component was stronger than its Median component)**, 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 **(the three ribs symbolise the three empires it devoured and absorbed: Babylon, Lydia and Egypt).**

6 After this I beheld, and lo another **(Greco-Rome)**, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl **(the Roman Empire twice depopulated Judea, after the 67-73AD and 132-136AD wars)**; the beast had also four heads **(Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, the Seleucid Empire, and Rome)**; and dominion was given to it **(over Jerusalem).**

7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast **(Islam)**, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth **(Islam conquered and ruled with an iron sword - see "Daniel 2 - Interpretation Errors")**: 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 **(ten Islamic dynasties that successively ruled Jerusalem after the city's initial conquest by Caliph Omar. Omar was one of the immediate successors of Mohammed, whose religion emerged from the "holy cities" of Mecca and Medina in Arabia. The ten Islamic dynasties are listed by name on the page "The Two Witnesses" and on the chart on the "Home" page. This Islamic fourth beast ruled Jerusalem over a period of almost 1300 years).**

8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn **(Roman Catholicism/ "Christianity", in many respects a continuation of the fourth head of the third beast, Rome)**, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots **(three of the Islamic dynasties ruling Jerusalem were conquered by "Christian" forces)**: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man **(the Papacy, and by extension "Christian" religious and political leaders)**, and a mouth speaking great things **(lies).**

9 I beheld till thrones were cast down **("were put in place" - NKJV, "were set in place" - NIV)**, and the Ancient of days **(God the Father)** 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 **(of angels)** ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him **(the myriad people of the final "Beast" power, false Christianity)**: the judgment was set **("the court was seated" - NKJV, NIV)**, and the books were opened **(the record of "Christianity" was examined).**

11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake **(its last "great" words came from the mouth of German leader Adolf Hitler who was highly motivated by Rome's false Christian, Jew hating ideology, and who 1) planned to replace the Bible with his own book "Mein Kampf" in German churches, 2) planned, and began, to destroy God's chosen people, the Jews, and replace them with his own chosen people, the Germans, and 3) sought to create a one thousand year "reich" under German rule, as a counterfeit of Christ's prophesied, imminent, one thousand year reign on Earth)**: I beheld even till the beast was slain **(in 1945, after its final abominable act, the Holocaust)**, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame **(upon Christ's soon coming return - Rev 19:20).**

12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they **(also)** had their dominion **(over Jerusalem and the Jews)** taken away **(most "Beast" powers had long since lost control over Jerusalem, but still had many Jews living in their midst, who were therefore under their "dominion". In the aftermath of WW2, Jews from all nations, including the former "Beast" powers, were able to return to the Holy Land. For more on this see "The Two Witnesses")**: yet their lives **(the lives of the "Beast" powers)** were prolonged for a season and time **(until the return of**

Christ, which is why the peoples of the Western world still live by the heritage of false Christianity, and why the peoples of the Muslim world still live by the heritage of Islam).

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man **(Christ)** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days **(God the Father)**, and they brought him near before him **(to be coronated as King (Lk 1:31-32). Note that this coronation occurs after the time of Gentile control of Jerusalem has ended, and that it occurs in the presence of God the Father in Heaven, and so is unseen by humans. Very likely this took place in the year 2025 - see the reason for this at the end of this article. This is further discussed on the page "Daniel 11 & 12 - Kings of the North and the South").**

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom **(the Kingdom of God)**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him **(at His return)**: 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 **(four kingdoms)**, which shall arise out of the earth **("on earth" - Complete Jewish Bible; "in the earth" - Jubilee Bible, i.e. on the "earth", or land of Israel).**

18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom **(first the physical saints, i.e. the Jews after WW2, and later, upon Christ's return, the spiritual saints)**, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever**.**

19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast **(Islam)**, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass **(see "Daniel 2 - Interpretation Errors" for an explanation of these "nails of brass")**; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

20 And of the ten horns **(the ten Islamic dynasties)** that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn **(the little horn)** that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great **(greatly offensive)** things **(the Papacy, and by extension its "Christian" daughter churches, and "Christian" political leaders)**, whose look was more stout than his fellows**.**

21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints **(Jews and true Christians)**, and prevailed against them;

22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High **(in 1945)**; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom **(from 1948 onward - see the page "The Two Witnesses" to understand the significance of these years).**

23 Thus he said, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth **(the fourth Gentile power to conquer Israel, including Jerusalem)**, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth **(of Israel)**, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces**.**

24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings **(kingdoms, i.e. Islamic dynasties; the first of the ten, the Umayyad dynasty, began to rule Jerusalem in 661AD)** that shall arise: and another shall rise after them **(the Papacy, which gained independence in 686AD, and conquered Jerusalem in 1099AD for the first of three times)**; and he shall be diverse from the first **(the ten are Islamic; he is "Christian")**, and he shall subdue three kings **(by conquering three separate Islamic dynasties that ruled Jerusalem, in 1099, 1229 and 1917 respectively, discussed more fully on the page "The Two Witnesses" and listed on the chart on the "Home" page).**

25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High **(first and foremost here meaning the Jews, but also true Christians)**, and think to change times and laws **(the Papacy has long tampered with God's commandments, hiding the second commandment, changing the fourth**

commandment from Sabbath to Sunday, and splitting the tenth commandment into two, to retain a list of ten, among many other changes and perversions of the truth): and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time **(1260 inclusive years, from 686, when the Papacy became a "horn", i.e. an independent power, when it was permitted by the emperor in Constantinople to independently install its Popes, until 1945, when it lost control over the Jews and subsequently Jerusalem).**

26 But the judgment shall sit **(as described in verses 9 and 10)**, and they shall take away his dominion **(the Papacy/false Christianity is called "Babylon the Great" in Rev 18. Since 1945 it has been in a state described in that chapter as "fallen" - see the page "Babylon is Fallen")**, to consume and to destroy it unto the end **(the "Beast" powers will fully cease to exist at Christ's return).**

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 **(first the Jews, as we see today, and then the resurrected firstfruits upon Christ's return)**, 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**".**

Daniel 8.1 "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 **(in Persia)**; 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 **(Media and Persia)**: and the two horns were high; but one was higher **(stronger)** than the other, and the higher **(Persia)** came up last **(Persian king Cyrus conquered Media, and the two merged into one empire).**

4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him **(no other Gentile nations could withstand him)**, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great **(the Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire (which was the <u>first head of the "Beast</u>") and thereby the entire Middle East, including Israel and Jerusalem. Conquering Jerusalem made Medo-Persia the <u>second head of the "Beast</u>". Esther 1:1 states that the Persian Empire stretched from India to Ethiopia).**

5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat **(Greece)** came from the west on the face of the whole earth **(Greece conquered Medo-Persia's western territories including Israel and Jerusalem in 333-332BC following the Battle of Issus in southern Anatolia in modern-day Turkey. Conquering Jerusalem made Greece the <u>third head of the "Beast</u>")**, and touched not the ground **(lit. *earth* - the same Hebrew word "eretz" as used earlier in this verse - the Greek leader, Alexander the Great, conquered the "earth", or land of Israel without any battles on its territory; he did however touch "heaven", i.e. God's dwelling place on Earth, Jerusalem. Josephus states that Alexander personally offered sacrifice in the Temple, which only priests of God were allowed to do (Ant. 11.8.5). This symbolic act initiated a long period of Hellenistic religious and cultural defilement of the Holy Land and its people)**: and the goat had a notable horn **(Alexander)** 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 **(the 331BC Battle of Gaugamela in modern day northern Iraq saw the complete defeat of Medo-Persia by the Greeks).**

8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great **(Alexander, having already conquered Egypt and subjugated all of Persia, continued to make conquests as far as India)**: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken **(Alexander died at a young age in 323BC, from an unknown illness, while in Babylon)**; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven **(after Alexander's death the Greek Empire was divided into many different parts, but over the course of a few decades four major or "notable" divisions had been established, in the West, North, South and East of the original territory. These were:**

1) Macedonia, ruled originally by Cassander and subsequently by the Antigonid dynasty

2) Thrace and Asia Minor, ruled initially by Lysimachus, and later by the Attalid dynasty, over subsequent decades becoming known as the Kingdom of Pergamon, covering Western Asia Minor, with Thrace becoming part of the Macedonian territory

3) The Ptolemaic Kingdom, initially under Ptolemy I Soter, based in Egypt, which captured Jerusalem in 301BC, making the Ptolemaic Kingdom the fourth head of the "Beast"

4) The Seleucid Empire, initially under Seleucus I Nicator, covering Anatolia, Syria, Babylon, Persia and beyond, which captured Jerusalem in 200BC, making the Seleucid Empire the fifth head of the "Beast").

9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn **(the little city-state of Rome, which had originally been founded by Greek colonists from Macedonia - see the Wikipedia articles "Evander of Pallantium" and "Palatine Hill")**, which waxed exceeding great **(Rome grew steadily in might and territory, capturing Macedonia and Epirus in 168BC)**, toward the south, and toward the east **(in the following century Rome conquered the three remaining divisions of the Greek Empire)**, and toward the pleasant land **(Rome captured the land of Israel including Jerusalem in 63BC, making Rome the sixth head of the "Beast").**

10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven **(the inhabitants of Jerusalem)**; and it cast down some of the host **(Jews)** and of the stars **(true Christians)** to the ground, and stamped upon them**.**

11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host **(Christ)**, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down **(the Jerusalem Temple, along with the entire city, was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD).**

12 And an host **(another occupying power, i.e. the seventh head of the "Beast", which was Mecca/Medina - Islam)** was given *him* **("him" is in italics, and so is not part of the text)** against the daily sacrifice **(against the practice of the Jews' religion)** by reason of transgression **(because of the Jews' transgression against God)**, and it cast down the truth to the ground **(it introduced its own false religion, and built a counterfeit temple, i.e. the "Dome of the Rock", in the place where God's Temple had stood)**; and it practised, and prospered **(it captured Jerusalem from the Romans in 638, and ruled the city until 1917, interrupted only for a total of about 100 years by two "Christian" Crusades. During the first of these, in 1099AD, "Christianity" led by the Papacy, having become a power in its own right, independent of the Roman Empire, captured Jerusalem. It thereby became the "eighth" head of the "Beast" (Rev 17:11), but as the same verse clarifies, it is "of the seven", as it is in reality the reconstituted, or "healed" (Rev 13:3), sixth head. In 1917 a third period of "Christian" rule of Jerusalem began when forces of the British Empire captured the city. After the withdrawal of the British in 1948, the rule of the "Beast" powers came to an end with the establishment of the State of Israel. At that same time the War of Independence began, after which Jordanian Muslims controlled about 10% of Jerusalem from 1948 until the Six Day War in 1967).**

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 **(the Temple and the Temple Mount)** and the host **(the Jews)** to be trodden under foot?

14 And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days **(2300 years)**; then shall the sanctuary be

cleansed **(from Alexander's 333BC conquest of the Persians at the Battle of Issus, until the 1967 Six Day War when the last Islamic forces were driven out, there were 2300 inclusive years of defilement of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem at the hands of Gentile armed forces).**

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 **(until)** 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 last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed **(after 2300 years)** the end **(of the prophecy)** shall be**.**

20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings **(the kingdom)** of Media and Persia**.**

21 And the rough goat is the king **(the kingdom)** of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king **(Alexander the Great).**

22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation **(listed in verse 8)**, but not in his power **(none as large or powerful as Alexander's empire).**

23 And in the latter time of their kingdom **(the time of the Greek powers that continued to rule and defile the City of God after Alexander's time, i.e. the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Seleucid Empire)**, when the transgressors **(the Jews)** are come to the full **(at the time when the semi-autonomous Hasmonean Kingdom held sway in Jerusalem, and the various Jewish religious groups such as the Pharisees and the Sadducees had their origins)**, a king **(a kingdom)** of fierce countenance **(Rome)**, and understanding dark sentences **("skilled in intrigue" - NASB, "proficient at deception" - ISV)**, shall stand up **(and conquer Jerusalem).**

24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power **(rather, by Satan's power)**: and he shall destroy wonderfully **(totally destroy God's city and Temple in the 66-73AD First Jewish Revolt)**, and shall prosper, and practise **(rebuild Jerusalem as a pagan city, Aelia Capitolina)**, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people **(wipe Judea off the map at the time of the 132-136AD Bar Kokhba War).**

25 And through his **(subsequent)** policy **(of accepting "Christianity")** also he shall cause craft **(deceit)** to prosper **(to increase)** in his hand **(by turning Jerusalem into a "Christian" city)**; and he shall magnify himself in his heart **(appear righteous by practising "Christianity")**, and by peace **(by seeking to establish a united "Christian" empire)** shall destroy many **(people with different beliefs, including true Christians)**: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes **(by establishing the Papacy to usurp Christ's position as head of the Church, and through the introduction and enforcement of false Christian teachings)**; but he shall be broken without hand **(the Roman Empire's rule of Jerusalem was "broken" by Christ and then replaced with Islam).**

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 **(a period of 2300 years of Jerusalem's defilement by Gentile forces - see v14).**

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**".**

Some Concluding Remarks

From where we stand today, we can see that almost all of the events prophesied in Daniel 7 and 8 have come to pass and are able to be understood when we study the history of God's Holy City, Jerusalem. We also see that the powers described in Daniel 7 and 8 line up perfectly with those in Daniel 2.

It becomes clear that "the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation" **(Dan 8:13) concerns a 2300 year period of religious desecration of the Temple Mount at the hands of Gentile forces that began with Greek defilement of God's Temple, progressed to the Roman destruction of God's Temple, and concluded with an Islamic counterfeit of God's Temple built in the place where the true Temple once stood.**

The times of the Gentiles are now over, and none of the "Beast" powers will ever rule over Jerusalem again. In Daniel 7:12, however, we are told that their lives will be prolonged for some time, and consequently we see today that their desire to rule the Holy City still remains, as witnessed by the many wars fought over it since 1948.

In October 2023, the seventh head of the "Beast", Islam, in this end time led mainly by Iran, brutally attacked Israel from the coastal territory of Gaza in an attempt to recapture Jerusalem. The attack was rebuffed, but some 1200 Jews were slaughtered and hundreds more were taken captive by the Gazans.

Likewise, the eighth head of the "Beast", "Christianity", in this end time led mainly by the United States of America (USA), has also been actively fighting in and around the Holy Land, aiding the nation of Israel militarily, but often opposing it politically. Additionally, most leaders of "Christian" (as well as non-Christian) nations are calling for a "two state solution", which would see part of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, given back into Islamic hands. This is in stark contrast to what God has prophesied for Israel.

Revelation 19:19 tells us that the remnant of these "Beast" powers will fight Christ at His return, and these two religions, Islam and false Christianity, will be "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" **(v20), or in other words will cease to exist.**

Prophetic and Typological Light from the Scriptures

The Gentile nations are pictured as "waters" **(Isa 17:12, Lk 21:25, Rev 13:1 and 17:15). When the 2520 years of the Jews' dispersion came to an end in 1945, they were figuratively *drawn out of the waters* of the Gentile nations and given a new national start. We can see here a parallel with Moses, whose name means "drawn out of water", a name he was given when he was rescued from the River Nile as a baby (Ex 2:1-10). Continuing the picture, Moses, in his 80th year of life (Ex 7:1-7), was made leader over Israel and stood before the Pharaoh of Egypt demanding the release of the Children of Israel. This appears to typify Christ, in the 80th year since the**

Jews came out from under Gentile rule, after His coronation (see Dan 7:13-14 above – did this occur on the Day of Atonement?), forcing Satan to release the remaining Jewish captives in Gaza. The Biblical year that began in Abib/Nisan 2025 was that 80th year, and indeed the sudden prisoner exchange agreement, which was made on the Day of Atonement, and the release of the last of these captives ten days later during the Feast of Tabernacles, seems to have been through Christ's intervention.

It is also remarkable that just as the firstborn of Egypt (its leaders) were slain *en masse* at the time of the Exodus, so this ongoing Islam v Israel war has been witnessing the precise elimination of many leaders of the enemy nations that surround Israel.

As the Biblical year entered the 12th month (Adar, i.e. Feb/Mar 2026), the build-up of military forces in the Middle East, predominantly those of Iran (modern Persia), the USA, and the nation of Israel ("the kings of the earth**"), began to fulfil Revelation 19:19, indicating the nearness of the second coming of Christ.**

On Adar 10 (Feb 28), Israel and the USA launched a massive military assault against Iran. On that day, the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khamenei and dozens of other prominent leaders in his regime were eliminated.

The fact that this occurred on the tenth day of the month is significant, as the tenth day is highlighted frequently in Scripture: The setting aside of the Passover lamb every year under the Old Covenant, Joshua leading the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land, and Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, all took place on the tenth day of the first month. Jerusalem was besieged by Babylon on the tenth day of the tenth month, and the Temple was burnt down by them a year and a half later on the tenth day of the fifth month. Josephus records that the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70AD also took place on the tenth day of the fifth month. The Day of Atonement occurs every year on the tenth day of the seventh month. In all these examples we can see that rulership is the central theme.

The significance of the 12th month can be seen in the account in the book of Esther: In the narrative of this book, Haman, the king's official, plots to destroy the Jews in the Persian Empire, determining by lot which month of the year this annihilation is to take place. We are informed that the lot falls on Adar, *the 12th month*. However, the tables are turned, the chosen month seeing instead the death of Haman's henchmen. Other similarities have also been noted between this historical event in Persia and the current war with Iran (formerly Persia).

So we see that all throughout the history of Jerusalem God's hand is clearly evident. This also applies to recent events in the Middle East. Together they show that Christ's return to Earth and the commencement of His rule of the Holy City are now imminent. At that time all the prophecies of Daniel will have been completely fulfilled by the Almighty God who inspired them to be written more than two and a half millennia ago.

13

DANIEL 11 & 12 – KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

The long prophecy found in Daniel chapters 11 and 12 is one of the most complex we are given in Scripture. What is obvious to most readers is that the entire period from Daniel's time until the second coming of Christ is covered here. What is much harder to discern is the point where the prophecy moves from the past into the present.

The text at various times uses the titles "king of the north" **and** "king of the south"**. Many modern commentators, including the Churches of God, say that there will be a yet *future appearance of these powers*. Others say that these roles have long since been fulfilled. What is the correct interpretation?**

Those who see a future fulfilment of the roles of the Kings of the North and the South imagine them to be rising powers in Europe and in the Islamic world, even nominating specific countries that they think will be the final players in this prophecy. In earlier times however, very credible explanations were put forward showing that the prophecies concerning these "kings" were fulfilled in the distant past.

Here is an excerpt from author and lawyer Philip Mauro (1859-1952) on this subject (bold text in brackets inserted):

"Daniel 11 makes difficult reading for those who are unacquainted with the history of the times to which the prophecy recorded therein relates. The latter part of the chapter has proved difficult also for expositors, among whom there is a wide difference of opinion as to the persons and events referred to. Down to the end of verse 30 there is practical agreement among expositors as to the meaning of the prophecy, and the events by which its several predictions were fulfilled. We are not aware of any sound and competent teacher who does not see, in verses 1–30, the main outlines of Persian history, the rise of Alexander of Macedon, the division of his empire between his four generals, the incessant wars between the Seleucids (kings of Syria, "the north") and the Ptolemies (kings of Egypt, "the south"), and the career of Antiochus Epiphanes that odious persecutor of the Jews, spoken of as the "vile person" (verse 21).

"But there has been a disagreement as to the application of verses 31–35, and as to who is meant by "the people that do know their God", who "understand" and "instruct many." Some of the older commentators, as Bishop **(Thomas)** Newton, leap over some centuries at this point, and locate the fulfillment in the times of the gospel, making "the people who do know their God", etc. to be the apostles and preachers of our era. But this is quite inadmissible, according to the plain terms of the prophecy itself, as we shall point out. And indeed the great body of competent expositors finds the fulfillment of these verses (31–35) in the doings of that remarkable family of Asmoneans **(Hasmoneans)**, generally called the Maccabees, who arose for the deliverance of the Jews in the reign of Antiochus, and who faithfully served their people as rulers and priests for 130 years**" (The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation, 1944, p118-119)**.

And here are some excerpts from minister and author James Farquharson (1781-1843) regarding Daniel 11:36

where a personage called "the king" **is introduced:**

"The 36th verse, and those following it in the eleventh chapter, form very literal predictions of the character, and deeds, and events of the reign of a king, who succeeded, not any Syrian king, but the Maccabees, and their descendants the Asmoneans.

"Herod was the king of Daniel's people; and he was the only king after Daniel's time, who held, to the end of his life, the sovereign power over all that people, independently of, and separate from, the priestly authority.

"He is styled emphatically, by the Evangelist Matthew, "Herod the king", and by Luke, "Herod the king of Judea"" **(Daniel's Last Vision and Prophecy, 1838, p97 and 99)**.

Mauro also identifies "the king" **in Daniel 11:36 as King Herod:**

"It would be strange indeed if, in an outline which gives prominence to Xerxes, Alexander, the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the Maccabees, there were no mention of that remarkable personage who exerted upon Jewish affairs and destinies an influence greater than they all, and who sat upon the throne of Israel when Christ was born.

"A glance at the context is enough to show that "the king" of verse 36 cannot mean either of the kings of verse 27. Moreover, these are never spoken of as "the king", but always, both before and after verse 36, as "the king of the north", or "the king of the south", as the case may be. Nor does the Scripture speak of any "king" who is to arise at the time of the end of this present age, and who answers at all to the description of the prophecy.

"What has caused able commentators to go astray at this point, and in some instances to seek far afield for the interpretation of this passage, is the fact that they were unable to find anyone among the successors of Antiochus who answers at all to the description of "the king". But they have overlooked two things which, had they heeded them, would have kept them from being so misled. Those things are, first, that the prophecy has not for its subject the kingdoms of Syria or Egypt, *but the people of Israel*, and hence the expression, "the king", without other qualification, would mean one who was king over Daniel's people; and second, that the verses immediately preceding (31–35) relate wholly to the affairs of the Jews under the Asmonean princes, and hence the terms of the prophecy itself lead us to look at this point for the beginning of a new order of things in Israel. And that is just what history certifies to us; for, precisely at this juncture of affairs, the Asmonean dynasty was brought to an end by violence and bloodshed, and it was replaced by that of a "king", who answers perfectly to the description of the last part of the prophecy" **(The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation, 1944, p140-141)**.

In making comments on the Biblical text below, I will for the most part allow myself to be guided through Daniel 11:30-12:3 by the very able explanations of Mauro and Farquharson, but from there on I will divert to my own explanation to cover the time up until the point where it is foretold to Daniel that he shall "stand in thy lot at the end of the days" **(Dan 12:13).**

In Daniel 11:21, Antiochus IV Epiphanes is introduced as "a vile person"**. He was at that point in history the** "king of the north"**, i.e. the ruler of the Seleucid Empire, located to the north of Israel, with Israel being part of that empire's realm. The Seleucid Empire was the fifth head of the** "beast" **powers described in Daniel 7, i.e. the fifth major independent power to conquer Jerusalem, after Babylon, Persia, Greece and the Ptolemaic Kingdom.**

In Daniel 11:25, Antiochus is shown as successfully attacking the Ptolemaic "king of the South"**, headquartered in Egypt, and returning afterwards to his own land, but not before setting** "his heart against the holy covenant" **as stated in verse 28.**

This is elaborated on in I Maccabees 1:21-24, where it is related that Antiochus in 169BC "arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures which he found. Taking them all, he departed to his own land**".**

Daniel 11:29 states that Antiochus once again attacked the king of the South, but this time the victory did not go to Antiochus.

Let's start reading from Daniel 11:30 (my comments on the text are in brackets):

Daniel 11:30 "For the ships of Chittim **(the Romans)** shall come against him **(thwart Antiochus' conquest of Ptolemaic Egypt)**: therefore he shall be grieved, and return **(turn back)**, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return **(to Jerusalem, but this time sending one of his generals, see below)**, and have intelligence with **(take the side of)** them that forsake the holy covenant **(regarding this time period, I Macc 1:11-15 says: "In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying: Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen, that are round about us; for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow. So this device pleased them well. Then certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king (Antiochus), who gave them licence to do after the ordinances of the heathen. Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem, according to the customs of the heathen. And made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen, and were sold to do mischief". Those who were in favour of this "Hellenisation", i.e. the adoption of the customs, worship and lifestyle of Greek culture, were aided, violently, by the Greek/Seleucid occupiers of the Holy Land. However, the forsaking of the worship of the true God on the part of many led them into direct conflict with those Jews who wished to continue in the traditional religion of their fathers).**

31 And arms **(armed forces)** shall stand on his **(Antiochus')** part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate **(two years after Antiochus' first assault on Jerusalem, he sent a general by the name of Apollonius with a force of 22,000 men who inflicted great violence upon Jerusalem, forbidding, upon penalty of death, the practice of the true religion, and instead brutally enforcing the practice of Greek religion, defiling the Temple in the process - II Macc 5:24-27, 6:1-6).**

32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries **(those who obeyed the Seleucid conquerors and adopted Greek culture and religion were richly rewarded)**: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits **(the books of the Maccabees speak at length about the exploits of Mattathias and his sons, in particular Judas Maccabeus, and those who rallied around them. These refused to abandon the true religion and waged war against the Seleucids and apostate Jews for years).**

33 And they that understand among the people **(initially those mentioned above)** shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days **(when Antiochus himself had captured Jerusalem, two years before he sent Apollonius, some forty thousand Jews were killed and about as**

many taken captive, as recorded in II Macc 5:14. The ongoing punishments meted out by the Seleucids were fierce, as seen for instance in the account of the seven brothers and their mother who were viciously put to death for refusing to eat pork, as recorded in II Macc 7. See also II Macc 6:7-10 which details the murder of the mothers who circumcised their baby boys in defiance of the instructions of the Seleucid occupiers. The time period of this oppression was from approximately 169BC until about 142BC, as can be derived from I Macc 1:10, 1:20 and 13:41).

34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help **(initially, when the battles were not always going their way, the righteous Jews were but few, i.e. a relatively small band of fanatic resistance fighters (I Macc 3:10-26). In I Macc 3:18-19 Judas Maccabeus remarks just before one of his engagements with the Seleucids that "with the God of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude, or a small company, for the victory of battle stands not in the multitude of a host, but strength comes from heaven")**: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries **("many who are not sincere will join them" [NIV]. But when some degree of autonomy was won from the Seleucids from about 140BC, the Jews in general, even if reluctantly, fell in line with the rebellion and the Hasmonean period ensued).**

35 And some of them of understanding shall fall **(many died in the wars between the Seleucids and the pious Jews, but also in the subsequent civil wars between the Sadducees and Pharisees)**, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end **(the end of the Seleucid Empire and Hasmonean period)**: because it is yet for a time appointed **(the appointed time of the commencement of Roman rule over Jerusalem, i.e. the sixth head of the "Beast" powers, in 63BC).**

36 And the king **(Herod the Great, the first king of Judea appointed by Rome, in 37BC)** shall do according to his will **(eliminate all opposition to his will, including from his own family)**; and he shall exalt himself **(at the expense of all others. Josephus says in Ant. 17.8.1 that Herod "was of great barbarity towards all men equally")**, and magnify himself above every god **(every false god),** and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods **(the true God. When God was born of flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, Herod, with the full intent of murdering Him, lied to the wise men, saying "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him" - Matt 2:8)**, and shall prosper **(Herod and his descendants continued to reign over, and oppress, the people of God)** till the indignation be accomplished **(the destruction of the Jewish nation that would reject Christ)**: for that that is determined **(in the Seventy Week Prophecy of Dan 9)** shall be done**.**

37 Neither shall he regard the god of his fathers **(Herod was Idumean by birth. John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean leader and high priest in Jerusalem from 134BC-104BC had forced the Idumeans to be circumcised and convert to Judaism during his reign (Josephus, Ant. 13.9.1). This shows that the Idumeans were not originally worshippers of the true God. Josephus refers to Herod as a "half-Jew" in Ant 14.15.2. The original god of the Idumeans was Qos or Qaus)**, nor the desire of women **(children are the desire of women. Amongst many others, Herod murdered a number of his own children and also killed the infants in and around Bethlehem shortly after the time of Christ's birth)**, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all **(Herod was a total egomaniac).**

38 But in his estate **(instead)** shall he honour the god of forces **("fortresses", as also found in verses 7, 10, 19 and 39. Herod loved the overt display of power in great building works)**: and **(in the process)** a god whom his fathers knew not **(the true God)** shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things **(by magnificently enlarging and beautifying the Jerusalem Temple, exactly in time for Christ's first coming).**

39 Thus **(likewise)** shall he do in the most strong holds **(build many fortresses, such as at Masada, Herodium, Jericho, Machaerus, Caesarea, as well as at Jerusalem)** with **(for)** a strange god **(a human god. Herod the Great usually dedicated his building works to Caesar Augustus, who was worshipped as a god)**, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory **(Herod was infatuated with power, i.e. the emperor's power, and as an**

extension of that, his own power. His grandiose building endeavours were meant to display that power): and he shall cause them to rule over many **(Herod maintained Rome's rule from his fortresses)**, and shall divide the land for gain **(in Ant. 15.8.5 Josephus states that Herod, in rebuilding the city of Samaria, "contrived to bring there many of those who had been assisting him in his wars" (retired soldiers) and that "he parted the adjoining country, which was excellent, among the inhabitants of Samaria" and that this was all "for his own security, and a monument of his magnificence").**

40 And at the time of the end **(of the Ptolemaic Kingdom)** shall the king of the south **(the Ptolemaic Kingdom, based in Egypt)** push at him **(at Herod, in an attempt to usurp some of his territory in the Holy Land)**: and the king of the north **(Roman forces, led by Octavian)** shall come against him **(against the Ptolemaic Kingdom, led by Cleopatra VII allied with Marc Antony)** like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships **(clashing at the famous naval battle known as the Battle of Actium in 31BC, with victory going to Octavian)**; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over **(Octavian continued victoriously on his way south, as a result of which Rome became firmly established as the sixth head of the "Beast", being in full control of the land of Israel as well as the adjacent countries).**

41 He shall enter also into the glorious land **(the following year, 30BC, Octavian attacked Egypt by way of Israel. Cleopatra and Marc Antony had fled back to Egypt after their defeat at Actium the previous year)**, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon **(a Roman expedition into these countries at that time failed).**

42 He **(Octavian)** shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries **(the whole region)**: and the land of Egypt shall not escape**.**

43 But **(And)** he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt **(how could this prophecy be about a time still in the future, when Egypt today ranks among the poorer and, as Scripture foretells, "the basest of countries" (Eze 29:15) and is certainly not known for its wealth? However, at the time of fulfilment, Egypt was still fabulously wealthy)**: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps **(the Roman Empire swallowed up the Ptolemaic Kingdom and its surrounding territories. Shortly after his victory in this war, Octavian became the first Roman emperor, calling himself Caesar Augustus).**

44 But **(switching back to Herod, whose hold on power in Judea was now uncontested due to Octavian's victory over the Ptolemaic Kingdom, and Herod's allegiance to him)** tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him **(trouble Herod. Matthew 2:1-12 says that Herod "was troubled" by the wise men who came "from the East", and who would have arrived in Jerusalem travelling from the North, announcing the birth of Christ, the "king of the Jews")**: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many **(murder the infants in Bethlehem in his attempt to kill Christ).**

45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas **(the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea)** in the glorious holy mountain **(Jerusalem - Ps 48:1. Herod had a personal palace in Jerusalem)**; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him **(help him *successfully*. Herod was struck with dreadful ailments in his latter years, which led to a slow and very painful death. Many physicians tried in vain to help him. Josephus records Herod's sufferings at length, as well as his violent, murderous nature which remained till the very end)".**

Daniel 12:1 "And at that time **(the time of Herod and his successors)** shall Michael **(Christ)** stand up **(the archangel Michael (Jude 9) is used here as *a type of Christ*, for the following reasons: firstly, because angels are on a lower level than God and Christ, and, as a man, Christ appeared in a lower form of life than His usual form; secondly, because angels are messengers of God, and Mal 3:1, Mk 1:14 etc, show that Christ was God's messenger, sent to proclaim the message of the Kingdom of God; and thirdly, because Michael is portrayed in Dan 10:13 and Rev 12:7 as one who makes war on God's behalf, which is exactly what Christ did at His first coming, when He fought against Satan and was victorious)**, the great prince which standeth for the children of

thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble **(the "great tribulation" on those who rejected Christ, i.e. the 67-73AD Roman war on the Holy Land, at the midpoint of which Jerusalem was destroyed)**, such as never was since there was a nation **(of God's people)** even to that same time: and **(but)** at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book **("thy people" in Dan 9:24 are Daniel's *physical* countrymen, as the fulfilment of that prophecy bears out. Here, however, the clause "every one that shall be found written in the book" is added to "thy people". This must be referring to Daniel's *converted* countrymen, who fled Judea before the fall of the nation, having been forewarned by Christ in His Olivet Prophecy. The physical Jews also survived as a people, but with great loss of life).**

2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake **(this is talking about the gospel being preached from Christ's time onward and a spiritual awakening taking place in individuals as a result of God's spirit working with them. This process will continue until Christ's second coming and throughout His Kingdom when all the dead will be resurrected (Acts 24:15). Mauro says, "Isaiah describes the people of Israel as being under the influence of "the spirit of deep sleep" (Isaiah 29:10). Paul paraphrases another word of Isaiah (Isaiah 60:1) as having the meaning, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14). And the Lord Himself declared that the era of this spiritual awakening had come, when He said, "The hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). In both these last two passages the reference is to those who were spiritually dead, as all would agree" - The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation, 1944, p109)**, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt **(some will "endure until the end" (Matt 24:13) of their lives and attain everlasting spirit life, while others will not).**

3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever **(this is where we see the prophecy carry down into our time. The preaching of the gospel, leading to those who are spiritually dead coming to an awakening, is still occurring today, but the time of shining "as the brightness of the firmament" will not begin until the first resurrection at Christ's return. This is the same time when Daniel will be resurrected - v13).**

4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end **(the time of Christ's first coming and its aftermath, which brought an end to the Old Covenant and the Roman province of Judea)**: many shall run to and fro **(the apostles, and those who followed after them, preaching the gospel throughout the world)**, and knowledge shall be increased **(Christ added the greatest wealth of knowledge we have, through the writings of the New Testament. In Rev 5-11 Christ unsealed the sealed prophecies of Daniel, greatly elaborating on them. As a result, it was made possible for the understanding of these to *increase* over time, by people all over the world, as the prophesied events came to pass).**

5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river**.**

6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders **(how long until all the prophecies given to Daniel are fulfilled)**?

7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half **(1260 inclusive years, from 691 until 1950, see verse 11)**; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished **(the RSV more correctly reads: "when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished". The phrase "when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" refers to three successive milestones, the timing of which are given in this verse, verse 11 and verse 12. Christ foretold in Lk 21:24 that "Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled". After this 2520 year period came to an end in the last year of WW2, the Jews speedily regained their country (see the page "The Two Witnesses"). In 1948 they declared the State of Israel, then prevailed in the 1948/1949 War of Independence**

and re-established their government, known as the Knesset, in Jerusalem at the end of 1949, thus making 1950 their first year of sovereign rule in the Holy City. In July 1950 the Knesset issued the "Law of Return", which allowed all Jews in the world to return to Israel. This restoration of sovereign Jewish rule in Jerusalem, and the official declaration permitting the Jews to return to the Holy Land, was the first of the three prophesied milestones).

8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end **(the outcome)** of these things?

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

10 Many shall be purified **(through the centuries of the Christian era until the time of Christ's return)**, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand**.**

11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away **(foreshadowed in Dan 8:12)**, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days **(i.e. 1290 inclusive years. The beginning of this prophecy was fulfilled when non-Muslims (in practice meaning Jews) were banned from praying (i.e. from offering their spiritual daily sacrifice) on the Temple Mount at the time that it was turned into an Islamic place of worship in the late 7th century, when the Dome of the Rock was constructed in the place where the Temple had once stood. This ban from praying on the Temple Mount is the main reason why the Jews for so long have prayed at the Wailing Wall instead. The year 1950, which is 1260 inclusive years since the 691AD construction of the Dome of the Rock, marked the first year of sovereign Jewish rule in Jerusalem, which had been restored over the approximately 90% of the city (Rev 11:13) that the Jews had captured in the War of Independence. In the 1967 Six Day War, the Jews captured the remaining 10% of Jerusalem. In 1980, 1290 inclusive years since the construction of the Dome of the Rock, the Knesset officially annexed the last 10% of Jerusalem by passing the "Jerusalem Law", which includes the momentous declaration that "*Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel*". This restoration of Jewish sovereignty to *all* of Jerusalem, 1290 years since the construction of the Dome of the Rock, was the second milestone by which "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end". This crucially returned the Temple Mount, the place where the Dome of the Rock still stands, back into Jewish hands. As can be seen on the chart on the "Home" page, the year 1980AD equates to 5949AM. This was the 49th year of the 119th jubilee period from Creation. Leviticus 25:8-10 states that in every 49th year the Jubilee year was to be proclaimed, referring to the 50th year, when all land was to be returned to its original owners. How fitting that the proclamation of Jerusalem's full return to Jewish ownership occurred in a 49th year!).**

12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days **(meaning 1335 inclusive years since the building of the Dome of the Rock, which was the Biblical calendar year that began in March 2025, and which was also the year 5994 from Creation. This brought us to the third milestone by which "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" (v7). This year saw the authorised restoration of the "daily sacrifice", i.e. prayer to the God of Israel on the Temple Mount, when a ban was lifted that had by and large been in place since the 7th century AD. This year also saw the downfall of Iran, the end time leader of the seventh head of the "Beast", as well as the large-scale elimination of countless government, military and scientific leaders of the Islamic countries that have attacked Israel in recent times. In the process, the nation of Israel has risen to be *an invincible military powerhouse*. Thus, the blessing of victory over their enemies (Lev 26:7-8) that had been withheld for 2520 years has now been realised, and "the shattering of the power of the holy people" has come to a full end, only eighty years after the Jews emerged from the Holocaust as a broken and stateless people. See the page "Revelation 13 - The Beast" for the importance of the number 5994 in Bible chronology).**

13 But go thou **(Daniel)** thy way till the end **(till the end of your life)**: for thou shalt rest **(in the grave)**, and stand in thy lot **(be resurrected into your allotted place in God's Kingdom)** at the end of the days **(when the 1335**

years have come to an end, and Christ returns to Jerusalem)".

Although this is speculation, the year 2026/5995AM appears to make sense as the year of Christ's return for the following reasons:

1) Jacob (or Israel), a type of Christ, was 78 years old when he began seven inclusive years of work for Laban, for the right to marry Rachel in his 84th year. This can be ascertained by comparing the ages of Jacob and Joseph when Jacob entered Egypt, along with the fact that Joseph was born in Jacob's 14th inclusive year of service to Laban when Jacob was 91. In 1948/5917AM Christ re-established the nation of Israel (Jacob) in the Holy Land. In the year 2026/5995AM this nation is therefore 78 years old in the same year that Christ, upon His return, would begin seven inclusive years of work, during the last of which, 2032/6001AM, He would marry His bride (the Church) and together they would begin producing the second harvest for God's Kingdom (Rev 19:1-9, 21:1-2).

2) As explained in the article "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS", the Gentile nations are pictured as "waters" **(Isa 17:12, Rev 17:15). When the 2520 years of the Jewish dispersion came to an end in 1945, they were figuratively drawn out of the waters of the Gentile nations and given a new national beginning. We see here a parallel with the story of Moses, who is a type of Christ, and whose name means "drawn out of water", a name he was given when he was rescued from the River Nile as a baby (Ex 2:1-10). Moses, in his 80th year of life (Ex 7:1-7), having been made the leader of Israel, stood before the Pharaoh of Egypt demanding the release of the Children of Israel. This appears to typify Christ, having been coronated King in Heaven (Dan 7:13-14), standing up against Satan on behalf of the Jews in 2025/5994AM, the 80th year since the Jews came out from under Gentile rule in 1945. It was in his 81st year that Moses led Israel out of Egypt. This would correspond to the year 2026/5995AM, with Christ resurrecting spiritual Israel (the Church).**

3) Joshua, a type of Christ, took seven years to conquer and settle the land of Israel, a type of God's Kingdom. From the year 5995AM until the year 6001AM there are seven inclusive years, the last of which would be the first year of Christ's prophesied millennial rule, lasting until 7000AM. Joshua was appointed leader in the year prior to the beginning of this conquest (Num 20:28-29, 33:38, 27:15-23), which is likely a type of Christ's coronation as King in 5994AM.

4) King Solomon, a type of Christ, spent a total of 8 years building the first Jerusalem Temple, a type of the Church (I Kings 6:1,37-38). In the first year the foundation was laid and during the following 7 years the structure was erected. This may well picture Christ's coronation as King in the year 5994AM, and the setting up of His spiritual Temple during the years 5995-6001AM.

5) Just as there was a prophesied 2520 year period of Gentile control of Jerusalem, beginning with the Babylonian conquest, so there was another 2520 year period prophesied, running from the *fall* of Babylon until the final demise of all the Gentile powers that have controlled Jerusalem. This is the subject of an obscure prophecy found in Daniel 5, which appears as a cryptic phrase written by "the fingers of a man's hand" **(Dan 5:5) on the wall in King Belshazzar's palace. The phrase reads** "mene, mene, tekel, upharsin" **(Dan 5:25), which is a list of weights, and is explained by expositors at least as far back as William Miller as follows: *mene* refers to *a mina*, *tekel* refers to *a shekel*, and *upharsin* refers to *half a mina*. If we consult Ezekiel 45:12 in the RSV, which takes the reading of this verse from the Septuagint, we can see that a mina equals 50 shekels, and therefore *mene* (50 shekels), *mene* (50 shekels), *tekel* (1 shekel), *upharsin* (25 shekels) equals 126 shekels. Ezekiel 45:12 also tells us that one shekel equals 20 *gerahs*, which means that 126 shekels equals 2520 gerahs. As seen with Joseph, in Genesis 40, interpreting three branches and three baskets as three *days*, the 2520 gerahs should be interpreted as 2520 days. However, because this prophecy in Daniel 5 is a prophecy of duration (i.e. it concerns the entire time during which control of Jerusalem** "is divided" **(Dan 5:26) between many Gentile powers until they lose that control and ultimately come to their full demise), the 2520 days refer to 2520 years. As seen on**

the chart on the "HOME" page, from the capture of Babylon by the Persians in 494BC/3476AM, there are 2520 inclusive years until the current year 2026AD/5995AM, when we should expect the events of Revelation 19:19-21 to occur.

6) As shown above in Daniel 12:6-12, "the shattering of the power of the holy people" **came to an end in 2025/5994AM. In verse 13, Daniel is then told that he will be resurrected** "at the end of the days"**, i.e. when the 1335 years prophesied in verse 12 have come to an end. This must be referring to the following year, 2026/5995AM, otherwise there would be no direct link between verses 12 and 13, and so the question posed in verse 6 would be left unanswered. Note that the same applies with the Seventy Week Prophecy, which foretells Christ's *first* coming: In the year *following* the 69 week stage of the prophecy (Dan 9:26) Christ is cut off from His existence with God in Heaven and begotten in Mary's womb. See the article "FULFILLED PROPHECIES" for a full explanation of this.**

Some Concluding Comments

The reason this prophecy of Daniel speaks at length about "the king of the south" **and** "the king of the north" **is because of the place that these two Jerusalem ruling powers fill in Daniel's earlier prophecies. The king of the South, i.e. the Ptolemaic Kingdom, was the *fourth* head of the "Beast" powers of Daniel 7, and the king of the North, i.e. the Seleucid Empire, was the *fifth* head. Rome succeeded them as the *sixth* head to rule over Jerusalem.**

In regard to this establishment of Roman rule, the Wikipedia article "Battle of Actium" states, "Octavian's victory at Actium gave him sole, uncontested control of "Mare Nostrum" ("Our Sea", i.e., the Roman Mediterranean) and he became "Augustus Caesar" and the "first citizen" of Rome. The victory, consolidating his power over every Roman institution, marked Rome's transition from republic to empire. Egypt's surrender after Cleopatra's death marked the demise of both the Hellenistic Period and the Ptolemaic Kingdom, turning it into a Roman province**".**

The dating of the construction of the Dome of the Rock to 691AD is based on the actual date that the builders wrote on a plaque on the Dome itself, which is the Islamic year 72. The Islamic calendar is approximately 354 days a year in length, consisting of 12 lunar months, with six of these usually having 30 days, and six having 29 days. Therefore, it is out of sync with all other calendars, and this is why for instance the Islamic month of Ramadan can fall in any month on our Roman calendar.

As shown here: https://hijri.habibur.com/72/ , the Islamic year 72 ran from June 4, 691 until May 22, 692.

Since the Biblical calendar year begins in either March or April (Ex 12:2), approximately 10 months of the Islamic year 72 correspond to the year 691AD (or to be more precise 4660AM). Therefore, the greatest likelihood is that 72 equals 691. Additional proof of this can be seen in how the 1260, 1290 and 1335 years of Daniel 12:7, 11 and 12 terminate in 1950, 1980 and 2025 respectively, as mentioned above. These are 1260, 1290 and 1335 *inclusive* year spans, i.e. counting the first year and the last year of a given period. God shows

this principle in II Kings 18:9-10, and it can also be seen with other Biblical timelines.

Some sources say that 691AD was the *completion* year of the Dome of the Rock, but the in-depth study attached here shows that it was the commencement year. This makes sense, as it would be more likely that the Jews would be banned from the Temple Mount at the *commencement* of the construction of this Islamic "holy" site, rather than at its completion. Jews were considered unclean by Muslims (e.g. they weren't allowed to touch food in stores unless they bought it), so they wouldn't have wanted them anywhere near their Dome from the time it started to go up.

God's hand in history, especially when it pertains to the affairs of His people, His Holy Land and His Holy City, is clearly discernible. At major turning points in Israel's history, we see that major personalities are raised up among their oppressors for specific purposes. The Pharaoh of the Exodus, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus the Great and Adolf Hitler all fall into this category. Likewise, Herod the Great was raised up for a special purpose, i.e. to prepare Judea in a physical way for Christ's first coming.

Therefore, the fact that Roman power over Israel and its surrounding regions was consolidated during the early years of Herod's reign should not surprise us. This created the stability required to make the nation ready. The magnificent remodelling of the Jerusalem Temple at this precise juncture in history was also undoubtedly by God's design. Herod became king of Judea in 37BC; Roman rule in the entire region became absolute in 31-30BC; Octavian became the first Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, in 27BC; and Herod the Great began his Temple work in about 18BC. Christ was most likely born in 5BC.

Crucial to understanding the timing of Biblical prophecies is knowing that the words "end" **and** "time of the end" **mean different things in different places in Scripture. Their meaning must be derived from the context. They may be referring to the end of a particular era, the end of a particular prophecy, the end of a ruling dynasty, the end of the life of a particular individual etc. Unfortunately, when modern day expositors see the word** "end" **in Scripture, they tend to think it's only ever talking about the time just prior to Christ's return.**

In concluding this third article on the writings of Daniel, it is interesting to note that all four "beast" **powers have long-term prophecies dating from their time:**

1) Babylon – their conquest of Jerusalem began 2520 years of "the times of the Gentiles", as prophesied in Leviticus 26 and foretold in type in Daniel 4. Babylon's demise also commenced a 2520 year period, foretold in Daniel 5.

2) Medo-Persia – Cyrus' decree allowing the Jews to return to Judea commenced the 490 years of the Seventy Week Prophecy of Daniel 9.

3) Greco-Rome – Alexander the Great's conquest of Jerusalem began 2300 years of military defilement of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem by Greek, Roman and Islamic forces, as foretold in Daniel 8.

4) Mecca/Medina (Islam) – their construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount commenced a 1335 year period, as prophesied in Daniel 12.

ZECHARIAH OVERVIEW

The prophecies of Zechariah contain some of the most bewildering figurative imagery that we find in Scripture. In many ways, the writings of Zechariah are comparable to those of Daniel and the book of Revelation. All three of these books give a historical overview of major events to befall God's people between the time they were written and the time of the return of Jesus Christ to this Earth.

The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are addressed at length on the pages of this website, so it seems fitting to also give an explanation of the prophecies of Zechariah, and to show how well these writings all complement each other.

The aim here is not to give a full commentary, but rather to give an overview of Zechariah, with a focus on the more obscure and figurative passages.

Zechariah the prophet began receiving revelation from God in "the eighth month of the second year of Darius" **(Zech 1:1). Note that the prophet Haggai began to receive his revelation from God two months earlier (Hag 1:1). Prior to this time, a remnant of the Jews had returned to the land of Judah from Babylonian captivity, by permission of the Persian king, Cyrus the Great. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah speak at large of these events.**

The chronology of this period is very interesting. After Cyrus captured Babylon and established the Persian Empire, he and his son Cambyses most probably ruled for a combined total of 14 years. Darius the Great succeeded Cambyses, and so we see that, if these years are correct, Darius' second regnal year was 16 years after the Jews had returned from Babylon to the Holy Land in the first year of Cyrus. As shown on the chart on the "HOME" page, this return occurred in the year 3481AM, i.e. the 3481st year since Creation. Counting 16 inclusive years (i.e. including the first and the last) takes us to 3496AM for the second year of Darius.

The Jews who had returned to Jerusalem had been first and foremost occupied with rebuilding the Temple, but because of opposition from Gentile neighbours, the work had stopped. The first chapter of Haggai tells us that this work was resumed in the second year of Darius, and Ezra 6:15 tells us that the Temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius, which was 3500AM. This is the exact midpoint of the 7000 years God has allotted for His work on Earth, as pictured by the seven days of Creation.

We are informed that the prophecy in Zechariah 7 was given in the fourth year of Darius, as this 3500 year mark approached. This is reflected in its content, as will be elaborated on below.

On the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT" the prophetic content of the seven days of Creation is outlined. The

account of the fourth day, which pictures the fourth millennium of man's time on Earth, speaks of the "greater light" **and the** "lesser light"**. These picture primarily the first coming of Christ and the creation of the Church in the fourth millennium. In fact, the Church was established in the last year of the fourth millennium, i.e. in the exact year 4000, the same year as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

What happened at the beginning of the fourth millennium? We find that the first Temple, built by Solomon, had just been completed. The timing can be derived precisely from the Scriptures. The work on the foundation of the Temple commenced in 2992AM, and the Temple itself took seven years to complete, i.e. 2993-2999. The following year, 3000AM, the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the Temple, and the Temple was officially dedicated to God. Therefore, the first year of the fourth millennium, 3001, was the first full year of its operation. The Scriptures from which this information is derived can be found on the chart on the "HOME" page.

So we see that the fourth millennium *began* with a physical Temple in Jerusalem, and *ended* with a spiritual Temple (i.e. the Church).

This brings us back to Zechariah, and as we have just seen, to the time of the second Temple at the exact middle point of this amazing fourth millennium.

This is all in fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the fourth day of Creation, that of the "greater light" **and the** "lesser light"**.**

Chapter 1

Although the Jews have resumed rebuilding the Temple at the commencement of Zechariah's prophecies, God warns them (v 2-6) to remain obedient to Him by reminding them of the fate of their fathers. He petitions the people to further turn to Him, and verse 6 testifies that they respond favourably.

Three months later (v 7) the prophet is shown (v 8-11) a vision of a man on a red horse, accompanied by other horses, who reports that the "earth" **of Israel is quiet and at peace. No doubt this is a result of God blessing the Jews for responding to Him. Verse 12 refers to the 70 year period of captivity in Babylon, regarding which verse 15 asserts that the Babylonians went too far in their punishment of Judah, and so now God wants to be merciful to His people.**

Verses 18-19 give a figurative outline of the Gentile powers that would occupy/control the Holy Land, including Jerusalem. Whereas Daniel 7 pictures these powers as four *beasts*, the first chapter of Zechariah pictures them as four "horns"**. These powers were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greco-Rome, and Islam.**

Zechariah also mentions (v 20-21) four "craftsmen" **(other translations say** "carpenters" **or** "blacksmiths"**) which come to** "terrify and cast out" **the four horns. This refers to the powers that would drive out the four horns from Jerusalem: Medo-Persia conquered Babylon, Greece defeated Medo-Persia, Islam overcame Rome, and lastly, Islam was dislodged by Catholic/Christian forces which were a continuation of the Roman power.**

Chapter 2

The second chapter of Zechariah continues with those recently returned from Babylon.

Verses 1-2 show a man who has come "to measure Jerusalem"**. This refers to the size of Jerusalem's population in Zechariah's day compared with what it was to become leading up to the first coming of Christ, mentioned in verse 10.**

Verses 4-5 prophesy that Jerusalem, i.e. "Zion" **(v7), will become a city overflowing with God's people. It will extend far beyond its ancient boundaries and be** "without walls"**; God will instead figuratively be a** "wall of fire" **all around her.**

Verses 6-7 encourage the Jews who had been "spread abroad" **by God, and who were still in distant lands, to flee from** "the land of the north" **and** "the daughter of Babylon" **and to join their compatriots who had returned to the Holy Land.**

Verse 8 states that "he who touches you touches the apple of His eye"**, and so punishments are poured out on those who oppress the Jews and fight against Jerusalem.**

And in verse 9 God says, "For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants"**, which refers to the nations that held the Jews captive being defeated by those who previously were subject to them.**

In verses 10-11 Christ says, "I am coming and I will dwell in your midst" **and** "many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day"**, which is referring to Christ's first coming and the establishment of His Church, including great numbers from the Gentile** "nations"**.**

Verse 11 continues, "then will you know that the Lord of hosts **(God the Father)** has sent me **(Christ)", alluding to those who accept Christ as Messiah.**

Chapter 3

Chapter three presents us with a vision of Joshua the high priest standing before the "angel of the Lord"**, with Satan standing at Joshua's right hand** "to accuse him"**. The book of Ezra confirms that Joshua was high priest at the time of the return from Babylon, so Zechariah would have known him personally (Ezra 5:1-2). Jude 9 identifies the** "angel of the Lord" **here as Michael the archangel.**

Verse 3 says that Joshua is wearing "filthy garments"**, but the angel of the Lord orders that they be removed and replaced with clean clothing, which the angel explains to Joshua is symbolic of having** "removed your iniquity"**.**

Joshua is depicted here as a type of the priesthood which had failed in its duty to lead the people to obey God, and the defeat of Judah by the Babylonians and the removal of the Jews to Babylon had been the result. Now, however, with a remnant of the Jews having returned from Babylon, a new start is proposed by God, as spelled out in verse 7.

Verse 8 states that the high priest and regular priests, being intermediaries between man and God, are types of Christ, who is here figuratively called "the branch"**, as He is elsewhere in Scripture, e.g. Isaiah 11:1, Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15. This refers to the fact that Christ branches forth from the chosen line of ancestors that includes Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesse, David and Solomon.**

The "stone" **in verse 9 refers to the** "chief corner stone"**, i.e. Christ, that the** "builders"**, i.e. the priests, would go on to reject (Ps 118:22-23; Matt 21:42). The implication is that the priesthood, having been given a clean start, should not once again reject God.**

Verse 9 also speaks of "seven eyes"**. In Revelation 5:6 these are identified as** "the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth"**. They appear to be referring to the seven Church eras that were built on the** "chief corner stone"**, Christ, after His first coming.**

Continuing in verse 9, God says that He "will remove the iniquity of that land in one day"**, predicting the day of Passover in 31AD when Christ would be sacrificed. This very sacrifice has been rejected by the followers of Judaism to this day.**

From the time of Christ's sacrifice for the sins of mankind, those who are converted will live in peace with God and one another (v10). This will become the norm in the Kingdom of God once Christ returns and establishes His rule on Earth.

Chapter 4

In chapter 4 (v 1-3) the angel shows Zechariah a vision of a seven branched golden lampstand, called in Hebrew a menorah. On either side of the lampstand is an olive tree. Verses 11 to 14 tell us that the olive trees "stand beside the Lord"**.**

Revelation 11:3-4 informs us that the two olive trees are also called "two witnesses"**. The page "THE TWO WITNESSES" gives many specific proofs that the** "two witnesses" **are the people of Judah and Benjamin, i.e. the Jews.**

This makes perfect sense in the narrative of Zechariah, because the people who had returned from Babylon to the Holy Land in Zechariah's time were those of the southern kingdom of Judah, who at their core consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

God had called all the tribes of Israel to be "a light unto the nations" **(Isa 42:6; Isa 49:6), as represented by the original menorah. Later, in Solomon's Temple, ten more of these lampstands were added (II Chron 4:7).**

God had also stated to all of Israel that "you are my witnesses" **(Isa 43:10). However, the northern kingdom of Israel, composed of ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, apostatised, went into Assyrian captivity, and did not return to the Holy Land, except for a tiny remnant described by God as** "one of a city, and two of a family" **(Jer 3:14).**

This is why we see only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin represented by two olive trees supplying oil to light the menorah, and also why they are represented as two witnesses, two olive trees and two lampstands in Revelation 11:3-4.

Although some people from the other tribes had joined those of Judah and Benjamin before the Northern Kingdom fell, and also afterwards in Babylon, we see evidence in the book of Ezra that the people who returned from Babylon still collectively went by the name "Judah and Benjamin"**:**

In Ezra 4:1-2 we read, "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel ..... "**.**

Regarding a religious gathering ordered by Ezra and the elders of the people, Ezra 10:9 states, "So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem"**.**

In Revelation 1:12-20 we find that the symbolism of the lampstands also applies to spiritual Israel, as God's light

to the world. Christ is here depicted standing "in the midst" **of** "seven golden lampstands" **picturing** "the seven churches"**. Revelation 2 and 3 show that these represent seven eras of Church history, spanning from the first century until our time today.**

Verses 6 to 9 are a message of encouragement to the Temple builders, telling them that regardless of oppression and those who have "despised the day of small things" **(v 10), God Himself will see to it that His work is done.**

Verse 10 of Zechariah 4 once again mentions the seven eyes of God and indicates that there will be rejoicing both in Heaven and on Earth over Zerubbabel's work of rebuilding the Temple. The reason for this is that the Temple is a type of God's people, and Zerubbabel is a type of Christ, just as Solomon, who built the first Temple, is also a type of Christ. The "great mountain", **i.e. the kingdom of this world, is going to become a** "plain" **(v7) on which the spiritual Temple of God will stand upon Christ's return.**

Verses 11-14 reiterate the topic of this chapter. Judah and Benjamin were the only tribes left of Israel that were still walking with God, and therefore still a light unto the world. Consequently, the physical Jews are a type of the spiritual Jews that constitute the Church.

Chapter 5

In this chapter Zechariah is introduced to more figurative images. First, he sees a "flying roll" **or** "flying scroll"**. The scroll represents a curse upon** "the face of the whole earth"**, which here specifically applies to the land of Judah and its people.**

Verse 3 mentions writing on both sides of the scroll. One side has curses because of the sin of stealing, and the other side has curses because of the sin of swearing falsely by God's name (v 4). This shows that sin brings punishment. As the whole nation of Israel were given God's law and had entered into a covenant of obedience with Him, punishment came on all of them because of their transgressions.

Next, in verses 6-7, Zechariah is shown a measuring basket with a round metal lid. This was the device commonly used by vendors in the marketplace to measure produce, such as grain, at the time of sale. The produce was placed into the measuring basket, pressed down with the lid, and shaken to eliminate any gaps. More produce would then be added until the basket was completely full. This is what Christ was referring to as a type of God's blessings when He said, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom"**. Here, God is figuratively measuring the iniquity of the people of the Kingdom of Judah, which had come to the full, bringing curses upon them.**

Consequently, Zechariah then sees a woman, who represents Judah, sitting in the measuring basket and being

measured by God. The verdict isn't good, with verse 8 describing her as "wickedness". She had already been described above as a people who steal and swear falsely.

Finally, in verse 9, two women with wings carry away the basket containing Judah. A woman in Scripture is often a symbol of a people or a nation. In verse 11 we are told that Judah is taken to a place called "Shinar", i.e. Babylon (Dan 1:2), which is where the captives of Judah were originally transported. However, the Jews were also taken into captivity by the Romans, so it is evident that Babylon and Rome are pictured here by the two women with wings.

This is also borne out by the amazing historical fact that both the Babylonian and the Roman destructions of Jerusalem took place on the exact same date, i.e. the tenth day of the fifth month (Jer 52:12; Josephus, Jewish War 6.250).

This fits with what we find in Ezekiel chapter 4. Ezekiel is told by God to lie on his left side for 390 days, picturing 390 inclusive years of Israel's sins, from when Solomon descended into idolatry in 3017AM, until the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 3406AM when Zedekiah was king.

Ezekiel is then told to lie on his right side for 40 days, picturing the sins of the House of Judah. This fits perfectly with the period of 40 inclusive years from the death of Christ at the hands of the Jews in 4000AM (31AD) until the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 4039AM (70AD).

In both instances the periods of time that are pictured end in a siege of Jerusalem. Again, we see a perfect historical fit, as well as an alignment of prophecies from various parts of Scripture.

Chapter 6

In chapter 6 Zechariah sees a vision of four horse-drawn chariots. These are described in verse 5 as being "the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth". These appear to be angelic forces that control the power of nations in this world, in particular those nations that affect God's people and His land. From the prophecies of Daniel, and confirmed by history, we understand that the four powers that consecutively occupied and controlled the Holy Land were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greco-Rome, and Islam.

The first chariot is shown to have red horses, but in the description in verses 6 and 7 these red horses are not mentioned. The inference is that the red horses represent the angelic forces that aided Babylon, which at the time of Zechariah's writing had already been defeated by Medo-Persia. Verse 8 confirms this by stating that the black horses, representing the forces aiding Medo-Persia, have given God's spirit rest, i.e. dealt with the Babylonians.

Verse 6 says that the black horses (those aiding Medo-Persia) go to the north to deal with Babylon, after which the white horses (those aiding Greco-Rome) follow them to the north, to deal with Medo-Persia, and finally the dappled horses (those aiding Islam) go to the south to help the adherents of Islam defeat the Romans.

The "earth" **mentioned twice in verse 7 refers to the land of Israel.**

Beginning in verse 9 we read of the making of a crown of gold and silver, which is placed on the head of Joshua the high priest, who is depicted here as a type of Christ (the gold and silver seem to be symbolic of Christ's roles as King and Priest). This provides a logical sequence, as the four Gentile powers that rule Jerusalem and the Holy Land are to be succeeded by the rule of the people of God - first His physical people (the Jews) and, at His return, Christ and the resurrected firstfruits.

Verse 12 again mentions "the man whose name is the Branch"**, speaking of Christ's first coming as a physical man.**

Verse 12 continues with "From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord"**, which refers to Christ raising up the Church.**

Verse 13 speaks of His coming rule as both King and Priest, and how these two ruling offices will be harmoniously combined.

Chapter 7

As mentioned in the introductory remarks, the prophecy in chapter 7 was given in the fourth year of Darius the Great, which is the year 3498AM, which is just before the middle point of God's 7000 year plan here on Earth.

Verses 2 and 3 state that the Jews sent representatives to the Temple (which was still under construction) to enquire if they should continue fasting in the fifth month, commemorating the fall and destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. Perhaps the fact that Babylon had now been conquered by Medo-Persia, and the Jews had been permitted to return to their land, prompted them to enquire about this.

God responds by saying that their fasting was not being done in the right spirit. He makes it clear in verses 5 to 10 that physical religious practices that are not from the heart are basically meaningless.

In verses 7 and 12 God speaks of those in the past who had disobeyed the "former prophets" **and were**

therefore punished with captivity and, as said in verse 14, were "scattered" **among** "the nations"**.**

In verses 8 to 10 God reiterates His way of life, the implication being that this time the Jews must conduct themselves differently and live righteous lives, or the same outcome will result. As verse 11 says, they in the past disobeyed, so don't follow their example.

So here, nearing the midpoint of the 7000 year plan and the completion of the second Temple, we see God's intent for man in a nutshell: He wants man to develop His spiritual qualities of "justice"**,** "compassion" **and** "mercy"**, and to not** "plan evil in his heart"**.**

Chapter 8

In verse 3 of chapter 8 most translations say, "Thus says the Lord: I *will* return to Zion ...."**. The literal text however says,** "I *have* returned to Zion"**. God is saying that He is with those who have come back from Babylon to the land of Judah.**

Verses 4 and 5 mention people living till an old age, and children playing in the street, both pointing towards a time of relative peace for generations after the return from Babylon.

In verses 7 and 8 God speaks of gathering more of His people from the east and the west and bringing them to Jerusalem.

Verses 9 and 10 contain encouragement from God to complete the rebuilding of the Temple, as working conditions have greatly improved under Darius the Great.

In verse 12 we learn of more blessings that are to come upon the returned Jews.

The houses of both Israel and Judah are mentioned in verse 13, and this appears to be pointing to a much later time of blessing, when these have both fulfilled their respective periods of 2520 years of punishment foretold in Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24 and 28.

Verses 14 to 17 revert to the Jews at the time of Zechariah who have re-established themselves in the Holy Land, with only the "house of Judah" **mentioned in verse 15. God again reminds them to keep His law, even in spirit, reiterating the sins of the flying scroll.**

The four national fast days mentioned in verse 19 are said to become feast days at a future time.

Verses 20 to 23 apply to Gentile conversion to the true religion, which would begin in earnest in New Testament times.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 prophesies of events more than a century further down the chronological timeline, involving the third of the four powers that conquer Jerusalem and the Holy Land. As we saw previously, these powers are described in Zechariah 1 as "horns"**. The third power is** "Greece" **(v13), or Greco-Rome, led initially by Alexander the Great.**

Verses 1 to 4 predict Alexander's conquests in Syria and modern-day Lebanon, while verses 5 to 7 predict those in the territories of the Philistines, and suggest that a remnant there was converted to God's religion. This may have happened during the Hasmonean period (see Josephus Ant. 13.395-13.397).

Verse 8 contains some very specific details that history confirms. It starts with God declaring "I will camp around my house because of the army"**. When Alexander and his army approached Jerusalem, he was so struck with the large throng who came out to meet him, with the priests dressed in their priestly garments and the regular citizens all in white, that he did not attack the city. Instead, he dismounted and went into the Temple and offered sacrifice (Josephus Ant. 11.325-11.337). This however was not permitted by the law of God and might have been the reason for his early demise.**

The verse continues with "because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor **(this oppressor - Alexander)** pass through them, for now I have seen with My eyes **("now I am keeping watch" - NIV)". Alexander passed on from Jerusalem, down the coast to Egypt, doing battle there, before returning through Israel and pressing on toward Syria and Persia. He never again returned to the Holy Land, but died at Babylon, aged 33.**

In verse 9 we find the well-known Scripture, quoted in the New Testament, predicting Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem at His first coming: "Behold your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey"**. The purpose here is to contrast two conquerors: Christ the Saviour rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, a symbol of peace, while Alexander does so on a horse, a symbol of war.**

Verse 10 details the peace that Christ will bring at His second coming: the war "chariots"**,** "horses" **and** "battle bow" **will be** "cut off"**, when He begins to rule.**

Verses 11 and 12 refer to Christ's blood of the New Covenant and the "prisoners" **of the law of sin and death it sets free.**

Verses 13 to 17 continue on with the time of Greek rule of the Holy Land, and God says that He will fight on Israel's behalf. A victorious war over "Greece" **is predicted here, which history identifies as the Maccabean war against the Seleucid Empire in the second century before Christ.**

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 begins by God addressing His people and urging them to ask blessings of Him.

Previously the people had turned to idols and followed false teachers and had become like a herd of sheep without a shepherd, as verse 2 indicates. For this reason, God had sent them into captivity.

Verse 3 states that God was angry with the "shepherds" **of the** "house of Judah"**. However, now He declares that He** "will visit His flock" **and make them** "His royal horse in the battle"**.**

Out of Judah comes forth the "cornerstone"**,** "tent peg" **(Isa 22:25),** "battle bow" **and** "ruler" **as indicated in verse 4, all of which are types of Christ. Verse 5 states that God will raise up from Judah** "mighty men who tread down their enemies"**, i.e. warriors, who shall** "put to shame" "riders on horses"**, meaning those of the Seleucid Empire, which was renowned for its cavalries.**

In verses 6 and 7 God promises to preserve and bless His physical people, both the House of Judah (the two southern tribes of Israel) and the House of Joseph (the ten northern tribes of Israel).

Ephraim, the leading tribe of Israel, was to be especially blessed when their time of punishment ended. Verse 9 says that they would be "among the peoples" **and** "in far countries"**. They became the nation of Great Britain with its vast empire.**

In verses 8 to 12 God declares that He will gather His people from all the countries where they have been scattered. They will remember their God and He will bring them home in a miraculous manner. This is pictured by ancient Israel's crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan river, when it says that Christ will once again "smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up"**.**

At the end of WW2, when their time of punishment ended, many Jews were brought back to the land of Israel

from "Assyria" **(Germany) and** "Egypt" **(v10). The page "THE TWO WITNESSES" explains this in detail.**

In verse 11 curses are pronounced on Assyria and Egypt, both of which fought against the Jews in the 20th century and were punished by God for doing so, as history confirms.

Chapter 11

Verses 1 to 3 of chapter 11 are a figurative description of the 70AD destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. The Temple's construction had involved much timber, including cypress and cedar from Lebanon (II Chron 2:5-8). Its destruction left the sound of "wailing shepherds" **i.e. surviving religious leaders.**

In verse 4 we see that Christ's task at the time of His first coming was to spiritually feed the flock of Judah, whose leaders had failed them. In verse 7 we are told that Christ did this, teaching especially the "poor"**, i.e. the humble, meaning those who were teachable.**

Verses 5 and 6 state the failings of the religious leaders that led to the destruction of Jerusalem, in regard to which God says, "I will give everyone into his neighbor's hand and into the hand of his king **(the Romans).** They shall attack the land, and I will not deliver them from their hand"**.**

Verse 7 says that Christ "took two staffs and called one Favour and the other Union, and I pastured the flock" **(NIV). No doubt shepherd's staffs are intended.**

Verse 8 states, "I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me"**.**

The Jewish nation had three main bodies of religious leaders. These were the priests (Sadducees), the teachers of the law (Pharisees), and the judiciary, called the Sanhedrin, which was made up of the elders of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Christ said that these leaders "sit in Moses' seat" **(Matt 23:2).**

As the "month" **in verse 8 refers to duration of a prophesied event, it denotes 30 years (see "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES"). In ancient Israel it was customary for children to begin attending "Bet Sefer" (House of the Book) at their local synagogue around age 5 or 6. The Mishnah states, "At five years old one is fit for the Scriptures" (Aboth 5:21). At the synagogue school, children would memorise the first five books of the Torah.**

Christ therefore became familiar with the Scriptures from that age. We know from Luke 2:40-52 that by age 12 His understanding of them was remarkable. Since Christ died at the age of 35, we can identify a thirty year period during which the religious leaders of his day were found wanting by Christ, when judged by the Scriptures and their own conduct towards Him. At the end of His physical life Christ had been definitively rejected by the "three shepherds" **when they had Him arrested and crucified.**

Upon Christ's resurrection, the "three shepherds" **were finally** "dismissed" **and the ministers of the Church became God's spiritual shepherds on Earth, under Christ the** "Chief Shepherd" **(I Pet 5:4).**

In verse 10 Christ takes the shepherd's staff called "Favour" **("Beauty" - KJV) and cuts it in two, symbolising the ending of the Old Covenant, which He had made with the tribes of Israel at Sinai. This ending of the covenant occurred at Christ's death, and was confirmed by the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.**

Verses 12 and 13 contain elements quoted in the New Testament account of Christ's betrayal concerning the 30 pieces of silver paid to the traitor Judas Iscariot. This is mentioned here because it is symbolic of the rejection of Christ and the New Covenant by the nation of Judah at that time, Judas being the Greek version of the name Judah.

Verse 14 moves to the second shepherd's staff, called "Union" **("Bands" - KJV), which Christ also breaks, symbolising the** "breaking of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel"**. It is an indisputable fact that throughout the Christian era there has been much animosity between the Jews, who on a national level have rejected Christ, and the Israelite nations, found mostly in Western Europe, Britain, the USA, Australia and New Zealand, who on a national level have embraced "Christianity". The only way this brotherhood will be restored is when both Israel and Judah accept and live by the New Covenant, as foreshadowed by Ezekiel 37:15-28.**

Verses 15 to 18 are referring to the office of an "idol shepherd"**, or** "worthless shepherd"**. This is a very fitting description of idolatrous false Christianity, led by the Papacy, and prophesied about in numerous places in Scripture. Daniel 7:8,24-26 describes this power as a** "little horn"**, II Thessalonians 2 refers to it as** "the man of sin"**, while I John 2:18 labels it** "the antichrist"**. See the page "THE MAN OF SIN" for more on this.**

In verse 16 Christ says that He raises up this entity. However, what Christ establishes is the true Church, and in response Satan, "the god of this world" **(II Cor 4:4), raises up a counterfeit. God allows this in order to test His people's love of the truth (II Thes 2:11-12).**

Verse 17 refers to the "arm" **and the** "right eye" **of this religion, indicating that the** "idol shepherd" **will lack spiritual strength and understanding. History indeed confirms this and shows the instrumental role false Christianity has played in demonising and persecuting the Jews over the centuries, thus maintaining the great divide between Judah and Israel.**

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 introduces a new prophecy, centred on the time immediately after WW2, when the 2520 year period since the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians was completed, and the Jews had returned to the Holy Land.

Verses 2 and 3 say that the nations surrounding Israel would "lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem"**, but they would be** "cut in pieces"**. This is exactly what happened. On the same day that the modern State of Israel was declared (May 14, 1948), the neighbouring Arab nations declared war, and invaded Israel the following day.**

By November 1948 the Jews had captured about 90 percent of Jerusalem and a truce was declared in the city. When this First Arab-Israeli War, a.k.a. the War of Independence, ended in the summer of 1949, Israel's enemies had all been driven back, giving God's people great territorial gains. Following this, the Jews began to resettle that portion of Jerusalem they had captured, the Jewish government relocated its place of operation there, and the city was declared Israel's capital.

This was the first of five successive wars, prophesied from verses 2 to 9, all of which are introduced by the phrase "in that day"**, and during which God promises to fight on Israel's behalf. These wars are known as Arab-Israeli wars, but it would be more appropriate to label them Islam-Israeli wars.**

Verses 4 and 5 describe the Second Arab-Israeli War, a.k.a. the Sinai War or Suez Crisis, which occurred in the latter half of 1956. God says here "I will strike every horse **(*war* horse - i.e. Israel's hostile neighbours)** with confusion, and its rider with madness **(anger)**; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and **(but)** will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness"**. This war with Egypt led to such *blind* anger in that nation that Jews living there were forced to leave the country at short notice, forfeiting their belongings. By 1957 two-thirds of the Jewish population of Egypt had departed (some 30,000 people), many of whom came to** "Judah" **and** "Jerusalem", **adding greatly to the nation's** "strength" **(v5). Other Arab nations soon also expelled their Jewish populations. This event fulfilled a long-term Bible prophecy (Lev 26:28), as described on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES".**

Verses 6 and 7 foreshadow the Third Arab-Israeli War in 1967, a.k.a. the Six Day War. Verse 6 states that God will empower Israel's leaders "like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves"**, or in other words, like a fast-acting destructive fire. As the name of the war indicates, it took only six days. This verse goes on to say,** "they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left"**, which fits well with the rapid destruction of the greater part of the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian air forces at the very start of the war. The same verse says that** "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place"**. In this war Israel captured the remaining 10% of Jerusalem, including all of the Old City with its historical sites, and so all of Jerusalem was then back under the control of God's people. This brought to an end the 2300 years of defilement of Jerusalem at the hands of Gentile occupiers (333BC-1967AD) prophesied in Daniel 8:14. See the page "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY" for more on this.**

Verse 7 seems hard to understand, but the NLT expresses it very well: "The Lord will give victory to the rest of Judah first, before Jerusalem, so that the people of Jerusalem and the royal line of David will not have greater honor than the rest of Judah"**. As the remaining part of Jerusalem was not captured by the Jews until 1967, the rest of Judah had the honour of liberation before Jerusalem as a whole.**

Verse 8 predicts the Fourth Arab-Israeli War in 1973, a.k.a. the Yom Kippur War. Israel's neighbours purposely attacked on this day of fasting, also called the Day of Atonement, hoping to take advantage of soldiers weakened by fasting and unprepared to fight. However, God states, "In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David"**.**

Verse 9 refers to the Fifth Arab-Israeli War (Islam-Israeli war), which began on Oct 7, 2023, and which continues at the time of writing. This war will culminate in the final destruction of the nations that oppose both God and the nation of Israel, at the now imminent second coming of Christ: "On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem" **(NIV).**

Verses 10 to 14 present a remarkable picture of what will happen upon Christ's return. Christ says the Jews at that time "will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn"**. This speaks of people both high and low who** "mourn by themselves"**, or in other words come to individual repentance.**

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 continues with the scene upon Jesus Christ's return. The "fountain" **that shall be opened** "for sin and for uncleanness" **refers to the knowledge of His sacrifice for the sins of mankind becoming universal. All will learn that** "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" **(Acts 4:12).**

Verses 2 to 6 speak of false religion and its practices becoming a thing of the past.

Verse 7 reverts to the time of Christ's crucifixion, and is quoted in Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27. Christ is the "Shepherd" **whose death resulted in the scattering of the sheep, i.e. His disciples.**

Verse 8 moves forward 40 years to the time of the 67-73AD war with the Romans where it says that "two thirds in it shall be cut off"**. In this war some two-thirds of the Jews were killed, as foretold by the first trumpet of the seventh seal in Revelation 8. See "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)" for more on this.**

Verse 9 states that the remaining one-third will be greatly "refined"**, as they were through centuries of ongoing persecution. Today, at the end of all this, we see a small remnant of Jews, known as Messianic Jews, who** "keep

the commandments of God **(including the seventh day Sabbath)** and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"**, fulfilling the Biblical definition of true believers (Rev 12:14). God concludes that these people** "call on My name"**, to which He responds,** "This is My people"**.**

Like the Churches of God, however, these Messianic Jews can also be seen to fulfil the prophecy of the Laodicea Church era (Rev 3:14-22). In their case, for example, most are Trinitarian, practise circumcision and, following Jewish custom, make a distinction between Jew and Gentile in regard to commandment keeping.

At Christ's return, He will gather His people, like a shepherd does his sheep, in contrast to the scattering of His followers mentioned above (v7).

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 begins by referring to a "day of the Lord"**, which is a term used in Scripture to denote a significant intervention on God's part in our world. In Lamentations 2:22 the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians is called a** "day of the Lord"**. In Isaiah 13:9 the overthrow of Babylon by the Medes is called a** "day of the Lord"**. Ezekiel 30:3 calls Babylon's defeat of Egypt a** "day of the Lord"**. In the book of Joel three separate days of the Lord are mentioned, which are the Babylonian and Roman destructions of Jerusalem, as well as the Holocaust and its aftermath, i.e. the return of the Jews to the Holy Land. These three days of the Lord are explained on the page "THE END TIME ELIJAH".**

The context of the "day of the Lord" **in Zechariah 14:1 shows that it is the time when** "your spoil shall be divided in your midst"**, i.e. when the Jews return to their own country after World War 2, their 2520 years of punishment (Lev 26:24) having come to an end. This is the same moment in history as in chapter 12.**

Verse 2 is very specific. It mentions the city of Jerusalem being "taken"**, but also** "half the city" **going** "into captivity"**. Both of these things did indeed occur at that time. The 1948-49 War of Independence saw the historic, eastern** "half" **of the city fall into Arab hands, whereas the western** "half" **was captured by Jewish fighters. The newer, western part of the city is actually much larger than the older "East Jerusalem", which is why in Revelation 11:13 the split is presented as 90 percent and 10 percent.**

Verse 2 also speaks of "the houses rifled and the women ravished"**, which may refer to Jewish places of worship. The Arabs damaged and destroyed Jewish synagogues and their contents in the Old City of Jerusalem during the 20 inclusive years (1948-1967) that they controlled it.**

Verse 3 continues, "Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as He fights in the day of battle"**. This refers to the many wars that have been fought between Israel and its neighbours, beginning with the 1948-49 War of Independence, as listed above.**

From this point on in the narrative we are dealing with future events, so the interpretation is speculative. These prophecies could apply either literally or figuratively.

In verse 4 we read of Christ's soon coming return, when He stands on the Mount of Olives and it splits in two, with half moving to the north and half to the south. This split creates a cleft, or valley, that runs from east to west.

Verse 5 mentions "you" **fleeing** "through" **(in italics) the valley in the Mount of Olives** "as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah"**. This appears to refer to Jews fleeing, not** "through"**, but *from* the cleft that has opened up in the earth. It also shows that Jews will be living in Jerusalem when Christ returns, a situation Satan has unsuccessfully tried to undo since 1948.**

The cleft, or valley, is said to extend as far as "Azal"**. Some scholars equate Azal with** "Beth Ezel"**, a town mentioned in Micah 1:11 and located in the territory of the Philistines, near the Mediterranean Sea. This would make sense, as Beth Ezel is due west of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. It is also interesting that both the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are located along this same east-west line, meaning both would be destroyed in this scenario.**

Verse 5 ends by saying that this happens as Christ returns with His resurrected saints.

Referring to the day of Christ's return, Zechariah 14:6-7 states, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark **(KJV)**: it shall be one day which is known to the Lord **(known to Christ)**, neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light" **(NKJV). Joshua's so-called *long day* is a type of this event. In the account in Joshua 10, Joshua's forces march through the night and at daybreak attack the enemies of those who had made a covenant with Israel. This may indicate the time of day of Christ's second coming. Joshua, a type of Christ, after praying to God, instructs the sun and the moon to stand still so that his army will have time to complete the battle. This seems to picture Christ, now with His bride, causing the day of His return to be extended until His work on that day is completed. See "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" for more about the timing of Christ's second coming.**

Verses 8 to 11 describe conditions at the commencement of Christ's rule. The picture of the "living waters" **(symbolic of God's truth) that will flow from Jerusalem fits perfectly with the valley that the earthquake creates, as this valley allows water to flow down from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea in the east, and to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. We see a similar millennial picture of water flowing from Jerusalem in Joel 3:18 and Revelation 22:1. In these prophecies the Dead Sea is a type of the nations of Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea is a type of the Gentile nations.**

Verse 10 appears to speak of the Jerusalem area changing in topography by being lifted up and exalted, which might also occur as a result of the earthquake at Christ's return. This closely resembles the spiritual picture in Isaiah 40:4 which refers to Christ's first coming: "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low. The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth"**.**

Verses 12 to 15 show the devastating power of God that those who fight Christ will encounter. It seems that the return of Christ will set off panic and great civil unrest among the Jews and their neighbours.

Verses 16 to 21 reveal the conditions after Christ begins His rule. There will be physical survivors in the aftermath of God's wrath (Rev 11:18), and they will be taught to keep God's law, including the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, as commanded in Leviticus 23. If they fail to obey, they will be punished.

The chapter closes with "there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord"**, which means that from then on people will no longer live in ignorance of the true God. In God's Kingdom, all mankind will learn to live His way.**

It is noteworthy that Zechariah uses the phrase "in that day" **nine times when describing events to occur at the time of Jesus Christ's second coming:**

Zech 14:4 - Christ's feet will stand on the Mount of Olives

Zech 14:6 - It shall be neither clear nor dark, day nor night

Zech 14:8 - Living waters shall go forth from Jerusalem

Zech 14:9 - Christ shall be King and Lord

Zech 14:13 - There will be great panic among the people

Zech 12:11 - There will be great mourning

Zech 13:1 - A great fountain shall be opened for sin

Zech 13:2 - The names of idols shall be cut off

Zech 13:4 - False prophets shall be put to shame

These events will occur at the conclusion of the current Islam v Israel war that is described in Zechariah 12:9: "And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" **(NASB). This is not just speaking of those who come against Jerusalem in armed conflict, but also those who do so politically. At this time almost the entire world advocates for a so-called "two state solution" between Israel and its Islamic foes. This "solution" envisages part of Old Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, being taken from the Jews and handed to the Arabs as part the creation of an Islamic state in the land of Israel.** ***Therefore, Islam and most of the world share the same Satan-inspired goal*****. God in this verse says that they will also share the same fate.**

In conclusion, we see that although the book of Zechariah on the surface appears very difficult to interpret due to its figurative language and imagery, once we compare its prophecies with those of Daniel, Revelation and other Scriptures, and when we take into account the history of God's people and the Holy Land, we get a pretty good picture of what is being portrayed here.

15

THE OLIVET PROPHECY

One of the greatest sources of misunderstanding in the end time Churches of God is the Olivet Prophecy, found in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

In this prophecy, given just a few days before His death, Jesus Christ foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. Matthew in his account describes this calamity as "great tribulation" **(Matt 24:21). In times past this was understood to have occurred in the first century AD.**

However, in the last 150 or so years the Churches of God (COG) have breathed new life into the phrase "great tribulation"**, re-imagining it into a future worldwide catastrophe to occur prior to the return of Christ.**

After rebelling against the Romans, Judea and Jerusalem were besieged and conquered between 67 and 73AD. First a large Roman army led by General Vespasian attacked the Holy Land in 67AD, and subsequently his son, Titus, took command and totally destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70AD, 40 years after the Jews had rejected and killed Christ. This war is usually referred to as "The Jewish War" or "The First Jewish Revolt". Its final battle occurred in 73AD at the fortress of Masada near the Dead Sea, where the last of the Jewish fighters were defeated.

A careful study of the three accounts of the Olivet Prophecy will show that its primary focus is this first century Roman campaign against Judea.

Before going through the text of Matthew 24, I will first give some explanatory notes to explain the context of this prophecy and the terminology employed, and also to deal with the most common misconceptions associated with it. Some of these notes are drawn from the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES".

[1] In Luke 21:23 the term "great distress" **is used instead of** "great tribulation" **as found in Matthew 24:21. Luke says that** "great distress" **would affect** "the land" **(which he identifies as** "Judea"**) and** "this people" **(the people of Judea, i.e. the Jews), and that it would be followed by** "this people" **being led away into captivity.**

Luke next explains that after the period of "great distress" **Jerusalem would remain under foreign rule until** "the times of the Gentiles" **(i.e. 2520 years of Jerusalem being under the control of Gentile nations, which had begun with Jerusalem's conquest by Nebuchadnezzar) came to their appointed end (Lk 21:24).**

Luke's account fits perfectly with "great tribulation" **being inflicted on the Jews by the Romans in the first century.**

[2] Some people claim that the "great tribulation" **prophecy is dual, i.e. that there is both a first century fulfilment and an end time fulfilment. However, Christ said the exact opposite. He said,** "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" **(Matt 24:21). How can that be dual?**

[3] Much is made of Matthew 24:22 which states, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened"**. The phrase** "no flesh" **is explained by the COG's as applying to the whole world. As noted above, however, Luke 21:23 shows that this calamity was to befall** "the land" **(Judea) and** "this people" **(the Jews), rather than the whole world. In order to escape, all people had to do was to leave** "Judea" **and** "flee to the mountains" **(Matt 24:16), which is exactly what the Christians did when an initial Roman assault on Jerusalem in 66AD was rebuffed, giving them time to flee and save their lives.**

[4] Great confusion also results from misinterpreting the word "end" **in Matthew 24:14, which states,** "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come"**. The commentaries of Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, and Jamieson, Fausset & Brown all agree that this verse is about the New Covenant gospel going out into the world through the preaching of the apostles, after which all things associated with the Old Covenant in Jerusalem were destroyed and came to an** "end" **in 70AD. Hence, Christ logically continues in the next verse,** "therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" **(Matt 24:15), i.e.** "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" **(Lk 21:20),** "then know that its destruction is near" **(rest of verse 20).**

Even if one were to argue that the prophecy requires the gospel to have first been preached to an audience called "all the world"**, note that the Biblical writers already in their time considered the gospel to have gone** "throughout the whole world" **(Rom 1:8), been** "made known to all nations" **(Rom 16:26)** "in all the world" **(Col 1:6), and been** "preached unto every creature under heaven" **(Col 1:23).**

[5] An additional source of misunderstanding involves the figurative statement "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven" **in Matthew 24:29. The Churches of God commonly take this sentence literally. However, in type the sun pictures Christ, the moon pictures His wife (originally the nation of Israel, and subsequently the Church), and the stars picture the children of the family of God. This was portrayed on the fourth day of Creation week, as explained on the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT". We see this typology confirmed in Joseph's dream in Genesis 37 where we are told that the sun, moon and stars picture the family/nation of Israel, with Jacob, as father, being a type of Christ. Here in the Olivet Prophecy the reference is to the demise of the Jewish nation. In Scriptures like Isaiah 13:10 and Ezekiel 32:7, the figurative darkening of the sun, moon and stars pictures the demise of other nations as well, i.e. God removing His light from them.**

[6] Matthew 24:29 continues by stating, "the powers of the heavens will be shaken"**, which interpreters again usually fail to see as a figurative statement. The literal text has the singular** "heaven"**. Heaven is God's dwelling**

place. Jerusalem is His dwelling place on Earth, or in other words, His *heaven on earth*. The "powers of heaven" **therefore are the Gentile nations that successively conquered Jerusalem. In the prophecies of Daniel, God describes these powers and shows that they are pre-ordained by Him. Thayer's Lexicon says that the word translated here as** "shaken" **should be read as "will be caused to totter".**

Therefore, the phrase "the powers of heaven will be shaken" **should be understood in the sense that the successive Gentile powers, ordained by God to rule over Jerusalem, will rise and fall.**

This is exactly in line with what Luke writes at this point in the Olivet Prophecy, where he says, "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" **(Lk 21:24). See the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more on this.**

[7] Another verse in the Olivet Prophecy that causes modern interpreters to fall into error is Matthew 24:34: "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place"**. The term** "this generation" **is usually incorrectly understood to mean our generation today. However, the Gospels record 23 occurrences of Christ using the word** "generation" **apart from the Olivet Prophecy, and every one of them pertains to the people He was talking to in His day. In Matthew alone the word is used ten times. Here are seven of these occurrences:**

(i) "But to what shall I liken this generation?" **(Matt 11:16)**

(ii) "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah" **(Matt 12:39)**

(iii) "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" **(Matt 12:41)**

(iv) "The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation .... " **(Matt 12:42)**

(v) "So shall it also be with this wicked generation" **(Matt 12:45)**

(vi) "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?" **(Matt 17:17)**

(vii) "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation" **(Matt 23:33-36). It should be noted that Christ spoke these words just prior to giving the Olivet Prophecy.**

In Luke 17:25 we find Christ saying, "but first He **(Christ)** must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation"**. He was speaking about that generation of Jews of His day, who rejected Him as their Messiah and caused Him to suffer a painful death.**

So we see that the term "this generation" **in Matthew 24:34 must apply to the generation Christ was addressing at that time. What causes confusion in Matthew's account is that whereas verses 1-29 foretell the calamities that were about to befall Israel and Jerusalem in the first century, verses 30-31 refer to the time of Christ's second coming. After a parable in verses 32-33, Christ states in verse 34 that** "this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place"**. People have mistakenly assumed that** "all these things" **includes Christ's second coming.**

However, what we find here is that a particular form of literary construction has been used. A well-known example of this is found in Revelation 20:4-5: "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection"**. The final sentence** "this is the first resurrection" **does not apply to the statement** "but the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished"**, but rather it refers back to the main subject, i.e. those who** "reigned with Christ for a thousand years"**.**

This same literary construction is also used in Matthew's Olivet Prophecy. Matthew 24:1-29 refers to the destruction of the Jewish nation and Jerusalem. Verses 30-31 describe much later events in history, but verse 34 refers back to the original topic.

[8] The text of Luke 21:23-24 shows that the event described as "great distress" **(i.e.** "great tribulation"**) occurs before** "the times of the Gentiles" **are fulfilled. As the** "times of the Gentiles" **came to an end in the 20th century when the Jews got their country back, the words** "great distress" **or** "great tribulation" **cannot apply to an event that is still in the future.**

[9] Throughout Matthew's account of the Olivet Prophecy two very different Greek words are used repeatedly which in almost all English versions of the Bible have both been translated as "come"**,** "comes" **or** "coming"**. These Greek words are "parousia" and "erchomai" and its derivatives. The fact that no differentiation has been made in translating these two words obscures the fact that Christ deliberately chose them in order to distinguish between *two very different events*: "parousia" to denote the** "day of the Lord" **that was prophesied to come upon the Jews of Christ's time for their transgressions, and "erchomai" to denote the second coming of Christ.**

The word "parousia" is a noun meaning *presence*. An example of this can be seen in Philippians 2:12 where Paul contrasts "parousia" with the Greek word for absence. Similarly, in I Corinthians 5:3 and II Corinthians 13:2,10 Paul uses the related Greek verb "pareimi" to contrast *being present* with *being absent*. The word "erchomai" is a verb that most commonly means *to come* or *to go*.

A rare exception is Robert Young's 19th century "Literal Translation of the Holy Bible", which does differentiate between these two words, rendering the four occurrences of "parousia" in Matthew 24 as "presence" **(vv 3,27,37,39), and the six occurrences of "erchomai" as** "come" **or** "coming" **(vv 30,42,43,44,46,48).**

Various major calamities brought about by God throughout the history of mankind are referred to in Scripture as a "day of the Lord"**. For instance, Joel describes the conquest of the Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians as a** "day of the Lord" **in Joel 1:15, 2:1 and 2:11 (see the page "THE END TIME ELIJAH" for a full explanation of this). Similarly, Zephaniah calls the same event a** "day of the Lord"**, as does Obadiah. Jeremiah refers to it in Lamentations 2:22 as** "the day of the Lord's anger"**. In Isaiah 13 the overthrow of Babylon by the Medes is called a** "day of the Lord" **multiple times. The defeat of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar is called a** "day of the Lord" **in both Ezekiel 30 and Jeremiah 46, and likewise Judah's demise at the hands of the Romans, as predicted in detail here in the Olivet Prophecy, is foretold in Malachi 4:5-6 as** "the great and terrible day of the Lord"**.**

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is a clear example of Christ's involvement in a major event in the history of mankind. In Genesis 18-19 we see Christ and two angels visiting Abraham and then moving on to deal with these two evil cities. Christ was literally *present* to assess the level of wickedness being perpetrated there, and to authorise the punishment that was to be inflicted. The word *parousia* (presence) in the Olivet Prophecy should be understood in the same way. For if the destruction of worldly evildoers in Sodom and Gomorrah warranted Christ's direct personal involvement, how much more the destruction of His own people, Temple and Holy City?

As explained on the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES", the 67-73AD Roman defeat of the Jews fulfilled the last week of the Seventy Week Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27. This war lasted one "week"**, i.e. seven years, and in the** "middle" **year, 70AD, the Temple was destroyed, bringing animal sacrifices to an end. Additionally, before the war began, God's people were given a sign to flee. All these things were direct fulfilments of Daniel's prophecy.**

The specific year 70AD was also predicted by Ezekiel, who lay on his side for 40 days to picture 40 years of sin of the people of Judah (Eze 4:5-6). From Christ's death at the hands of the Jews in 31AD until 70AD there were 40 inclusive years during which the Jews in general continued to reject Him and His message.

Additionally, Zechariah 13:7-8 refers to the time of Christ's crucifixion, as quoted in Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27, where Christ is the "Shepherd" **whose** "sheep shall be scattered"**, after which** "two thirds in it shall be cut off"**. Indeed, in the 67-73AD war some two-thirds of the Jews were killed, as also foretold in the first trumpet of the seventh seal in Revelation 8. See "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)" for more details on this.**

Other Scriptures also predict this period of time. Therefore, what should be abundantly clear is that for these events to occur after exactly 40 years, to last for exactly seven years, to bring about the destruction of the Temple in the middle year of the seven, to bring about the specified casualties, and to fulfil all the other details of the prophecy, Christ's presence (*parousia*) was imperative, and the likely reason it is called a "day of the Lord"**.**

With all this in mind, let's now look at the Olivet Prophecy as recorded in Matthew 24. My annotations are in (brackets).

Matthew 24:1 "Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple**.**

2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down**".**

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately **(Mark 13:3 states that it was specifically Peter, James, John and Andrew)**, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming **(Greek - "parousia")**, and of the end of the age? **(the apostles thought that the destruction of the Temple, the end of the age of Gentile rule over their land, and Christ's restoration of the kingdom to Israel (see Acts 1:6-7) would all occur at the same time, but Christ's answers show them otherwise)".**

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you**.**

5 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ', and will deceive many **(the NT shows that already in the early days of the Church a false message was being preached in Christ's name. See II Cor 11:13, Gal 1:6-9, Acts 15:5 and Rev 2:2).**

6 And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars **(between the year of Christ's death and the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem, Herod Antipas, king of Galilee and Perea, went to war with Aretas, king of Nabatea; numbers of large scale riots took place in various Jewish cities between ethnic Greeks and Jews, killing tens of thousands; and a civil war raged between Zealot "Sicarii" and the Roman occupiers of Judea and their sympathisers).** See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet**.**

7 For nation will rise against nation **(ethnic rivalry, as above)**, and kingdom against kingdom **(as above).** And there will be famines **(Acts 11:28-29 mentions famine coming to Judea. Paul collecting donations for the Jerusalem brethren confirms this)**, pestilences **(a result of famine)**, and earthquakes in various places**.**

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows**.**

9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake **(the book of Acts gives many examples of these things).**

10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another**.**

11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many **(the Jewish false prophet mentioned in Acts 13:6-10 was one of many).**

12 And because lawlessness **(among those professing Christianity)** will abound **(i.e. the false Christian gospel of "licentiousness" (Jude 1:4), claiming that Christ had done away with the law)** the love of many will grow cold **(love is the keeping of God's law - Ex 20:6, I Jn 5:3). Revelation 2:4 shows that the condition of love growing cold started in the first Church era).**

13 But he who endures to the end **(remains faithful to God)** shall be saved**.**

14 And this gospel of the kingdom **(the New Covenant)** will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations **(will be preached to nations far and wide, which Rom 1:8, 16:26 and Col 1:8,23 state had already occurred in the apostle Paul's time)**, and then the end **(of all things associated with the practices of the Old Covenant in Jerusalem)** will come **(in 70AD - this is the "end of the age" the disciples asked about in verse 3).**

15 Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation', spoken of by Daniel the prophet **(in Dan 9:27)**, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand) **(Luke here states "but when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know its desolation is near". This "abomination" was the autumn 66AD Roman assault on Jerusalem by Cestius Gallus which is the sign the disciples asked for in verse 3),**

16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains**.**

17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house**.**

18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes**.**

19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath **(the holy day of rest).**

21 For then there will be great tribulation **("great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people" - Lk 21:23)**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world **("since there was a nation" of Israel - Dan 12:1)** until this time, no, nor ever shall be **(Eze 5:9-13 also alludes to this event).**

22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake **(Mark here adds "whom He chose". Unlike in verses 24 and 31, where the "elect" are faithful Christians, "the elect .... whom He chose" (Mk 13:20) are the *physical* elect, i.e. the Jews)** those days will be shortened **(Titus' officers wanted to starve the inhabitants of Jerusalem in a long, drawn-out siege, which was a common tactic of the Romans. Titus, however, after waiting some time, decided to lift the siege and attack, as a speedy victory was desirable to shore up his father's role as the newly installed Roman emperor. Hence, many Jews survived).**

23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it**.**

24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect **(the three Jewish factional leaders, Simon bar Giora, John of Gischala, and Eleazar ben Simon, who led the revolt against the Romans, and also fought each other in Jerusalem until its 70AD capture, are examples of such deceivers).**

25 See, I have told you beforehand**.**

26 Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it**.**

27 For as the lightning **("shining" - see Lk 11:36, 24:4)** comes from the east and flashes to the west **(the sun's light before sunrise)**, so also will the coming **("parousia")** of the Son of Man be **(Christ's unseen, but clearly noticeable "presence" in the 66-73AD "day of the Lord" as prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6).**

28 For wherever the carcass is **(the Jewish nation)**, there the eagles **(the Romans)** will be gathered together **(the Jews, through their rejection of Christ, had become spiritually dead, or in other words, a "carcass". Consequently, God gave them over to destruction by the Romans, whose national emblem was the eagle. Luke 21:24 states at this point of the narrative, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled").**

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened **(God's light ceased to shine on the Jewish nation)**, and the moon will not give its light **(the Jews no longer reflected God's light into the world)**; the stars will fall from heaven **(the Jews were removed from Jerusalem and dispersed among the nations)**, and the powers of the heavens **(lit. "the powers of heaven", i.e. the powers that consecutively conquered and controlled Jerusalem)** will be shaken **(will periodically, violently change).**

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven **(the 1948-1950 restoration of sovereign Jewish rule in Jerusalem, God's dwelling place or "heaven" on Earth, after the "seven times", or 2520 years, of the punishment of the Jews was completed, was the first of three major stages of when "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" (Dan 12:7), which together fulfil this sign. See "Daniel 11 & 12 - Kings of the North and the South" for more on this)**, and then **(after the fulfilment of the last of these three**

stages in the year 2025) all the tribes of the earth **(the land of Israel)** will mourn **(Zechariah 12:10 says, "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son")**, and they will see the Son of Man coming **(Greek - "erchomai")** on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory **(the second coming of Christ).**

31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet **(the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal - Rev 11:15-19)**, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other **(the gathering of the firstfruits of salvation at Christ's return - I Thes 4:16-17)".**

In verse 32 Christ tells a parable, and then in verse 33 makes its application clear to the disciples. However, Christ uses parables because their lessons apply to people of all times. In verse 34 Christ continues with His prophecy.

32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near **(Luke 21:28-31 says, "your redemption draws near" and "the Kingdom is near").**

33 So you also **(the people in Christ's time)**, when you see all these things **(the things described by Him which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem)**, know that it is near - at the doors! **(i.e. the end of the age of all the Temple based practices of the Old Covenant, and the commencement of the age of the New Covenant Church)".**

34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation **(the generation of Christ's day)** will by no means pass away till all these things **(the events leading up to and including what Christ labels "great tribulation", with its destruction of Jerusalem)** take place**.**

35 Heaven and earth **(Jerusalem and Israel)** will pass away **(in their form at that time)**, but My words will by no means pass away**.**

36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, **("nor the Son" - NIV)**, but My Father only **(Christ knew that Ezekiel's prophecy in Eze 4:6 speaks of a 40 year period culminating in a siege of Jerusalem, specifically related to the sins of the House of Judah. Christ was put to death in 31AD, and the Romans besieged and destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD, which is 40 inclusive, unrepentant years later. Therefore the *year* of the fulfilment of these events was known to Him, and He was able to confidently state which generation would witness Jerusalem's destruction. However, concerning the specific "day and hour" (the exact time) no prophecy existed, and so they were not known to Him, or anyone else, but only to the Father. Christ makes this declaration here in verse 36 in contrast with verses 48-50 below, where, in regard to His second coming, He did know the precise time. In Zech 14:7 we are told that the day of Christ's return "is known to the Lord", i.e. to Christ Himself. Based on all the chronological, prophetic, and typological information available to Him from the Scriptures, there can be little doubt that Christ did know the exact time of His second coming when He gave the Olivet Prophecy).**

37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming **("parousia")** of the Son of Man be **(Christ's "presence" in all the events of the 66-73AD "day of the Lord").**

38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away **(in death)**, so also will the coming

("parousia") of the Son of Man be**.**

40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken **(lit. "brought near", i.e. led to a place of safety in the region of Pella in the eastern foothills of the Jordan river)** and the other left**.**

41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left **(as above)".**

Christ then proceeds with two more parables:

42 "Watch therefore, for you **(the disciples Christ was speaking to)** do not know what hour **(lit. "day" - NIV, NASB)** your Lord is coming **("erchomai" - Christ's second coming. As stated above, the fact that the "day of the Lord" destruction of Jerusalem, and Christ's second coming were almost 2000 years apart was not known to the apostles at that time. In Acts 1:6 they ask Christ, soon after His resurrection, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?". Later the apostles did begin to understand the times Christ was speaking about - see "The Man of Sin" for more on this).**

43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come **("erchomai")**, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into**.**

44 Therefore you also be ready **(throughout your lives)**, for the Son of Man is coming **("erchomai")** at an hour you do not expect **(Christ knew that the disciples would have to die in the faith long before His second coming)".**

45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes **("erchomai")**, will find so doing **(or blessed is that servant who continues to do so till the end of his life).**

47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods**.**

48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming **("erchomai")**' **(the servant neglects the study of God's Word while at the same time becoming compromised by the teachings of false Christianity (of which God states, "the wicked will not understand" - Dan 12:10), and therefore is unaware of the fulfilment of the prophecies leading up to Christ's return),**

49 and begins to beat his fellow servants **(through his own apostasy causes spiritual hurt to his brethren by spreading these false prophetic interpretations)**, and to eat and drink with the drunkards **(spiritual drunkards - adopting their false beliefs),**

50 the master of that servant will come **(Greek - "heko", i.e. "arrive")** on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of **(meaning he will either die in an unprepared spiritual state before Christ returns, or be alive in such a state at Christ's second coming. Although the timing of this event can be ascertained from the Scriptures within a close approximation, the embracing of Futurist prophetic interpretations by the Churches of God has led them to believe that a whole host of events, involving many years, must first occur before Christ can return. See the page "Daniel 11 & 12 - Kings of the North and the South" for more about Christ's second coming),**

51 and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth**".**

So we see that, contrary to what the majority of Churches of God are teaching, almost all of the Olivet Prophecy pertains to the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple and the Jewish nation in the first century, and the conditions leading up to it.

We also see that there is no Scriptural foundation for the common belief that the term "great tribulation" **mentioned in this prophecy is referring to an event just prior to Christ's second coming.**

Note that the versions of the Olivet Prophecy found in Mark 13 and Luke 21 follow the same outline as Matthew 24, whilst providing a number of significant additional details. A commentary on Luke's version can be found on the page "THE REAL SEVEN SEALS".

16

REVELATION IS HISTORY

The book of Revelation is widely considered to be the most difficult in the Bible. In the Churches of God the wildest speculations abound with regard to its interpretation. And yet these ideas keep on being proclaimed year after year.

It is true that the prophecies in Revelation are mostly given in figurative language; however, the explanations are generally straightforward and logical. This last book in the Bible simply gives us an overview of the major historical events involving God's people from the commencement of the Church age at Christ's first coming, until the time of His second coming and millennial reign.

In the 16th century, Europe experienced the world-changing Protestant Reformation. This came about largely as a result of the widespread availability of the Holy Scriptures, made possible by the invention of the printing press. The tumultuous changes of those years also had ongoing consequences for the Church of God.

In the original introduction to the 1611 King James Bible, we see that the Protestant translators correctly and unashamedly identified "that man of sinne" **(II Thes 2:3) as the office of the Papacy, i.e. the head of the Catholic Church. The Protestants also commonly applied the Biblical** "day for a year" **principle (Num 14:34, Eze 4:6) to the prophecies of Revelation 12 and 13, explaining them as the Catholic Church treading down dissenting Christians for 1260 years. Furthermore, they identified the** "woman sitting on a scarlet beast" **in Revelation 17 as that same Roman church.**

In response to its loss of power and prestige, and to dispel the assertions made against it, the Catholics instigated the Counter-Reformation.

***This of necessity required alternative explanations of prophecies*.**

The main thrust of the Catholic counter-argument was that the time related prophecies of the book of Revelation were not talking about *years*, but rather about *days*. One theory placed all the prophesied events into the first century or two after Christ. This theory is now known as "Preterism". Another theory placed most of the events of the book of Revelation way off into the future. This school of thought is today referred to as "Futurism". A third school of prophetic interpretation, "Historicism", was adhered to by both Protestant Reformers and Sabbath keeping Christians, who realised that this method provides a logical, historical overview of God's work with mankind. In addition, it reflects Christ's own words in Revelation 1:1 which state that this book concerns "things which must shortly come to pass"**, i.e. *begin* to come to pass.**

For example, the seven trumpets of Revelation 8 to 11 were understood as a sequence of seven major events in history, from the first coming of Christ until His return. They were considered to foretell such things as the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem, the fall of pagan Rome, the "Christianisation" of the Roman Empire, the Dark Ages and the Crusades. As explained on the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)", some of these interpretations were indeed correct.

In the 19th and 20th centuries however, under the flawed guidance of Seventh Day Adventist leader Ellen G White, Church of God (Seventh Day) leader Andrew N Dugger, and Worldwide Church of God leader Herbert W Armstrong, many Futurist interpretations of prophecies in the book of Revelation made their way into the Churches of God.

It is true that Armstrong recognised the prophecies concerning the Church eras, found in Revelation 2 and 3, as history. However, most of Revelation's key topics, including "the seven seals", "the seven trumpets" and "the seven last plagues", covering well-known prophecies such as "the four horsemen of the apocalypse", "the two witnesses", "the 200 million man army", "the mark of the Beast" and "Armageddon", were assigned by him a place in the future. He did the same thing with "Babylon is fallen" and the final "Beast" power of Revelation 13 and 17, as well as the "great tribulation" of the Olivet Prophecy and the "ten toes" of the Daniel 2 statue. Unfortunately, we still carry this baggage with us today. For more information, please read this very enlightening history of the origin of Futurism.

To understand the Historicist framework of prophecy, it is essential to have a good knowledge of Bible chronology. God is *the* Master Mathematician and He does things "properly and in order" **(I Cor 14:40). He is the ruler of the pages of history and has foretold this history, albeit in very figurative language, in the pages of Scripture with frequent use of numbers and timelines. Regrettably however, the Churches of God rarely factor sound Bible chronology into their explanations.**

As complicated as Revelation at first appears, it is in essence simply an account of the 2000 years of history between Christ's first coming and His second coming. Its focus is primarily on:

1) the people who have entered into the New Covenant with God, i.e. His Church, described mainly in chapters 1-3, 7, 12, 14 and 19-22.

2) the people who still hold to the Old Covenant with God, i.e. the Jews, and their holy city, Jerusalem, described mainly in chapters 4-6 and 8-11.

3) the Gentile powers, led by Satan, that have opposed both these groups and occupied Jerusalem for almost the entirety of the 2000 year period, as described mainly in chapters 13 and 15-18.

Hopefully, the pages on this website examining the book of Revelation will be enlightening.

THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS

Chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation contain specific messages to "seven churches" **located in seven different cities in first century Asia Minor. In the Sabbath keeping Churches of God, these messages have correctly been understood to foretell seven consecutive time periods, or eras, from the time of the foundation of the Church almost two thousand years ago, until the soon coming return of Jesus Christ.**

Herbert W Armstrong (HWA) (1892-1986), the founder of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), consistently proclaimed that he established and headed the sixth Church era, called "Philadelphia" **(Rev 3:7).**

Unbeknown to most WCG members however, when HWA first came into contact with the Church early in the 20th century its general belief was that the spiritually strong Philadelphia era had come to an end around the middle of the 19th century, and the lukewarm "Laodicea" **era (Rev 3:14-22) had commenced at that time.**

I believe that with close examination of the evidence we we will be able to see that their interpretation was likely correct.

Herbert Armstrong consistently taught that the era previous to his own was the one called "Sardis"**, which is described in Revelation 3:1-6 as being** "dead"**. According to him, the Sardis era of God's Church had covered approximately 300 to 350 years prior to the beginning of his ministry in the 1930's.**

This supposed Sardis period, however, was a "Golden Age" in the history of western civilisation. It attained the highest standards in a wide variety of areas such as literature, art, music composition, architecture, craftsmanship, scholarship, exploration, and even in manners, conduct, dress standards etc.

The Church and the world are closely related; they mirror one another.

The Church, established near the end of the *fourth millennium*, is pictured by the moon, brought into being on the *fourth day* of Creation. For more on this see the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT". The nations of the world are pictured as waters (Rev 17:15), and just as the moon affects the tides of the oceans, so the Church affects the tides of this world.

When the Roman Empire tried to "break" the Christian religion, the Empire itself was broken in half. When God's true Church was largely hidden from the pages of history, the world went through the Dark Ages.

When the Church emerged from obscurity around the time of the Reformation, this was accompanied by the Christianisation of the world as a result of the widespread distribution of the Scriptures. When there was great turmoil in God's Church in the United States in the 1860's, that country fought a terrible civil war. When God's people were in serious spiritual decline in the first half of the 20th century, the world experienced the Great Depression sandwiched between the two greatest wars ever known to man. When apostasy befell the Church in the latter half of the 20th century and onward, this has been mirrored by the terminal decline of this world.

So how could the poor-quality, "dead" **Sardis era of the Church of God have been paralleled by such a high-quality period in the history of mankind?**

The Sardis era was considered by Herbert Armstrong to have lasted from the end of the 16th century until his own rise in the 1930's. However, this period ran from the enormously influential reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and James I until the splendour of the Victorian Age, an era that saw the emergence of the greatest empire of all time, the British Empire, and the greatest single nation ever founded, the United States of America. It was the period in time when the descendants of Israel received the blessings that had been promised to Abraham, after they had been withheld for 2520 years.

Identifying the Church era of that time as "Sardis" **does not add up.**

William Penn (1644-1718), in founding the state of Pennsylvania, started what he termed "A Holy Experiment". Religious persecution had existed in Europe for a long time, but with the settlement of the "New World" a way opened up for all who wanted to escape the restrictions placed on Christian worship. Penn and others actually went around marketing their colonies to Christian groups in Europe, for the specific purpose of offering them somewhere to live and worship in freedom. Penn was himself a Quaker, and the Quakers were also a persecuted group. These people in many cases left behind family and friends, home and work, and went looking for a more favourable place to practise their religion; so strong was their desire to worship God as they believed He required.

Among these pilgrims were Sabbath keeping members of the true Church of God. They had no guarantees, no governments to protect them, no travel, health or life insurance, just faith in their Creator and a desire to live a quiet and humble life of obedience to Him.

They travelled on unsound ships and in perilous waters. These people happily started all over again, enduring much hardship, and in the process helping to build a nation founded on God and His law: the United States of America.

One city stood out as a beacon, a city purposefully named by Penn, a city built without fortifications. The US independence from Great Britain was declared there. In the twelfth year of independence, the new nation's constitution was drawn up in that same city. The first President resided there, and the first US Congress met there. The providential city that William Penn founded was aptly named *Philadelphia.*

Generally speaking, the true Christians of that era were made of sterner stuff than the Christians of today; they earned and deserve the name Philadelphian.

As time progressed, however, with religious persecution mostly a thing of the past, the American people became prosperous with Abraham's blessings and, just like Israel after conquering the land of Canaan, they gradually became lukewarm; they didn't need God quite so much anymore.

By the time of World War 1 the Christian Western nations were in serious spiritual decline. By then Charles Darwin's theories had been around for more than half a century, and it was no longer considered progressive to believe in God or Biblical narratives like the Creation and the Flood. The Bible was ridiculed.

I think of my own grandparents: All four were born around 1900 (in the Netherlands), all four were decent, law-abiding people who wouldn't hurt a fly. However, none of them went to church, none of them believed in God, and none of them taught their children anything religious. That just wasn't the thing to do anymore in a modern, educated, Western society. I remember that anything to do with God or religion was embarrassing in our family. The decline in Western society started much earlier than many people think, and *this is clearly paralleled in the Church eras.*

The author of this website wracked his brain for years over how the Philadelphia era could have produced such leaders as Herbert and Garner Ted Armstrong, who on the one hand taught much truth, but on the other hand also expounded many erroneous doctrines and Biblical interpretations. The logical answer is that their ministry was during the seventh, and final, Laodicea era and not the sixth, Philadelphia era.

Much Biblical truth was certainly taught, but much damage was also done.

That is why Laodicea is called "lukewarm" **(Rev 3:16); it is hot and cold at the same time.**

Let's look at the Church era messages in Revelation 2 and 3:

The Ephesus era covered the time of the twelve apostles and ended soon after the death of the last original apostle, John, around 100AD. Two second century writers, Polycrates and Irenaeus, say that John resided in Ephesus in his latter years. It is a long-held tradition that he was also buried there. So we see that the name of this city is a geographical marker: the first Church era, which the book of Acts shows had commenced in Jerusalem, came to an end in Ephesus.

This era, which began on the day of Pentecost in the year 31AD, set off on a solid footing. Many brethren

continued in the faith, which is affirmed by Christ's comment, "you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary" **(Rev 2:3).**

Already in this first Church message, however, it is stated that there were true apostles and false apostles (Rev 2:2), and we see evidence of this in the New Testament (II Cor 11:13-15; Jude 4, etc).

Over time, a substantial number are said to have "left your first love" **(Rev 2:4). The Olivet Prophecy states that** "lawlessness" **is the reason that the love of many brethren would grow cold (Matt 24:12), and so it seems likely that what is alluded to here is the inroads false Christian ideas were already making into the Church in this era. Jude 4 speaks of false brethren who** "have secretly slipped in among you"**, and states that** "they are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality" **(NIV). In I John 5:3 it says that the love of God involves *keeping* His commandments, not abolishing them. The false notion that God's grace frees man from God's law appears to have taken hold at an early stage of Christian history.**

The apostle Peter speaks about this same condition in II Peter 2:1-2: "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed"**.**

A group called "Nicolaitans" **are also mentioned in the Ephesus era message:** "But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" **(Rev 2:6). The Greek word** "Nicolaitan" **is composed of two words: "nikos", meaning "victory" or "conquest," and "laos", meaning "people". Therefore,** "Nicolaitan" **can be translated as "conqueror of the people".**

At the time of the first Church era, the Holy Land and most countries where early Churches were founded were under the control of the Roman Empire. Thus, the Romans were the "conquerors of the people". Their idolatrous, polytheistic religion was strongly condemned by various New Testament writers, as seen for instance in Romans 1:18-32, I Corinthians 10:14-22, II Corinthians 6:14-18 and I John 5:21.

The first Church era came to a close around the end of the first century AD.

<u>The Smyrna era</u> started after the death of the apostle John and with the emergence of Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, around the year 100AD. It ran until 313AD, ending with Roman emperor Constantine's "conversion" and the issuing of the Edict of Milan. As with Ephesus, the name of this era functions as a geographical marker of Church history, because the original city of Smyrna was where a leading minister of God resided during the first half of the second century AD.

Polycarp, who had been taught and ordained by John, was burned at the stake, at an advanced age, for

being a Christian and refusing to offer sacrifice to the Roman emperor. In "The Martyrdom of Polycarp" his death is said to have occurred "on the great Sabbath". Polycarp had learnt from John to keep Passover on the 14th day of the first month of the year. He disputed with Anicetus, the Bishop of Rome, over this date, with the latter arguing for the date on which Easter came to be kept. This dispute intensified later in the second century when it was continued by Polycrates of Ephesus and Victor, the Bishop of Rome, and became known as the Quartodeciman controversy.

The Smyrna message is one of only two Church messages that is totally complimentary of its members. They are said by Christ to be spiritually "rich" **(Rev 2:9), even though they were physically poor. The most likely reason for their being rich is that during the post-apostolic period the New Testament writings began to be copied and circulated, leading to a deeper understanding of Christ's gospel message among His followers.**

This era saw also serious oppression, by pagan Rome, of all who called themselves Christian. As the era drew to an end it witnessed ten years of severe persecution initiated by the Roman emperor Diocletian, from 303AD until early 313AD, as foretold in Revelation 2:10.

In 312AD Emperor Constantine converted to "Christianity". The key event connected with his conversion was the Battle of Milvian Bridge (in Rome) in that year, where he reportedly saw a vision of a cross in the sky with the words "By this sign, conquer". Following this, Constantine adopted the Chi-Rho (a "Christian" symbol) for his troops, and went on to defeat his enemy, Maxentius. This led to the issuing of the Edict of Milan in 313AD, which established religious tolerance in the Roman Empire and ended the Diocletian Persecution.

However, from this point on "Christianity" began to be organised at Constantine's discretion and in 325AD he led the highly influential Council of Nicea at which he sought to doctrinally unify the various factions of Christianity under the umbrella of the Roman Empire.

In this era, we observe a clear distinction between true Christians (those addressed by Christ) and organised false Christianity, which is labelled "a synagogue of Satan" **(Rev 2:9).**

<u>The Pergamos era</u> ran from 313AD until 1095AD, the year the first Catholic crusade began.

Whereas the first two eras are mainly delineated by geographical markers, Pergamos is the first of four eras where figurative clues in the text regarding false Christianity serve as guideposts to the passage of time.

The ancient city of Pergamos, a.k.a. Pergamon or Pergamum, contained a massive altar dedicated to the Greek god Zeus, built to commemorate a Greek military victory in the second century BC.

Referring to this, Revelation 2:13 says that the Church in Pergamos dwells "where Satan's throne is"**. However, for the Pergamos *era* this indicates something much more than a physical altar. Although Satan is** "the god of this world" **(II Cor 4:4), and his throne has been on Earth for almost 6000 years, God gives the Pergamos era this description for good reason:**

The Roman Empire up until this time had been anti-Christian. However, at this remarkable juncture in history, in the first half of the fourth century, when Constantine was emperor, the Roman Empire had a complete about-face. In effect, Satan manifested himself as an "angel of light" **(II Cor 11:14) and began to pass off this "Beast" power as "Christian". Over time church and state were united and the Papacy was established.**

The rise of the Roman Empire as a "Christian" power was predicted in Daniel 8:25: "And through his policy **(of accepting "Christianity")** also he shall cause craft **(deceit)** to prosper in his hand"**. See the page "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS" for more on this.**

The rise of the Papacy was foretold in II Thessalonians 2, where it was predicted that one who "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" **would come on the scene and that this would be by** "the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders"**. The office of the Papacy was earlier foretold in Daniel 7:25.**

So the "synagogue of Satan" **of the Smyrna era (organised false Christianity), developed into** "Satan's throne" **(Roman state Christianity) of the Pergamos era. This** "throne" **was led at first by the emperor and later by the Papacy.**

Some people might object and say that the false church cannot be described as "the temple of God" **as in II Thessalonians 2. The fact is, however, that it was the true Christian faith that over time was largely corrupted by the introduction of unbiblical teachings.**

During the Pergamos era Satan hijacked Christianity in an organised way, and on a state level, forcing true Christians to go "into the wilderness" **(Rev 12:14), i.e. to disappear from public view. The phrase** "where Satan's throne is" **should therefore be understood as "when Satan's throne is established".**

Next, a reference is made in Revelation 2:13 to a certain "Antipas"**, likely a figurative name for a martyr of the first century "**who was slain among you"**. This name is an abbreviated form of Antipatris, meaning "against the father", and therefore a cryptic name for all the true Christians of the Pergamos era, who stood against the "holy father" (the Papacy) of the great false church, often to the point of martyrdom. The Papacy became an independent power in 685AD when the emperor, based in Constantinople, allowed Rome to appoint and install its Popes without imperial approval.**

Revelation 2:14 identifies the issues they faced: "But I have a few things against you, because you have there

those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel **(in this case, true Christians)**, to eat things sacrificed to idols **(accept false Christian doctrines)**, and to commit sexual immorality **(idolatry)". As shown in the account in Numbers 22-24, Balaam taught Balak how to curse Israel by enticing them to sin and thus bring curses on themselves.**

As with the Ephesus era, the Nicolaitans are also mentioned in the message to Pergamos: "Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans" **(Rev 2:15). Throughout the Ephesus and Smyrna eras the pagan Roman Empire had been "the conquerors of the people" in the Holy Land and most of the territory where Christians were located. From the beginning of the Pergamos era, it was instead the "Christian" Roman Empire that was enticing God's people into accepting false Christian teachings.**

Then, some 325 years into the Pergamos era a new power conquered the Middle East, including the Holy Land, as well as parts of Africa and Europe. This power, which invaded Jerusalem in 638AD, was Islam. Islam subjugates the nations it conquers, either forcing its beliefs on them or reducing them to a lower status in society. Thus the "teaching of the Nicolaitans" **that the Church became susceptible to at that time were the teachings of Islam.**

The long and troubled Pergamos era ended as the "synagogue of Satan" **(false Christianity), led by the** "throne of Satan" **(by this time solely the Papacy), shifted into an even deadlier phase of its diabolical existence: the Crusades and the Inquisitions.**

As a side note, in the latter part of the 19th century German archaeologists dismantled the Altar of Zeus in Pergamos and transported it to Germany. In the 1930's it was reassembled and put on display in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. This occurred at the same time that Nazi Germany was rising and the final attempt by the false Christian "Beast" power to destroy the Jews was imminent, just as "the times of the Gentiles" **were coming to an end (Rev 11:7). The symbolism of the original, physical** "throne of Satan" **being set up in Berlin at the same time that Adolf Hitler held power there is striking, but the story doesn't end there. In Revelation 18 the false Christian "Beast" is called** "Babylon the Great"**. In the 1930's the Pergamon Museum also reconstructed and put on display the famous blue Ishtar Gate of Babylon. How amazingly fitting! See "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" and "THE TWO WITNESSES" for more on this period in history.**

<u>The Thyatira era</u> ran from 1095 until 1347, the former date being the commencement of the First Crusade, and the latter being the onset of the Black Death.

The Thyatira era is warned by Christ about "Jezebel"**, a type of the same Catholic Church that oppressed the Pergamos era, but which was now taking things to a whole new level. The congregation in Thyatira in first century Asia Minor must have had a troublesome woman in attendance, who is alluded to here to illustrate this point. The original Old Testament Jezebel was a pagan princess who married Ahab, an Israelite king, but actively continued her pagan religion in Israel, whilst murderously hunting down and persecuting the worshippers of the true God.**

The story of Jezebel in the book of I Kings has notable parallels with the Catholic Church at the Thyatira point in history. The Catholic religion, like Jezebel's, is largely of pagan origin, but it palms itself off as the wife of Christ, and Christ of course is the ultimate Israelite King. The Catholic Church, like Jezebel, was also very murderous, being responsible for the death of millions.

Revelation 2:24 speaks of "the depths of Satan"**, because during this era Satan showed himself at his very worst.**

In the year 1095, Pope Urban II called the First Crusade to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim control. The capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099 led to them establishing what they called "The Kingdom of Jerusalem". The Catholics saw their conquest of the Holy City as an affirmation of God's favour, and a justification to enforce their brand of Christianity in all the territories under their control or influence.

In the following century the Inquisitions began. The extent of the barbarism meted out, and suffering inflicted in these endeavours, supposedly in the name of Christ, is incalculable. The details are too grotesque to mention, and prove the satanic mindset from which they originated. The Crusades and the Inquisitions brought an enormous escalation in evil from that perpetrated during the Pergamos era. How fitting that the great false church, which masterminded these evils, is figuratively referred to as "Jezebel"**!**

Revelation 2:19 states "and as for your works, the last are more than the first"**. This most likely refers to many of the Thyatiran brethren faithfully enduring the escalation of persecution in the latter half of this era.**

Enforced conversion to Catholicism is symbolically described by God in Revelation 2:20 as: "you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols"**. When the Scripture calls Jezebel a teacher, keep in mind that her teaching involved the sword. No doubt some of the brethren gave in under the pressure.**

God's response to Jezebel was proportionate to the crime. He says in Revelation 2:22-23 that He will "cast her into a bed" **(a sick bed)**, "into great tribulation" **(the Black Death), and** "will kill her children with death"**, unless they repent of their deeds.**

As the Catholic leaders did not repent, this prophecy was fulfilled with the arrival in southern Europe of the Black Death in 1347. Many estimates show that more than half of Europe's population was wiped out; in southern Europe, where Catholicism was headquartered, perhaps as many as eighty percent died.

<u>The Sardis era</u> most likely ran from 1347 until 1455, from the beginning of the Black Death in Europe, until one of the greatest interventions by God in the history of man.

The enormity of the Black Death would have made a life-changing impact on the members of the true Church. They certainly recognised that this severe curse was from God, because we read in Revelation 2:23 regarding this plague, "I will kill her **(Jezebel's)** children with death and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts"**.**

In Revelation 3:1 Christ says to the Sardis brethren, "you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead"**, which applied to them figuratively. But as the general population of Europe had been decimated, the numbers of Church members would also have been greatly reduced. Those who had been compromised by false Christianity were not spared the wrath of God, as Revelation 2:22 indicates.**

Another sign that the Sardis era was not in good shape is given in Revelation 3:2, where Christ encourages the brethren to "strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die"**. Some 1300 years had passed since the original apostles first went out into the world to preach the gospel, so it is likely that, due to the passage of time and the corrupting influence of false Christianity, as well as the relentless persecutions, very little of the original truth did** "remain"**.**

In Revelation 3:3 Christ continues, "Remember therefore how you have received and heard"**. The word** "heard" **is very significant here, as the scarcity of Biblical manuscripts at that time meant that the transmission of the gospel had largely been by word of mouth. The word** "heard" **also alludes to the enormous blessing God was about to bring to the world in the next era.**

Previously, in the Pergamos message, Christ warned those who opposed Him, "I ..... will fight against them with the sword of My mouth"**. Hebrews 4:12 states,** "the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword"**, and Galatians 6:17 speaks of** "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God"**. Therefore, the sword that Christ uses to fight and disarm evildoers is His Word, the Holy Bible.**

Then, in the Thyatira message, God foretold that He would give Jezebel "time to repent"**. The New Testament Greek doesn't use the indefinite article, "a". Rather, it says,** "I will cast her into bed" **and** "He will rule them with rod of iron"**. A word for "a" doesn't appear, but translators add it in English. Likewise, the word** "time" **in verse 21 should read** "a time"**. A** "time" **in Scripture is a year of 360 days. However, in a prophecy of duration, using the** "day for a year" **principle given in Numbers 14 and Ezekiel 4, a** "time" **denotes 360 years. See the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" for more on this.**

Therefore, the "fight against them" **mentioned in Revelation 2:16 was held back for 360 years, giving** "Jezebel" **that amount of time to repent, with the count starting from the commencement of the Thyatira era in 1095. As the Black Death of the Sardis era did not convince the Catholic Church to repent, and instead she quickly resumed her evils, Jezebel's fate was sealed. Her full demise would begin in the next era.**

Clearly, at this point a historical sequence can be observed where the false Christian "throne of Satan" **of the Pergamos era developed into the murderous** "Jezebel" **of the Thyatira era, which left at least half of the people in Europe** "dead" **in the Sardis era.**

The Philadelphia era ran from 1455 until around 1860, from the commencement of the widespread availability of the Word of God, until the time that the Churches began to be followers of men rather than of God.

Philadelphia means "brotherly love", which is highly appropriate from what we know about the people of this era being a body of believers with Christ as their Head.

The ancient city of Philadelphia in Asia Minor was founded in the days of the Kingdom of Pergamon. It was situated at its eastern extremity and was intended to be an example of Greek civilisation, spreading Greek culture into eastern Lydia and Phrygia. As such it functioned as a gateway, or "open door" (Rev 3:8), to advance the cause of Hellenism.

The Philadelphia Church era began with one of the greatest turning points in history, i.e. the invention of the printing press. This soon led to the mass production of the Holy Scriptures, which was the "open door" by which the truth of God was spread to the world.

In 1455, exactly 360 years after the commencement of the Thyatira era, Johannes Gutenberg produced the first Bible printed using movable metal type, in Mainz, Germany. This Bible was printed in Latin, the only language the Scriptures were permitted to appear in, by Catholic edict. Only about 180 copies of the Gutenberg Bible were produced, but a means to mass produce printed material, combined with the onset of the Reformation, led over time to Bible translations in various languages, resulting in widespread access to the Word of God.

In 1522 a German language New Testament, translated by Martin Luther, was printed. A full Dutch language Bible was printed in 1526. The first full French version appeared in 1530. English language versions included that of William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale in 1535, the Great Bible of 1539, and the Geneva Bible of 1560. The first full Spanish Bible was printed in 1569.

The Geneva Bible was so popular that, over a period of about eighty years and as a result of many printed editions, an astonishing 360,000 copies were sold in England, at a time during which the population increased from about four to five million people. The Geneva Bible was especially popular as it contained lengthy marginal, explanatory notes, and was printed using an easy-to-read letter type. It was also the first full English Bible to contain verse numbers. Its publication in England was temporarily banned at one stage to promote sales of the King James Bible, which appeared in 1611.

People who had hitherto been unable to read the Word of God had a whole new world opened up to them. Those who were illiterate flocked to churches just to hear the Scriptures read aloud; such was the thirst to hear God's message. In a relatively short period, historically speaking, Europeans went from being virtually cut off from access to God's Word in the middle of the 15th century, to being awash with the Scriptures in their own languages by the end of the 16th century.

The Biblical awakening caused by the "open door" fuelled the Protestant Reformation, which was a historical

event of proportions hard to overestimate. The Reformation led to a great diminishing of Catholic power and influence, the emergence of numerous additional Christian denominations, and the rise of much Biblical inquiry, discussion and scholarship.

The Reformation also brought the extraordinary Iconoclastic Fury, which saw large crowds attacking Catholic Churches all over northern Europe and destroying idolatrous statues and artworks. Many books have been written about all the remarkable societal changes that the Reformation led to.

In England, Queen Elizabeth I (reigned 1558-1603) made church attendance mandatory; those who didn't comply were fined. In Scotland, Bible ownership was compulsory for those who were of means. The result of all this, historian J R Green summed up in the following way:

"No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years ..... of the reign of Elizabeth. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. And its effect ..... was simply amazing. The whole temper of the nation was changed. The whole nation became, in fact, a Church" ("A Short History of the English People", Chapter 8, Section 1, 1874).

Through this momentous period of change, God's true Sabbath keeping Church also saw its turnaround. The rapid introduction of the Scriptures, in an ever-wider variety of languages, steadily allowed the Sardis era's Scriptural ignorance to be replaced by solid Bible literacy. By having access to the Scriptures, people could now understand God's truth directly from His Word.

The Anglo-Spanish War that commenced in 1585, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, also curtailed Catholic influence in the world and assisted in creating the breathing space required to bring the true Church back to life. This allowed it to come out of hiding, grow in numbers, and thus emerge from the near-death experience of the Sardis era.

Records exist of substantial numbers of Sabbath keeping congregations that sprang up from the early 1600's onwards in England and Wales.

The Church had originally set off on a strong footing, having been taught personally by Jesus Christ in the first century. After some 1300 years, that foundation had been all but fully eroded. How was the Church brought back to health? Did men bring this about? No, just like in the Smyrna era, God brought it about, this time by making His Scriptures available to the general public, calling it the "open door that no one can shut" **(Rev 3:8, NIV). By providing His Word in languages people could understand, God opened Himself up to them. Christ said,** "I am the door" **(Jn 10:9), and He is also called The Word (Jn 1:1). The Bible is the mind of God in print. Therefore, a legible, intelligible Bible is an *open door*, giving access to God.**

It is significant that the Philadelphia era is said to have "kept my word" **(Rev 3:8). This makes sense, for how can people *keep* God's Word if they haven't *received* God's Word?**

This crucial marker of time, showing that the Philadelphia era sprang up as a result of the widespread distribution of the Holy Scriptures, *is no small point*. It was the mass circulation of the Scriptures that created the necessary conditions for the transition from the "dead" Sardis era to the Philadelphia era.

These Christians are said to have "a little strength" (Rev 3:8). They had this strength because they spent much time reading God's Word, and were not beset by the multitude of distractions that we are. As a consequence, they were able to gain *spiritual strength*.

Additionally, in Revelation 3:8, Christ says, "you have not denied my name". We are commanded to not take His name in vain, but to represent Him in all our words and deeds. That's what a true Christian does. But again, how can people do that without having His Word available for instruction, deep meditation and reflection?

In Revelation 3:9 we learn that this era was opposed by false Christianity ("the synagogue of Satan"), opposition which by this time was coming mostly from Protestant quarters, and that these persecutors will in the future be forced to admit their error. Again, this is a marker of time, because those of our day who want to claim the Philadelphian mantle have encountered little or no opposition from false Christianity. In the Philadelphia era, however, being a Sabbath keeping Christian was very difficult. For many years Sunday keeping was compulsory in England, and so church attendance records were kept, and fines were imposed for non-compliance. Sabbath keepers were not allowed to congregate in large numbers wherever they wanted, and permission had to be obtained to meet at specific addresses. Preachers were required to be credentialed by the authorities, and were not permitted to freely travel between congregations. These restrictions on assembly were designed to minimise the opportunity for dissension against authorities. Many a Sabbath keeper spent time in jail for "unorthodox practices" in Philadelphian days.

The history of the post-Reformation, Sabbath keeping Church of God has been largely ignored by the end time COG's. The agenda in our day has mostly been one of glorifying our recent or current leaders, and this has led to downplaying the accomplishments, and sometimes even the existence, of those who went before us. It is somewhat ironic that HWA portrayed himself as the one who restored Church doctrines, *when this was exactly what drove the era prior to his*. From the writings of Sabbath keepers in the 1600's, we can see that they felt it was their duty before God to rid themselves of all false doctrines that Christianity had been saddled with by Rome. They believed that the Reformation had not gone anywhere near far enough, and in England they even petitioned leaders of the country to change the national day of worship from Sunday to Saturday.

A very good source of information on this topic is "The Seventh Day Men - Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800" by SDA scholar Bryan W Ball. The great wealth of factual information in this book comes from old church records, church bulletins, correspondence between congregations, county records, court records, and the many publications by Sabbath keepers.

Ball identifies over 60 Sabbath keeping congregations that existed in England and Wales between the years 1617 and 1750. Groups varied in size from just a family or two to congregations of hundreds of people. Ball also lists 66 known pro-Sabbath writings published between 1628 and 1745 in England. At least as many pro-Sunday publications were produced, and often these writings were in response to each other. Some of the authors of

this period state that the Sabbath v Sunday argument was the most significant point of Christian debate in 17th century England.

Sabbatarian ministers and writers of this period included John Traske, Theophilus Brabourne, Peter Chamberlen, John Belcher, James Ockford, Francis Bampfield, Thomas Bampfield, Edward Stennett, Joseph Stennett I, II and III, Samuel Stennett, Robert Cornthwaite, Thomas Tillam, Christopher Pooley, Edmund Townsend, Joseph Davis, John James, John Sullins, Henry Jessey, William Saller, Henry Soursby, William Whiston and many more.

Many of these brethren were highly intelligent, educated people. Henry Jessey was a Cambridge University educated Hebrew scholar. Thomas Bampfield was a lawyer and a member of Parliament. William Whiston was a Cambridge University mathematician and lecturer, as well as a Greek scholar, who is best known for translating the writings of Josephus. Peter Chamberlen was the royal physician to King Charles I and King Charles II.

Beliefs held generally among these people were: the Ten Commandments, including the Saturday Sabbath from Friday sunset until Saturday sunset, adult baptism, baptism by immersion, laying on of hands, anointing of the sick, foot washing, Millennialism, prophecy interpreted according to the school of thought called Historicism, which employs the "day for a year" **principle for prophetic timelines, Sunday worship is the** "mark of the beast" **(I believe it is Sabbath breaking), clean and unclean meats, and the** "little horn" **of Daniel 7:8 is the Roman Church. Some brethren even kept Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.**

Tillam and Pooley began to espouse some radical beliefs over time, even advocating circumcision, incurring the rebuke of other Sabbatarian ministers.

Here are a few notable events of the 1600's in Britain, related by Ball:

1) In the town of Exeter in the year 1600 a group of Christians attempted to keep Passover, but were prevented from doing so by authorities. In those times public meetings needed government approval and were strictly regulated. "Non-conformity" to the State religion was a punishable offence.

2) In 1607 theologian John Sprint, in a publication supporting Sunday worship, referred to "Sabbatary Christians" of his time who insisted on keeping "the Jewish Sabbath". The fact alone that so many pro-Sunday writings were produced shows the subject to have been a serious point of contention.

3) In 1621 Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, objected to a bill brought before Parliament on the grounds that it contained the word "Sabbath", which he felt might be misinterpreted. He argued that "many of late have run to Judaism" and have "written for the very day".

4) An opponent of John Traske (1585-1636) wrote that Traske believed "the resurrection of Christ should be celebrated on the fourteenth of March moon to coincide with the Jewish Passover and should be followed by the eating of unleavened bread for seven days".

5) In 1657 and in 1682 Sabbatarian ministers appealed to Parliament and the judiciary to change the official day

of worship from Sunday to Saturday, on the grounds that Sunday had been instituted by Rome without Scriptural proof and contrary to apostolic practice.

6) During the 1690's a Frenchman by the name of Henri Misson travelled throughout England, writing a detailed memoir. Here are some of his observations on people he encountered there who referred to themselves as "Sabbatarians": "There is a particular society, though it makes but a little noise, of people, who ..... go by the name of Sabbatarians (footnote: "the common people call them Seventh-Day Men") [and] make profession of expecting the Reign of a Thousand Years ..... These Sabbatarians are so called, because they will not remove the Day of Rest from Saturday to Sunday. They leave off work betimes on Friday Evening, and are very rigid observers of their Sabbath. They administer baptism only to adult people ..... The major part of them will eat neither pork nor blood, nor things strangled..... For the rest, their morality is severe, and their whole outward conduct pious and Christian-like" ("M. Misson's Memoirs and Observations in his travels over England", 1719, pp 233-235).

The seriousness with which brethren of this time period kept the Sabbath is echoed by English Sabbatarian George Carlow. In his writings, he quotes Nehemiah 13:15-18, which condemns doing business on the Sabbath. He also advocates sunset to sunset "holy rest", and hails Nehemiah for "causing Jerusalem's gates to be shut before the Sabbath", calling this "a good example for earthly minds, who will not leave their servile labor till the last minute, but perhaps allow themselves liberty to do some household business after the Sabbath's beginning" ("A Defense of the Sabbath", 1847, p74 and p97, originally published in 1724 as "Truth Defended").

The above information only deals with Sabbath keeping Christians in Britain, but a sprinkling of like-minded people also existed throughout other countries in continental Europe.

Throughout the 1600's and 1700's many European Christians began making their way across the seas to the New World, giving themselves the opportunity to escape religious oppression and start a new life in what would become the United States of America.

As mentioned in the introduction, the city of Philadelphia became the launchpad of the United States, the "great" nation of Manasseh that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been promised by God long ago (Gen 48:17-19). We see therefore that, as with the first two Church eras, the name of the sixth era is also a geographical marker. However, rather than being a reference to the original city in Asia Minor, in this case it is a new city by the same name. As with Ephesus, the name Philadelphia doesn't indicate where the era began, but rather where it became established and later came to its end.

The history of Philadelphia is embodied in the person of William Penn, the founder of both Pennsylvania and Philadelphia. His 1701 "Charter of Privileges" was the foundation for Christian freedom of religion in the United States. It also provided for democratic rule of the people and, wisely, only allowed inhabitants who professed the Christian faith to hold office in Pennsylvania.

Through the foundation that freedom of religion provided, Christians, including Sabbath keeping Christians, were able to flourish in this undeveloped new continent, many congregations being raised up of quiet, humble,

hard-working, God-fearing people. These times of spiritual prosperity lasted for the best part of two centuries on American soil.

The first known Sabbath keepers to make the journey to the New World were Stephen and Anne Mumford who, with other members of their family, had belonged to a Sabbatarian congregation in London. They arrived in Rhode Island in 1665, and within a few years had begun a small congregation in Newport. Soon other congregations were raised up in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. These people referred to themselves as Sabbatarians, Sabbatarian Baptists, and later, Seventh Day Baptists.

Around 1684 Abel Noble, a Sabbatarian minister, came from London to America and settled a few miles from Philadelphia, teaching the seventh-day Sabbath. As a result of his work a Church was raised up near Philadelphia around 1700. Noble also laboured as a missionary in New Jersey, and introduced his views among the German Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata, Pennsylvania.

In 1705 Edmund Dunham, a Baptist deacon, organised a small Sabbath keeping congregation in Piscataway, New Jersey, after being challenged on the validity of observing Sunday. Dunham was later ordained a minister by elders from Rhode Island.

A history of the Sabbath keeping Church in America was published in 1811 by Henry Clarke, a Seventh Day Baptist (SDB) minister from New York. Clarke presided over a congregation of about 160 Sabbath keepers in that state. His book lists 11 congregations of SDB's in north-eastern USA, with close to 1800 baptised members, and adds that thousands more non-baptised people attended their services.

As today's Seventh Day Baptists are mostly Trinitarian, in line with mainstream Christianity, it is noteworthy that in Philadelphian days this was not the case. Clarke states that they believed in "one God, the Father", and "one Lord, Jesus Christ", but that the holy spirit is "the operative power or spirit of God". He goes on to say that "there are few if any, of this denomination, as I conceive, who believe that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are three absolute distinct persons, coequal, coessential, and coeternal Gods, and yet but one God, as such an idea would be in the face of Scripture, and repugnant to right reason" ("A History of the Sabbatarians or Seventh Day Baptists in America", 1811, p62).

These brethren strongly believed in the validity and morality of the Ten Commandments, and kept the Sabbath "from even to even"**. They utilised local congregational government and rejected the concept of the Primacy of Peter, thereby avoiding individuals gaining control of the Church.**

It is a very interesting and significant fact of history that when Biblical awareness was greatly re-ignited during the time of the Reformation there was in general a wholesale move away from the concept of one man leading a church.

Clarke also states that Sabbatarians in his time believed that God had created all things by Jesus Christ, and that

Christ was the giver of the law, and the Rock that followed Israel in the wilderness. They believed in a resurrection, were Millennial in outlook, practised baptism by immersion, and baptised adults only. They understood Christ spent fully three days and three nights in the grave, from late Wednesday until late on the Sabbath. Clarke also stresses that Sabbath keepers should avoid fellowshipping with Sunday keeping "Christians".

In 1830 the Seventh Day Baptists began publishing a periodical called "The Protestant Sentinel", which was soon after renamed "The Seventh Day Baptist Register". Its October 6, 1841, edition states that at that time there were about 50 SDB churches, with 62 ministers and a membership of 5500 in the USA.

The Philadelphia era came to its conclusion around the time of the outbreak of the US Civil War in the early 1860's. The "Christian" world had by then clearly begun a downhill slide in standards and morality, with Christianity beginning to take a back seat to the emerging belief in evolution and the non-existence of a Creator. Over time, influenced by the changes occurring in the world and made complacent by growing prosperity, the Church of God also became lukewarm in its allegiance to God. Serious divisions developed among them, where individuals sought to draw away personal followings.

As the end of the era drew on, the danger God had warned the Philadelphians about when he said, "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" **(Rev 3:11) began to rear its ugly head. The cooperative spirit as embodied in the governmental principle established by Christ in His appointment of 12 apostles, rather than just one single leader, began to be eroded by *individuals* seeking selfish glory and proclaiming themselves to be** "some great one" **(Acts 8:9). Most Bible translations read something like** "let no one take your crown" **in Revelation 3:11, which is more correct, as both men and women are alluded to here.**

From the mid-1800's on, the Church saw the emergence of people such as James and Ellen White, and others, who proclaimed some of God's truth, but also introduced "damnable heresies" **(II Pet 2:1) into the Church of God, including beliefs about their own importance or office, echoing the spirit of** "Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence" **(III Jn 9).**

This condition only grew worse over time.

However, God promised the faithful Philadelphians that "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world **(the World Wars)**, to try them that dwell upon the earth" **(those of the "earth" of Israel, i.e. the Jews) (Rev 3:10). And so He did. By the time of the World Wars, including the Holocaust that killed one third of all Jews, the Philadelphia era had long since come to an end.**

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An explanation should be given here of the phrase "the key of David"**, mentioned at the beginning of the**

Philadelphia era message. One COG makes a very big deal of this, but totally misses its simple meaning.

At the start of each of the seven Church era messages there are introductory statements that enumerate attributes of Christ, confirming that He is the one who is speaking to the Churches. If the reader refers back to chapter one of Revelation, he will find all these attributes of Christ already mentioned. This is where we are given the clue to the meaning of the key of David.

In Revelation 1:18 Christ says, "I have the keys of Hades and Death"**. The terms Hades and Death are shown, in Revelation 20:11-15, to simply refer to the grave. Christ Himself was in Hades when He was in the tomb (Acts 2:31).**

Christ, however, died having lived a sinless life. His death therefore paid the penalty for all who have sinned, making possible their *resurrection* from death to eternal life. In John 11:25 Christ says, "I am the resurrection"**.**

So what is the connection between "the key of David" **and** "the keys of Hades and Death"**?**

God's plan is to reproduce Himself in mankind. However, man sinned.

In the Scriptures, David is presented as the ultimate example of a sinful man finding redemption with God. His sins were serious; they included murder and adultery. And yet he found favour with God who called him "a man after My own heart" **(Acts 13:22). God confronted David with his sins and he genuinely repented and turned his life around. He is a type of all true Christians, showing that salvation is possible even for the worst of sinners.**

Christ says that He holds "the keys of Hades and Death" **and** "the key of David"**. He also says that He** "opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens" **(Rev 3:7). If He opens the door of eternal life to a person, no one can shut that door. Likewise, even if all men speak well of someone, but Christ shuts the door of His Kingdom on that person, he won't be in it. All power has been given to Christ, as He says in Matthew 28:18. The key of David that He holds is the key to His Kingdom and eternal life.**

In a single phrase, the key of David is the key to salvation.

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<u>The Laodicea era</u> of the Church of God began around 1860 and will continue until the return of Jesus Christ. The message to this Church era contains no geographical markers, as all the main Churches of God remained headquartered in the USA where they had been established in the previous era. This message also contains no

references to false Christianity, because its days as a force against God's Church had mostly abated by the time this era commenced.

What the message does have is an abundance of figurative language describing the spiritual state of God's people during this era: "neither hot nor cold"**,** "lukewarm"**,** "wretched"**,** "pitiful"**,** "poor"**,** "blind" **and** "naked"**.**

Most of these traits are either pictured by or contrasted with aspects of the ancient city of Laodicea in Asia Minor: The city had a water supply that was piped in from a great distance, rendering it lukewarm by the time it reached Laodicea; it was a banking centre and therefore rich with substantial quantities of gold; it had a school of medicine which produced eye salve made from Phrygian powder and oil; and it was also known for the manufacture of black cloth.

Additionally, when Laodicea suffered a severe earthquake in 60AD, and Rome offered financial assistance to rebuild the city, the Laodicean authorities declined the offer, saying in effect that they "have need of nothing"**. Laodicea literally means "the people judge", which we will see is very fitting in describing this self-righteous era.**

All these things help us to understand this final Church message, which I will go through towards the end of this section.

The emergence of the Laodicea era of the Church must be sought in the aftermath of the "adventist" movement begun by William Miller in the 1830's in North America. Although not a Sabbath keeper, Miller was a persuasive preacher and prolific writer who believed in the imminent return, or "advent", of Jesus Christ. He had made calculations, based on Biblical prophecies, which led him to believe that first 1843, and then 1844, would be the year of Christ's second coming.

Miller made quite a lot of sense in his interpretation of difficult Biblical subjects. He believed that the commencement of the Reformation in the early 16th century coincided with the start of the Philadelphia Church era, and that it ran until the late 18th century, when he believed the Laodicea era had begun. He correctly used the "day for a year" **principle when interpreting prophecy, as was the custom in times prior to ours, and believed that the prophetic periods of 2300 and 2520 years found in the Bible pertain to major events. He also understood that the** "times of the Gentiles" **mentioned by Christ in Luke 21:24 are the same as the** "seven times" **of punishment spoken of in Leviticus 26. History has proven him largely correct on these points, although not about what the time periods refer to.**

A very good source of information on the subject of William Miller and his beliefs is "The Journey - A History of the Church of God (Seventh Day)", a book by Robert Coulter.

Over a number of years Miller gained thousands of followers, some of whom sold all their belongings in anticipation of Christ's return. When the appointed date passed without event, it became known as the "Great

Disappointment". In the same year they had expected Christ to return, 1844, some Millerites were introduced to the doctrine of the seventh day Sabbath. Acceptance of this doctrine grew amongst them, but not in the case of Miller himself who died in 1849.

James and Ellen White were among those who had been won over by Miller's predictions regarding Christ's return. In 1846 they also began observing the Sabbath. Ellen White claimed that she received regular visions from God, and over time many Sabbath keeping adventists began to view her as a prophetess. In that process, she and her husband James also began to be seen as the movement's leaders. Still convinced that Miller's identification of 1844 was accurate, Ellen White claimed that his predictions concerning the year 1844 hadn't been incorrect, but had instead seen Christ enter a new phase of His work in Heaven that year.

In the 1850's Ellen White's visions led to a split amongst Sabbath keeping adventists. James White, Ellen's husband, had established a number of Sabbath keeping congregations in Michigan. Over time, the Whites began to insist on members accepting the legitimacy of Ellen's visions. One of the Church's preachers at the time was a man named Gilbert Cranmer, who rejected her visions and was on that basis denied the opportunity to speak in the congregations established by James White. Cranmer subsequently broke away from them and, together with others who were of like mind with regard to Ellen White, established the Church of Christ in 1858. It was later renamed the Church of God, and later still, the Church of God Seventh Day.

The majority, however, who remained loyal to Ellen White, officially took the name Seventh Day Adventist Church in 1860, and brethren began the now common trend of putting a human being, or the ideas of one human being, in charge of the Church.

In 1861 the US Civil War broke out. It is hard not to see this as an outward manifestation of the spiritual state of the Church: the physical nation at war as a reflection of the spiritual nation at war. It was certainly a sign of a house divided against itself. During the Civil War, Ellen White predicted that the British would invade the US and fight against the North, but this did not happen.

During the last century and a half, the SDA Church has grown to enormous proportions, with more than 20 million members worldwide. From their earliest days SDA's have believed that the Laodicea Church message of Revelation 3 applies to them, although to this day they curiously seem to see it partly as a badge of honour. Over the course of the 20th century, they strangely adopted the doctrine of the Trinity, a trademark of false Christianity, greatly discrediting themselves as a true Church of God.

The Church of God Seventh Day (COG7) has also grown, but at a much slower rate. Internal friction has caused it serious damage through the years. The divisive and controversial legacy of long-term leader and preacher Andrew N Dugger hangs heavy over its history. Dugger took much power to himself and banned opposing views. Additionally, following the SDA's, he abandoned some of the Church's long-held Historicist prophetic interpretations and replaced them with Futurist interpretations. At present the COG7 numbers some 400,000 members, mostly outside the USA.

One branch of the Sabbath keeping Churches that emerged from the COG7 in the 1930's was the Sacred Name Movement. These people insist on the use of God's names in the Hebrew language only, but offer questionable explanations as to how God's names can be found written in Greek in the New Testament. Also, a wide variety of possible pronunciations are offered by various groups, all insisting that theirs are the correct ones.

Another breakaway from the COG7 led to a relatively short-lived, but very influential branch of the Church of God:

In the 1930's, Church history saw a man emerge who would go on to epitomise the Laodicea era in the 20th century by introducing Papal style "one man rule" into the Church of God.

That man was Herbert W Armstrong. The Church he founded was the Radio Church of God, later renamed the Worldwide Church of God. At its peak it had over 100,000 members. Armstrong called himself the "end time Elijah", falsely claiming that God had raised him up to restore all lost doctrines to the Church in fulfilment of Matthew 17:10-11.

Many individuals have arisen since, though none quite like him, who have also laid claim to being "some great one" **(Acts 8:9), such as an apostle, a prophet, the fulfilment of some particular Scriptural prophecy, or simply the successor of HWA.**

The desire for power and dominion over the Church on the part of charismatic *individuals* is one of the most obvious hallmarks of the final Church era.

This fits well with Seventh Day Adventist belief that the Laodicea era commenced in the mid-19th century with the emergence of their group and its central figure, Ellen G White.

The Laodicea era message (Rev 3:14-22) has been applied, by some groups, to those who have *departed* from the faith, but in reality most of those who left the faith, at whatever time they left, were pruned by Christ from His vine. The Laodicea passage applies to *those who remain*, who still have God's spirit, not to those who have been pruned off and cast away, and no longer constitute the Church.

The Laodicea era has seen many characteristics that are truly "hot"**: The teaching of the validity of God's law, the resolve of many to trust in God for healing, and the willingness to give up a job or career rather than break God's Sabbath or annual holy days, are some examples (Rev 3:15).**

At the same time this era has shown characteristics that are undoubtedly "cold"**. Serious errors have been introduced involving autocratic Church government and idolatry of Church leaders, thus denying the direct way that God interacts individually with His children. In addition, opulent lifestyles and the amassment of wealth,**

financed through centralised tithing, have been witnessed, leaving the local congregations poor and the people at the top rich.

In the late 1970's the average annual wage in the USA was approximately $12,000. According to Worldwide Church of God lawyer Stanley Rader, in his book "Against The Gates Of Hell", Herbert Armstrong's income around this time was $200,000 per year, *plus* expenses (as was Rader's own). This means that Armstrong was taking about sixteen times the average wage for himself from the Church's tithe income. There can be little doubt that he was the highest paid Church of God minister of all time.

Additionally, HWA's leadership legitimised the desecration of the fourth commandment by permitting Church members to visit restaurants on God's holy Sabbath Day in direct violation of Nehemiah 10:31 and 13:15-22. Other doctrinal errors he introduced are listed elsewhere on this website.

Unfortunately, by only focusing on the "hot" **aspects, whilst concealing or ignoring the** "cold" **aspects, an unbalanced view of its history has been retrospectively portrayed by the Church, largely obscuring the true nature of this final Church era.**

The breakaway of many ministers and members from the Worldwide Church of God after Herbert Armstrong's death in 1986, when Joseph W Tkach took over the helm and led the Church into oblivion, was commendable. These brethren sought to retain the true doctrines handed down through the ages. Regrettably, however, they also continued to teach many unsound doctrines that had been introduced by Herbert Armstrong.

With all this in mind, let's look at the message to Laodicea (quoted from the New American Standard Bible [1995 version] except where indicated):

(Comments in brackets are added by the author)

Revelation 3:14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold **(unconverted)** nor hot **(converted)**; I wish that you were cold **(unconverted, not yet called)** or hot **(converted, and "on fire" for God, so one could be part of the firstfruits harvest).**

16 So because you are lukewarm **(possess traits of both converted and unconverted people)**, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth **(remove you from the Body of Christ).**

17 Because you say, "I am rich **(claim to understand the Bible)**, and have become wealthy **(profess to have greater understanding than those of previous eras)**, and have need of nothing **("all things have been restored by the end time Elijah"; "Christ places His doctrines in the Church" (COG's); "we have the 'Spirit of Prophecy'" (SDA's)"**, and you do not know that you are wretched **(in a dismal spiritual state, greatly removed from God)**, pitiful **(deficient in effort, lacking Godly zeal)**, poor **(in Bible knowledge)**, blind **(to fulfilled Bible prophecies)**

and naked **(lacking God's righteousness, as a result of sinful practices such as making men into idols, misrepresenting God, transgressing the Sabbath, observing pagan practices, depriving people of truth, teaching doctrinal and prophetic lies, etc.) (NIV)**,

18 I advise you to buy from Me **(obtain from Christ)** gold refined by fire **(God's truth, direct from His Word)** so that you may become rich **(in Godly knowledge)**, and white garments **(God's righteous nature, obtained through genuine repentance and obedience, having learnt His law from His Word, rather than the dubious explanations of men)** so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve **(God's understanding)** to anoint your eyes so that you may see **(especially in regard to fulfilled prophecy).**

19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent **(we all need to repent of being Laodicean).**

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock **(Christ stands shut out of His Church due to its members following the doctrines of men, rather than the Word of God)**; if anyone **(any individual willing to go against the flow of this era)** hears My voice and opens the door **(opens their Bible, which is Christ in print)**, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me **(he will be given solid, wholesome, spiritual food by Christ).**

21 He who overcomes **(but not he who remains in the Laodicean state)**, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne**.**

22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'**".**

In general, we of the Laodicea era have failed to understand that just as the brethren of all six previous Church eras *had to overcome the spiritual conditions of their time*, the same is required of us today. The prevalent belief that all one has to do to make it into God's Kingdom is to attend Church services, accept established Church beliefs, and have unquestioning faith in Church leaders, is not consistent with what God requires of His people. We need to see ourselves as God sees us and acknowledge that the message to Laodicea applies to us. Then we must repent of our deficient spiritual state and answer Christ's knock by allowing Him to teach us personally from His Word.

I believe that the sequence of Church history presented in this article cannot be too far off the mark. The evidence in most cases speaks for itself, as long as we are willing to look at the facts objectively, *without prior biases and allegiances to certain individuals*.

Some people deny that the Church era messages constitute a historical sequence. And yet an abundance of historical markers are given:

Ephesus, where John, the last of the 12 apostles resided; Smyrna, "rich" **with the treasures of God's Word and its** "ten days" **of severe persecution; the** "martyr(s)" **slain by the** "throne of Satan" **of the Pergamos and Thyatira periods; the Black Death** "sickbed" **of Sardis and the** "time"**, or 360 years, leading to Catholicism's loss of power; Philadelphia's** "open door" **of receiving God's** "word" **in print, and the** "hour of temptation" **they were spared from; and deceived, supposedly** "rich" **Laodicea which has failed to** "let no man take your crown" **by allowing human beings to rule them in place of Jesus Christ.**

The historical sequence in the seven messages to the Churches also shows seven stages of the *false* church that can be identified throughout:

Era 1) "Apostles" **who are** "liars" **(single deceivers)**

Era 2) "A synagogue of Satan" **(organised deception)**

Era 3) "Satan's throne" **(state "Christianity" and the Papacy)**

Era 4) "Jezebel" **and** "the depths of Satan" **(Catholicism's murderous endeavours)**

Era 5) "Death" **(Catholicism's severe punishment by means of the Black Death)**

Era 6) "The synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews" **(predominantly Protestantism)**

Era 7) No mention of a false church (their power waning and ultimately "fallen" **- see the page "BABYLON IS FALLEN" for more information)**

The historical account of the Church eras reveals three glaring errors made by HWA:

1) He failed to recognise the post-Reformation re-emergence of the true Church, and its unwavering determination to restore the true doctrines Roman Catholicism had suppressed for so long. This era of believers could not by any stretch of the imagination be "Sardis" **as he labelled them. They were the Philadelphia era, full of zeal for God and possessing sound Biblical knowledge, raising up substantial numbers of Sabbath keeping congregations on both sides of the Atlantic. HWA himself mostly continued with these people's teachings, as shown on the page "THE END TIME ELIJAH", so his theory and his practice did not match up.**

2) His placement of the Philadelphia era in the 20th century does not make sense in light of its description given by God. Revelation 3:9 mentions the "synagogue of Satan" **opposing the Philadelphia era Church. As shown above, in the Pergamos and Thyatira eras, this involved ongoing oppression from *organised false Christianity*. The problem with HWA's explanation is that *there was no ongoing, organised oppression of the Sabbath keeping Churches in the 20th century.* The power of the false Christian churches had by then been greatly eroded. The long period of persecution by false Christianity, especially in the Western nations where the true Church was mainly based, had largely come to an end before the time of HWA's ministry. The fact that HWA was able to preach his message widely, through various forms of media, virtually without any restrictions, shows that his time period was not the Philadelphia era. Had it still been that era, the forces of the** "synagogue of Satan" **would never have permitted it.**

3) The Laodicea era message makes no mention of external persecution; rather, it refers primarily to self-delusion *within* the Church, and its dire consequences. Although this message perfectly describes the era that included his ministry, HWA failed to recognise it.

In conclusion, if we have eyes to see, and a willingness to be honest about these things, from our unique place in history we should be able to identify the historical timeline of the seven eras of the true Church of God.

THE REAL SEVEN SEALS

The prophecy of the seven seals is the cornerstone of the book of Revelation. It is the pivot on which the book turns and the foundation on which it unfolds. The seals give us a historical overview of the fate of the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, and describe the conditions that would befall Jews and Christians from the time that the prophecy was given until the second coming of Christ.

In Revelation 5:1-5 the apostle John is shown a vision of a scroll in the right hand of God. He is told that the scroll is "sealed with seven seals" **and that only Christ is** "worthy" **to** "loose the seven seals thereof"**. From Revelation 1:3 we gather, and the contents confirm, that this scroll contains written *prophecy*.**

Why is Christ worthy to remove the seals of this prophecy? Revelation 5:9 explains:

"You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood"**.**

Jesus Christ came to Earth to overcome Satan, to establish His Church, and to die for the sins of mankind. Through His victory, He became worthy to unseal the seals of this prophecy.

But what prophecy does the scroll contain?

There is only one set of prophecies in the Old Testament that are said to be sealed. They are the writings of Daniel. In Daniel 12:4 Daniel is told to "seal the book" **and in verse 9 he is informed that** "the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" **(see "Two Important Points" near the end of this article for an explanation of the word "end").**

How does Christ's victory qualify Him to unseal the prophecies of Daniel?

The prophecies of Daniel cover a timeline of events from Babylon's conquest of Jerusalem until the second coming of Christ.

Christ's return will coincide with the resurrection of the firstfruits of salvation, and be followed by the removal of Satan, and the accession of Christ to the rulership of Earth.

However, these things are only made possible because Christ succeeded in His mission at His first coming - that's how He qualifies.

Jesus Christ's first coming was according to the timeline given to the prophet Daniel in the Seventy Week Prophecy, found in Daniel 9:24-27. See the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES" for a detailed explanation. It should be noted that in this prophecy a "week" **is reckoned as seven years. See the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" for an explanation of this principle.**

This prophecy begins in Daniel 9:24 by stating that "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" **and verse 26 adds that** "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city **(Jerusalem)** and the sanctuary **(the Temple)".**

Christ speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in His Olivet Prophecy. There He describes conditions and events that would culminate in the final "week", or seven years, which at that time remained to be fulfilled of the Seventy Week Prophecy, and which would see the destruction of the Jewish nation at the hands of the Romans.

Why were the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple then impending? Throughout their history, whenever the people of Israel went astray, God sent prophets to them with words of rebuke, and a call for them to change their ways. In most cases these warnings went unheeded, and many of the prophets were killed because of their message. Finally, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the prophesied Messiah, to teach the people about God and to usher in the New Covenant by His sacrificial death.

If the Jews had accepted their Messiah, and repented of their evil ways, they would have become the New Covenant people of God and been greatly blessed. However, most of the Jews rejected their Messiah (Matt 21:33-39). Christ therefore predicted that great punishment was to come upon them (Matt 23:31-38), as had already been foretold in the Seventy Week Prophecy.

From the beginning of Christ's ministry in 27AD, a forty inclusive year period of grace transpired for the Jews to repent (as predicted in type in Jonah 3:4). At the end of this period, in 66AD, the Jews rebelled against their Roman masters. The Roman assault on the nation of Judea then began in the spring of 67AD, reached its climax with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 70AD, and continued until the fall of Masada in 73AD, a period of seven inclusive years.

The conditions that would prevail between the conclusion of Christ's ministry and the destruction of Jerusalem, as described by Christ in the Olivet Prophecy, were in keeping with those of the whole period of Gentile occupation of the Holy Land.

Israel had become God's nation at Mt Sinai when He made the Old Covenant with them. This covenant stated that God would bless the people of Israel if they obeyed Him, and curse them if they disobeyed. These blessings

and curses are recorded in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, and the Biblical narrative shows that they occurred in waves. Sometimes, such as in the time of Joshua, Israel was mostly blessed, while at other times, such as in the days of the Judges, it was frequently cursed.

It was also foretold in Leviticus 26 that if they persisted in their sins God's people would ultimately be conquered and have rulership of their land given over to other nations for a very long period of time. The length of this period was to be "seven times"**, meaning 2520 years. See the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for an explanation. History clearly bears out that for Jerusalem and the Jews this lasted from the capture of the Holy City by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, until the end of World War 2. See the chart on the "HOME" page for the timelines involved.**

So, because the prophecies of Daniel begin at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem, and the sealed scroll of Revelation 5 is the sealed book of Daniel, it follows that the curses and conditions "unsealed" **by Christ in Revelation 5-11 are those that began with the Babylonian conquest and continued from that time onward.**

This is also borne out in Revelation 1:1, where we are told that the prophecies of the book of Revelation concern "things that must shortly take place"**, and by Revelation 1:19, which elaborates somewhat by stating that they relate to** "things which are" **and** "things which will take place after this"**. Therefore we see that Christ is not just speaking about future conditions, but also about those that had already been present for centuries in the Holy Land to a greater or lesser degree.**

Many different interpretations of the book of Revelation exist, but it is the Historicist explanation that, with the benefit of hindsight, proves to be correct. This is logical because the Scriptures themselves employ this method of interpretation. When Daniel was given the interpretation of the prophecy of the statue of a man made of various metals (Dan 2) and the prophecy of the four beasts (Dan 7), he was told that these referred to empires which would appear successively in history.

It is also logical that God, in His word, having given an overview of man's first 4000 years up until Christ's death and resurrection, would give the next 2000 years in advance, leading up to Christ's return. This way, no matter where in history a person would find themselves, they would have a message and see prophesied conditions pertaining to their time.

The region where the fulfilment of the sealed prophecies must be sought is the Holy Land and especially Jerusalem, because that city is the focus of the prophecies of Daniel. It is also the focus of Christ's Olivet Prophecy, so maintaining a "Jerusalem focus" is essential to a right understanding.

Earlier prophecies given by God had pertained to all the people of Israel. However, it was mainly people from the Kingdom of Judah who had returned to the Holy Land after the Babylonian captivity. Daniel, himself a Jew, was told that the prophecies given to him concerned "thy people and .... thy holy city" **(Dan 9:24), meaning the**

Jews and Jerusalem. This is why the first "beast" **in the prophecies of Daniel is Babylon, which captured Judah and Jerusalem, and why it is not Assyria, which had earlier captured Israel and Samaria.**

Let's look at the description of the seals starting in Revelation chapter 6.

I have quoted Christ's Olivet explanations directly under the text of the seals, as these are descriptive of the entire duration of Jerusalem's occupation by Gentile nations. These are taken from Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, which are the three accounts of the Olivet Prophecy given in Scripture.

First Seal: False Religion

Revelation 6:1 "Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see"**.**

2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer"**.**

"For many will come in my name saying I am He" **(Lk 21:8) and** "false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders" **(Matt 24:23-27).**

The first condition that would exist in Jerusalem and the Holy Land is the presence of false prophets and false religion.

Two words in the description of the first seal need elaboration: "white" **and** "bow"**. In Scripture, the colour *white* signifies God's righteousness, as seen for instance in Daniel 7:9 and Matthew 17:2. Many have thought therefore that the white horse of Revelation 6 represents Christ. The *bow*, however, gives us a very interesting clue in regard to this first seal.**

In Scripture, a bow is often used as a symbol of deceit. In Hosea 7:16 we read, "They return, but not to the Most High, they are like a deceitful bow"**. Jeremiah 9:3 states,** "And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies"**. Psalm 78:56-57 says,** "Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God, and did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow"**.**

In the same vein, Ephesians 6:16 reads "In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" **(NIV). Arrows are fired from a bow, in this case figuratively by Satan the devil.**

In contrast, Revelation 19:11,15 show the righteous Christ also riding a white horse, but not holding a bow. Instead, coming from His mouth is a sharp sword, representing the word of God, which is truth (Eph 6:17, Jn 17:17).

So in this first seal we see false religion presenting itself as true religion, i.e. Satan coming as "an angel of light" **(II Cor 11:14) to deceive.**

Prior to the Babylonian conquest the people of Judah had gradually sunk into idolatry, influenced by surrounding nations. This is why God allowed them to be conquered and exiled.

Although neither the Babylonians nor the Persians enforced their own religions on the land of Judah, from the subsequent Greek conquest onward it became the habitual practice of Gentile conquerors of Jerusalem to bring their false religions into the Holy Land.

After their return to Judah from Babylonian captivity, the Jews' religion was restored by Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. However, during the century or so before Christ's first coming it deteriorated into what became known as Judaism, a mixture of God's truth and "Jewish fables" **(Tit 1:14).**

Therefore, by the time of Christ's coming, religious deception, both of Gentile and Jewish origin, had become the norm in the land of Judea.

At that time Jerusalem was under Roman rule, Rome being the sixth head of the overall "Beast" power of Gentile kingdoms to rule the city of God (Rev 17:10). See the page "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" for more on this. The Romans had their own pagan religion, and with their practices defiled the land of Israel.

Additionally, Jewish false prophets arose periodically, of which Josephus disparagingly mentions a number in "Wars of the Jews" 2.13.4-6. The Romans permitted them to preach, as long as their preaching did not lead to insurrection.

One of these prophets was Theudas, of whom Josephus states "Now it came to pass, while Fadus was procurator of Judea (mid-40's AD), that a certain magician, whose name was Theudas, persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them, and follow him to the river Jordan. For he told them he was a prophet: and that he would, by his own command, divide the river, and afford them an easy passage over it. And many were deluded by his words" (Ant 20.5.1). Theudas and many of his followers were captured and killed by the Romans.

Of events in the following decade Josephus says that "impostors and deceivers" arose who "persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness: and pretended that they would exhibit manifest wonders and

signs, that should be performed by the providence of God" (Ant 20.5.6).

Josephus also relates that "there came out of Egypt, about this time, to Jerusalem, one that said he was a prophet; and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him to the mount of olives" claiming that "he would shew them from hence how, at his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down". Instead, the Roman governor, Felix, ordered his troops to attack these rebels, upon which he "slew four hundred of them" (Ant 20.8.6).

Leading up to their first century demise, the Jews became ever more stricken with false religion; the siege of Jerusalem in 70AD saw three factions of Jews fighting each other more than they fought the Romans. Each faction had its own "false prophet" **in charge: John of Gischala, Simon bar Giora and Eleazar ben Simon, as described at length by Josephus in "Wars of the Jews". The people's allegiances to these men were a major factor in their defeat.**

In the following century another false Jewish prophet arose called Simon Bar Kokhba, who was, and still is, by some Jews considered to be the Messiah. His war against the Romans, known as the Second Jewish Revolt (132-136AD), resulted in hundreds of thousands of Jewish deaths, and is only eclipsed in the history of the land of Israel by the devastation of the 66-73AD war, known as the First Jewish Revolt, when more than a million Jews died.

In Acts 8 we see the appearance in Samaria of a false prophet known as Simon the Sorcerer, credited as the founder of false Christianity. He is elaborated on at length by the historian Eusebius in his book "Church History". It is hard to overstate the impact Simon has had on history.

In the epistle to the Galatians we read that recipients of this letter were already, in the early days of Christianity, being influenced by "another gospel" **(Gal 1:6). The brethren of the first Church era, Ephesus, were commended for identifying supposed** "apostles" **who in reality were** "liars" **(Rev 2:2). False Christianity became the dominant religion of the whole Roman Empire in the time of Constantine the Great, and has greatly impacted Jerusalem throughout the millennia.**

Christ warned in His Olivet Prophecy about "false christs and false prophets" **appearing during the time leading up to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Their subsequent rise indeed led to the death of many thousands in Israel.**

However, the broader concept of *false religion* should also be understood in regard to this first seal, because history shows that false Christianity *and* Islam together trampled down Jerusalem for a total of more than sixteen hundred years.

When Christ removed the first seal He <u>unsealed</u> Daniel 2, 7 and 8, thereby showing that Jerusalem would be subjected to a long history of conquest, occupation and influence by the practitioners of false religion.

Second Seal: War and Violence

Revelation 6:3 "When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see"**.**

4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth **(of Israel)**, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword"**.**

"Wars and commotions" **(Lk 21:9),** "nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" **(Lk 21:10)** "and you will hear of wars and rumours of wars" **(Matt 24:6).**

The second condition that would exist in Jerusalem and the Holy Land is war and violence.

Note that the word "earth" **in verse 4 denotes Israel. On the third day of Creation God separated the *earth* from the *sea*. This foreshadowed God's work in the third millennium when He created the people of Israel and placed them in the land of Israel, separating them from the surrounding Gentile nations. In Revelation 17:15 the nations are referred to as** "waters" **or seas. Please see the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT" for more on this.**

Only a few years after the time of Christ, war erupted between Herod Antipas, ruler of the regions of Galilee and Perea, and King Aretas of Nabatea, the kingdom to the south of Perea and Judea. As quoted from newworldencyclopedia.org:

"....border disputes between Antipas and King Aretas of Nabatea had been slowly moving toward open warfare, exacerbated by Antipas' divorce of Aretas' daughter. In 36 C.E. Antipas' army suffered a serious defeat after fugitives from the former tetrarchy of Philip sided with the Nabateans. Antipas was forced to appeal to (Roman Emperor) Tiberius for help. The emperor ordered Lucius Vitellius, the Roman governor of Syria, to march against Aretas and ensure that he was captured or killed. Vitellius mobilized two legions, sending them on a detour around Judea..." (article "Herod Antipas").

Emperor Caligula (37AD-41AD), who succeeded Tiberius, began during the course of his reign to view himself as a god. This gave rise to fears of war for a considerable time in the land of Israel. The reason was that he ordered statues of himself to be erected in all nations the Romans occupied. In 40AD, a general by the name of Petronius was sent to Jerusalem to set up a statue of Caligula in the Temple, something that would have been greatly offensive to the Jews.

However, Petronius was intercepted before he got there and rebuffed by the Jews. The order had been that if he and his army met opposition, they should kill all who stood against them and carry the rest of the nation off into captivity. Instead, the Romans retreated to Syria in defeat and reported the situation to the emperor. From that time forward therefore, the fear of reprisal hung over the nation of Israel, until Caligula's sudden and unexpected death gave the Jews a temporary reprieve. Josephus records this, and a lot more, in his Antiquities from 18.8.2 onwards.

In the decades leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, the land was terrorised by a rebel group called the "Sicarii" as described by Josephus in War of the Jews 2.13.3. Here is a quote from Wikipedia:

"The Sicarii were a splinter group of the Jewish Zealots who, in the decades preceding Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE, strongly opposed the Roman occupation of Judea and attempted to expel them and their sympathisers from the area. The Sicarii carried "sicae", or small daggers, concealed in their cloaks. At public gatherings, they pulled out these daggers to attack Romans and alleged Roman sympathisers alike, blending into the crowd after the deed to escape detection" (article "Sicarii").

Josephus says that thousands were killed by the Sicarii, many of them villagers whose towns were raided for supplies (War of the Jews 4.7.2). He also says that as bad as their *deeds* were, the *fear of them* that came over the people was even greater.

In 66AD the Jews revolted against the Romans as a response to heavy taxation, but also because of the generally deteriorating relationship between local Roman rulers and the Jews. Violent clashes had occurred in some regions between Jews and non-Jews, leading to many deaths.

One Cestius Gallus was dispatched to restore order. He marched on Jerusalem but was driven off just when victory appeared to be his. The following year Vespasian and his armies arrived and began what would be the campaign that brought the Jewish nation to its knees, resulting in the capture of innumerable Jewish towns and the destruction of much of Jerusalem.

Christ foretold this first century war in His Olivet Prophecy, and added that Jerusalem would be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" **(Lk 21:24), predicting continued conquest and violence for the Holy Land.**

This ongoing warfare is elaborated on throughout the account of the seven trumpets of the *seventh* seal. Please see the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)".

When Christ removed the second seal He <u>unsealed</u> large portions of the book of Daniel, including chapters 2, 7, 8, 9 and 11, showing that Jerusalem would be subjected to a long history of war, violence and bloodshed.

<u>Third Seal: Famine and Hardship</u>

Revelation 6:5 "When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see". So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand**.**

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine"**.**

"Famines" **(Matt 24:7 and Lk 21:11)**

The third condition that would exist in the Holy Land is famine. The above description in Revelation 6:5-6 alludes to economic hardship as well as a scarcity of food. A denarius was a man's daily wage, but the amount of food it is said here to be able to purchase is barely enough for one person, let alone a man's dependants.

In Acts 11:27-30, the prophet Agabus foretells a severe famine. The Greek word *oikoumene* in verse 28 has been variously translated as "world"**,** "earth" **or** "land of Israel"**, but verse 29 says that the location of the famine is specifically** "Judea"**. Verse 28 shows that this famine took place during the reign of Emperor Claudius who ruled from 41AD to 54AD. In I Corinthians 16:1-3 we see Paul arranging contributions for the Jerusalem brethren; Romans 15:25-28 refers to this as well.**

Josephus adds that Queen Helena of Adiabene (part of Assyria) came to Jerusalem to worship around this time and, finding the city in famine, made arrangements for grain and dried figs to be brought from Egypt and Cyprus (Ant 20.2.5). This and the sending of contributions by distant brethren show that surrounding countries were not affected like Judea was.

While Jerusalem was under siege in 70AD, terrible famine resulted when rival groups of Jews destroyed their own grain supply out of spite toward one another.

During Israel's early years in the Holy Land they were blessed with all the abundance that was foretold in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. However, as lawlessness and idolatry became commonplace, curses gradually multiplied, as foretold by these same prophecies, and poverty and hardship became more and more prevalent in the land that was once "flowing with milk and honey"**.**

Eventually they were conquered by Gentile nations and lost control of their land. The 2520 years ("seven times"**) of Gentile occupation, predicted in Leviticus 26 and foreshadowed in Daniel 4, then greatly exacerbated the curses on Jerusalem and the Holy Land for most of that entire duration.**

Visitors to the Holy Land during its many centuries of occupation would sometimes comment on how bleak and dismal the countryside looked. Not until Jewish settlers returned in the early 20th century did things begin to change. When they first arrived, they found mainly swamps and marshland, sand dunes and desert. Since the founding of the State of Israel, a total transformation has taken place: vegetation is again flourishing, water is flowing, and much food is being produced.

When Christ removed the third seal from Daniel's writings He unsealed Daniel 9:11 which states that "all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us"**, showing that Jerusalem and the Holy Land would be subjected to a long history of famine and hardship as a result of the protracted Gentile occupation foreshadowed by Daniel 2, 4 and 7.**

Fourth Seal: Untimely Death

Revelation 6:7 "When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see"**.**

8 So I looked, and there before me was a pale horse. Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth **(of Israel)** to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth **(NIV)".**

"Famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places" **(Matt 24:7).**

The fourth condition that would exist in Jerusalem and the Holy Land includes all causes of untimely death.

Note that these curses were not new phenomena, as shown by Ezekiel 14:12-21. At the time of Judah's impending fall to Babylon, God threatened to send "My four severe judgments on Jerusalem - the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence - to cut off man and beast from it" **(Eze 14:21). Together these curses overwhelmed Judah because of their disobedience.**

If instead Israel had obeyed God, He promised that "you shall eat your bread to the full" **(Lev 26:5) and** "I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through the land" **(Lev 26:6). In Exodus 15:26 He says,** "I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians"**. These kinds of promises are repeated in many places in the Bible and were fulfilled as long as Israel remained faithful.**

The reference to "a fourth of the earth" **in Revelation 6:8 most probably indicates the fraction of the Jews living in the Holy Land throughout the entire period of Gentile occupation who would suffer a premature death as a consequence of their ongoing transgressions against God.**

As in the previous seal, when Christ removed the fourth seal He unsealed Daniel 9:11, where Daniel in prayer confesses to God that "all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us"**, with the result that Jerusalem and the Holy Land would be subjected to a long history of curses leading to the untimely death of many, coinciding with the Gentile occupation foreshadowed in Daniel 2, 4 and 7.**

The removal of the first four seals reveals various horses and riders. These represent curses on the land of Judea, and specifically Jerusalem, from the time of its conquest by Gentiles until the return of Christ. The fifth and sixth seals, however, involve curses which started in the Holy Land, but over time spread to affect Jews and true Christians in the various other countries to which they were dispersed.

Fifth Seal: Persecution of God's Faithful People

Revelation 6:9 "When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held **(those who were persecuted and martyred because of their faithfulness to God).**

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth **(of Israel)**?"

11 Then a white robe **(signifying righteousness)** was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed"**.**

"They will lay their hands on you and persecute you" **(Lk 21:12),** "They will put some of you to death" **(Lk 21:16),** "Brother will betray brother to death" **(Mk 13:12).**

The fifth condition is the ongoing persecution of the true worshippers of God.

From the time of Babylon's capture of the "earth" **of Israel, those who were faithful to God were often persecuted by the powers that consecutively conquered the Holy Land. God's faithful people were also persecuted by those Jews who collaborated with the occupying powers, as occurred during the period of Seleucid rule and also that of the Romans.**

In New Testament times the Jews instigated Christ's death and persecuted the early Church. The book of Acts records the killing of the deacon Stephen at their hands (Acts 7:59-60). The apostle James was then killed by the Romans who, seeing it pleased the Jews, also arrested Peter and imprisoned him (Acts 12:1-4). Acts 8:1 states that severe persecution broke out against the Church at that time, beginning in Jerusalem. In Mark 13:9 Christ predicts that "they shall deliver you up to councils, and you shall be beaten in the synagogues"**. Clearly this refers to *Jewish* persecution of the Church.**

Prior to Christ's time this same mindset had already existed, as testified in Luke 13:34 where Christ laments "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her"**. Those who brought God's reprimand were never popular, and in many cases were martyred (Heb 11).**

However, God promises to avenge His faithful people. In Matthew 23:35-36 Christ warns the Jewish religious leaders "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation"**. Approximately 35 years later John was given the prophecies of Revelation in the decade before the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, so this punishment indeed came upon the generation that Christ addressed, as reiterated in this fifth seal.**

For almost two millennia after the Romans destroyed the Jewish nation, the persecution of true Christians was meted out mostly by "Beast" powers in the areas they controlled, including the "earth" **i.e. the Holy Land. For an account of God's vengeance on these powers see the page "THE REAL SEVEN PLAGUES'. As the lives of the "Beast" powers have been** "prolonged for a season and a time" **(Dan 7:12), persecution carried out by them persists to this day in many parts of the world.**

When Christ removed the fifth seal He <u>unsealed</u> Daniel 3 and 6, indicating that persecution, in one form or another, would be inflicted on all His faithful people throughout the age of man.

The events involving Daniel and his friends being subjected to the lions' den and the fiery furnace are well-known examples of such hostility instigated by Satan and his demons.

<u>Sixth Seal: Punishment of the Jews</u>

Revelation 6:12 "I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake **(the 67-73AD war)**; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair **(the Jewish nation was eclipsed, as God's light was withdrawn from them)**, and the moon became like blood **(the Jewish people enduring severe punishment).**

13 And the stars of heaven **(Jerusalem)** fell to the earth **(the Jews were defeated, and nationhood was taken from them)**, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind **(Israel is typified as a fig tree - Lk 21:29-30).**

14 Then the sky **(lit. "heaven")** receded as a scroll when it is rolled up **(Jerusalem was destroyed)**, and every mountain **(the successive nations ruling Jerusalem)** and island **(the Jews, living in the midst of these Gentiles)** was moved out of its place **(life in the Holy Land became volatile and unstable).**

15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains **(the majority of Jews were driven from their homeland, becoming a stateless people, scattered among the nations)**,

16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb **(Christ, the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice was rejected by the Jews)**!

17 For the great day of His wrath has come **(the Jewish-Roman war of 67-73AD, a milestone in the ongoing "times of the Gentiles" which had begun with the Babylonian conquest)**, and who is able to stand?""

"And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations" **(Lk 21:24).**

The sixth condition is the ongoing punishment of the Jews.

The people of Israel who had returned to the Holy Land after the Babylonian captivity were predominantly from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Ezra 4:1, 10:9). They re-occupied Jerusalem and its surrounding territory and were at that time a repentant people, as seen in Nehemiah 9 and 10, where we read of a renewal of the covenant between themselves and God. They promised once again to keep His laws and to walk with Him faithfully. Had they indeed maintained this attitude, God would have certainly continued to bless them.

However, over time their religion descended into what became Judaism, the ultimate sin of which was the rejection and killing of the promised Messiah. This has had serious ongoing consequences for the Jews. Of course, not all the Jews rejected Christ. Some did repent and accept Him and become part of the New Covenant Church (Acts 6:7).

When Christ removed the sixth seal He unsealed the thread running *throughout* Daniel's writings, i.e. God's vengeance on the Jews for their wilful rejection of Him, which would continue for 2520 years and would include loss of sovereignty over the land of Israel. At the particular stage of history here in Revelation 6, just prior to the 70AD devastation, the Jews were about to endure much more suffering and go into captivity once again.

Seventh Seal: Seven Successive Major Events in the History of Jerusalem and the Jews

Revelation 8:1 "And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets**".**

"And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" **(Lk 21:24).**

The seventh seal consists of seven trumpets, each of which represents a major turning point in the history of Jerusalem and the Jews:

Trumpet 1) The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD during the First Jewish Revolt.

Trumpet 2) The rebuilding of Jerusalem as a Gentile Roman city in the 2nd century, and the subsequent Second Jewish Revolt a.k.a. the Bar Kokhba War.

Trumpet 3) The "Christianisation" of Jerusalem, begun by Constantine in the 4th century.

Trumpet 4) The Islamisation of Jerusalem, following Omar's conquest in the 7th century.

Trumpet 5) The Crusader conquests and battles over Jerusalem, from the late 11th century until the middle of the 13th century.

Trumpet 6) The period of the two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the subsequent return of the Jews to Israel and Jerusalem in the 20th century.

Trumpet 7) The return of Christ to Jerusalem with all its associated events.

Please see the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)" for a detailed account of the fulfilment of the prophecy of the seven trumpets.

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The Olivet Prophecy

Below is Luke's version of the Olivet Prophecy, which references all the seven seals.

Underlined text identifies the seals. My annotations and additional Scriptures are in (brackets).

Luke 21:5 "Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said,

6 "These things which you see, the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down"**.**

7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"

8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He' and 'The time has drawn near'. Therefore do not go after them **(Seal 1).**

9 But when you hear of wars and commotions **(Seal 2 and 4)**, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately"**.**

10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom **(Seal 2 and 4).**

11 And there will be great earthquakes **(Seal 4)** in various places, and famines **(Seal 3 and 4)** and pestilences **(Seal 4)**; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven**.**

12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake **(Seal 5).**

13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony**.**

14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer;

15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist**.**

16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death **(Seal 5).**

17 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake **(Seal 5).**

18 But not a hair of your head shall be lost**.**

19 By your patience possess your souls**.**

20 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies **(this is the sign the disciples asked for in verse 7)**, then know that its desolation is near **("Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation', spoken of by Daniel the prophet (in Dan 9:27), standing in the holy place" - Matt 24:15) (Seal 6).**

21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her**.**

22 For these are the days of vengeance **(on the Jews for rejecting and killing Christ)**, that all things which are written may be fulfilled **(written in the Seventy Week Prophecy of Dan 9:24-27, and in Eze 4 where 40 years of sin by the House of Judah are foretold. Christ died on Passover 31AD; the final siege of Jerusalem began 40 inclusive years later around Passover 70AD) (Seal 6).**

23 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! **(Luke 23:28-30: "But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!'")** For there will be great distress in the land **(of Israel)** and wrath upon this people **(the Jews) (Seal 6).**

24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations **(as a consequence of the 67-73AD war) (Seal 6).** And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled **(Seal 7: Trumpets 1-6) (This is a momentous chronological statement. It takes the prophecy all the way to the 20th century, when Judah's 2520 years of punishment came to an end).**

25 And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars **(see the above description of Rev 6:12-13)**; and on the earth **(of Israel)** distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring **(distress caused by many Gentile invasions and conquests for a period of almost two millennia following the first century destruction by the Romans) (Seal 7: Trumpets 1-6)**;

26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth **(on Israel)**, for the powers of the heavens **(lit. "powers of heaven" i.e. powers that conquer and control Jerusalem)** will be shaken **(will periodically, violently change) (Seal 7: Trumpets 1-6).**

27 Then **(after "the times of the Gentiles" are fulfilled and the Jews control Jerusalem again)** they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory **(the second coming of Christ) (Seal 7: Trumpet 7).**

28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near**".**

29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees**.**

30 When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near **(Israel is in Scripture pictured as a fig tree - see Jer 24, Hos 9:10, Joel 1:6-7 and Lk 13:6-9, which put Mk 11:12-14, where Christ cursed a fig tree, into perspective).**

31 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near **(the time when the New Covenant will have fully succeeded the Old Covenant, i.e. in 70AD).**

32 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things **(prophesied about it)** take place **(Luke 17:25 tells us who Christ meant by "this generation". Speaking of His then impending crucifixion, He said, "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by *this generation*").**

33 Heaven and earth will pass away **(Jerusalem and Israel of that time)**, but My words will by no means pass away**.**

34 But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you unexpectedly**.**

35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth **(the land of Israel).**

36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man"**.**

Two Important Points

Two important points need to be made in regard to the Olivet Prophecy. Both have caused much confusion.

The first point concerns the meaning of Matthew 24:14. It states, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then will the end come"**. In our current Church era, the word** "end" **has usually been wrongly applied to the time of Christ's second coming. This has had a very blinding effect on our understanding. The meaning of the word** "end" **in Scripture must always be derived from its context.**

The very next verse, Matthew 24:15, says, "Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation …. standing in the holy place"**. The meaning of this is made clear in Luke 21:20:** "but when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near"**.**

Therefore the "end"**, or** "desolation"**, spoken of in Matthew 24:14-15 is the end of everything associated with the Old Covenant: the city of Jerusalem, the Temple, the physical sacrifices, the physical priesthood, even the Jewish nation itself. All these came to an end in 70AD.**

This is confirmed by Hebrews 8:13, which says, "By calling this covenant "new", he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear" **(NIV). The book of Hebrews is generally believed to have been written between 60 and 70AD, i.e. in the years leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem.**

People of course may object and say that the gospel wasn't preached to "all the nations" **by that time, so this can't possibly be the explanation. The Scriptures however, state otherwise:**

In Colossians 1:5-6 Paul writes, "the truth of the gospel which has come to you, as it has in all the world"**. In Romans 10:18 Paul quotes Psalm 19 in regard to the preaching of the gospel:** "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world"**. In Romans 16:25-26 Paul speaks of the** "gospel" **that has been** "made manifest ..... to all nations"**.**

Therefore, when God says, "this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come"**, this simply means that the New Covenant gospel began to go out to all people, both Jews and Gentiles, and then in the 70AD tribulation all things connected with the Old Covenant were destroyed, i.e. brought to an *end*.**

Likewise, when Daniel was told in Daniel 12:9 that the prophecies he was given were "sealed till the time of the end"**, this referred to the same period in history, for it was at this time that Christ unsealed Daniel's prophecies, as recorded in the book of Revelation. This is what Daniel 12:4 means by** "knowledge shall increase"**.**

<u>The second point</u> concerns the phrase "unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved" **found in Matthew 24:22, which follows Christ's warning about a coming** "great tribulation"**. Many in our time believe this is speaking about everyone in the whole world.**

The parallel account in Luke, however, gives us the correct explanation. Luke 21:23 says, "there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people"**. Verse 21 calls for those** "who are in Judea" **to** "flee to the mountains" **to avoid this coming distress. Luke therefore identifies** "the land" **as the land of Judea, and** "this people" **as its inhabitants, i.e. the Jews. So we see that the** "great tribulation" **or** "great distress" **was not a worldwide phenomenon, but rather one that occurred in the first century AD and was limited to the Holy Land.**

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In conclusion, as stated at the outset of this article, the prophecy of the seven seals provides the foundation of the book of Revelation. The seals give an overview of the fate of the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, as well as the conditions that would befall Jews and Christians, from the time that the prophecy was given, until the second coming of Christ.

The account of the seven seals continues on the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)".

REVELATION 7 & 14 – THE 144000

In Revelation chapter 7 the apostle John hears an angel speaking about a group of 144,000 "servants of our God" **who would be** "sealed" **and protected from the seven trumpet events of Revelation 8-11 which were just about to commence. As explained on the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)", these were seven major events in the history of Jerusalem, starting with the 70AD destruction of the Holy City at the hands of the Romans.**

These 144,000 are said to be 12,000 each "of all the tribes of the children of Israel"**.**

After this, John sees a group he describes as "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" **(Rev 7:9-10).**

Many have wondered about the identity of this "great multitude" **and its relationship to the 144,000. The Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), amongst others, believe that the two groups are one and the same.**

I believe there is good reason to accept this interpretation, as internal evidence in the book of Revelation points in that direction. Take a look at the following examples:

In Revelation 1:10-13, John hears behind him what he describes as "a loud voice, as of a trumpet"**, but when he turns around he sees** "One like the Son of Man"**.**

In Revelation 5:5-6, John is told that "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll"**, but when he looks he sees** "a Lamb as though it had been slain"**.**

In Revelation 17:1-3, John is told by an angel, "I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters"**, but when John is taken to see this apparition he states,** "I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns"**.**

In each of the three examples given above, John hears a description of something, and immediately afterwards sees a vision of it, *but in a substantially different form*.

The same appears to apply in the case of the 144,000 and the great multitude in Revelation 7; John first hears their number and then sees this great congregation of people. And since the first group is "of Israel" **and the second group is** "of all nations"**, Israel should be understood here as *spiritual Israel*.**

All this fits very well with Revelation 14 and 19. In Revelation 14:1-5, 144,000 are with Christ on Mount Zion, and are said to be "firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" **(v4). In Revelation 19:6-9 the subject is** "the marriage of the Lamb"**. Christ and a** "great multitude" **are present on this occasion (v1,6-8).**

From I Thessalonians 4:13-18 we gather that the "firstfruits" **receive salvation at the return of Christ; in I Corinthians 15:52 we learn that this occurs** "at the last trumpet"**; and Revelation 11:15-19 confirms that Christ returns at the seventh, or** "last" **trumpet.**

All these things seem to fit together well.

Seeing the 144,000 as spiritual Israel would also explain something many have long wondered about, i.e. why the tribe of Dan is missing from the list of the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:5-8, since we would expect to find some faithful, repentant people from the physical tribe of Dan, such as Samson (Heb 11:32), among the 144,000.

Many similarities can be seen between the great multitude in Revelation 7 and the 144,000 in Revelation 14. The diagram below, taken from an SDA site, but modified by the author, bears this out.

The 144000	The Great Multitude
1) They will be with the Lamb (Rev 14:1)	1) They will be in front of the Lamb (Rev 7:9)
2) They will stand before the throne (14:3)	2) They will stand before the throne (7:9,15)
3) They will stand before the four living creatures and the 24 elders (14:3)	3) They will stand before the four living creatures and the 24 elders (7:11)
4) They follow the Lamb wherever He goes (14:4)	4) The Lamb will be their Shepherd, so as His sheep, they follow Him (7:17)
5) They are without fault, indicating forgiveness from God (14:5)	5) They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, indicating forgiveness from God (7:14)
6) They kept themselves pure (14:4)	6) They are clothed with white robes, indicating purity (7:9,14)
7) They praise God with a loud voice (14:2,3)	7) They praise God with a loud voice (7:10)

Let's look at Revelation 7 and 14, with my annotations in (brackets).

Revelation 7

Revelation 7:1 "After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree**.**

2 Then 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 granted to harm the earth and the sea,

3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads **(indicating the protection of God's people during the seven trumpet events of the seventh seal of Rev 8-11)".**

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed **(12 groupings of spiritual, or faithful Israel. Some of these people would have already entered this group in Old Testament times. The sealing of New Testament believers completes this number by the time of Christ's return)**:

5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed;

6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed;

7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed;

8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed **(the sons of Israel were born of four women, who symbolise four distinct parts that make up this group of 144,000: Leah, the older sister with weak eyesight, who pictures those of Israel converted under the Old Covenant; her handmaiden Zilpah, who pictures those of the nations converted from the time of Adam until the end of the Old Covenant; Rachel, the younger, more beautiful sister, who pictures those of Israel converted under the New Covenant, and her handmaiden Bilhah who pictures those of other nations converted under the New Covenant).**

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude **(the same group as above)** which no one could number **(only God knows who will be included in this group)**, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues **(Gentiles as well as Israelites)**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen"**.**

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know". So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the **("the" is not in the original text)** great tribulation **(the almost 6000 years of Satan's rule on Earth, during which they lived and were called by God. Acts 14:22 states "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God")**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**.**

15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them**.**

16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**".**

Revelation 14

Revelation 14:1 "Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads **(John sees a vision of the completed firstfruits harvest at the time of Christ's return).**

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps**.**

3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth**.**

4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins **(true Christians undefiled by false religion).** These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits **(the first group to be saved)** to God and to the Lamb**.**

5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God **(their sins have been forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ).**

6 Then **(showing how the 144,000 came into being)** I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people,

7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come **(has begun for the 144,000)**; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water **(the gospel preached since the Garden of Eden, that the firstfruits both respond to and proclaim, by which process they become part of the 144,000)".**

8 And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication **(the gospel goes out into a world that is entrenched in false religion, typified firstly by the original pagan Babylon which is symbolic of *all* false religions, and secondly by "Babylon the Great", i.e. false Christianity. The first had "fallen" at the time of John's writing; the second**

began its fall in the 20th century. However, it is not until Christ's return that all false religion will finally be eliminated)".

9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships **(loves)** the beast **(the powers that Satan has put in place, which oppose God)** and his image **(the nature of Satan)**, and receives his mark **(Sabbath breaking)** on his forehead or on his hand,

10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God **(as seen in the "seven last plagues" of Rev 15-16)**, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation **(throughout history).** (And) he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb **(i.e. the generation alive at the return of Christ).**

11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest **(no Sabbath rest)** day or night, who worship the beast **(accept its teachings and practices)** and his image **(those who love Satan's nature, rather than God's nature)**, and whoever receives the mark of his name **(Sabbath breaking, being an observable sign of their rejection of God)".**

12 Here is the patience of the saints **(the enduring righteous ones, the 144,000)**; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus **(the standards laid out in the Scriptures, by which all are judged).**

13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on'" **(throughout the two thousand years of the Church eras, until Christ's return when the 144,000 will be born into the family of God).** "Yes", says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them **(they receive their reward at the resurrection)".**

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man **(Christ)**, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle**.**

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth **(spiritual Israel)** is ripe**".**

16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped **(the spiritual harvest of the 144,000 firstfruits at Christ's return).**

17 Then 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, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine **(God's people are described as a vine)** of the earth **(the land of Israel)**, for her grapes are fully ripe**".**

19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God **(the wrath of the seventh trumpet poured out on the land of Israel - Rev 11:15-19).**

20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city **(Jerusalem, to where Christ returns)**, and blood came out of the winepress **(the punishment of the unrighteous)**, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs **(the English word "furlongs" is the word "stadia" in the Greek text. A "stadion" (sing.) equals approximately 180 metres, so 1600 stadia are about 288 kilometres. This is the approximate distance between Dan and Beersheba, which in the Scriptures denotes the full length of inhabited Israel, as for instance in I Samuel 3:20. Thus, the expression "1600 stadia" symbolises judgement on the land of Israel)".**

So we see that a good case can be made for the "144,000" and the "great multitude" being one and the same group, i.e. the "firstfruits" of salvation who enter into the "marriage of the Lamb" at Christ's return to Earth.

It should be noted that much of the prophecy in these two chapters is yet to be fulfilled and so cannot be fully understood until that occurs. However, when the content is examined in light of the surrounding chapters, the general meaning may be ascertained.

20

THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL
(THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)

Most modern-day Bible commentators, including those in the Churches of God, teach that the seven trumpets introduced in Revelation chapter 8 all refer to events yet in the future.

In times past, however, the seven trumpets were generally believed to picture a sequence of seven major events, beginning in the first century. To this day, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) teaching on this subject reflects this Historicist method of interpretation, with which I concur.

However, contrary to SDA teaching, I believe that the details of this prophecy give abundant indication that all seven of these events concern *Jerusalem*, the city of God, and *the Jews*, the physical people of God.

This article will show that the seven trumpets picture respectively:

1) The Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD during the First Jewish Revolt

2) The rebuilding of Jerusalem as a pagan Roman city in the second century and the subsequent Second Jewish Revolt, a.k.a. the Bar Kokhba War

3) The "Christianisation" of Jerusalem, begun by Constantine in the fourth century

4) The Islamisation of Jerusalem, following Omar's conquest in the seventh century

5) The Crusader conquests and battles over Jerusalem, from the late 11th century until the middle of the 13th century

6) The period of the two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the subsequent return of the Jews to Israel and Jerusalem in the 20th century

7) The return of Christ to Jerusalem with all its associated events

The seven trumpets together constitute the seventh seal on a prophetic scroll unsealed by Christ in Revelation 5-11. The purpose of removing the seals is to shed light on the *sealed* prophecies of Scripture, which are those of the book of Daniel (Dan 12:4 and 12:9). This is explained on the page "THE REAL SEVEN SEALS".

The first six seals describe general conditions that would prevail. However, they alone do not unseal the full extent of these prophecies.

It is the gradual fulfilment over time of *the trumpet events that constitute the seventh seal,* that fully reveals the meaning of Daniel's prophecies.

The Scriptures are to a great extent a record of history. What is not yet covered by history is covered by prophecy. We see this principle in the narratives of the seven Church eras, the seven heads of the "Beast", and also the seven trumpets of the seventh seal.

In Revelation 5 it is stated that only Jesus Christ, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah"**, is able to** "loose" **the seals of the scroll that is** "sealed with seven seals"**. It has been commonly taught in the Church of God that Christ does this loosening or removing of the seals in His Olivet Prophecy. In actual fact it is in the book of Revelation that the seals are removed, providing a lot more detailed information regarding Daniel's prophecies, and making it possible to understand them from that point onward, with the progress of time. This is underlined by what we find in Revelation 22:10, where John is told** "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand"**. In other words, the time to understand came when the New Testament Scriptures were completed.**

However, in the Olivet Prophecy Christ does speak at length about the first trumpet event, and briefly touches on the sixth and seventh trumpet events, thereby shedding much light on Daniel as well.

Absolutely crucial to understanding these prophecies is knowing that God's focus in the Scriptures is on Israel. More specifically, His focus is on Jerusalem.

Not only does this apply to the seven seals of Revelation 5-11, but we see it in the Olivet Prophecy as well, which is given by Christ after the disciples draw His attention to the buildings on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. He responds by predicting that not one stone of these will be left on top of another, and that Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies before its destruction. He also speaks of "those in Judea" **fleeing at a time of great distress upon** "the land" **and** "this people" **(Lk 21:23), referring to the area surrounding Jerusalem, and the Jewish people. Christ then adds the important statement:** "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"**.**

The "times of the Gentiles" **were 2520 years during which Jerusalem was given over to Gentile control as punishment for the sins of the Jews, a period predicted in Leviticus 26 and Daniel 4, where it is expressed as** "seven times"**. Please see "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" and "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for further information.**

These 2520 years began with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and exile of the Jews, and came to an end in the 20th century with the Holocaust, which was Satan's climactic last attempt to prevent the fulfilment of God's prophecies regarding the return of the Jews to their homeland and Jerusalem.

As the predictions of the Olivet Prophecy take us all the way up to the return of Christ, which will be a return to Jerusalem (Zech 14:4-5), we see that from beginning to end Christ's main focus in that discourse is the Holy City. The page "THE OLIVET PROPHECY" has a lot more information on this.

This Jerusalem focus is also clearly seen in the prophecies outlined by Daniel, and therefore it applies to the prophecies of the seven seals of Revelation as well, because the added information of the seals allows the prophecies of Daniel to be better understood as events unfold through history.

The first four seals on the scroll in Revelation 5 describe conditions that would afflict Jerusalem and the Holy Land in general. These are:

Seal 1: false religion

Seal 2: war and violence

Seal 3: famine and hardship

Seal 4: untimely death

Seals five and six would initially affect God's people in the land of Israel, but subsequently in all the lands where they would be located. These are:

Seal 5: persecution of the faithful people of God

Seal 6: punishment of the Jews

This leads us to Seal 7: "seven trumpets" **(Rev 8:2) picturing seven successive major events in the history of Jerusalem and the Jews.**

In the Olivet Prophecy the first *six* trumpets of the seventh seal are summed up by Christ as "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" **(Luke 21:24).**

As there is such an abundance of figurative language used in the "trumpets" narrative and elsewhere in Revelation, a legend of commonly occurring words will be helpful:

<u>Seas</u> - seas in prophecy usually denote the Gentile nations (Rev 13:1, 17:15).

<u>Earth</u> - earth *in prophecy* usually signifies either Israel as a whole, or parts of Israel (see "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT", specifically the third day of Creation, when the earth was separated from the seas, signifying Israel's creation and its separation from the rest of the nations in the third millennium).

<u>Heaven</u> - heaven in prophecy often denotes Jerusalem. The "third heaven" **(II Cor 12:2) is where God resides (see "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT"). Jerusalem is where He resides on Earth, making it *heaven on earth*.**

<u>Trees</u> - trees usually signify the people of God. Throughout Scripture Israel is compared to a fig tree, a vine, an olive tree etc. A number of parables use this imagery. Trees were created on the third day, symbolising the nation of Israel being created in the third millennium.

<u>Grass</u> - grass and other vegetation, also created on the third day, likewise often indicate the people of God, i.e. Israel (Isa 40:1-7).

<u>Ships</u> - ships often denote or are associated with religious leaders (e.g. Noah, Christ, the disciples) who navigate the seas, i.e. give direction to the nations. All of God's people are meant to be such leaders.

<u>Sun, Moon and Stars</u> - the light of these heavenly bodies shining upon the nations pictures God's blessings, while the removal of their light denotes curses. Eclipses of the sun and moon often represent the downfall of nations. In type, the sun pictures Christ, the moon pictures His wife (originally the nation of Israel, and subsequently the Church), and the stars picture their children. This was portrayed on the fourth day of Creation week, as explained on the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT". We see this typology confirmed in Joseph's dream in Genesis 37 where we are told that the sun, moon and stars picture the family of Israel, with Jacob as father being a type of Christ.

<u>Rivers and Springs</u> - these frequently denote the pure teachings of God, which are meant to flow from the people of God.

<u>Men</u> - this depends on the context of the prophecy: In Daniel's prophecies, which concern "your people and your holy city" **(Dan 9:24), it refers to Daniel's countrymen, i.e. the Jews. Here in the account of the *seals* it also refers to the Jews, because the prophecies unsealed in Revelation 5-11 are those of the book of Daniel. On the other hand, in the account of the seven plagues in Revelation 16,** "men" **refers specifically to Gentiles on the receiving end of God's plagues. When talking about *all humanity*, God uses phrases such as** "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" **(Rev 5:9).**

With this information in mind, let's look at the seven trumpets. My comments on the Biblical text are in (brackets). References to the prophecies of Daniel that the trumpets elaborate on are directly under the text.

Revelation 8:1 "When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven **(heaven on earth - Jerusalem)** for about half an hour **(an hour is a designated period of time. The designated period in this prophecy is the 70th week (67-73AD) of the Daniel 9 "Seventy Week Prophecy". The "about half an hour" refers to the first half of this designated period, i.e. 67-70AD, when war raged in the rest of Judea before the Roman soldiers reached Jerusalem).**

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets**.**

3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne**.**

4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints **(persecuted Christians)**, ascended before God from the angel's hand**.**

5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth **(of Israel).** And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake **(signifying war).**

6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound"**.**

The First Trumpet

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, after a four month siege by the Romans, in response to the First Jewish Revolt.

Revelation 8:7 "The first angel sounded: And hail **(stones fired by catapults)** and fire followed **(burning of the city)**, mingled with blood **(wholesale massacre upon the city's capture)**, and they **(the hail and fire)** were thrown to the earth **(here meaning specifically Jerusalem - see v1)**; and a third of the earth was burnt up **(a third of the inhabitants were killed in the siege, through famine, pestilence and factional violence)**, and a third of the trees were burned up **(another third was killed in the capture of the city)**, and all green grass was burned up **(i.e. in this location: Jewish life in Jerusalem ceased when the city was largely destroyed. The historian Josephus estimates the total number of Jewish casualties as 1.1 million - The Jewish War 6.9.3)".**

This fulfils and thereby unseals the final week of the Seventy Week Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, which began with the Roman assault on the Holy Land in 67AD, and ended with the fall of the last Jewish stronghold at Masada in 73AD, a period of seven inclusive years. Daniel 9:26 states that "the people of the prince **(Roman general Titus)** who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood **(a flood of troops)**, and till the end of the war desolations are determined"**. Verse 27 continues,** "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and offering to cease"**, which refers to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70AD, which was the middle year of the seven year period.**

Additionally, Christ here reveals the meaning of Daniel 8:9-11: "And out of one of them came a little horn **(the city-state of Rome, which grew out of an original Greek settlement to become the fourth head of the third beast mentioned in Daniel 7:6. It is the sixth head of the "Beast" overall, as described in Revelation 13 and 17, and it also concludes the sequence of powers depicted by the bronze in the Daniel 2 statue)** which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven **(conquered Jerusalem)**; and it cast down some of the host **(Jews)** and some of the stars **(Christians)** to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host **(put Christ to death)**; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down **(Jerusalem and God's Temple were destroyed)".**

In Matthew 24:15-16 and Luke 21:20-21, we read that Christ warned his followers to flee before the final "week" **of the Seventy Week Prophecy. He did this based on the second half of Daniel 9:27. Correctly translated**

this reads, "And on the perimeter **(of Jerusalem)** abomination of desolation **(Jerusalem surrounded by armies - Lk 21:20)**, before the end which is decreed is poured out on the desolate"**. This prophecy of the surrounding of Jerusalem was fulfilled by an unsuccessful assault on Jerusalem in 66AD by Roman general Cestius Gallus and his forces.**

Revelation 7 shows us what happened next. It pictures the protection of God's Church from the trumpet events, something we also see in Revelation 9:4. Christ referred to this in His Olivet Prophecy, warning His followers to flee from Judea "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies"**. This was how the protection was provided for Christians just prior to this first trumpet event. Eusebius tells us that they indeed heeded the warning (Church History 3.5). This was then followed by the events of the first trumpet of the seventh seal, which commenced in 67AD.**

The Jews thought they would find refuge in Jerusalem. In the 70AD assault however, the Romans bombarded the city with stones propelled by catapults ("hail"**), burned down the Temple (**"fire"**), thereby gaining access to the rest of the city, and slaughtered innumerable Jews with the sword (**"blood"**). "The Jewish War" by Josephus is a must-read to get a grasp of the magnitude of this catastrophe.**

Ezekiel chapter 4 also predicts the 70AD Roman destruction, where the prophet is ordered by God to portray Jerusalem under siege. He is instructed to lie on one side for 390 days and on his other side for 40 days, and is informed that these days picture *years* of sin. Ezekiel is told that the 390 years pertain to the sins of the House of Israel and the 40 years to the sins of the House of Judah.

The 390 years ran from Solomon's descent into idolatry until the Babylonian siege and destruction of Jerusalem in the days of King Zedekiah, and so involved the *entire* House of Israel. The 40 years that specifically related to the sins of the House of Judah led to the second fall of Jerusalem. The evidence is striking:

Christ's death was instigated by the Jews in the year 31AD. Josephus records that the Roman siege of Jerusalem began in early 70AD, 40 inclusive years later. Therefore we see that the Roman siege and destruction of Jerusalem were prophesied not only by Daniel, but also by Ezekiel.

The first trumpet of the seventh seal clearly depicts the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem.

<u>The Second Trumpet</u>

Jerusalem's rebirth as a pagan city, leading to the Second Jewish Revolt (132-136AD).

Revelation 8:8 "Then the second angel sounded: and something like a great mountain **(Jerusalem - see for**

instance Dan 9:16) burning with fire **(showing God's judgement**) was thrown into the sea **(was, around 130AD, turned into a Roman, Gentile city)**, and a third of the sea became blood **(in the resulting "Bar Kokhba Revolt", named after the Jewish revolutionary leader of that time, a third of all Roman forces were involved and saw bloodshed. See the Wikipedia extract below).**

9 And a third of the living creatures **(a third of the Jews)** in the sea **(under Gentile rule)** died, and a third of the ships were destroyed **(another third of the Jews, meaning two thirds of the Jews were killed. Roman historian Dio Cassius, an early third century writer, put the number of Jewish casualties at 580,000)".**

The second trumpet of the seventh seal reveals the continuation of Jerusalem's occupation by the Roman Empire, which is the fourth head of the third beast mentioned in Daniel 7:6 (the sixth head overall).

This prophecy also continues the fulfilment and <u>unsealing</u> of Daniel 8:13-14 in that this event is part of the 2300 year long religious defilement of Jerusalem by its Gentile occupiers, from which it was ultimately "cleansed"**. This is elaborated on in the article "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS".**

Christ here also <u>unseals</u> Daniel 8:23-24: "And in the latter time of their kingdom **(the four divisions of the Greek Empire after the time of Alexander)**, when the transgressors **(the Jews)** have reached their fullness, a king **(a kingdom, i.e. Rome)** shall arise, having fierce features **(full of aggression)**, who understands sinister schemes**.** His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power **(clearly Satan inspired)**; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people **(destroy the Jewish nation)".**

The 70AD destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, during the 67-73AD Roman campaign, had resulted in the deaths of 1.1 million Jews and the enslavement of 97,000 more (as recorded by Josephus). However, Judea still remained a Roman province where Jews continued to live.

Around the year 130AD, the Roman emperor Hadrian began to rebuild Jerusalem. He renamed it Aelia Capitolina, and constructed a pagan temple dedicated to the Roman god Jupiter on the Temple Mount, thus defiling the Holy City.

As a result, in 132AD a Jewish leader named Simon Bar Kokhba led a rebellion against the Romans. Despite some initial success on the part of the Jews, by 136AD the rebellion had been crushed amid very heavy casualties on both sides and in the end the Jews were completely destroyed as a nation.

At the conclusion of this war, Emperor Hadrian issued coins showing Jerusalem being ploughed like a field (Micah 3:12), which was Roman symbolism for the establishment of a new city. Judea was incorporated into a new Roman administrative region Hadrian called Syria Palaestina. As a result, the names Jerusalem and Judea were literally wiped off the map, and the Jewish province of Christ's time effectively ceased to exist. From this point on the Jews were banned from entering the Holy City, a situation that continued until the Roman Empire became "Christian" two centuries later.

Because so little is taught about this event in COG circles, I've quoted below some portions of the article "Bar Kokhba revolt" on Wikipedia:

"Following a series of setbacks, Hadrian called his general Sextus Julius Severus from Britain, and troops were brought from as far as the Danube. In 133/4, Severus landed in Judea with a massive army, bringing three Legions from Europe (including Legio X Gemina and possibly also Legio IX Hispana), cohorts of additional legions and between 30 and 50 auxiliary units. He took the title of provincial governor and initiated a massive campaign to systematically subdue Judean rebel forces. Severus' arrival almost doubled the number of Roman troops facing the rebels".

"The size of the Roman army amassed against the rebels was much larger than that commanded by Titus sixty years earlier - *nearly one third* of the Roman army took part in the campaign against Bar Kokhba. It is estimated that forces from at least 10 Legions participated in Severus' campaign in Judea, including Legio X Fretensis, Legio VI Ferrata, Legio III Gallica, Legio III Cyrenaica, Legio II Traiana Fortis, Legio X Gemina, cohorts of Legio V Macedonica, cohorts of Legio XI Claudia, cohorts of Legio XII Fulminata and cohorts of Legio IV Flavia Felix, along with 30-50 auxiliary units, for a total force of 60,000–120,000 Roman soldiers facing Bar Kokhba's rebels. As noted above, it is plausible that Legio IX Hispana was among the legions Severus brought with him, and that its demise occurred during Severus' campaign, as its disappearance during the second century is often attributed to this war".

"(Roman historian) Cassius Dio also wrote: "Many Romans, moreover, perished in this war. Therefore, Hadrian, in writing to the Senate, did not employ the opening phrase commonly affected by the emperors: 'If you and your children are in health, it is well; I and the army are in health'". Some argue that the exceptional number of preserved Roman veteran diplomas from the late 150s and 160s CE indicate an unprecedented conscription across the Roman Empire to replenish heavy losses within military legions and auxiliary units between 133 and 135, corresponding to the revolt".

The Third Trumpet

"Christian" rule over Jerusalem (commencing mid-320's AD).

Revelation 8:10 "Then the third angel sounded: And a great star **(Satan coming as an "angel of light")** fell from heaven **(Rev 12:9)**, burning like a torch **(a false light, false Christianity)**, and it fell on a third **(a third of all Jews and true Christians must have been living within the confines of the Roman Empire)** of the rivers and on the springs of water **(to violate the true teachings that emanate from Jerusalem and God's Church).**

11 The name of the star is Wormwood **(meaning bitterness).** A third of the waters became wormwood **(false Christianity polluted, made bitter, the living waters of true religion)**, and many men **(Jews)** died from the water, because it was made bitter **(the animosity toward and long-term persecution of Jews by false Christianity is well documented. True Christians and other dissenters were also victimised)".**

The third trumpet reveals the continuation of the fourth head of the third beast of Daniel 7:6, i.e. the Roman Empire, at this point in history developing into the "Christian Roman Empire", led from Constantinople. It is here unsealed as the second bronze thigh of the Daniel 2 statue, pagan Rome having been the first thigh. See "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" for more on this.

This prophecy also unseals Daniel 8:25: "Through his cunning he shall cause deceit **(a false version of the Christian religion)** to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart**.** He shall destroy many in their prosperity **("their" is in italics, and so is not part of the original text. He destroys many by succeeding, prospering, in the practice of his false religion).** He shall even rise against the Prince of princes **(against Christ, misrepresenting Him with false doctrines and abominable practices, and over time creating the Papacy)". Note that the "Christianisation" of Jerusalem mentioned in Daniel 8:25 comes *after* the destruction of the Jewish nation, mentioned in Daniel 8:24.**

Emperor Constantine gained full control of the Roman Empire after his final defeat of rival Licinius at the battle of Chrysopolis in 324AD. Constantine had converted to "Christianity" about a decade earlier. Upon taking control of the empire, he moved its capital to Byzantium in modern day Turkey, and later renamed it Constantinople. From 326 till 328, his mother Helena toured the Holy Land and other areas of Biblical significance, identifying supposed sacred sites and relics. The pagan Roman temple constructed on the Temple Mount around the time of the Second Jewish Revolt was torn down, and instead the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was erected at the alleged site of Christ's crucifixion. This edifice defiles Jerusalem to this day.

The adoption of false Christianity by the Roman Empire was a master stroke by Satan. It polluted the living waters of God's true religion, thereby misrepresenting God to the vast majority of the world's population from that time on. After Emperor Constantine laid the foundation for this dramatic change, Emperor Theodosius later in the 4th century made "Christianity" the official state religion.

The long history of the persecution of Jews and true Christians (Sabbath keepers) at the behest of both Catholic and Protestant false Christianity is comprehensively established.

The Fourth Trumpet

Islamic rule over Jerusalem (commencing 638AD).

Revelation 8:12 "Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened **(darkness fell over the "earth" (v13) of Israel when it was conquered by Islam).** A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night **(approximately one third of the Jews, and also many true Christians, must have been located in the Holy Land and other countries that came to be under Islamic rule at, or soon after, the time of Jerusalem's conquest. Those who were meant to**

reflect God's light, and so be a light to the world, were now overshadowed by the dark, demonic religion of Islam)".

This event unseals the fourth power in the Daniel 2 statue, which is Mecca/Medina (Islam), depicted by the iron legs and the feet of iron and clay.

It also fulfils and unseals the prophecy of the emergence of the fourth beast, as described in Daniel 7:7 and 7:23-24 (the seventh head of the overall "Beast" power shown in Revelation 13 and 17).

This leads to the unsealing of the "ten horns" **of Daniel 7:7 and 7:24, which history shows were ten Islamic dynasties that successively ruled over Jerusalem. For a list of these, see the page "THE TWO WITNESSES".**

This event also unseals Daniel 8:12-14: "And an host **(another occupying power, i.e. the seventh head of the "Beast" - Islam)** was given him **("him" is in italics, and so is not part of the text)** against the daily sacrifice **(against the people who had been given the true religion)** by reason of transgression **(because of the Jews' transgression against God)**, and it cast down the truth to the ground **(it introduced its own false religion to Jerusalem)**; and it practised, and prospered **(it captured Jerusalem in 638AD, and ruled the city until 1917, only interrupted for a total of about 100 years by two Crusades. It subsequently recaptured about 10 percent of the city in 1948 and held this until 1967).** 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 **(the Temple and the Temple Mount)** and the host **(the Jews)** to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days **(2300 years - from 333BC until 1967)**; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed **(see "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS" for the details of the fulfilment of this prophecy)".**

Lastly, this trumpet unseals Daniel 12:5-13, where periods of 1260, 1290 and 1335 years are foretold in connection with an "abomination of desolation"**, i.e. the Islamic "Dome of the Rock", constructed on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in the place where God's Temple had stood. See "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" for an explanation of this.**

In 637 or 638, depending on which sources are relied on, Jerusalem fell to the Islamic forces of Caliph Omar after a four month siege. The city was fortified, but not heavily protected, and was reportedly captured without bloodshed after Jerusalem's leader, Patriarch Sophronius, negotiated a surrender.

For all their shortcomings, both Judaism and traditional Christianity have in common that they rely on the Holy Scriptures and consider them to be the word of God. As such, both religions have an amount of "light" in them. Islam, on the other hand, has its own, non-inspired writings. These refer, ironically, to "the people of the book" - the book being the Bible and the people referring to both Jews and Christians. Islam figuratively contains no "light" and therefore it brought only "darkness" to Jerusalem and the other territories it controlled.

Accounts of violence and oppression endured by the people of God in Islamic countries are many and varied. As the Islamic rule of Jerusalem and the entire Middle East lasted for a very long period of time, so did this oppression, and it continues to this day. The Jews were designated as a lower class of people under Muslim law, and consequently were subjected to ongoing mistreatment and harassment. This included being made to live in confined neighbourhoods, being forced to wear distinctive clothing as a means of identification, and being limited in employment opportunities. Many other indignities were also imposed on them.

The Fifth Trumpet or First Woe

The medieval Crusader battles over Jerusalem (1095AD - 1244AD).

Revelation 8:13 "And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth **(the Jews)**, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

9:1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star **(Satan)** fallen from heaven to the earth **(Rev 12:4).** To him was given the key to the bottomless pit **(to release demons).**

2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit**.**

3 Then out of the smoke locusts **(armies of "Christian" Crusaders)** came upon the earth **(of Israel).** And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power**.**

4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree **(the people of God)**, but only those men **(the Jews)** who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads **(true Christians have the seal of God, which is the holy spirit (Eph 1:13); however, Jews who reject Christ don't have the seal of God).**

5 And they **(the Crusaders)** were not given authority **(by God)** to kill them **(completely - i.e. annihilate the Jews)**, but to torment them for five months **(a day for a year, i.e. 150 inclusive years of battles over Jerusalem. Pope Urban called the First Crusade to liberate Jerusalem in 1095 and the final battle the Crusaders and the Muslims fought in Jerusalem ended in 1244).** Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man **(severe suffering in persecution and war).**

6 In those days men will seek death **(a martyr's death)** and will not find it **(they did not find the kind of death they were seeking)**; they will desire to die **(a martyr)**, and death **(that death)** will flee from them**".**

The Crusades were initiated in order to expel the Muslim occupiers of Jerusalem. Reports had flowed back to Europe about Christian pilgrims being harassed and hindered by Muslims in the Holy City. Some sources say this oppression came from Jews as well. Whether this was true or not, for a variety of reasons, whenever a crusade got underway it also included severe persecution of Jews. This resulted in widespread murder, forced baptisms, extortion, and displacement of people.

Jewish historians record that those Jews who rejected "conversion" and baptism, and chose death instead,

introduced a phenomenon that was new to Judaism: "the tradition of freely accepted martyrdom, *Kiddush ha-Shem*, martyrdom for the glory of God, thus became the exemplary answer of Jews threatened in their life and faith by the crusaders" (See: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-crusades).

The concept of martyrdom was part and parcel of the spirit of this period in history. The Popes promised a full remission of sins and a glorious afterlife to the Christian crusaders if they died in their endeavours to liberate Jerusalem. Islam also promised those who died fighting its holy wars an afterlife in paradise. So we see that on *all sides* the martyr's death was sought, but not found, as none of the groups involved were being led by God.

7 "The shape of the locusts was like horses **(the Crusaders used horses extensively)** prepared for battle**.** On their heads were crowns of something like gold **(horses' heads were protected by armour)**, and their faces were like the faces of men **(like men, horses also had metal face plates).**

8 They had hair like women's hair **(braided manes and tails)**, and their teeth were like lions' teeth **(components of a horse's bridle extending from the bit and protruding downward on either side of the mouth, creating a similar appearance to a lion's two large canine teeth).**

Compare this image: https://www.britannica.com/science/canine-tooth

with this one: https://miniset.net/sets/ncm-mmf205358.

9 And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron **(horses' body armour)**, and the sound of their wings **(the clattering of all this armour)** was like the sound of chariots, with many horses running into battle**.**

10 They had tails like scorpions **(lances)**, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months **(150 years of suffering).**

11 And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon **(lit. "destroyer", i.e. Satan)**, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon**.**

12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter**".**

The fifth trumpet of the seventh seal unseals the prophecy of Daniel 7:7-8 regarding the "little horn" **(false Christianity led by the Papacy) gaining control of Jerusalem on three separate occasions when it overthrew Islamic ruling dynasties, thereby interrupting, and finally ending, the long Muslim occupation of the Holy City. Please see the page "THE TWO WITNESSES" for a full explanation of this.**

This trumpet also unseals Daniel 7:24-25, with Catholicism/Christianity now standing on its own feet, separate from the Roman Empire from which it had sprung. As per Revelation 17:11, it was the eighth head of the "Beast" to rule over Jerusalem, but it was "of the seven" **in that it was a continuation of the "Christianised" sixth head of the "Beast".**

This trumpet continues the fulfilment and unsealing of the prophecy of Daniel 7:25 concerning the little horn that shall "think to change times and laws"**, which it did by appropriating Christianity, but making foundational**

changes. This verse states that the Jews "shall be given into his hand" **for 1260 years. The 150 year period of the Crusader battles over Jerusalem was *part* of that 1260 year period.**

As stated previously, the 150 years pertain to campaigns fought over *Jerusalem*, the focus of prophecy. The Crusader wars did continue elsewhere for longer than 150 years, but the last battle fought in Jerusalem was in 1244, in the 150th year since Pope Urban initiated the first Crusade.

It says in Daniel 7:24 that the little horn (or eighth head) will "subdue three kings" **(i.e. in Jerusalem). This refers to the following conquests: the first Crusade overcoming the Fatimid Kingdom in 1099; the sixth Crusade replacing the Ayyubid Kingdom in 1229; and the so called "Last Crusade" of the largely "Christian" British Empire coalition which defeating Ottoman Turkey in 1917 during WW1. As shown below, this last Crusade is part of the sixth trumpet. It is described in more detail on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES".**

The Sixth Trumpet or Second Woe

The period of the two World Wars, the Holocaust and the Jews' return to Israel and Jerusalem (1914-1950).

Revelation 9:13 "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 **(demons)** which are bound in the great river Euphrates **(the Euphrates emanates from the mountains of Turkey; up until 1917 Jerusalem had for centuries been controlled by Ottoman Turkey. The removal of these four high-ranking demons from guiding Turkey, prior to WW1, would have been instrumental in Turkey's defeat, and allowed these demons to focus on Europe, with the design of destroying the Jews through Hitler's Germany. Compare this with Revelation 7:1-3 which also mentions four destroying "angels" about to unleash the carnage of the first trumpet on the Jews).**

15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an **(lit. the)** hour **(a specific point in history)**, and **(for)** a day, and a month, and a year **(a duration of 32 inclusive years, from the start of WW1 in 1914, until the end of WW2 in 1945. In a prophecy of duration, a "day" pictures a year, a "month" pictures 30 years, and a "year" remains a year. See "Days, Weeks, Months, Years and Times")**, for to slay the third part of men **(a third of all Jews in the world were killed in the latter stages of this period, i.e. in the Holocaust).**

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand **(200 million)**: and I heard the number of them **(the number of mobilised personnel during WW1 was in excess of 70 million. The number of mobilised personnel during WW2 was just over 127 million).**

See https://www.army.gov.au/about-us/history-research/traditions/remembrance-day and

https://www.military-history.org/articles/behind-the-image-number-of-people-mobilised-in-world-war-ii.htm.

17 And thus I saw the horses **(weaponry, such as tanks)** in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates **(armour - referring back to the weaponry)** of fire **(red)**, and of jacinth **(lit. hyacinth, i.e. blue)**, and

brimstone **(yellow-brown)**: and the heads of the horses **(weapons)** were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths **(the openings of these devices)** issued fire and smoke and brimstone**.**

Did John see German weapons like these?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sturmgesch%C3%BCtz_IV

https://www.alamy.com/tank-exposed-outside-the-military-museum-german-tank-belgrade-republic-of-serbia-image209575523.html

18 By **(mainly)** these three **(using these three substances, but employing a variety of methods)** was the third part of men **(Jews)** killed **(there were approximately 17 million Jews in the world prior to this period; about 6 million died)**, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone **("sulfur" - NIV)**, which issued out of their mouths **(referring to *bullets*, the *poisonous gas* used in some extermination camps, and *exhaust fumes* from diesel engines employed in other extermination camps as well as in gas vans).**

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads **(hoses entering gas trucks from their exhaust pipes)**, and with them they do hurt**.**

20 And the rest of the men **(the Jews)** which were not killed by these plagues **(the killing only stopped because Germany was defeated)** yet **(still)** 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 **(this is figurative language, but by rejecting Christ, they are akin to the worst of the heathen)**:

21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts **(the Jews in general never saw the Holocaust as a punishment permitted by God, in the way that Daniel saw the Babylonian captivity, and have never repented of rejecting and killing their Messiah. Thus, they have robbed their descendants of the truth and generally invalidated the essence of their religion)".**

Please note that the unsealing of Daniel's prophecies in the account of the sixth trumpet is explained in more detail on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES" where Revelation 10 and 11 are shown to elaborate on the specific time periods prophesied by Daniel.

This crucial period in history fulfils and unseals the prophecy of the statue of Daniel 2 which at this time has run its course and been struck on the feet by the "stone" **which becomes a** "great mountain"**. If God's Kingdom was going to be set up immediately upon the "Beast" powers' demise, the text would say that the statue's feet were struck by the great mountain, but it doesn't say that. Rather, it says that the statue was struck by a stone which *became* a great mountain. We are in this** "became" **stage today. Please read the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more information.**

The sixth trumpet therefore unseals the end of the "seven times" **or 2520 *years* of Gentile occupation of Jerusalem, pictured by Nebuchadnezzar eating grass for 2520 *days*, as recorded in Daniel 4. These same** "seven times"**, or 2520 years, were earlier prophesied in Leviticus 26. In His Olivet Prophecy, Christ refers to this moment in history as** "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" **(Lk 21:24).**

This trumpet also unseals Daniel 7:11: "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the

horn **(which became the eighth head of the "Beast", i.e. Catholicism/false Christianity)** was speaking **(its last pompous words came from Adolf Hitler. Satan, through Hitler, wanted to set up an alternative Millennium called the "Thousand Year Reich" with a new "chosen people", the Germans. How incredibly ironic!)**; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame" **(at the return of Christ - Rev 19:20).**

Additionally, this trumpet <u>unseals</u> Daniel 7:25-26, by revealing the events at the conclusion of the period during which "the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time **(this 1260 year period came to an end in 1945).** But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion **(over Jerusalem and the Jews)**, to consume and destroy it forever**.**

Lastly, the sixth trumpet events also fulfil and <u>unseal</u> Daniel 12:7: "The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven; and I heard him swear by him who lives for ever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished" **(RSV). When viewed in conjunction with Daniel 12:11, a 1260 year period can be seen to run from the setting up of an** "abomination of desolation" **until the restoration of Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem. In 1950, 1260 inclusive years since the construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in 691AD, the first stage of** "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" **was fulfilled when the newly re-established State of Israel, having moved its seat of government, the "Knesset", to Jerusalem, and having declared Jerusalem its capital city, passed the Law of Return, allowing all Jews in the world to return to Israel. See "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" for more on this.**

At this point in the prophetic narrative, when the events of the sixth trumpet have come to pass, Revelation 10:7 states, "But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets" **(NIV). In other words, in the time period between the sixth and seventh trumpets, it would be possible to understand the full meaning of these prophecies.**

Please see the chart, which can be viewed and downloaded on the "HOME" page, for the timelines that are given here. As stated above, please consult the page "THE TWO WITNESSES" to gain a better understanding of this sixth trumpet.

<u>The Seventh Trumpet or Third Woe</u>

Jesus Christ's return to Jerusalem

Revelation 11:15 "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever

and ever **(Christ's coronation in Heaven just prior to His return to Earth)**"!

16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

17 saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned**.**

18 The nations were angry **(the nations have been angry with Israel ever since it was re-established after WW2)**, and Your wrath has come **(upon Israel, because of its unbelief, at the hands of the angry nations that surround them - this appears to have begun on Oct 7, 2023)**, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged **(the two harvests of Rev 14:14-20)**, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great **(spiritual Israel - Dan 12:13, Jn 6:40)**, and should destroy those who destroy the earth **(those Jews who are hostile to God - Rom 9:6-8)".**

19 Then the temple of God **(comprising the resurrected firstfruits)** was opened **(manifested)** in heaven **(in Jerusalem - at the time of Christ's return)**, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple **(Christ united with His bride).** And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail **(great destruction upon the nation of Israel)".**

This seventh trumpet is the climax of all prophecy, where Christ <u>unseals</u> Daniel 7:13-14:

Daniel 7:13 "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man **(Christ)** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days **(God the Father)**, and they brought him near before him **(to be coronated as King (Lk 1:31-32). Note that this coronation occurs in the presence of God the Father in Heaven, and so is unseen by humans. Very likely this took place in the year 2025. See "Daniel 7 & 8 - Jerusalem's Conquerors" and "Daniel 11 & 12 - Kings of the North and the South" for more on this).**

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom **(the Kingdom of God)**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him **(at His return)**: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed**".**

Christ refers to His return in Luke 21:27: "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory**".**

So we see that the seven trumpets represent seven major turning points in the history of Jerusalem and the Jews, and all these were prophesied in the <u>sealed</u> writings of Daniel the prophet.

To recapitulate, the seven trumpets of the seventh seal are:

Trumpet 1) The destruction of Jerusalem

(during the First Jewish Revolt)

Trumpet 2) The rebuilding of Jerusalem as a pagan Roman city

(leading to the Second Jewish Revolt)

Trumpet 3) The "Christianisation" of Jerusalem

Trumpet 4) The Islamisation of Jerusalem

Trumpet 5) The Crusader battles over Jerusalem

(fought between "Christians" and Muslims)

Trumpet 6) The period of the two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the return of the Jews to Israel and Jerusalem

Trumpet 7) The return of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem

(and accompanying events)

However, these logical explanations are not what the Churches of God are teaching, even though they are well-known events, and milestones in Jerusalem's history.

Why the profound blindness?

Christ counsels this Laodicea Church era to "anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" **(Rev 3:18).**

In conclusion, as stated in the introduction of the article "THE REAL SEVEN SEALS", the prophecy of the seven seals provides the foundation of the book of Revelation. The seals elaborate on the prophecies of the book of Daniel, giving us an overview of the fate of the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, as well as the conditions to befall Jews and true Christians, from the time that the prophecy was given until the second coming of Jesus Christ.

21

THE TWO WITNESSES

Few subjects in the book of Revelation have caused as much speculation as the prophecy of the Two Witnesses spoken about in chapter 11.

As the fulfilment of this prophecy, some Churches believe that at a future time two people will emerge from among their ranks and prophesy for 1260 days. Others believe that two prophets from the past will reappear, e.g. Moses and Elijah, for this same period of time.

On the other hand, many believe the prophecy covers a period of 1260 *years*. Using this interpretation method, a variety of explanations have been put forward. Some see the Two Witnesses as the Jewish and Gentile components of the Church, others identify them as the true ministry going out in pairs to testify against the Roman Catholic Church, and still others teach that they refer to the Old and New Testaments Scriptures being suppressed by Catholicism.

The intent of this article is to show that the *true identity* of the Two Witnesses can be brought to light from the Scriptures and historical facts.

Notice this passage of Scripture in Revelation 11:

Revelation 11:1 "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"**.**

In verse 1, John, who wrote the book of Revelation, is told to "measure the temple of God"**. What exactly does this mean?**

The Church is referred to in Scripture as a spiritual Temple (I Cor 3:16). In Revelation 21 we see this spiritual Temple in its completed form after Christ's return.

The history of the Church is foretold in the seven successive Church era messages of Revelation 2 and 3. As the specific delineations of these seven eras are not given, they need to be "measured", i.e. carefully studied in the light of history, to work out their correct time periods. In each Church era message, we are given specific information to enable us to do this measuring. See the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" for more on this.

In verse 2, however, we find that a particular length of time pertaining to the physical "court" **outside the Temple, i.e. the Temple Mount, and the** "holy city"**, Jerusalem, does not need to be measured by us. It is already given as** "42 months"**, which is equivalent to 1260 days. As explained on the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES", a *month* in a prophecy is counted as 30 days, and so 42 x 30 days equals 1260 days.**

In verse 3, a second period of 1260 days is assigned to the Two Witnesses.

Therefore, *two periods* of 1260 days are spoken of here.

Most people in the Church of God are familiar with the "day for a year" **principle of reckoning prophecy which is found in the Scriptures (Num 14:34, Eze 4:6). This is also explained on the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES".**

When applying this principle, each of the two 1260 day periods denotes 1260 years. It will be shown below that these two periods are consecutive, a fact confirmed by both history and Bible chronology.

Therefore together these periods equal 2520 years, a length of time frequently referred to in Scripture as "seven times"**. Again, this is explained on the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES".**

2520 years, or "seven times"**, is the exact length of time that the people of God were to be punished for disobeying His laws, according to Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24 and 28.**

Revelation 11:2 says in regard to the court outside the Temple, "it is given unto the Gentiles"**, but the literal Greek says,** "it <u>was</u> given unto the Gentiles"**. Young's Literal Translation here reads** "was given"**. Green's Interlinear Bible also says** "was given"**. The Companion Bible has a marginal note in this place saying "is = was".**

This raises the question: When *was* the Holy City given unto the Gentiles? The answer is simple: when the Babylonians captured it. All seven successive Gentile powers that captured Jerusalem: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, the Seleucid Empire, Rome, and Mecca/Medina (Islam), came to power within the *first* 1260 year period, the one mentioned in Revelation 11:2. This period ran from 575BC (see the chronological chart on the home page for proof of this date) until 685AD. For further information see the article "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES".

During the *second* 1260 year period, from 686 until 1945, a sequence of ten Islamic dynasties and three "Christian" powers ruled Jerusalem at the same time that the Papacy ruled from Rome. This is explained further below. It is this second period that is referred to in Revelation 11:3.

Revelation 11:3 tells us that the Two Witnesses will prophesy, but what do they prophesy about?

Notice this passage in Daniel 7:

Daniel 7:24 "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings**.**

25 And he shall speak great words **(blasphemy)** 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" **(three and a half "times", i.e. 1260 years).**

From these verses we learn that a "horn"**, or power, shall arise amongst ten other powers, and shall be guilty of blasphemy and the persecution of God's** "saints" **for a set period of 1260 years.**

What is meant by the term "saints"**?**

Saints refers to those set apart by God for His own purposes. It can refer either to God's *physical* people or His *spiritual* people. Both are set apart by God and both are called saints in the Scriptures. The context has to bear out which is intended, and we will see that here the physical saints, Daniel's countrymen, the Jews, are intended.

What is the identity of the blasphemous "horn" **said to arise amongst ten other horns?**

In the early fourth century Constantine the Great moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople. The city of Rome speedily declined in significance from that point on, never to rise again as a military stronghold. However, as a *spiritual* centre the city grew steadily under a long succession of men with the title "Bishop of Rome". These Bishops of Rome, over time referred to as Popes, were allowed to be selected by church officials in Rome, but needed to be confirmed by the emperor residing in Constantinople before being sworn into office.

In 684 however, Emperor Constantine IV waived the requirement of Papal confirmation by the emperor, permitting Rome from that time onward to select and install its Popes independently. The first Pope so elected was Pope John V in 685, making his first regnal year 686. From this point on the Papacy became an *independent* power, or in Bible language, a "horn"**.**

From 686 until 1945 there were 1260 inclusive years during which *the independent Papacy* influenced many "Christian" nations to persecute millions of people it deemed to be heretics. Prominent among the victims were the Jewish people. Jews were greatly tormented through a variety of means, including inquisitions, forced migrations, pogroms, crusades, and finally the Holocaust.

Although many different groups (including true Christians) were persecuted during this 1260 year period, we will see further below that the events that occurred at the end of this period unmistakably identify the Jews as the people referred to in Revelation 11:3.

This 1260 year period is the same one prophesied in Daniel 7:25 during which the *saints*, i.e. the Jews, were to be given into the hands of the horn referred to in verse 24 as "another" **and in verse 8 as** "another little horn"**, i.e. the Papacy. *Therefore Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 11:3 refer to the same period of time*.**

Looking back at how history has unfolded we can see that the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11:3 were in fact *a living fulfilment* of the prophecy of Daniel 7:25.

<u>Thus it can be concluded that the Two Witnesses are the Jews</u>.

Additionally, the blasphemous little horn is also depicted in Revelation 13:5 as "a mouth"**, clearly denoting the Papacy. Therefore Daniel 7:25, Revelation 11:3 and Revelation 13:5 all refer to the same 1260 year period, from 686 until 1945 inclusively.**

We can now see why John is told in Revelation 11:2 that the Holy City "was given" **unto the Gentiles for 1260 years, but that God** "will give" **unto His Two Witnesses another 1260 years. From John's standpoint in history, in the first century AD, the first period had already started but had yet a long way to run, while the second period was still far off in the future.**

This complex prophecy shows a great degree of design.

We need to understand that God is THE great mathematician.

He tells *us* to do things "in order" **(I Cor 14:40), because that is exactly what *He* does. He does everything with planning and precision.**

That includes the duration of the punishment of His people.

To reiterate: The first 1260 year period saw all seven successive Gentile powers, i.e. the seven heads of the "beasts" of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 17, capture the city of Jerusalem. These were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, the Seleucid Empire, Rome, and Mecca/Medina (Islam). The second 1260 year period saw independent Papal rule from Rome, and its accompanying persecution of the Jews, during the time when Jerusalem was ruled by the "ten horns", all of which grew successively out of the seventh head of the "Beast", Mecca/Medina, which captured Jerusalem in the year 638AD. See "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" for more information.

These ten horns were ten Islamic dynasties that ruled over Jerusalem, three of which were defeated by the "little horn" (Dan 7:8), i.e. Catholicism/Christianity, also described as the "eighth" head of the "Beast" (Rev 17:11). The little horn became the eighth head of the "Beast" when it first conquered Jerusalem in 1099, as the First Crusade succeeded in its mission.

The ten horns and the three manifestations of the little horn are:

1) The Umayyad dynasty, based in Syria, which ruled Jerusalem from 661 till 750.

2) The Abbassid dynasty, based in modern-day Iraq, which ruled Jerusalem from 750 till 878 and 904 till 939.

3) The Tulunid dynasty, based in Egypt, which ruled Jerusalem from 878 till 904.

4) The Ikhshidid dynasty, based in Egypt, which ruled Jerusalem from 939 till 969.

5) The Fatimid dynasty, based originally in modern-day Tunisia and afterwards in Egypt, which ruled Jerusalem from 969 till 1073 and 1098 till 1099.

6) The Seljuq dynasty, based in modern-day Iran, which ruled Jerusalem from 1073 till 1098.

While under Fatimid rule, Jerusalem was captured by the first Crusade, led by Godfrey de Bouillon, in 1099, starting the first period of rule over Jerusalem by the "little horn" of Daniel 7:8, which lasted until 1187.

7) The Ayyubid dynasty, based alternately in Egypt and Syria, which ruled Jerusalem from 1187 till 1229 and 1244 till 1260. The Ayyubid ruler Saladin defeated the Crusaders in 1187.

Ayyubid ruler Al-Kamil surrendered Jerusalem to the sixth Crusade under Frederick II in 1229, which was the second period of rule over Jerusalem by the "little horn". This period lasted till 1244.

Ayyubid ruler As-Salih, with the help of the Kwarezmians, besieged and recaptured Jerusalem in 1244, ending Christian rule until 1917.

8) The Mamluk dynasty, based in Egypt, which ruled Jerusalem from 1260 till 1516.

9) The Ottoman Empire, based in modern-day Turkey, which ruled Jerusalem from 1516 till 1831 and 1840 till 1917.

10) The Alawiyya, or Muhammad Ali dynasty, based in Egypt, which ruled Jerusalem from 1831 till 1840.

The Ottoman Empire was defeated in 1917 during WW1 by the third emergence of the "little horn" referred to at the time as "The Last Crusade", when a combine of British Empire forces re-established Christian rule over Jerusalem. The British remained there until May 1948.

How did the Jews become the the Two Witnesses?

The explanation begins in I Kings 11:26-36:

I Kings 11:26 "Then Solomon's servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king**.**

27 And this is what caused him to rebel against the king: Solomon had built the Millo and repaired the damages to the city of David his father**.**

28 The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph**.**

29 Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field**.**

30 Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into *twelve pieces***.**

31 And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself *ten pieces*, for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give **ten tribes** to you

32 (but he shall have **one tribe** for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel),

33 because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David**.**

34 However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes**.**

35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you - **ten tribes.**

36 And to his son I will give **one tribe**, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there'""**.**

Israel was composed originally of twelve tribes. The tribe of Joseph was split into two, making thirteen tribes, but the tribe of Levi was set apart by God for His service. Therefore, when dividing up the land in Joshua's time, only twelve tribes received land. Levi was given towns to live in, within the territory of the other twelve tribes.

At the time of the fulfilment of Ahijah's prophecy, Jeroboam was to receive ten of the tribes. Solomon's son Rehoboam was to receive one tribe *in addition to the one* of which he already was the leader.

If there are twelve pieces in total and one king is to receive ten, obviously the other will have two.

***Which* two is made abundantly clear in verse 36:**

For David to "always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem"**, one of the two tribes would have to be Judah, for David is of the tribe of Judah.**

For this to happen in Jerusalem the other tribe would have to be Benjamin, because Jerusalem is in the territory of Benjamin (Josh 18:21-28).

After King Solomon's death, Ahijah's prophecy came to pass. Solomon's son Rehoboam made himself so unpopular that ten of the twelve tribes broke away from him to form the Kingdom of Israel, with Jeroboam as their first king. Rehoboam was left with only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, together called the Kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital city. Over time, many people from the tribe of Levi joined them, as did a substantial number from the other tribes. At their core however, they were the people of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, located in their allotted territories.

The account of the division of the nation of Israel into the ten tribes of the Kingdom of Israel and the two tribes of the Kingdom of Judah can be found in I Kings 12 and II Chronicles 11. In I Kings 12:20 it says that initially only the people of the tribe of Judah followed Rehoboam, but the very next verse and the remainder of the chapter show that the tribe of Benjamin joined them.

In I Kings 12:21-24 it states, "When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand chosen warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: "Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, 'Thus says the Lord, You shall not go up or fight against your kinsmen the people of Israel. Return every man to his home, for this thing is from me'""**.**

And II Chronicles 11:11-12 adds that Rehoboam "made the fortresses strong, and put commanders in them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. And he put shields and spears in all the cities, and made them very strong. So he held Judah and Benjamin"**.**

See also II Chronicles 11:1-3, 15:8-9 and Ezra 4:1, 10:9 for further examples of where the Kingdom of Judah is shown to consist mainly of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

After the division of the nation, the two Kingdoms continued as separate entities for around two and a half centuries until the Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, and its people taken into captivity. Just over 120 years later the Kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians, and its people also went into captivity. However, whereas the nation of Israel did not return to their land and were absorbed into other nations, a substantial number from the nation of Judah returned to the Holy Land and renewed their covenant with God.

It is these people, known as the Jews, who continued to be witnesses for God. They held to God's Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath, and therefore were set apart from all other people. It was the Jewish nation that Jesus Christ was born into and who for the most part rejected Him as their prophesied Messiah. As a result, they were once again decimated by their enemies and scattered among the nations for the remainder of the time of Gentile domination that God had foretold (Lev 26:33, Lk 21:24).

While exiled among the nations, the Jews held tenaciously to their religion, and so they were witnesses for God during their sojourn in those countries. In particular they witnessed to the fate that had befallen them because of their disobedience to God.

With all this information in mind, let's look at Revelation 11:1-14.

(My comments are in brackets).

Revelation 11:1 "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod **(a measuring rod)**: and the angel stood, saying, rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein **(the true Church through the ages, as delineated by the Church era messages in Rev 2 and 3).**

2 But the court which is without the temple **(the Temple Mount)** leave out, and measure it not; for it is **(it was)** given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city **(Jerusalem - *the capital of Judea*)** shall they tread under foot forty and two months **(1260 years, from 575BC until 685AD, during which all seven Gentile powers, the seven heads of the "Beast", came on the scene to rule Jerusalem).**

3 And I will give power **("power" is in italics, and so not in the original text)** unto my two witnesses **(Judah and Benjamin - *the people of Judea*, i.e. "the Jews")**, and they shall prophesy **(they shall fulfil the prophecy of Dan 7:24-25, being "given into the hand" of the little horn)** one thousand two hundred and threescore days **(1260 years, from 686AD until 1945AD, making 2520 years together with verse 2)**, clothed in sackcloth **(a time of mourning from suffering the worst of persecutions, like the innumerable banishments and pogroms, the murderous Inquisitions, the Crusades and the Holocaust. The website biblebelievers.org.au lists 109 regions and countries where the Jews have historically been persecuted and from which they have been expelled. More than a hundred of these occurrences were specifically during this second 1260 year period. See the list here.**

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth **(all Israel was God's olive tree (Jer 11:16) and was meant to supply the oil to be a light to the world. As 12 tribes they could be seen symbolically as 12 olive trees. Zechariah speaks of two olive trees (Zech 4). This identifies the two, because after all Israel had gone into captivity and been removed from their land, it was mainly a remnant of the two southern tribes that had returned from Babylon, and it is these that Zechariah is speaking to. At that time in history, Ezra 4:1 and 10:9 both mention "Judah and Benjamin" as being the people then living in the land. The people of Levi are described as "divisions" living among them (Neh 11:36). These together became "the Jews", witnesses of God to the world, preserving God's Word and fulfilling its prophecies, clearly revealing the existence of our Creator).**

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth **(God's punishment comes on those who persecute His people, when His people pray to Him for deliverance)**, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed **(a perfect literal example of this is found in II Kings 1:9-14, where fire proceeds from God in response to Elijah's request).**

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 **(this is highly figurative language, but history shows that those who persecute God's people and His Holy City are themselves cursed)".**

Here are some examples:

*** Babylon was punished for the destruction it brought on Jerusalem, as foretold in Isaiah 13 and 14 as well as Jeremiah 25, 50 and 51. It was completely destroyed by the Medes, and its original site never inhabited again.**

*** Catholic/Christian Europe, which was guilty of the most abominable persecutions of those they considered to be heretics, was struck by the Black Death in the mid-1300's. This was foretold in the Thyatira Church era message (Rev 2:18-29).** "Jezebel"**, who targeted both Christians and Jews, failed to repent and paid the price. (See the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS").**

*** When nearing the end of their 2520 years of punishment, the Jews were subjected to the greatest atrocities ever perpetrated against them, at the hands of Nazi Germany. The result was that the number of German WW2 deaths exceeded the number of Jews killed by the Germans, and their country was left in ruins.**

Here are some Scriptures that pronounce the punishment of the enemies of God's people:

* "I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it" **(Zech 12:3).**

* "Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; those who plunder you shall become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will make a prey" **(Jer 30:16).**

* "Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish" **(Isa 41:11).**

These are just a few of many Scriptures which testify that those who come against God's people or God's city pay a heavy price.

Revelation 11:7 "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 **(approximately six million Jews were killed in World War 2, at which time they "finished their testimony" in regard to the 1260 year period of Dan 7:25 and Rev 11:3, and their time of being in "sackcloth" (v3) came to an end).**

8 And their dead bodies **(the surviving Jews, figuratively dead)** shall lie in the street of the great city **("Babylon the Great", i.e. the "Christian" nations led by Rome, the former seat of the Roman Empire, as described in Rev 18)**, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where **(whereby)** also our Lord was crucified **(hundreds of thousands of surviving Jews were stranded all over Europe, many of them unable to return to their pre-war homes).**

9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations **(the people of the world, i.e. those depicted by "waters" or the sea - Rev 17:15)** shall see their dead bodies **(being cut off from the Holy Land makes them figuratively "dead" as a nation - see the contrast with verse 11)** three days and an half **(three and a half years, between 1945 and 1948 - see verse 11)**, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves **(many people did not wish these survivors of the Holocaust to have a place of rest, or a homeland, anywhere in the world).**

10 And **(But)** they that dwell upon the earth **(the earth of Israel or "eretz Yisrael", as the Jews say; contrasted here with the people of the nations in verse 9)** shall rejoice over them, and make merry **(no one else was particularly happy to take in Jews, but their fellow Jews already in the Holy Land were overjoyed to bring them "home")**, and shall send gifts one to another **(ships, crew, organisers, money etc. were sent from Israel to ports all over Europe to facilitate this 20th century exodus as foretold in Isa 11:11-16; the returning Jews were a "gift" in themselves, providing much needed labourers, men of fighting age, as well as capital, to Israel)**; because **(so that)** these two prophets tormented them **(tormented the Arabs and the British; the latter were in charge of "Palestine" at this time)** that **(also)** dwelt on the earth **(the British forcefully tried to prevent the Jews from reaching the Holy Land in large numbers, but when years of fighting Jewish resistance groups, with all the loss of life involved, became too much for them, they withdrew from the land).**

11 And after three days **(WW2 ended in Europe in May 1945; the State of Israel was declared in May 1948, precipitating Israel's War of Independence)** and an half **(in November 1948, the war in Jerusalem having come to an end, Israeli commander Moshe Dayan and Jordanian commander Abdullah el-Tell drew a map which outlined the boundaries of the ceasefire in Jerusalem)** the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet **(the Jews began to repopulate God's Holy City, Jerusalem)**; and great fear fell upon them which saw them **(miraculously, three and a half years after the Holocaust ended and with it the 2520 years of their national punishment, the Jews were on their feet again as a nation, in possession of much of Israel and the greater part of the city of Jerusalem, to the utter amazement of all who witnessed it).**

12 And **(For)** they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither **(to Jerusalem).** And they ascended up to heaven **(i.e. heaven on Earth: God's dwelling place on Earth)** in a cloud **(in great numbers)**; and their enemies beheld them **(in 1950 the Jewish parliament (the Knesset), having been established in Jerusalem, issued the "Law of Return", allowing all Jews to return to their homeland, Israel. "Those who fulfilled this sacred Jewish aspiration by reaching its shores were termed *olim* - 'people who had gone up' " - quoted from "Second Exodus" by Venia Hadari (p xiv). The Hebrew noun describing this practice is *Aliyah*. The United Israel Appeal website states: "Aliyah is a Hebrew word that means to 'go up'. While originally it referred to ascending to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Feasts, today it has come to mean the return of the Jews to the Land of Israel. Aliyah is simply the migration of Jews back to their ancestral homeland").**

13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake **(i.e. a war - see for instance Joel 2:9-10)**, and the tenth part of the city fell **(after the 1948-49 War of Independence, the Jordanian controlled part of Jerusalem was estimated at 11.5% of the total city of Jerusalem)**, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand **(Jewish deaths in the War of Independence were approximately 6400, but in the decades leading up to this point, hundreds more Jews lost their lives in their struggle to regain the Holy Land. They included Haganah, Irgun and Lehi resistance fighters killed in ongoing battles against the British occupiers of the land, and also many Jewish civilians killed in clashes with Arabs. The Wikipedia page "List of killings and massacres in Mandatory Palestine" also mentions 415 Jews killed during the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt)**: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven **(God was glorified through their victory).**

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly **(the second woe ended in 1950 with the proclamation of the "Law of Return". Remarkably, this agrees perfectly with Dan 12:7 which describes a 1260 year period connected to "when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" (RSV). Daniel 12:11 describes the starting point of this period as when "the abomination that makes desolate is set up". If we go back 1260 years from 1950, counting inclusively, we come to 691AD, the year of *the construction of the Dome of the Rock*, the ultimate long-term desecration of Jerusalem. Daniel 12:11 also states that this**

"abomination of desolation" would be set up when "the daily sacrifice shall be taken away". Ever since the destruction of the Temple in 70AD, daily prayers had replaced physical sacrifices. When the Muslims built the Dome of the Rock and made the Temple Mount an Islamic "holy site", non-Muslims were banned from praying there. This ban on Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount is the removal of "the daily sacrifice", and the main reason why for so long the Jews have prayed at the Wailing Wall, rather than on the Temple Mount. See the concluding comments of the page "Bible Chronology" for more on this)".

Let's go to Revelation 9 which sheds more light on this subject.

Revelation 9:12 says that the first "woe" **(or fifth trumpet), is past, and then begins describing the** "second woe" **(or sixth trumpet), which we have just seen come to an end in Revelation 11:14.**

Revelation 9:12 "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 **(lit. "the")** hour **(meaning a specific point in history)**, and **(for)** a day, and a month, and a year **(a duration of 32 inclusive years, from the start of WW1 in 1914, until the end of WW2 in 1945. In a prophecy involving the duration of a prophesied event, a "day" pictures a year, a "month" pictures 30 years, and a "year" is a year. See the page "Days, Weeks, Months, Years and Times" for more on this)**, for to slay the third part of men **(approximately a third of all Jews in the world were killed in the latter stages of this period, i.e. in the Holocaust).**

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them **(the combined number of mobilised men during the two world wars was approximately 200 million: over 70 million in WW1, and nearly 130 million in WW2).**

17 And thus I saw the horses **(tanks, armoured cars etc.)** in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates **(armour)** of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone **(red, blue-grey and yellow-brown – colours used on German vehicles for camouflage)**: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths **(cannons and guns protruding from their turrets)** issued fire and smoke and brimstone**.**

18 By these three **(mainly using these three substances, but employing a variety of methods)** was the third part of men killed **(there were approximately 17 million Jews in the world prior to this period; about 6 million died)**, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone **("sulfur" - NIV)**, which issued out of their mouths **(referring to *bullets*, *poisonous gas* used in some extermination camps, and *exhaust fumes* from diesel engines employed in other extermination camps as well as in gas vans).**

19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents and had heads **(hoses and their connection devices running from exhaust pipes into gas vans)**, and with them they do hurt**.**

20 And the rest of the men **(the rest of the Jews)** which were not killed by these plagues yet **(still)** 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 **(the Jews in general never saw this as a punishment permitted by God, in the way Daniel saw the Babylonian captivity, and have never repented of rejecting their Messiah)".**

For a more detailed explanation of the above passage of Scripture, see the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)".

Notice that Revelation 9:12-21 and 11:1-13 both lead up to the same point in history, i.e. the time just after the Second World War with the resettlement of the Jews in the Land of Israel and their capture of the greater part of Jerusalem.

Revelation 10 confirms this timing.

In Revelation 10:2 a "little book"**, or scroll, is said to be *open*. Clearly, with the fulfilment of so many major prophecies around the time of the two World Wars, the fact that this book is open indicates that from that time onwards it would be possible to understand these prophecies mentioned in this particular place in Scripture.**

The seven thunders mentioned in Revelation 10:3 must also be related to this same time period, as Revelation 10 is placed right in the middle of the account of the sixth trumpet.

In Revelation 10:6 we find the often quoted, but much misunderstood phrase "time no longer"**, which most translations, excluding the KJV, incorrectly render as** "no more delay"**. In Leviticus 26 God warns Israel four separate times that if they disobey Him they will be punished for** "seven times"**, referring to four periods of 2520 years. These periods of punishment are pronounced on the descendants of both Israel and Judah. Judah's loss of sovereignty and first captivity commenced in 575BC. Daniel 4 gives the account of Nebuchadnezzar being transformed into a** "beast" **for** "seven times"**, which is symbolic of the "Beast" powers, described in the book of Daniel, trampling down Jerusalem and the Jews for 2520 years. This is the same 2520 years of Judah's punishment foretold in Leviticus 26:24, which is discussed further on the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES". In 1945 this period of Judah's punishment came to an end and there was** "time no longer"**.**

In other words, Judah's "times" **were fulfilled.**

Jesus says in Luke 21:24, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"**. In 1945 those** "times" **came to an end and, as explained above, the Jews' time to regain their land speedily followed.**

Although we are not told what is said by the "seven thunders" **that accompany the angel with the little book in Revelation 10:3-4, it might well have been a reference to the seven times of punishment. This would fit**

perfectly with the angel saying in verse 6 that there was to be "time no longer"**, meaning that the** "seven times" **of the Gentiles treading down Jerusalem and the Jews had come to an end.**

In Revelation 10:8-10 John is told to take the "little book" **and eat it. When he does so it tastes sweet in his mouth, but makes his stomach bitter. This is remarkably similar to Ezekiel's experience, as described in Ezekiel 2:8-3:14. There this prophet is also told to eat a scroll that tastes sweet but makes his spirit bitter. Whereas Ezekiel was given this vision at the time when the nation of Judah had *just begun* its 2520 years of punishment, John's vision pertained to *the end* of those 2520 years.**

For both Ezekiel and John the ingestion of God's words was a bittersweet experience: bitter because of all the suffering that would be endured by the Jews, but sweet because in due course their time of punishment would come to an end, and God's promised blessings to Israel would prevail.

Further Prophetic Fulfilment

Following on from the major prophetic fulfilments detailed above, another long-term prophecy was fulfilled soon afterwards:

As explained, there were 2520 years from the first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 575BC until the last year of the Second World War in 1945, as foretold in Leviticus 26:24. However, eleven years after its first capture Jerusalem was again conquered by the Babylonians after Zedekiah's rebellion, at which time the city was largely destroyed and most of the Jews taken into captivity.

What happened 2520 years later, as foretold in Leviticus 26:28? This takes us to 1956, when, as a result of the Second Arab-Israeli War, a.k.a. the Suez Crisis or Sinai War, in which Israel, Britain and France fought against Egypt, the Jews were expelled from Egypt. As a consequence, a second wave of Jews migrated to Israel. In subsequent years other Arab countries also expelled most of their Jewish inhabitants.

In addition to fulfilling the prophecies of Leviticus 26, these two waves of migration were also a remarkable fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah 11:11, where returnees are foretold to come to Israel from Assyria (Germany), and Egypt, and other mainly Arab lands.

Exactly the same event is prophesied in Isaiah 27:13: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet **(the sixth trumpet)** shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria **(Germany, as well as other European lands)**, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt **(as well as other Arab lands)**, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem"**.**

Therefore, just as there were 2520 years from the *first* fall of Jerusalem, when Jehoiachin was king, until the end of WW2, after which large numbers of Jews made their way back to the Holy Land, so also there were 2520 years from the *second* fall of Jerusalem, when Zedekiah was king, until the return of many more Jews to Israel after the Second Arab-Israeli War.

In other words, 2520 years after the first wave of Jews went into Babylonian captivity, the Jews were released from their European (eighth head of the "Beast") oppressors. And, 2520 years after the second wave went into Babylonian captivity, the Jews were expelled from the Arab countries (the seventh head of the "Beast") where they had been dwelling.

Closing Comments

It is important to realise that major prophecies have major fulfilments.

Often this has not been understood. For example, one current Church of God "prophet" explains the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:13-14 as beginning from the time of Herbert Armstrong's death, after which the "prophet" wrote a booklet that was read by his own son 1150 days later!

In this day and age, one might expect to find something like that from the world, but to encounter such self-glorification in the Church of God is astonishing. How can Christians have such big opinions of themselves as to believe that they are personally prophesied about in Scripture?

Herbert Armstrong also believed that his rise was foretold in Scripture, and yet he did not understand the prophecies described in this article. Even though he was in a perfect place in history to grasp these things, he couldn't see that the re-establishment of Israel fulfilled major prophecies in the book of Revelation. Nor did he have a good understanding of Bible chronology and how it relates to prophecy.

Why didn't he understand, if he was who he claimed to be?

Read the pages "THE END TIME ELIJAH" and "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" for more information.

The fact that the Jews have been God's witnesses to the world shouldn't be a surprise to us. It is really just stating the obvious. The "lost ten tribes" of Israel couldn't have been witnesses, because they lost their identity and so became unrecognisable to the world. God's Church was hidden away for most of its history for its own protection. The Jews, however, have always been in plain sight wherever they have lived. God said that the Jews would be punished for 2520 years and this was done in full public view, exactly as you would expect for those called "witnesses"**.**

They preserved and carried with them the Scriptures that testify to their fate. They witnessed to their Creator's existence and the accuracy of His Word, in particular its prophecies, and continue to do so.

In Isaiah 43, God Himself reveals who His witnesses are. In verse 10 He tells Israel, "You are my witnesses"**. In verse 12 He makes this even clearer by declaring,** "you are my witnesses, says the Lord, that I am God"**. He repeats the same message in Isaiah 44:8. When ten of Israel's twelve tribes were dispersed and lost their identity, they ceased to be witnesses. The remaining two tribes, however, held on to many true teachings of God, including the Sabbath commandment that witnesses to Him as Creator. Through the centuries, God openly fulfilled His prophecies in these two tribes. In verses 5 and 6 of Isaiah 43, God says that He will gather these same people from the East, West, North and South. And that is exactly what He has done.**

In Revelation 11:3 it says that the Two Witnesses prophesy for 1260 years, but that doesn't mean they witnessed *only* during that prescribed time. They have *always* been God's witnesses. However, it was during the 1260 year period from 686 till 1945 that they were given into the hand of the "little horn" **as stated in Daniel 7:25. Before 686 the Papacy was not an independent power and so it was not yet a** "horn"**, and in 1945 this last remaining "Beast" power finally lost its control over the Jews.**

Please see the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more information on this.

I believe the above to be a logical explanation of prophecy against the backdrop of history. The "little book" **of Revelation 10 is now open because with the progression of time the fulfilment of the prophecies has made it possible to understand them.**

To reiterate: major prophecies have major fulfilments. No one from our time is going to be able to say, "How could I have known about that?".

These prophecies have been fulfilled out in the open, through well-known historical events.

Therefore the Churches of God have no excuse.

One might conclude now that the Two Witnesses have come and gone, but nothing could be further from the truth. The Jews remain God's witnesses to this day.

What *has* come and gone is the 1260 year period during which they fulfilled the specific prophecy they were foretold to fulfil in Revelation 11:3: "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth" **(NKJV).**

Please read "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL - THE SEVEN TRUMPETS" to see the Two Witnesses in their full historical context.

REVELATION 12 – THE WOMAN

The 12th chapter of Revelation shows God providing protection for His loyal people throughout the first half of the Gentile occupation of the Holy Land.

In Revelation 11:2-3, two 1260 year periods are mentioned. These two periods together equal 2520 years of Jerusalem and the Jews being trodden down and persecuted by a series of Gentile powers, which are collectively described in Scripture as "a beast" **(Rev 13:1). These 2520 years commenced at the time of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and concluded at the end of the Second World War. This period is foretold in Leviticus 26:24 and is alluded to in type in Daniel chapter 4, as explained in detail on the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES".**

Revelation 12 and 13 reveal more details about these two consecutive 1260 year periods. Specifically, Revelation 12 focuses on the first 1260 year period, while Revelation 13 focuses on the second 1260 year period. This is evidenced by the *crowns* that are described in Revelation 12:3 and 13:1. In Revelation 12:3 these crowns are on the seven heads of the "Beast" powers, whereas in Revelation 13:1 they are on the ten horns of these same powers, in each case designating their time of rule.

During the first 1260 year period, which ran from 575BC until 685AD inclusively, all seven heads of the "Beast" came to rule over Jerusalem, after which the first of the ten horns gained control of the city. The second 1260 year period, from 686 until 1945 inclusively, was that of the "mouth that speaks great things and blasphemies" **(Rev 13:5), when the Papacy operated as an independent power during the same period of time that the ten horns successively ruled Jerusalem. This is explained in detail on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES".**

Let's look at Revelation 12 and see what information is given about the first 1260 year period.

(My comments are in brackets).

Revelation 12:1 "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman **(spiritual Israel)** clothed with the sun **(having the character of God through the indwelling of His spirit)**, and the moon under her feet **(she figuratively controls the moon, determining how much of God's sunlight she reflects into the world**), and upon her head a crown of twelve stars **(symbolising the twelve divisions of the people of God):**

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered **(Israel went through centuries of national pain and suffering to get to the point of delivering Christ into the world. See Micah 4:10).**

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon **(Satan - see v9)**, having seven heads and ten horns **(representing the Gentile nations that Satan empowered for 2520 years to trample**

down Jerusalem and the Jews), and seven crowns upon his heads **(the events here described all occurred during the first 1260 year period, when all seven heads of the "Beast" came to rule over Jerusalem).**

4 And his tail drew **(had drawn)** the third part of the stars of heaven **(angels who followed Satan and became demons)**, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman **(Mary - representative of spiritual Israel)** which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born **(Satan tried to have Christ killed as a baby).**

5 And she brought forth a man child **(Christ)**, who was to rule **(lit. who is to rule)** all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne **(after He had succeeded in His mission on Earth).**

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath **(had)** a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days **(Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus fled to Egypt where they remained for this length of time, it being a type of the abovementioned 1260 year period pictured by the seven heads with the crowns, a period during which God provided safe havens for his loyal people - see also verse 14).**

7 And there was war in heaven **(a spiritual war, centred in Jerusalem)**: Michael **(i.e. Christ - see "Daniel 11 & 12 - Kings of the North and the South" for why the archangel Michael is used as a type of Christ)** and his angels fought against the dragon **(Satan)**; and the dragon fought and his angels,

8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven **(Christ overcame Satan, thus qualifying to rule on Earth. He also died for the sins of mankind, making their salvation possible. See Col 2:15, Eph 6:12).**

9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him **(this permanently separated Satan and his demons from God and His angels. This must have occurred at the very beginning of the fifth Millennium - see the page "The Seven Day Blueprint").**

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 **(defeated)**, which accused them before our God day and night **(which he can no longer do, since Christ has paid the penalty for man's sins).**

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 **(many were martyred).**

12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth **(Israel)** and of the sea **(the Gentile nations)**! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time **(until his time of rule comes to an end).**

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman **(spiritual Israel - now the Church)** which brought forth the man child **(Acts 8:1 describes the Jews instigating "great persecution" against the Church in Jerusalem, perhaps only a year after its inception, and therefore in the first year of the fifth millennium).**

14 And **(But)** to the woman were given **(had been 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 **(1260 years)**, from the face of the serpent **(the account in Acts 8 describes early Christians fleeing to the regions of Samaria and Judea. However, already at the start of this 1260 year period, when the Jews were exiled to Babylon, the faithful among them were protected by God there, as the books of Daniel and Esther testify. During the times of the Maccabees, those loyal to God were preserved in Judean hideouts, away from their Seleucid oppressors. When Christ was a baby, his parents fled with Him from Herod's persecution to Egypt, and found refuge there. Just before the Roman campaign of 67-73AD against the Jews, faithful Church members in Israel fled to safety**

beyond the Jordan to a place called Pella, in obedience to Christ's command. So we see that throughout these 1260 years of oppression, places of refuge were provided by God for His loyal people when needed).

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood **(intense persecution)** after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood**.**

16 And **(But)** the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth **(the earliest persecutions of the Church, as testified throughout the New Testament, came from the Jews. In the 67-73AD war, most of the Jewish nation was destroyed. Therefore, the *earth of Israel* figuratively** "swallowed up" **the Jews, bringing their persecution of the Church, for the most part, to an end).**

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed **(God's loyal people in other locations)**, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ **(note the description of a true believer here: one who keeps God's commandments and accepts the testimony of Jesus. Jews will acknowledge the former, "Christians" of this world to a degree the latter, but very few people accept and teach the truth of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures)".**

So we see that Revelation 12 gives us a brief overview of God's dealings with His faithful people (the "woman") during the first half of the "Times of the Gentiles", i.e. the 1260 year period running from 575BC until 685AD. Even though the Holy Land was controlled by foreign powers, God looked after those who were faithful to Him wherever they were located.

Revelation 13 covers the second 1260 year period which completes the 2520 years of Gentile occupation of Jerusalem and persecution of God's people.

23

REVELATION 13 – THE BEAST

Misinterpretations of Revelation 13 are the norm in the Churches of God. Lamentably also, most groups are under the misapprehension that certain elements of this prophecy are yet to be fulfilled.

Fanciful ideas abound with regard to the "mark of the beast" **alluded to in Revelation 13:17. One of the most prevalent is the belief that this refers to an enforcement of Sunday worship just prior to the return of Christ.**

However, Revelation 20:4 makes it clear that the conditions described in Revelation 13 are *ongoing throughout the time of God's work with His people*. This verse states, "Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years"**.**

Here we see that *all* those who will rule with Christ, regardless of when they lived, have rejected the "mark of the beast"**. This is figurative language, emphasised by the word** "beheaded"**. Throughout history, very few people of God have been literally beheaded for their beliefs, but *all* of God's people have had to give up their own authority over their lives and allow God to be their *spiritual head*.**

Revelation 13 gives us an *overview* of the "Beast" powers that ruled Jerusalem over a period of 2520 years, with a particular focus on the second half of that period. It expands the description of the "Beast" powers already given in the book of Daniel.

In Daniel 7 four separate beasts are depicted, with a total of seven heads, the seventh head having ten horns. These same powers are described in Revelation 13, except that here they are portrayed as *one* beast.

In Daniel 7:8,25 an additional power, described as a "little horn"**, is said to come up amongst the ten horns. This little horn is elaborated on greatly in Revelation 13, and is portrayed from verse 11 onwards as another individual beast, namely a** "lamb" **which** "spoke like a dragon"**, making *five* beasts in total, with the four from Daniel, but all five together constituting one overall "Beast". The** "lamb" **or** "little horn" **is also identified as an** "eighth" **head of the "Beast" in Revelation 17:11.**

In Revelation 13:18 the number 666 is assigned to the fifth beast. The explanation of this number identifies this beast as a *historical* power, rather than a future one.

Let's go through Revelation 13, and we'll see that it all adds up.

(I've added my comments in brackets).

Revelation 13:1 "Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast **(a combination of Gentile powers)** rising up out of the sea **(and onto the "earth" of Israel)**, having seven heads **(representing seven independent powers that successively ruled over Jerusalem starting in 575BC: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, the Seleucid Empire, Rome, and Mecca/Medina - Islam)** and ten horns **(representing ten successive Islamic dynasties that subsequently ruled over Jerusalem - listed on the page "The Two Witnesses")**, and on his horns ten crowns **(showing that the content of this chapter mainly concerns the period when the ten horns were in power, and the eighth head of the "Beast", described in verses 5, 6 and 11-18, came up among them)**, and on his heads a blasphemous name **(the "Beast" powers practise false religions, and blaspheme the true God).**

2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion **(showing that this "Beast" is made up of the individual beasts described in Dan 7).** The dragon **(Satan - Rev 12:9)** gave him his power, his throne, and great authority **(over Jerusalem and the Jews for 2520 years).**

3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded **(meaning that its time of ruling Jerusalem was over)**, and **(but)** his deadly wound was healed **(the Roman Empire's time of ruling Jerusalem as the sixth head of the "Beast" ended in 638AD when Islam, the seventh head of the "Beast", conquered the city. However, Roman Catholicism led by the Papacy, having become a power in its own right, independent of the Roman Empire, but in most ways continuing the nature of that Empire, captured Jerusalem once again on behalf of Rome in 1099AD. It thereby became the** "eighth" **head of the "Beast" (Rev 17:11), but as the same verse clarifies, it was "of the seven", as it was in reality a reconstituted, or "healed", sixth head).** And all the world marveled and followed the beast**.**

4 So they worshiped the dragon **(Satan)** who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast **(they worshipped its empires, leaders, religions)**, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"**.**

5 And he was given a mouth **(the same mouth described in Dan 7:8,25)** speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months **(1260 inclusive years, from 686, when the Papacy became independent from the Roman Empire's seat of power in Constantinople, until 1945. This is fully explained on the page "The Two Witnesses").**

6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven **(false Christianity issuing forth from the Papacy, taking God's name in vain).**

7 It was granted to him **(the overall "Beast")** to make war with the saints and to overcome them **(mainly the Jews, but also true Christians. This began when Babylon conquered Jerusalem, and lasted until the end of WW2. However, persecution was greatly increased during the 1260 years when the Papacy was independent, compared with the earlier 1260 year period mentioned in Rev 12).** And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations **(all the nations within his dominion).**

8 All who dwell on the earth **(of Israel, while it was under Gentile control)** will worship him **(the "Beast")**, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world **(but those whose names *are* in the Book of Life resisted. An excellent example of this is seen in the contrast between the attitude of the Jews and that of the early Church in Christ's time: The Jews sought to**

please and put first their Roman, "Beast" power, occupiers, even saying "we have no king but Caesar" (Jn 19:15), whereas the Church sought to please God and put Him first).

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear**.**

10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword **(God takes vengeance on those who come against His city and His people).** Here is the patience and the faith of the saints **(they trust in God and wait on Him to act).**

11 Then I saw another **(now separately described)** beast **(Roman Catholicism/"Christianity", the "little horn" or eighth head of the "Beast")** coming up out of the earth **(not only true Christianity, but also false Christianity, as portrayed here by this beast, originated from the "earth" of Israel)**, and he had two horns like a lamb **(impersonating the true Lamb, Jesus Christ)** and spoke like a dragon **(he speaks deceptively, like Satan. Note that this beast has a *head* and *two horns*. The first Roman Catholic/"Christian" crusade which captured Jerusalem in 1099AD is represented by the head of this beast. Its two horns represent the two subsequent times it succeeded in seizing control of Jerusalem. These three conquests are described in detail on the page "The Two Witnesses". They are also found in Dan 7:8,24 where the "little horn" is prophesied to uproot three of the ten Islamic dynasties that successively ruled Jerusalem).**

12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence **(continues the Gentile occupation of Jerusalem, and the oppression of the Jews, and causes itself to be worshipped in all the territories it controls)**, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it **(the land of Israel)** to worship the first beast **(see verse 8)**, whose deadly wound was healed **(by the Catholic conquest of Jerusalem).**

13 He performs great signs **(by the power of Satan)**, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth **(of Israel)** in the sight of men **(the Catholic capture of Jerusalem from the hands of the "infidel" Muslims was taken to be a great and favourable sign from God).**

14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth **(the Holy Land)** by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived **(to create a Catholic kingdom, in the image of all other Gentile, "Beast" power kingdoms (see Matt 20:25). The Catholic kingdom in the Holy Land and surrounding territories was called the "Kingdom of Jerusalem" and ruled from 1099 until 1291).**

15 (For) He was **(had been)** granted power to give breath to the image of the beast **(to create the Papal system with its "Christian" rule)**, that the image of the beast should both speak **(speak "great things and blasphemies" - see verse 5)** and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed **(many who refused to worship the Papacy were put to death by it, through the political alliances it had forged).**

16 He causes all **(under his control)**, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark **(an obvious transgression of God's law, namely *Sabbath breaking*, even though this head of the "Beast" calls itself "Christian", and claims to represent God)** on their right hand **(symbolising their actions)** or **(and)** on their foreheads **(symbolising their acceptance of the teachings of this power)**,

17 and **(so)** that no one may buy or sell **(practise religion)** except one who has the mark **(of Sabbath breaking)** or the name of the beast **(be it Catholic, or "Christian")**, or the number **(the values)** of **(associated with)** his name **(false Christianity's unbiblical doctrines and practices, including *Sunday keeping*).**

18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number **(the values)** of the beast **(false Christianity)**, for it is the number of **(a)** man **(a sinful man, specifically here the office of "the man of sin" mentioned in II Thes 2:3)**: His number is 666 **(various plausible explanations regarding Papal titles are offered as possible solutions to this riddle. These certainly fit the attitude and mindset of the holders of this office, described in II Thes 2, but they do not explain why the specific number mentioned is 666, and not some other**

number. That explanation, I believe, is to be found in mathematics, as I will demonstrate further below)".

Revelation 13 shows that Papal enforcement of the values of "Christianity", including the "mark of the beast"**, is historical, having occurred during the 1260 years that this power was given authority. Therefore, contrary to what many believe, this is a prophecy that has already been fulfilled.**

The development of false Christianity

False Christianity began with individual "false apostles" **(Rev 2:2, II Cor 11:13) and over time progressed to being an organised** "synagogue of Satan" **(Rev 2:9). Subsequently it obtained a** "throne" **(Rev 2:13), i.e. Roman state "Christianity", and with it a** "mouth" **(Dan 7:8, Rev 13:5), i.e. the Papacy. Eventually the Papacy grew into a** "little horn" **(Dan 7:8 20, 24-26) when it became independent from the Roman Empire in 686. In Revelation 13 we see the little horn depicted as a two-horned** "lamb" **(Rev 13:11), also called the** "eighth" **head of the "Beast" (Rev 17:11) due to its conquests of Jerusalem in 1099, 1229 and 1917. The Papacy is also pictured as a** "woman" **wearing scarlet and purple, and labelled** "Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots" **in Revelation 17:3-6,18. This is owing to the fact that much of its religion was derived from the religion of ancient Babylon (see "The Two Babylons" by Alexander Hislop), and because it became the progenitor of false Christianity in general. Since 1945 "Christianity" has been in a state Revelation 18 describes as** "fallen"**. See the page "BABYLON IS FALLEN" for more information.**

God's Third Commandment and the number 666

The number 666 is connected to God's law, which is made up of ten principles. In Exodus 34:28 and Deuteronomy 4:13 and 10:13 these ten principles are called the "ten words" **and are known to us as the Ten Commandments. The third commandment instructs man to** "not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"**, referring to the sin of** "blasphemy" **(see v6 above), i.e. misrepresenting God.**

The two-horned lamb, which at its core symbolises Catholicism and the Papal institution, has greatly transgressed God's third commandment throughout its long, unsavoury history. In two verses alone, Revelation 13:5-6, this power is three times described as being blasphemous.

It has blasphemed God by claiming to sit "as God in the Temple of God" **(II Thes 2:4), thereby assuming the place of Christ as head of the Church. It has also blasphemed God by altering three of His Ten Commandments (as predicted in Dan 7:25), and by adding to the words of Scripture, e.g. Matthew 28:19 and I John 5:7. In addition, it has claimed that the host of abominations it has committed have been sanctioned by God, which is yet another great blasphemy.**

Countless other examples could be shown of how the stated doctrines and beliefs of this organisation have misrepresented God to the world.

How is this related to the number 666?

God's law is reflected in numbers. Numbers are also called *values*, and God's values are displayed in numbers. God attaches values from 1 to 10 to each of His Ten Commandments, and gives us the decimal system of numeration in the process. See the article "THE TEN WORDS" for more about this concept.

To depict Catholicism's blasphemous transgressions mathematically, we must bring the numbers attached to God's laws into disarray in a specific way. We can do this by using any three numbers (three being representative of the third commandment, i.e. not taking God's name in vain) between 1 and 10.

Take for instance the numbers 1, 2 and 3 and combine them into multi-digit numbers, arranging them into as many combinations as possible. This gives us six numbers: 123, 132, 213, 231, 312 and 321. If we add these numbers together, we get 1332. If we proceed to divide 1332 by the average of the original three numbers (which is 2) we get 1332÷2=666.

If we use the numbers 4, 5 and 6, we see the same thing: 456+465+546+564+645+654=3330.
The average of 4, 5 and 6 is 5. And 3330÷5=666.

Non-consecutive numbers yield the same result: Take for instance 1, 8 and 9.
189+198+819+891+918+981=3996. The average of 1, 8 and 9 is 6. 3996÷6=666.

Using numbers where the average produces a fraction works just the same. Let's take 1, 2 and 4.
124+142+214+241+412+421=1554. The average of 1, 2 and 4 is 2.333..... , or to be precise, 2 and a third.
1554÷2.333..... = 666.

If we choose two, or even three of the *same* numbers, this formula still works. Using the numbers 1, 1 and 2 produces 112+121+112+121+211+211=888. The average of 1, 1 and 2 is 1.333..... , or 1 and a third.
888÷1.333..... = 666.

Care must be taken when using the number 10 doing these calculations. If for instance using 2, 6 and 10, the number 2 stands for 2 x 100, the 6 stands for 6 x 10, and the 10 stands for 10. Writing that as a three-digit number equals 270. Therefore the numbers

2 6 10

2 10 6

6 2 10

6 10 2

10 2 6

10 6 2

should for the purpose of addition be written as

270

306

630

702

1026

1062

Add those six numbers together, then divide their sum by the average of the original three numbers, which is 6, and the calculation will be 3996÷6=666.

I believe that this mathematical explanation shows why the blasphemous false Christian "Beast" is given the number 666.

As the number 666 is only arrived at with the above formula by using *three* numbers, 666 is a mathematical outcome unique to the number 3, which is representative of the third commandment. In other words, the number 666 is a mathematical depiction of the transgression of God's third commandment.

However, James 2:10-11 says, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery", also said, "Do not murder". Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law"**.**

This passage of Scripture states that if you break one of God's Ten Commandments, you have broken them all. And as all of God's laws stand together as one unit, so by extension the number 666 can be seen as indicative of lawlessness in general.

As mentioned above, Roman Catholicism has broken the third commandment by misrepresenting God in many significant spiritual matters, even tampering with His Ten Commandments. They have discarded the second commandment, changed the day associated with the fourth commandment, and split the tenth commandment into two parts. As a result, most of the commandments have been shifted out of the places assigned to them by God.

This was foretold in Daniel 7:8,25 where this power, described as a "little horn"**, will** "think to change times and laws"**. This they certainly have done for those many millions of people under their influence.**

Of course, *all of us* have transgressed God's law, and earned the 666 label. In doing so we have incurred the death penalty. However, when we accept Christ's sacrifice and turn from our transgressions, God rids us of that description and penalty.

The big difference between true and false Christianity is that true Christianity has upheld God's law, summed up by the Ten Commandments, while false Christianity has institutionalised and justified transgression of God's commandments, has forced others into also transgressing them, and has claimed to have done all this in the name of God!

To give credit where credit is due, I developed the idea for the explanation of the Biblical number 666 after consulting the website www.archimedes-lab.org. I did this as part of researching the mathematical properties of the number 666, as I had begun to suspect that there was a mathematical link between the concept of lawlessness and the number 666. The above website, amid a plethora information about many numbers, makes the following statement (though not connecting it to the law of God in any way):

"***Take ANY number having 3 consecutive digits and sum all 6 possible combinations, here 789: 789 + 798 + 879 + 897 + 978 + 987 = 5,328. Now, if you divide the result by 8 you'll obtain 666***".

As it turns out, the above statement is in reality dealing with three individual numbers: 7, 8 and 9. In addition, as shown in my calculations above, and contrary to this statement, the numbers *don't* need to be consecutive, and they *don't* need to involve single digits. Also, to be precise, the total of the six numbers needs to be divided by the *average* of the three individual numbers used, which in this example is 8.

It becomes clear, by doing further calculations, that this law doesn't only apply to the ten basic numbers 1 to 10. Rather, any three numbers of any size will yield the same result.

If we take for instance the numbers 22, 34 and 49, we'll see that this law works the same way:

22 34 49 (2200+340+49) = 2589

22 49 34 (2200+490+34) = 2724

34 22 49 (3400+220+49) = 3669

34 49 22 (3400+490+22) = 3912

49 22 34 (4900+220+34) = 5154

49 34 22 (4900+340+22) = 5262

Adding those six numbers together produces:

2589+2724+3669+3912+5154+5262=23310

The average of 22, 34 and 49 is arrived at thus: 105÷3=35

and, finally

23310÷35=666

Endless similar calculations could be demonstrated.

As the spiritual application of God's law is limitless, likewise this mathematical depiction of *the transgression of God's law* is limitless in its application.

Chronological aspects of 666

The number 666 can be seen in the chronological record of God's work with mankind, as shown in a few places on the chart on the "HOME" page. Here are some examples:

1) Christ died on the day of Passover in the first month of the year 4000AM, after a 3.5 year ministry that began in 3996AM. The number 3996 is 666 x 6. As the spiritual principle at the foundation of the *sixth* commandment ("You shall not murder"**) is *love* (see the page "THE TEN WORDS"), this significant period in history pictures *love* overcoming *lawlessness*.**

Just before Christ began His ministry, He overcame Satan's attempts to entice Him to transgress God's law. This titanic spiritual battle (Matt 4:1-11) took place in the year 3996AM. Satan sinned when he tried to create doubt in Christ's mind by saying, "if you are the Son of God"**. Christ was able to resist Satan's temptations because of His great love for God the Father, and His familiarity with the Scriptures. This was echoed in Christ's own words during His ministry,** "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind" **(Matt 22:37).**

Three and a half years later Christ willingly sacrificed His life on the cross, making possible the forgiveness of man's sins. In becoming a mortal human being He had risked His eternal life, and His Father had risked losing His eternal companion. Therefore, this was the greatest act of love of all time. Christ was referring to this when He said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" **(Jn 15:13). Christ also said,** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" **(Jn 3:16).**

The fact that the three and a half year chain of events that led to Christ's sacrifice began in the year 3996AM cannot be coincidental.

2) The construction of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount commenced in the year 691AD, which equates to the year 4660AM. It is not known how long it took to build this Islamic structure, but if, as is likely, it was completed two years later, that would make it the year 4662AM. The number 4662 is 666 x 7. As the spiritual principle at the foundation of the *seventh* commandment ("You shall not commit adultery"**) is *faith*, the establishment of this structure representing a false faith in the holiest place on Earth, where God's Temple once stood, is remarkable to say the least.**

The interior of the Dome of the Rock contains a blasphemous inscription denying that Christ is the Son of God, an inscription likely added in the Dome's year of completion. The timing of the construction of the Dome of the Rock is a perfect example of God's faithfulness to His prophecies, since it is from the year 691AD/4660AM that, using the prophetic numbers given in Daniel 12, we can count the years until "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" **(Dan 12:7-12 - RSV). See the page "DANIEL 11 & 12 - KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH" for more on this.**

3) The year 2025AD corresponds to the 5994th year since Creation (with the understanding that the Biblical year begins on Abib/Nisan 1, not January 1). The number 5994 equals 666 x 9. The spiritual principle behind the *ninth* commandment ("You shall not bear false witness"**) is *justice* (see the article "THE TEN WORDS").**

As explained on the page "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS", the year 5994AM was most probably the year of Christ's coronation in Heaven just prior to His return to Earth. However, as in the case of the year 3996AM where there is a three and a half year time span that ends in the Jubilee year 4000AM, we see that there is a seven inclusive year time span that will end in the Jubilee year 6000AM. It appears that during this period those who transgress God's law, beginning with Satan the Devil, will encounter the justice of Jesus Christ. A 5994AM coronation of Christ, a 5995AM return of Christ, and a 6000AM binding of Satan and accession by Jesus Christ to the throne of the Earth (as explained on the page "THE SANCTITY OF THE SABBATH"), would be a logical timetable for bringing man's six millennia on Earth under Satan's dominion to an end. This is all speculative, but for these world-changing events to have commenced in the year 5994AM fits very well chronologically, and seems to be alluded to in the account of the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15-19, where it speaks of the "time" **(5994) of the** "dead" **(666) to be** "judged" **(9).**

Further significance of the year 5994AM can be seen on the chart on the "HOME" page.

So we see that the number 666 is not just related to Catholicism. That religion is designated with the number 666 in Revelation 13 because it is the greatest deception Satan has ever foisted on an unsuspecting world, leading them to accept a false and sinful version of Christianity as God's true religion. However, the truth is that *all* those who practise false religions, including all other "Beast" powers (Rev 13:1), blaspheme God and are therefore transgressors of His law.

Even atheists, who assert that God does not exist, are taking God's name in vain and thereby earn for themselves the 666 label.

<u>Concerning the phrase "the image of the beast" (Rev 13:15)</u>

The Creation account tells us that God made man in His *image* (Gen 1:26). The Bible narrative informs us that the creation of physical man is just the beginning of God's plan. Through the conversion process God is creating human beings in His *spiritual* image, or in other words His character. God's adversary, Satan, likewise has *his own* image or character. It is the total opposite of God's character.

On the very first day of Creation God pictured these opposites when He created day and night. God has placed His ways and Satan's ways before us and tells us to choose: good over evil, light over darkness, lawfulness over lawlessness, life over death. In other words, we are to choose His image or character over the image or character of Satan.

God raised up His people, Israel, and revealed His nature to them so that they in turn could reflect His character as a light to the world. God led them into the land of Israel, but over a long period of time they increasingly disobeyed Him, and were eventually sent into captivity, whereupon rulership of their country was given to those who did *not* know God. These conquerors reflected the ways of the "god of this world" **(II Cor 4:4), Satan the devil. They are collectively described here in Revelation 13 as** "a beast"**. We are told that the dragon, Satan, gives them their power (v2). He also gives them *his character* or *image*.**

The second commandment states, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"**, forbidding, in its most basic meaning, the use of physical images in the worship of the true God. However, the spirit of the second commandment is about coming to know God's true character, and not having a false *spiritual* image of Him. He wants us to know Him exactly as He is, and to love His true image.**

People who worship and obey God love His characteristics or image: love, faithfulness, mercy, benevolence, honesty, integrity, patience, humility, peace, joy, cooperation, productiveness etc.

People who are led by Satan love and worship *his* characteristics or image: hostility towards God, selfishness, power hunger, pride, hatred, discord, violence, oppression, covetousness, competition, perversion,

destructiveness, dishonesty, deception etc.

We see this image of Satan reflected in all the "Beast" powers.

God requires us to reject this way of life, and that is why in Revelation 20:4 we are told that all those who are ultimately resurrected as firstfruits and granted to rule with Jesus Christ, "had not worshipped **(loved, adored)** the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands"**.**

This even includes all those firstfruits who lived long before the "Beast" came into being!

They, through a lifetime of overcoming, chose the ways of God over the ways of Satan, developing God's character through the habit of keeping His Ten Commandments (Ps 19:7), the forgiveness of their transgressions being made possible through faith in the sacrifice of Christ. They learnt to keep the spirit of God's law, radiating His image and glorifying His name in their words and deeds.

In Deuteronomy 6:8, God pictured this by instructing Israel to figuratively tie His laws to their foreheads and hands.

God wanted His ways to become their ways, in both thought and conduct.

Concluding remarks

Revelation 13 gives us an overview of the "Beast" powers in their entirety, all the powers that have trodden down Jerusalem and the Jews and persecuted true Christians as well. This period, known as "the times of the Gentiles"**, lasted from 575BC until 1945AD, which is 2520 inclusive years, as fully explained on the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" and other pages on this website pertaining to the book of Revelation.**

The two-horned beast described in Revelation 13:11-18 specifically represents false Christianity led by the Papacy. Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:5 indicate that this power would be given authority for 1260 years, and *history clearly bears this out*. Therefore this beast is not some entity still to rise up in the future, as claimed by the Churches of God and many others; rather, it is a prophecy that was fulfilled throughout the long, bloody and deceptive history of false Christianity led by Rome.

As stated at the outset, the Churches of God have failed to take into account that the symbolic phrase, "had not

worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands" **(Rev 20:4) applies to *all* of God's people throughout time.**

There are no elements of Revelation 13 still left to be fulfilled.

THE REAL SEVEN PLAGUES

It is impossible to gain a good understanding of prophecy without having a good knowledge of history. This is especially true for the book of Revelation.

In Isaiah 46:9-10 God says, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done"**.**

God has foretold "the end from the beginning" **in the history of *the Church* in Revelation 1-3, 7, 12, 14, and 19-22, in the history of *Jerusalem and the Jews* in Revelation 4-11, and also in the history of the Satan-led powers that conquered Jerusalem and the Jews, collectively labelled a** "beast"**, in Revelation 13 and 15-18.**

The "seven last plagues"**, outlined in Revelation 15 and 16, were to be poured out on the "Beast" powers that ruled the** "earth" **of Israel (Rev 15:1-2, 16:1-2), as punishment for their rebellion against God and their crimes against Jerusalem and the Jews. God is protective of His city and people, and He says,** "vengeance is mine" **(Deut 32:35). The plagues are called** "last plagues" **in Revelation 15:1 because at the time Revelation was written five of the heads of the "Beast" had already come and gone (Rev 17:10). These previous five heads had already incurred God's punishments *since the time they had ruled over Jerusalem*. We see this prophesied for instance in Isaiah 13 (Babylon), Daniel 8:1-7 (Persia), Daniel 8:8 (Greece) and Daniel 11 (Ptolemaic Kingdom and Seleucid Empire). The final powers that were to rule over Jerusalem would be afflicted with the last seven plagues.**

Crucial to understanding the seven plagues is having an understanding of *the seven trumpets* of the seventh seal in Revelation 8-11. This is because the plagues are directly related to the trumpets. Indeed, many parallels can be seen in the descriptions of the trumpets and the plagues:

The first trumpet and the first plague both afflict the "earth"**. The second trumpet and second plague both involve the** "sea"**. The third trumpet and third plague affect the** "rivers" **and** "fountains of water"**, while the fourth trumpet and fourth plague affect the** "sun"**. The fifth trumpet mentions** "a king" **called** "Abaddon"**, and the fifth plague speaks of** "the throne of the beast"**. The sixth trumpet and sixth plague both afflict the** "Euphrates"**, while the seventh trumpet and seventh plague both involve** "great hail"**.**

Why do we find these similarities? The seven *trumpets* signify seven major upheavals/calamities to fall on Jerusalem and the Jews from Christ's time onwards (see the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)"). The seven *plagues* are God's wrath poured out on the Gentile powers for their part in causing these catastrophes. As Revelation 16:6 states, "they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink"**. In other words, God's punishment fits the crime.**

The first three *trumpets* were inflicted on Jerusalem and the Jews by the sixth head of the "Beast", Rome. As a consequence, the first three *plagues* were poured out on the Romans.

The fourth trumpet was the conquest of Jerusalem by the seventh head of the "Beast", Islam. Therefore the fourth plague was poured out on the Muslims.

Islam's rule over Jerusalem was twice interrupted by the eighth head of the "Beast", Roman Catholicism/"Christianity", when the Crusaders captured Jerusalem on two occasions during the 150 year period of the fifth trumpet, and so the fifth plague was poured out on false Christianity.

The sixth trumpet, which lasted for the period that included the two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the Jews' embattled return to Israel and Jerusalem, was inflicted by both the seventh and eighth heads of the "Beast". The sixth and seventh plagues therefore fell upon these last two "Beast" powers:

The sixth plague struck the *seventh* head of the "Beast", Islam, and shortly thereafter the seventh plague struck the *eighth* head of the "Beast", Roman Catholicism/"Christianity".

As a result these two powers lost their dominion over Jerusalem and Israel, as well as over the Jews, and thereby the 2520 year period of "the times of the Gentiles" **(Lk 21:24) came to an end.**

Therefore, just as the seven trumpets of the seventh seal have a logical progression through history, so do the seven plagues.

Let's look at Revelation 15 and 16.

(My comments are in brackets).

Revelation 15:1 "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God **(on the "Beast" powers)** is complete**.**

2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name **(see "Revelation 13 - The Beast" for an explanation of these terms)**, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God **(a vision of the firstfruits, who are protected from these plagues during their lifetime, similar to what occurs in Rev 7 in regard to the trumpets).**

3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!

4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested**".**

5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened**.**

6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands**.**

7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever**.**

8 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed **(no one will be resurrected and enter God's Kingdom until after the seven plagues have been poured out)".**

Revelation 16:1 "Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth **(on those who occupy and defile the "earth" of Israel)"".**

The First Plague

Curses on the pagan Roman Empire, the sixth head of the "Beast"

Revelation 16:2 "So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth **(upon the Romans, who defiled the "earth" of Israel)** and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men **(these Gentiles treading down Jerusalem)** who had the mark of the beast **(transgressed God's law, specifically the Sabbath)** and those who worshiped his image **(they loved the characteristics of Satan displayed by the empire, and worshipped the emperor)".**

The Romans under General Titus inflicted great suffering on Jerusalem in 70AD during the time of the first trumpet, as shown on the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)". God in turn brought great suffering on Rome.

It is interesting to note that in 69AD, the year prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, while war raged in Judea, no less than four Roman emperors, Nero, Galba, Otho and Vitellius, met an untimely death.

In 79AD Titus became Roman emperor and ruled for just over two years. During this brief reign, a catastrophe occurred that is still spoken of and written about today. Only two months after Titus took charge, Mount Vesuvius, located south of Rome, erupted in one of the most violent and destructive volcanic eruptions in history. Two cities, Pompeii and Herculaneum, were destroyed with great loss of life. Rome itself was covered in ash and darkness, and according to Roman historian Cassius Dio the poisonous ash led to an outbreak of

pestilence (Book 66:22-23). The following year, while Titus visited the devastated region around Pompeii, a fire broke out in Rome and burned for three days, destroying many pagan temples and other significant structures. This event was then followed by further pestilence, the whole disaster prompting Cassius Dio's comment that it "seemed to be not of human but of divine origin" (Book 66:24).

Roman historian Suetonius also recorded these events in his account of Titus in "The Twelve Caesars": "There were some dreadful disasters during his reign, such as the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Campania, a fire at Rome which continued three days and as many nights, and a plague the like of which had hardly ever been known before" (Life of Titus 8:3).

This was only the beginning of a long, painful journey for the pagan Roman Empire. As time went on it was subjected to many more pestilences. Two of the most notable were the Antonine Plague (165-180AD) and the Cyprian Plague (251-266AD), which caused millions of deaths and crippled the empire economically.

The Second Plague

The demise of the pagan Roman Empire

Revelation 16:3 "Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea **(Rome, the "sea" (Rev 17:15) that ruled over the "earth" of Israel)**, and it became blood as of a dead man **(its people and armies, weakened by repeated pestilences and continual warfare, were gradually overrun and defeated by foreign invaders)**; and every living creature in the sea died **(when the Roman Empire officially became "Christian", paganism was outlawed and pagan Rome ceased to exist)".**

Pagan Rome had destroyed Jerusalem and rebuilt it as a pagan city at the time of the second trumpet, as shown on the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)". Over time, God weakened pagan Rome in a number of ways, gradually bringing about its demise:

1) Early in the fourth century Emperor Constantine moved the seat of government of the Roman Empire to Constantinople. This included the Senate and the entire bureaucracy. Rome had been the centre of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire for some 800 years. It had ruled Jerusalem for well over 300 years. Losing its position of leadership was a great humiliation and also weakened it militarily.

2) When Constantine adopted the "Christian" religion he initiated laws against paganism. Over time, successive emperors issued more and more stringent edicts outlawing pagan practices, and in 380AD Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the state religion. The Wikipedia article "Persecution of Pagans in the late Roman Empire" states that "In the year 391, Valentinian II issued a law that prohibited sacrifices and that forbade anyone from

visiting the temples. A later law of Valentinian II declared that pagan temples were to be closed; this was viewed as practically outlawing paganism". Making sacrifices to idols became punishable by death, and so the state religion that had for so long forced people to worship it and its emperors, itself became the target of persecution.

3) Over the centuries, recurring warfare and internal strife resulted in a sustained economic decline that steadily sapped the strength of the empire.

4) Frequent outbreaks of pestilence during this time also weakened the armed forces, as described on the website www.ancient.eu:

"The Antonine Plague, sometimes referred to as the Plague of Galen, erupted in 165CE, at the height of Roman power throughout the Mediterranean world during the reign of the last of the Five Good Emperors, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (161-180CE). The first phase of the outbreak would last until 180CE affecting the entirety of the Roman Empire, while a second outbreak occurred in 251-266CE, compounding the effects of the earlier outbreak. It has been suggested by some historians that the plague represents a useful starting point for understanding the beginning of the decline of the Roman Empire in the West, but also the underpinning to its ultimate fall"**.**

Since moving the capital from Rome to Constantinople had curtailed the military defences of the western territories, including Rome itself, the city was no longer able to repel the various tribes that surrounded it. Rome was eventually captured by the Visigoths in 410AD. Subsequently, it was also conquered in turn by the Ostrogoths, the Vandals, the Huns and the Franks. The year 476AD is usually considered to mark the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

In the middle of the sixth century, Emperor Justinian reincorporated Rome into the Roman Empire which nevertheless continued to be run from Constantinople in the East. Over the course of a few centuries Rome came to prominence again, this time as the spiritual centre of Catholicism, and in that capacity eventually captured Jerusalem from the Muslims, making Roman Catholicism/Christianity the eighth head of the "Beast" (Rev 17:11). However, Rome never regained its position as the mighty pagan military power it had been for so many centuries.

The Third Plague

Curses on the Christian Roman Empire based in Constantinople

Revelation 16:4 "Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water **(which had been polluted by false Christianity)** and they became blood **(those who had caused the pollution were themselves cursed).**

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things**.**

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets **(Jews and Christians)**, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due**".**

7 And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments""**.**

Israel, the land of the "living waters" **(e.g. Zech 14:8), had been polluted by the bitter waters of false Christianity at the time of the third trumpet, as shown on the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)". This was initiated by Roman emperor Constantine the Great in the early part of the 4th century AD. As a result, both Jews and true Christians, as Sabbath keepers, became the targets of persecution. God responded by cursing the "Christian" Roman Empire with a litany of wars and pestilences.**

During the first two centuries of the "Christian" Roman Empire led from Constantinople, wars were fought with the Persians, Germans, Huns and Goths, amongst others, as well as numerous civil wars. From around 500AD, the Empire endured more than 200 (!) wars, battles and sieges until Constantinople fell to the Muslims in 1453. See a list with links to all these conflicts here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Byzantine_battles.

One of the most zealous proponents and legislators of false Christian doctrine was Emperor Justinian (ruled 527-565AD). Unsurprisingly, the pestilence which arose during his reign, the aptly named Justinian Plague, which first struck the Empire in 541AD, is regarded as one of the most devastating plagues of all time. It saw repeated outbreaks over the following two centuries, wiping out an estimated one third of Europe's population.

The Fourth Plague

Curses on Mecca/Medina - Islam, the seventh head of the "Beast"

Revelation 16:8 "Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun **(darkened by Islam)**, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire **(God's judgements).**

9 And men were scorched with great heat **(severe curses)**, and they blasphemed the name of God **(spoke lies about the true God)** who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent **(of their false and blasphemous religion)** and give Him glory**".**

The seventh head of the "Beast", Islam, conquered Jerusalem in 638AD, causing the darkness of a totally false religion to shroud the Holy City for the duration of its reign. See "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)" for a description of this fourth trumpet event.

As Islam blocked out the light that was meant to emanate from the city of God, symbolised by the sun, it in turn was on the receiving end of the burning wrath of God, notably through continual warfare and pestilence.

The curse of continual warfare between the various adherents of Islam is already implied in the ways the book of Daniel presents the seventh head of the "Beast" to us. In the statue of Daniel 2 the power that represents Islam consists of iron and clay. This indicates a people who manifest disharmony amongst themselves, which aptly describes the followers of Islam. In Daniel 7 this power is shown to be the fourth *individual* beast to rule over Jerusalem. This fourth beast is depicted as having a head with ten horns. As history shows, warfare between the various ethnicities and factions within Islam led to a progression of ten dynasties ruling over Jerusalem after its initial conquest by Caliph Omar. See the chart on the "HOME" page and the page "THE TWO WITNESSES" for the identification of these ten dynasties. As we still see today, Islam spends even more time at war with itself than it does with outsiders.

The first occurrence of pestilence found in Islamic records is the Plague of Amwas (Emmaus). Around 638-639AD this plague struck Muslim forces camped in the town of Emmaus, just outside Jerusalem (Lk 24:13), killing about 25,000 men. *It struck only months after the Muslims had seized Jerusalem from the Roman Empire*.

Subsequently, the plague spread into Syria, Iraq and Egypt, periodically reappearing throughout the Middle East over the following centuries, as detailed in this in-depth study:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/600071?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

The Black Death reached Egypt in 1348 and from there spread rapidly throughout North Africa, Gaza, Palestine and Syria, resulting in a large death toll. The city of Cairo was reduced by around 200,000 people, approximately one third of its population.

As time went on, the outbreaks continued. Notice this quote from Wikipedia: "Plague was present in at least one location in the Islamic world virtually every year between 1500 and 1850. Plague repeatedly struck the cities of North Africa. Algiers lost 30,000–50,000 inhabitants to it in 1620–1621, and **(was struck)** again in 1654–1657, 1665, 1691 and 1740–1742. Cairo suffered more than fifty plague epidemics within 150 years from the plague's first appearance, with the final outbreak of the second pandemic there in the 1840's. Plague remained a major event in Ottoman society until the second quarter of the 19th century. Between 1701 and 1750, thirty-seven larger and smaller epidemics were recorded in Constantinople **(by this time in Ottoman hands)**, and an additional thirty-one between 1751 and 1800. Baghdad has suffered severely from visitations of the plague ...." **(article "Black Death").**

The statement "they blasphemed the name of God .... and they did not repent and give Him glory" **(Rev 16:9) is worth elaboration. Genesis 16:12 says of Ishmael, Abraham's firstborn son,** "He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him"**. His descendants, from whom arose the religion of Islam, are included in this prophecy. This hot-headed temperament is a very fitting description of the Arabic peoples.**

Islam sprang from a people aggrieved over their lot which is detailed in God's Word. As a result, the Scriptures were rejected and a new narrative was spun where the favoured line of descent from Abraham supposedly ran through Ishmail, rather than through Isaac as the Bible records. Through this gross dishonesty they blaspheme the name of God.

Even more significantly, they blaspheme God's name by their denial of Christ's deity.

Referring to the Bible, the Koran frequently mentions "the book" and "the people of the book", so they are familiar with God's truth, and yet have rejected it.

The Fifth Plague

Curses on Roman Catholicism/"Christianity" - the "little horn" **and** "eighth" **head of the "Beast"**

Revelation 16:10 "Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast **(Rome, where the Papacy, i.e. the "mouth" of Dan 7:8 and Rev 13:5, resided)**, and his kingdom became full of darkness **(warfare and pestilence)**; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain**.**

11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds **(great evils, including those perpetrated against Jews and true Christians)".**

The Roman Catholic Crusades that were fought against the Muslims for control of Jerusalem, and the large-scale killing of Jews that accompanied them, were the fifth trumpet of the seventh seal of Revelation. Therefore Roman Catholicism/"Christianity", the power that initiated the Crusades, was the recipient of the fifth plague.

The "Christianised" Roman Empire, led from Constantinople rather than Rome since the time of Constantine, had lost control of Jerusalem to the Muslims in 638AD. Rome, however, stood back on its feet, this time as an independent spiritual empire led by the Papacy. When the Crusaders, at the behest of the Papacy, conquered Jerusalem in 1099, Rome became the head of the "Beast" once again (Rev 13:3). This was the "eighth" **head (Rev 17:11), which was in many ways a continuation of the sixth head.**

During this same period in time the Papacy/false Christianity initiated the Inquisitions, the bloodiest chapter in its history, which led to the persecution and death of millions.

However, Revelation 18:6 warns, "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her**".**

Also, in the Church era message to Thyatira, "Jezebel", a code name for Roman Catholicism, was warned that she would be thrown into a "sickbed" if she did not repent, as explained on the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS". As she did not repent, the greatest plague in man's history, the Black Death, was poured out on this power.

Below is a quote from Wikipedia:

"The Black Death (Bubonic Plague) is estimated to have killed 30% to 60% of Europe's population. In total, the plague may have reduced the world population from an estimated 450 million to 350 - 375 million in the 14th century. It took 200 years for the world population to recover to its previous level. The plague recurred as outbreaks in Europe until the 19th century" (Article "Black Death").

The Encyclopaedia Britannica says that the Black Death was a "pandemic that ravaged Europe between 1347 and 1351, taking a proportionately greater toll of life than any other known epidemic or war up to that time" (Article "Black Death").

As a point of interest, the final year of this devastating plague in Europe was 1351. As prophesied in Revelation 16:10, the plague was to strike the "throne of the beast", and indeed Southern Europe, where the Papacy was based, was struck the hardest. As outlined on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES", the Papacy gained its independence from Constantinople in 685AD, making 686AD the first of its 1260 years of power as predicted in Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:5. This was the first year of the rule of a Pope (John V) who was chosen and installed without the approval of the emperor. It was at this point that the Papacy became an independent power, i.e. the "little horn" of Daniel 7:8 and 20. Revelation 13:18 informs us that the number of the office of the "man of sin", i.e. the Papacy, is 666. If we count 666 inclusive years (counting the first and the last year) from 686AD, we come to 1351, the last year of the Black Death in Europe. Note, however, that I do not consider this to be the explanation of the number 666 in Revelation 13. It is given on the page "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST".

Historical records show that Bubonic Plague outbreaks recurred in countless European cities over a period of hundreds of years after its first outbreak, killing many more people. The Wikipedia article "History of Plague" gives many of the horrific details:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_plague

The Crusades were also followed by a multitude of bloody wars fought in the name of "Christianity", especially after the time of the Reformation. They included the French Wars of Religion, the Eighty Years' War, and the Thirty Years' War, which led to the death of millions. The most destructive wars of all time, however, the First and Second World Wars, stand unparalleled among the curses on the "Christian" nations.

Innumerable wars, civil conflicts, outbreaks of pestilence and many other curses have fallen on the "Christian" nations since the days that the eighth head of the "Beast" first conquered Jerusalem.

The Sixth Plague

The demise of the seventh head of the "Beast", i.e. Mecca/Medina - Islam, in World War 1, ending its rule of Jerusalem and the Holy Land

The sixth and seventh plagues are directly related to the sixth trumpet. As explained on the page "THE HISTORICAL SEVENTH SEAL (THE SEVEN TRUMPETS)", the sixth trumpet included a 32 year period (Rev 9:15) from the beginning of WW1 in 1914 until the end of WW2 in 1945.

Revelation 16:12 "Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates **(on Ottoman Turkey, which up until the time of WW1 had ruled over the Holy Land for four centuries. The Euphrates emanates from Turkey, and is symbolic of its power)**, and its water was dried up **(during WW1 the Ottoman Empire was defeated and its rule over Jerusalem came to an end, thus bringing to a close an almost 1300 year period of Islamic rule over Jerusalem)**, so that the way of the kings from the east **(i.e. the Jews)** might be prepared **(for their return to the Holy Land. The east (lit. "the rising sun") is a symbol of Christ. God called Abraham from the east, Joshua entered Canaan from the east, Christ's triumphal entry of Jerusalem was from the east, and His second coming will be from east. The return of the Jews to the Holy Land after World War 2, as predicted in this verse, was anciently prefigured by Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon by means of redirecting the Euphrates River, which led to him allowing the Jews to go back to the land of Judah – from the east – after their time of exile in Babylon).**

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon **(Satan)**, out of the mouth of the beast **(the nations that Satan stirred up to conquer Jerusalem and the Jews. At this particular time, the final "horn" (the Ottoman Empire) of the seventh head of the "Beast" (Islam) controlled Jerusalem)**, and out of the mouth of the false prophet **(false Christianity, led by the Papacy, the eighth head of the "Beast").**

14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty **(the "Great War", i.e. WW1).**

15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" **(this verse reveals the timing of these events. Its language is similar to that found in the final Church era message, showing it to be during the Laodicea era. It also shows that as late as the time of this sixth plague, Christ had not yet returned).**

16 And they **(the demons)** gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon **(in September 1918 the decisive Battle of Megiddo was fought, which resulted in the comprehensive defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the British and their allies, bringing to an end the Turkish occupation of the Holy Land)".**

Adding to the devastation of World War 1, which itself led to the death of some 20 million people, the Spanish Influenza outbreak in 1918 killed another 20 to 50 million people globally, also greatly impacting the Islamic and "Christian" countries.

We see therefore that the *fourth* and *fifth* plagues, i.e. curses on the seventh and eighth heads of the "Beast", Islam and Catholicism/"Christianity", continued throughout this period.

The Seventh Plague

The demise of the eighth head of the "Beast", i.e. Catholicism/"Christianity", in World War 2, ending its control ever the Jews

Revelation 16:17 "Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air **(bringing to an end the rule of Satan, "the prince of the power of the air", over Jerusalem and the Jews - Eph 2:2)**, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake **(a great war),** such a mighty and great earthquake **(World War 2)** as had not occurred since men **(Gentiles, the men incurring the seven plagues)** were on the earth **(occupied Jerusalem).**

19 Now the great city **(Rome - representative of all "Christianity")** was divided into three parts **(1 - the Axis powers: Germany, Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria; 2 - the Allied powers: United Kingdom, USA, Soviet Union, Canada, Australia et al; 3 - the neutral countries: Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Ireland).** And great Babylon **(false Christianity)** was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath **(the forces and many of the cities of the "Christian" nations, i.e. the eighth head of the "Beast", were decimated in WW2).**

20 Then every island **(earth in the midst of the sea)** fled away **(Jews fled from living among Gentiles)**, and the mountains were not found **(powers that once were, disappeared).**

21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men **(millions of tonnes of bombs were dropped from planes, ravaging the cities of Europe during WW2)**, each hailstone about the weight of a talent **(the talent is variously thought to be somewhere between 60 and 125 pounds in weight. Bombs weighing much more than that were used on industrial and strategic targets, but lighter varieties, starting from 100 pounds, were dropped on residential areas. See this chart: http://www.303rdbg.com/bombs.html).** Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great**".**

The destruction caused by World War 2, as well as the pain and suffering, was enormous, with a death toll estimated to be between 70 and 85 million people. The British, who occupied the Holy Land at that time, emerged technically among the victors, but for them it was somewhat of a Pyrrhic victory: Their strength was spent, their economy was ruined, and their world standing was eroded.

It has often been remarked that Germany, though defeated, recovered from WW2 faster than Britain did. This loss of power and status affected British overseas territories as well, and it came as no surprise when they rapidly abandoned Palestine soon after the war. This of course was all according to God's plan, as fully covered on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES".

It should be noted that the *entire* "Christian" world was cursed by WW2. The Axis powers as well as the Allied countries that fought them were all nominally Christian (see v19 above). This war had a devastating impact on an entire generation, including enormous loss of life, as well as permanent injury and lasting trauma. See the page "JACOB'S TROUBLE" for additional information.

Concluding Remarks

The curse pronounced in Zechariah 12:2-3 shows us how God deals with nations that come against His Holy City: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: *all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces*, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it"**.**

This also applies to those who seek to harm God's people. The "two witnesses" **mentioned in Revelation 11:3 are the people of Judah and Benjamin, otherwise known as the Jews. See the page "THE TWO WITNESSES" for an explanation. Revelation 11:5 warns concerning the Jews,** "if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire". **This is very figurative language, indicating that a variety of punishments will be meted out by God to avenge His people who cry out to Him in distress.**

The pouring out of the seven last plagues shows God's consistency throughout history. He created the nation of Israel to be His people, and Jerusalem to be His city, but Israel's sins resulted in them being conquered and ruled by Gentile nations for a specified period of "seven times" **(Lev 26:24), which equals 2520 years. Even though God allowed this to happen, He sees Gentile occupation of His land and His Holy City as a defilement, and as an affront to Him. Jerusalem is His dwelling place (II Chron 7:1-3,12-16; Joel 3:16-17), and He does not want unbelievers living in His presence. For this reason, all such Gentile conquerors were severely punished by having various ongoing** "plagues"**, or curses, poured out on them.**

The Gentile nations that conquered Jerusalem and its people are pictured in the prophecy of Daniel 7 as four "beasts"**. They are pictured again in Revelation 13 and 17 as parts of one overall** "beast"**. These prophecies together foretell the rise and fall of a total of 18 powers, which occurred during the 2520 year period predicted in Leviticus 26:24, from 575BC until 1945AD.**

The first Gentile power to conquer Jerusalem was Babylon. Its fate was to be overthrown by the Medes and Persians and for its capital city to be a desolation forever. Jerusalem was then in Medo/Persian hands, until they in turn lost it to the Greeks under Alexander the Great. Alexander died at a young age, which led to the fragmentation of the Greek Empire. One of its divisions, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, next conquered Jerusalem, but it suffered ongoing warfare with another of the Greek divisions, the Seleucid Empire, until the latter prevailed and took over rulership of Jerusalem. Both were eventually conquered by Rome, which then became the sixth Gentile power to rule Jerusalem.

It was during Roman rule of Jerusalem that the prophecies of Revelation were given (Rev 17:10), and so it was on Rome that *the seven last plagues* of Revelation 15 and 16 began to be poured out. These seven plagues fell in turn on the sixth head of the "Beast" (Rome), the seventh head of the "Beast" with its ten horns (Islam), and

the eighth head of the "Beast", or "little horn"**, ("Christianity"), which was the final Gentile power to rule the Holy City.**

God says that He declares the end from the beginning, and He has been true to His Word. Today, since the end of the 2520 year punishment of the nation of Judah, Satan's "Beast" powers no longer rule Jerusalem or trample down the Jews.

However, Daniel 7:12 tells us that when the "Beast" powers "have their dominion taken away"**, i.e. over Jerusalem, their lives are** "prolonged for a season and a time"**. And since we see that Islam and "Christianity" both still greatly trouble God's people and defile the Holy Land with their religions, the curses of the fourth and fifth plagues, respectively, continue to be poured out on them as well. These will conclude upon Christ's return, when Islam and "Christianity" are symbolically cast into** "the lake of fire" **(Rev 19:20), or in other words cease to exist.**

Curses on the seventh head of the "Beast" continue predominantly in the form of their endless wars against Israel and against each other, while curses on the eighth head of the "Beast" are seen in the crime, depravity, chronic sickness, and migration crises that today wrack the Western World. This is perfectly in line with the predicted fate of the "Christian" nations just prior to the return of Christ, as described in Revelation 18. Please see the page "BABYLON IS FALLEN" for more on this.

BABYLON IS FALLEN

The Church of God in its current and final era, has largely adopted the "Futurist" method of interpreting prophecy. Any prophecies not understood, of which there are many, are assigned a place in the future, the realm of the "yet to be fulfilled".

Scripture, however, says that this era, called Laodicea, is "blind" (Rev 3:17), and of course God does not lie. This blindness is nowhere more evident than when it comes to fulfilled Bible prophecies.

Leviticus 26:18,21,24,28 reveal four 2520 year periods of punishment that the nation of Israel would endure. The first of these periods runs from the division of the nation of Israel after King Solomon's death, the second runs from the demise of the northern Kingdom of Israel, and the last two periods from the two-stage conquest of the southern Kingdom of Judah, whose people became known as the Jews. See the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES" for an explanation of this.

The time period referred to in Leviticus 26:24 started from the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem when it was ruled by King Jehoiachin. As shown on the chart on the "HOME" page, from the time that Nebuchadnezzar defeated Jehoiachin and took the city in 575BC, until the last year of the Second World War, 1945, there were exactly 2520 inclusive years.

After the Holocaust ended in 1945, the Jews experienced the most remarkable turnaround a people have ever known; just three and a half years later (Rev 11:11), in 1948, they were standing on their feet again, in their own country and capital city, as fully explained in the article "THE TWO WITNESSES".

To make this total reversal possible, the most destructive war of all time, World War 2, was fought.

As a result of this war, the force figuratively called a "beast" in Revelation 13:1 lay defeated.

The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation reveal that this "Beast" constituted a succession of powers depicted by seven heads, ten horns, and a little horn that is also called an eighth head (see Rev 17:3 below). These powers ruled over and trampled down both Jerusalem and the Jews for 2520 years, as predicted in Leviticus 26:24. *That all came to an end after 1945*.

That doesn't mean these powers no longer exist. Daniel 7:11-12 says:

"I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn **(the little horn/eighth head)** was speaking; watched till the beast was slain **(its dominion over Jerusalem and the Jews came to an end - in 1945)**, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame **(at Christ's second coming).** As for the rest of the beasts, they **(also)** had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were **(likewise)** prolonged for a season and a time **(until their full demise at the return of Christ - Rev 19:20)".**

The eighth head of the "Beast" was Roman Catholicism/"Christianity", described in Revelation 17 and 18 as "Babylon the Great"**. It was the last "Beast" power to have** "dominion" **over Jerusalem through the British occupation of the Holy Land.**

In past centuries, the nations that made up this eighth head (first and foremost European nations, but also including many other, mainly Western countries that identify as Christian) were strong of mind and purpose, as seen in their many enduring achievements. However, in the years since WW2 they have lost their moral compass.

European weakness, like the weakness of all Western nations, stems from the abandonment of its original source of strength, Christianity.

This form of Christianity, of course, was not the genuine article, but it still contained many of the elements of Christian living.

Countries that were once brimming with religious fervour, as is evidenced by their countless churches and cathedrals, and depicted in all forms of art, have now sunk into a moral abyss. Where once there was a Christian work ethic, decency, and a focus on God and family, a worldly spirit now prevails. An addiction to entertainment, drugs, partying, deviant sexual behaviour, and every other godless pursuit imaginable, has taken hold in society. Modern technology has greatly facilitated this decline into debauchery which has now spread to all formerly Christian nations of the Western world.

In addition, the weakness of Christian nations has of late reached an embarrassing level as millions of so-called "refugees" have overrun them, demanding "asylum", housing, financial assistance etc. In Europe, this process began already in the 1960's when "guest workers" were brought in, mainly from South and East Mediterranean regions. Their effect on society was immediate, and mostly not positive, as they brought with them the religion, social problems and crime levels that plagued their countries of origin.

The European "Beast" powers of old would not have tolerated this situation. As an example, we witness today the country of Italy being flooded by Africans, when these people would have been running the other way in the days of the old Roman Empire. Now, however, they can sense the weakness of the Christian nations and are taking advantage of it. Even when these people have their asylum claims rejected, there is an unwillingness to forcibly remove them. Instead, failed asylum seekers are frequently offered money to go back home voluntarily.

This lack of national fortitude can also be seen in the widespread breakdown of the justice system. If a nation is overwhelmed with lawlessness, the administration of the law becomes very difficult. If those in authority have a blurred vision of what constitutes right and wrong, they are not in a position to effectively police the transgressions of others. The result is that often the most lenient of sentences are handed down for the most serious of offences, to the utter dismay of upstanding citizens.

In recent times, we have also witnessed widespread rioting and destruction of property in Western nations. Some favourite targets have been statues and monuments commemorating founders of nations and other high achievers. An entire generation of people have been raised to hate anything and everything that concerns their Christian heritage.

As Christianity bites the dust, so does our traditional culture, because it was founded on Christian values. Instead of being conquered by a *foreign* invader, we are bringing about our own destruction. Astonishingly, many politicians and media outlets are actually encouraging this demonic mindset.

The abandonment of God and His standards by the traditionally Christian countries has had far reaching effects unforeseen by those who thought this would be "progress".

This enormous shift in attitude commonly sees the Western nations today labelled by many commentators as "post-Christian".

The Scriptures, however, identify this phenomenon as "Babylon is fallen"**.**

With these things in mind, let's have a look at Revelation 17 and 18.

My comments are in (brackets).

Revelation 17

1 "Then one of the seven angels **(most likely the seventh one; see "The Real Seven Plagues")** who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot **(the great false Roman church and, by extension, the Orthodox and Protestant churches)** who sits on many waters **(many nations),**

2 with whom the kings of the earth **(leaders of Christian nations, Christianity being in control of Jerusalem and the "earth" of Israel at the time of this judgment)** committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth **(church members)** were made drunk with the wine of her fornication **(her false teachings)".**

3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast **(having taken control of the "Beast")** which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns **(all the powers that historically ruled over Jerusalem and the Jews: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, the Seleucid Empire, Rome, and Mecca/Medina (the seven heads) and ten Islamic dynasties that emerged from the seventh head (the ten horns), which are listed on the page "The Two Witnesses").**

4 The woman **(who is "the eighth" head of Rev 17:11; she is also the "little horn" of Dan 7:8 and 7:25 that ruled Jerusalem for three separate periods of time, displacing Islamic powers)** was arrayed in purple **(Catholic Bishops wear purple)** and scarlet **(Catholic Cardinals wear scarlet)**, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls **(all manner of physical riches these churches possess)**, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication **(teachings and practices that misrepresent God).**

5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT **(the Roman Catholic Church, continuing in many ways the religion of original Babylon)**, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS **(the Orthodox and Protestant churches)** AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH **(the teachings and practices of false Christianity).**

6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus **(from the Inquisitions, the Holocaust, and many other persecutions throughout the centuries).** And when I saw her, I marvelled with great amazement**.**

7 But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns**.**

8 The beast that you saw was **("was" indicates it is partly made up of national powers that had come and gone at the time John wrote Revelation - see verse 10)**, and is not **(powers yet future at the time John was writing - see verses 10 and 11)**, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit **(cf. Rev 9:1-3 where "smoke" (representing demons) rises from the "bottomless pit" (their place of restraint), and gives power to "locusts" (the armies of the eighth head of the "Beast") which fight the armies of the seventh head of the "Beast" during the Crusades)** and go to perdition **(ultimately meet their demise).** And those who dwell on the earth **(in Israel, the land these powers all rule over)** will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world **(those who are not among God's faithful people, and therefore don't understand that these events were prophesied to occur)**, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is **(the past, future and present manifestations of the "Beast" at the time John was writing. These are listed in verse 10).**

9 Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains **(kingdoms)** on which the woman sits**.**

10 There are **(They are)** also seven kings **(kingdoms that rule over Jerusalem and the Jews).** Five have fallen **(Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom and the Seleucid Empire)**, one is **(Rome - at the time John wrote this)**, and the other has not yet come **(Mecca/Medina, or Islam).** And when he **(it)** comes, he **(it)** must continue a short time **(to be precise, 24 inclusive years as a united force, from 638AD until 661AD, when the time of Islamic fragmentation, depicted by the ten horns, began - see the page "The Two Witnesses").**

11 The beast that was, and is not, is himself **(itself)** also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition **(the eighth head is the woman who rides the "Beast". The original seat of government of the sixth head of the "Beast", i.e. Rome, over time became the seat of government of the eighth head of the "Beast", i.e. the "woman", which is the Roman Catholic Church. It is not counted as a new head, as it is in many ways a continuation (a healing) of the sixth head (Rev 13:3,12). When the 2520 years were finished, the eighth head went into "perdition", or in other words it "is fallen").**

12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings **(ten successive Islamic dynasties ruling Jerusalem, also depicted as ten toes in the statue of Dan 2)** who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for **(or "at")** one hour **(with each of these ten powers having their particular time, or "hour", in history. The page "The Two Witnesses" lists the ten horns by name, as well as the length of their reigns)** as kings with the beast**.**

13 These **(all these powers)** are of one mind **(the mind of Satan)**, and they will give their power and authority to the beast **(expend their efforts on opposing God).**

14 These will make war with the Lamb **(fight against God's city and His people)**, and the Lamb will overcome them **(one by one)**, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him **(during this long period of persecution)** are called, chosen, and faithful **(by enduring in the faith until the end of their lives)".**

15 Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues**.**

16 And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot **(Islam hates Christianity)**, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire **(Islamic forces have fought Christian forces for well over a thousand years, in various locations, making long-term conquests in Europe, especially the Iberian Peninsula, Greece and the Balkans region).**

17 For God has put it into their hearts to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast **(to Satan)**, until the words of God are fulfilled**.**

18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city **(Rome)** which reigns over the kings of the earth **(the leaders of Christian nations)"".**

Revelation 18

1 "After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory**.**

2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen **(Babylon's second fall, after original Babylon's fall)**, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird **(the entire "Christian" world has fallen from its Christian foundation, turned its back on God's law, and instead turned to the worst of transgressions and abominations. Seeing no difference between the holy and the profane, they have become "educated", "advanced" and "secular", which in practice means they have given themselves over to a strong demonic influence. As a result, the virtues of Christianity have been abandoned, as is clearly manifested by the normalisation of depravity now witnessed in all Western countries. In addition to this, seeing no difference between true and false religion, they have allowed themselves to be overrun by enormous numbers of foreigners with erroneous belief systems. Witness the mass immigration of non-Christians into all the former Christian countries of Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia, etc.)**!

3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication; the kings of the earth **(the political leaders of Christian nations)** have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth **(the religious leaders of Christianity)** have become rich through the abundance of her luxury **(the churches became physically very wealthy, but they also held high positions in society; clergymen were revered by all)".**

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues **(a warning for true Christians of all eras).**

5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities**.**

6 Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her**.**

7 In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen **(I am the bride of Christ, the King)**, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow'**.**

8 Therefore her plagues **(see the page "The Real Seven Plagues")** will come **(to a climax)** in one day **(1945 marked the end of her power and the 1260 years of her persecution of the people of God (Dan 7:25), 2520 inclusive years after the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The official date for the end of WW2 in Europe is May 8, 1945. See "The Two Witnesses" for the significance of this date)** - death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her **(Germany and Italy were bombed into submission and left in ruins. However, all of Christendom suffered enormously in the World Wars).**

9 The kings of the earth **(Christian political leaders)** who committed fornication **(accepted her religion)** and lived luxuriously with her **(through the implementation of Judeo/Christian principles)** will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

10 standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come' **(at a time appointed by God - see v8).**

11 And the merchants of the earth **(the religious leaders)** will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise **(accepts their teachings)** anymore **(as the years since the war have rolled on, traditional Christianity has been largely abandoned. With fewer and fewer people being interested in it, its churches have become sparsely attended and many church buildings have been sold off for other uses)**:

12 merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

13 and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men**.**

14 The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all **(all her many and varied doctrines, teachings and edicts are cast aside and ignored).**

15 The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing **(the Catholic Church in particular became very rich, but is now losing much of its wealth in court cases and settlements with the victims of its crimes. Christianity in general was rich in the sense of position, influence, and access to leaders, but that amounts to very little now and can no longer stem the tide of secularism. By extension this also refers to the physical wealth that Christianity brought. The dominant economic position that the Christian countries held for centuries is now being lost)**,

16 and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls **(the downfall of the Roman church, Christianity in general, and together with them, the Western democracies, is undeniable. *Many people are bewailing this*)**!

17 For in one hour such great riches came to nothing'. Every shipmaster **(religious leaders)**, all who travel by ship, sailors **(ordinary people)**, and as many as trade on the sea **(evangelise the world)**, stood at a distance

18 and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like **(What has become of)** this great city **(Rome and by extension *all* Christendom, especially the Western democracies)**?'

19 They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate **(her religious power has been taken away)'.**

20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!".

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore**.**

22 The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore **(no one dances to their tune anymore).** No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore **(their religion is generally no longer believed)**, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore **(their evangelising has petered out).**

23 The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore **(God's truth has ceased from them)**, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore **(they generally are no longer seen to represent God).** For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery **(false teachings and practices)** all the nations were deceived**.**

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints **(the people of God who were victims of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant persecution in all the countries they controlled and influenced),** and of all who were slain on the earth **(those killed in the Holy Land during the times it was controlled by "Christian" forces)".**

Since the Second World War, the Christian Western democracies have morally collapsed. Perversion has become a lifestyle choice, depravity is now celebrated, the breaking of God's law has been legalised, dishonesty has become the norm, and money is worshipped like a god. The standards once laid down by our Creator have been replaced by vague humanist ideals, which are often contrary to God's law, and in reality are nothing more than man's self-righteousness.

We think we know better than God. The situation today is much the same as it was in Isaiah's time. We tell God, "Don't come near us, for we are holier than thou" **(Isa 65:5).**

Isaiah 3:8 says: "they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not"**. Today, we too are proud of our evil deeds. But Isaiah 5:20 warns:** "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter"**.**

That pretty much sums us up: We call evil good and good evil.

The author of all this chaos is Satan the devil. His goal is to entice people to sin. And sin weakens individuals, churches and nations.

Think of the greatness the "Christian" nations attained in the past. In the 1500's, the printing press made the Bible widely available and many people, even whole nations, began learning about God. Although their form of Christianity was generally not the genuine "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" **(Jude 3), it still contained a lot of God's truth. Witness the high-quality nations that were built on this foundation. Witness the achievements in design and invention, the standards in architecture, art, music, dress, manners etc. Look at the quality of workmanship. God's high standards were applied to all endeavours and the evidence can still be seen when visiting the old city centres and museums of Europe. Today, on the other hand, we are the "plastic generation" - a "throw-away society".**

Worse still, our physical decay mirrors our moral decay.

Consider also the endless scandals involving child sexual abuse within traditional Christianity:

In the USA, many Catholic dioceses have filed for bankruptcy as they fight abuse charges. Staggering amounts of money have been handed over in compensation settlements. In Australia, the Anglican Church was forced to sell off more than a hundred of its properties to pay its victims. Many other "Christian" organisations have also been found guilty of similar crimes.

When the churches were powerful, they were able to conceal their abominations. The reason we are hearing about these things now is because they have lost their power to control what is made public.

The fact that Christianity is in free fall has been made abundantly clear in recent years as we witness all across the Christian world thousands of church buildings being closed, sold off, or remodelled into homes, bars, shops, libraries, theatres and even mosques.

For centuries people feared God. Today that fear is gone. "Babylon the Great" **has fallen because the majority of people have abandoned the God of the Bible.**

One of the most remarkable aspects of all this fulfilment of prophecy is that the final generation of the Church of God has seen all these things occur in its lifetime, and yet has failed to recognise the Scriptural significance.

26

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

The various branches of the Church of God have for many years been putting out articles, booklets, magazines and TV programs warning us of a final uprising of the power described in Revelation 13:1 as "a beast"**.**

Scripture, however, says that the final, Laodicea Church era is "blind" **(Rev 3:17).**

Does this apply to their explanation of the "Beast" as well?

What exactly is the "Beast"?

The usual explanation as to what constitutes the "Beast" is that it is a succession of "earth ruling empires". This is deduced from Daniel 2:39 which says that these powers "rule over the whole earth"**. However, what does** "earth" **mean in this context? Is the Bible a book about the whole Earth as we think of it? Did any of the powers generally identified as "Beast" powers rule over the entire globe or anything remotely close to it? No, they didn't.**

The "earth" **that they did all rule over was the earth that the Scriptures are about, namely the earth of Israel. Please read the article "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT" to see how God separated the earth from the sea on the third day of Creation, picturing the creation of the *people* of Israel in the third millennium, as well as the separation of the *land* of Israel from the Gentile lands in that same time period.**

The Bible is an Israel focused book. As soon as we take our eyes off Israel, we lose focus in interpreting prophecy. Even more specifically, the Bible is a *Jerusalem* focused book. Jerusalem is central to a correct understanding of prophecy.

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, is told that he is the head of gold in a statue that represents the "Beast" powers. In Daniel 7 these same powers are depicted as four separate beasts. Why is Babylon the head of the statue and the first individual beast? Why not the great Assyrian Empire that had previously captured the Kingdom of Israel? For one simple reason: the Assyrian Empire didn't capture *Jerusalem*.

For the same reason, Egyptian Pharaoh Necho isn't the head of the statue either. He took King Jehoahaz of Judah captive after sending for him to come to Hamath, to the north of Israel (II Kings 23:31-34; Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 10.5.2).

He then appointed a new king and placed Judah under tribute, but *there is no record of him capturing Jerusalem.*

Nebuchadnezzar, on the other hand, is shown in Scripture to have successfully besieged Jerusalem on two occasions. The forces of Babylon captured and destroyed Jerusalem during the reigns of kings Jehoiachin and Zedekiah.

From the Scriptures therefore we can conclude that to "rule over the whole earth" **means to conquer the land of Israel including Jerusalem.**

The "Beast" can be simply defined as the succession of Gentile powers that conquered Jerusalem and the Jews, as foretold by God.

How long was this Gentile rule prophesied to last?

Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24 and 28 inform us that God's people were to be punished for "seven times"**, i.e. 2520 years, if they continually disobeyed Him. For an explanation of this please see the page "DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, YEARS AND TIMES".**

This same period of time is echoed in Daniel 4, where Nebuchadnezzar, the head of the statue, is transformed and "given the heart of a beast" **(Dan 4:16) and made to act like a *beast* in representation of his kingdom and those "Beast" powers that would follow after him. The previous verse says he will** "graze … on the grass of the earth"**. People are depicted as grass in Scripture, e.g. in Isaiah 40:6-7, and the obvious meaning is that "Beast" powers subjugate, trample down and persecute the people of God.**

Daniel 4:17 gives us the timing clue. It says that Nebuchadnezzar's plight will last for "seven times"**, which for him personally was 2520 days (a** "time" **being 360 days).**

However, using the "day for a year" **principle as found in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:5-6, and with the benefit of knowing how history has unfolded, we can see that Nebuchadnezzar's literal** "seven times" **in Daniel 4 are a type of the** "seven times" **described in Leviticus 26:24, i.e. 2520 *years* of Jerusalem and the Jews being trodden down by Gentile powers.**

Nebuchadnezzar is used here as a symbol of the totality of the times of the Gentiles.

Jesus Christ was fully aware of these prophecies of the Old Testament and their ongoing fulfilment when, in His Olivet Prophecy, He gave us one of the most important chronological clues we have:

"Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" **(Luke 21:24).**

When Christ spoke these words, the times of the Gentiles had already been underway for hundreds of years!

This remarkable sentence gives us four crucial elements:

1) Jerusalem is trodden down/occupied.

2) Jerusalem's occupation is by Gentile powers.

3) The occupation lasts for a specific length of time.

4) The occupation will come to an end when the "times .... are fulfilled"**.**

To make very plain what Christ knew and meant, He might just as well have said:

Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the *seven* times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Counting 2520 years from the first capture of Jerusalem by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar in 575BC (see the page "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY" for a full explanation of this date), brings us to the last year of World War 2, 1945. That was also the last year of the statue of Daniel 2, i.e. the year that the "Beast" lost its power over the Jews.

The combined prophecies of Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Revelation 13 and Revelation 17 show that the "Beast" powers consist of seven "heads"**, or independent powers that rule Jerusalem. Revelation 12:3,9 and 13:4 explain them to be Satanic in nature. History shows that these powers were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, the Seleucid Empire, Rome, and Mecca/Medina. Out of the seventh head, Mecca/Medina, there emerged ten successive Islamic** "horns"**, or dynasties, that also had dominion over the Holy City. These were the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Tulunids, the Ikhshidids, the Fatimids, the Seljuqs, the Ayyubids, the Mamluks, the Ottomans and the Alawiyya. Three of these ten horns were overthrown in Jerusalem by a** "little horn" **or** "eighth" **head, i.e. "Christianity". These overthrows occurred in 1099 led by French forces, in 1229 led by German forces, and in 1917 led by British forces. See the "DANIEL" articles, "THE TWO WITNESSES" and the chart on the "HOME" page for more information about the "Beast" powers.**

The year 1945 is when the "times of the Gentiles" **came to an end. The page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES" lists six prophetic timelines that concluded in 1945 and confirm this fact.**

The times of the Gentiles came to an end at this point because of the demise of the power of the false "Christian" beast. This ended the state sponsored persecution of the Jews and led to their liberation from the concentration camps at the end of the Holocaust.

As explained on the page "THE TWO WITNESSES", from this point on it took three and a half years for the Jews to stand up on their feet and regain control of their country and capital city (Rev 11:11).

Some people may reject this timing because they believe the Kingdom of God will immediately follow on from the demise of the Gentile "Beast". This is similar to what many said in Christ's time, when they rejected Him as the Messiah of Daniel 9:25 because he wasn't immediately setting up His Kingdom.

If the demise of the "Beast" was going to be *immediately* followed by the Kingdom of God, the prophecy in Daniel 2 would say that the feet of the statue were struck by the "great mountain"**. Rather, it says that the feet were struck by a** "stone that …. *became* a great mountain"**.**

Today we are in that "became" **phase. The current State of Israel is the intermediate stage between the times of the Gentiles coming to an end and the setting up of the Kingdom of God upon Christ's return.**

People may object to this explanation, pointing to Revelation 19:19-20 which says of the time of Christ's second coming, "And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone"**.**

This indeed shows that Islam and the Papacy are to be with us up until the return of Christ. *The fact that they are is a fulfilment of prophecy in itself.* However, these powers no longer control Jerusalem or the Jews. Those days are over. Daniel 7:12 confirms this by stating that when "Beast" powers lose their "dominion" **(over Jerusalem and the Jews), they are allowed to continue to exist:** "As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time"**. Upon Christ's return, however, they are symbolically cast into** "the lake of fire"**, or in other words cease to exist.**

In the meantime the Churches of God (COG) continue to proclaim that a coming "European Superpower" will arise as the final manifestation of the "Beast" and will conquer the nations of the world, including Israel. This shows total ignorance of the fact that the "Beast" has been "slain" **(Dan 7:11), i.e. it no longer rules Jerusalem.**

The nations that constituted the eighth head of the "Beast", Catholicism/"Christianity", a.k.a. "Babylon the Great"**, have** "fallen" **(Rev 18). Since the end of the Second World War, the formerly "Christian" nations have largely departed from what Christianity they had. In addition, they have been overrun by foreigners. There are, for instance, over 45 million Muslims living in European countries, as well as many people of a variety of other false persuasions. This is all in fulfilment of the prophecy that says,** "Babylon is fallen and has become the dwelling place of demons and every unclean bird"**. Please read the page "BABYLON IS FALLEN".**

Here are the fulfilments of prophecy the Churches *ought* to be proclaiming:

1) The restoration of the nation of Israel at the time and in the manner specifically prophesied by God.

2) The ongoing demise of Babylon/"Christianity" and the other former "Beast" powers that for so long trampled down Jerusalem and persecuted the Jews.

Instead, they keep "flogging a dead horse", desperately wanting Germany or Europe to reawaken and become a power again and fulfil *their* prophecies. If a single right-wing politician causes a stir in Europe, the COG's are quick to jump up and proclaim that the "Beast" is rising. Sure, there are still people with nationalistic tendencies and aspirations, but they are unable to make a fist. The "Christian" nations have departed from the religion that gave them their strength. They have lost their power; their churches are virtually empty.

Mindless entertainment, partying, drugs and depravity consume the formerly Christian nations. They are so weakened by sin, that there is no power left to harness.

Remarkably, when the Second World War was still raging, Herbert Armstrong (HWA) proclaimed it was the final stand of the "Beast". He was right! However, because much like the people in Christ's day he "thought the Kingdom of God should immediately appear" **(Lk 19:11) at the conclusion of the war, and it didn't, he changed his tune and instead began predicting *another* final rise of these powers, including another Gentile conquest of Jerusalem. In doing this he made two significant errors:**

1) HWA failed to see that the time of rule of the "Beast" powers and "the times of the Gentiles" **are synonymous, and that they constituted a 2520 year period from 575BC until 1945, at which point they were** "fulfilled"**.**

2) HWA failed to understand that the restoration of the nation of Israel was the result of "the times of the Gentiles" **coming to an end. Instead, he believed they would end with the setting up of God's Kingdom.**

Since that time, the errors have only been compounded by the Churches of God.

The widespread misinterpretation of the Olivet Prophecy, and the general belief in a worldwide, "Beast"-led, "great tribulation" **just prior to Christ's return, have greatly contributed to the spiritual blindness in evidence today.**

The "great tribulation" ***was*** **a major, terrifying event, which befell Jerusalem and the Jews in the first century AD, but was confined to such a location that fleeing from Judea to the surrounding mountains was enough to escape it.**

Please see the pages "THE OLIVET PROPHECY" and "THE REAL SEVEN SEALS" for a detailed account of the Olivet Prophecy.

I hope the above explanation makes it clear to the reader where we are in prophecy today, with the "times of the Gentiles" **well and truly behind us.**

27

JACOB'S TROUBLE

One of many Biblical prophecies that the Churches of God believe is yet to be fulfilled is found in Jeremiah chapter 30 and referred to in verse 7 as "Jacob's trouble"**.**

With all Bible topics context is important. The chapters leading up to this prophecy concern the time of the Babylonian captivity, a punishment inflicted by God on the Kingdom of Judah. From Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10-14, Daniel 9:2 and II Chronicles 36:20-21 we understand that after the land of Judah had rested 70 years, the Jews would be allowed to return there. When we read the account of this repatriation in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we see that indeed a remnant of the Jews did come back. However, the majority either remained in Babylon or became dispersed among the nations.

The exile to Babylon was in reality the beginning of a much longer period of punishment, spoken about in Leviticus 26:24, that would last for "seven times"**, or 2520 years. This included persecution both by the nations that occupied the Holy Land over that entire period, and the nations throughout which the Jews were scattered.**

The Scriptures speak at length about the *commencement* of the 2520 year punishment of the nation of Judah. Although it is generally less understood, they have much to say about the *conclusion* of this period as well.

One place we find this is in Jeremiah 30:4-17, where there is a prophecy for the 20th century.

World War 2 was one of the most pivotal turning points in history. It is astonishing that it is rarely mentioned in the Churches of God in relation to prophecy, especially since all the tribes of Israel were involved in this greatest of all wars.

The Holocaust is sometimes mentioned, but no one seems to wonder why Satan was so determined to destroy the Jews at this particular moment in history, and why he put up such an enormous fight, empowering some of the most demonic leaders ever witnessed on the world stage. Clearly, he wanted to prevent God's prophecies regarding the Jews' return to the Holy Land from being fulfilled.

A close look shows that Jeremiah 29 is specifically about the House of Judah, whereas Jeremiah 30 prophesies about both "Israel and Judah" **(verse 4).**

Jeremiah 30:7 says: "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it"**. The patriarch Israel's original name was *Jacob*. He was the father of all the tribes of Israel, so this prophecy involves all of physical Israel.**

Verse 8 adds: "I will break the yoke off their necks" **(NIV) and** "Foreigners shall no more enslave them"**.**

This cannot be speaking about the Jews' return from Babylon, because further national enslavement of the Jews followed after that. This can only be speaking about the aftermath of the "seven times"**, or 2520 years of punishment. The chart on the "HOME" page shows that this period ran from 3395AM, when Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar first conquered Jerusalem, until 5914AM, when WW2 ended, which equates to 575BC until 1945AD.**

Indeed, no Israelite nation has been conquered or enslaved since 1945. World War 2, however, saw the enslavement of millions of Israelites. Those familiar with the British Israel theory understand that Great Britain and the USA are descended from Joseph, one of the sons of Israel. The descendants of Israel's other sons are mainly found in democracies such as France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, Switzerland, Sweden and, of course, Israel. The first five of these countries were conquered by Germany in WW2 and were subjected to their tyranny.

The combined number of WW2 casualties, both military and civilian, *among the descendants of Israel,* was approximately 8 million. This number includes about 6 million Jews, most of whom were liquidated in extermination camps after being rounded up in all the countries that Germany conquered. Those deemed fit were put to forced labour and deliberately worked to death. The less fit were murdered immediately, using gas chambers, shooting, or other methods.

As well as attempting to annihilate the Jewish populations in occupied countries, the Germans also implemented a policy of rounding up non-Jewish men and boys, transporting them to Germany, and putting them to work in industries considered essential to the war effort. In addition to the large numbers that were taken from Eastern European nations, around two million of these slaves were abducted from the Israelite countries Germany had conquered, and many of them died under the harsh treatment and conditions.

Also, hundreds of thousands of captured soldiers from Israelite countries were confined to squalid prisoner of war camps, often as slave labourers, with many of these also dying from overwork, malnutrition, disease and barbaric treatment.

The Wikipedia article on this subject is very insightful, as well as sobering:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forced_labour_under_German_rule_during_World_War_II

In 1945, exactly 2520 years after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, World War 2 came to an end. The surviving prisoners were then liberated and allowed to return to their home countries. To read about the Jews' prophesied return to the land of Israel, please see the page "THE TWO WITNESSES".

Jeremiah 30:9 speaks of these people worshipping the true God, and of "David" **(the Son of David, i.e. Christ) being their king. We might be inclined to see this as an event that is only in the future, but Acts 2 sheds some light on the subject:**

The apostle Peter, speaking on the day of Pentecost, states in Acts 2:16-18 that the phenomenon of people speaking in tongues was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29. Joel says that God would pour out His spirit on "all flesh"**, or** "all people"**. However, the** "all flesh" **that was spoken about amounted to only a few thousand people on that day. Clearly this needs to be understood in light of Acts 5:32, which tells us that God gives His holy spirit to** "those that obey Him"**. Therefore the** "all flesh" **who received the holy spirit were *all those who obeyed God*. Since that day this prophecy has continued to be fulfilled in all those converted to the way of God.**

If we view Jeremiah 30:9 in the same manner, the meaning becomes clearer. All the Israelite nations had Sabbath keeping Christians amongst them who worshipped the true God. These greatly increased in number after WW2. Similarly, the Jews who returned to the Holy Land after WW2 witnessed the development of the Messianic movement, i.e. Jews accepting Christ as the Messiah. Therefore, all the Israelite nations contained some people who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus" **(Rev 12:17), even though their numbers were very small in comparison with the overall population. When Christ returns and establishes His kingdom, the ongoing fulfilment of Jeremiah 30:9 will take on much greater proportions.**

It is evident therefore that Jeremiah chapter 29 refers to the return of the exiles from Babylon near the *beginning* of Judah's 2520 years of punishment, while chapter 30 refers to the WW2 period and the subsequent return of all surviving enslaved Israelites to their respective countries, including the Jews to the Holy Land, at the *end* of the 2520 years.

It is World War 2, including the Holocaust, that Jeremiah refers to as "Jacob's trouble"**.**

In the Olivet Prophecy, Christ refers to the conclusion of this momentous period in history as "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" **(Lk 21:24). See the page "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES" for more on this.**

Am I alone in interpreting "Jacob's trouble" **this way? Definitely not. Below is a link to an article that also claims this prophecy was fulfilled during the WW2 time period, but applies it to the Jews only, and not to the other tribes of Israel. Although I don't agree with *all* the content of this article, I point to it to show that the belief that "Jacob's trouble" is still in the future is not shared by all:**

https://www.ifi.org.il/en/teachings/jacobs-trouble-past-or-future

In conclusion, I believe a strong case can be made that the prophecy of "Jacob's trouble" **in Jeremiah 30:7 was fulfilled in the 20th century.**

28

THE MAN OF SIN

Few Biblical prophetic terms have stirred people as much as the one found in II Thessalonians 2:3, namely the "man of sin"**. The common thought in the Churches of God (COG) today is that this prophecy concerns a person who will arise in the end time, just prior to Christ's return.**

One major COG identifies the "man of sin" **as a specific Church leader who went astray in recent times.**

However, from the Reformation onwards, the standard view among non-Catholics was that the "man of sin" **referred to the office of the Papacy. The original introduction of the 1611 King James Bible openly refers to "that man of sinne" in context with "Popish persons".**

I believe that the traditional identification of the "man of sin" **as the Papacy is correct.**

Let's look at the text of II Thessalonians 2:1-12:

1 "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come **("is at hand" - KJV).**

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God**.**

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time**.**

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who **(that which)** now restrains will do so until he **(it)** is taken out of the way**.**

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming**.**

9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved**.**

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"**.**

Paul states in II Thessalonians 2:7 that the mystery (of emerging false Christianity) was already at work in his time. In Acts chapter 8 we find evidence of this, as Simon Magus, or Simon the Magician, is introduced to us, and obviously for good reason. Eusebius' "Church History", written early in the 4th century AD, provides more information about Simon, as well as his first successor, Menander (Church History 2:13-14, 3:26).

Eusebius says that Simon Magus reached Rome before any true apostle did: "With faith in our Lord Jesus Christ reaching all people, the enemy of salvation (Satan) planned to capture the imperial city in advance and sent Simon there ..... and by assisting his sorcery took possession of many in Rome and led them astray. This is reported by Justin (second century author Justin Martyr)" (Church History 2:13).

In the same section of his book, Eusebius continues: "Simon was the original author of all heresies. From his time down to ours, his followers, *while pretending Christianity*, prostrate themselves before pictures of Simon and Helen (Simon's female companion), worshiping them with incense, sacrifices and libations".

We see therefore that the falsifying of Christianity began shortly after true Christianity was established. It was several centuries, however, before false Christianity became organised and state sponsored. Emperor Constantine began the process of making the Roman Empire "Christian" early in the 4th century, and in the latter part of the 4th century Emperor Theodosius made "Christianity" the state religion. This meant that its leaders and their teachings became subject to state approval and direction. Theodosius appointed various cities in his realm as church administrative centres, and all major cities had their own Bishops, or overseers.

In the middle of the 6th century Emperor Justinian reduced the number of major centres of Christian governance to five, creating the "Pentarchy". These five cities were Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria, each of which had their leading "patriarch", also called *father* (Greek "pappas"). After Islamic forces conquered most of the Middle East in the 7th century, only Constantinople and Rome were left as major Christian administrative centres in the Roman Empire. From that time on there were just two leaders over the Christian world: the Patriarch of Constantinople, today known as the head of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Pope of Rome.

Initially, newly elected Popes of Rome were required to be ratified by the Roman Emperor, based in Constantinople, before they could be installed into office. The Pope would be elected in Rome, but the name of the candidate would be submitted to Constantinople for approval. This clearly shows who was in charge of the Empire.

In 684AD however, overburdened by continual warfare, including a five-year siege of Constantinople by Muslim forces, Emperor Constantine IV made a monumental decision that forever changed the religious power balance between Rome and Constantinople. Wikipedia explains:

"John V was the first pope of the Byzantine Papacy consecrated without the direct imperial approval. Emperor Constantine IV had done away with the requirement during the pontificate of Benedict II, John V's predecessor" (Article "Pope John V").

John V was installed as Pope in 685, making 686 his first year in office.

From this point on, the Papacy was an independent power, or in Biblical language, a "horn"**. To be precise, it was the "little horn" of Daniel 7:8:** "I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words"**.**

The apostle Paul was a Pharisee and as such was well schooled in the Old Testament Scriptures. He had also been taught personally by Christ. When he wrote about the "man of sin" **in II Thessalonians, he wasn't talking about something new; rather, he was referring to the prophecy of Daniel 7, in particular the *little horn* mentioned in Daniel 7:8. This little horn was foretold to emerge among ten horns, or powers, that would arise out of the fourth** "beast"**, the last of the successive "Beast" powers that would rule over Jerusalem and the Jews. See the page "DANIEL 7 & 8 - JERUSALEM'S CONQUERORS" for a full explanation.**

The little horn is described in Daniel 7:20 as having "eyes" **and a** "mouth" **and an** "imposing" **look, and it is said of him in verse 25 that he will** "speak against the Most High" **(NIV), change** "times and laws" **(teach people to transgress *God's* commanded times and laws), and persecute God's people. Therefore it is no wonder that Paul labels this power the** "man of sin"**.**

Paul had written his first epistle to the Thessalonians to prepare them for the second coming of Christ. However, word reached him that the Thessalonians now believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent. He therefore wrote his second epistle to them, mentioning this concern in II Thessalonians 2:1-2: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" **(KJV).**

In order to indicate the long period of time that would elapse before Christ's return, Paul then explains (in verse 7) that "he who **(that which)** now restrains will do so until he **(it)** is taken out of the way"**. In other words, *the sixth head of the "Beast" powers that rule over Jerusalem, Rome, had to be taken out of the way* (conquered) before the seventh head, Mecca/Medina, could take its place, followed by its ten horns, during which period the** "time, times and half a time" **(1260 years) of the little horn would commence. See the article "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" for more on this.**

The apostle John confirms in Revelation 17:10 in regard to the "Beast" powers, that at the time he is writing, "five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come"**. The five that** "are fallen" **are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, the Ptolemaic Kingdom, and the Seleucid Empire. The sixth power, the** "one" **that** "is"**, is Rome, and the seventh, the one that** "is not yet come" **is Mecca/Medina (Islam). It is clear that Paul already understood the basic outline of these things when he wrote to the Thessalonians.**

There are three important years associated with the rise of the office of the "man of sin" **(the Papacy):**

638AD - when the seventh head of the "Beast", Mecca/Medina, captured Jerusalem from the sixth head, the Roman Empire headquartered in Constantinople.

661AD - when the first of the ten Islamic "horns"**, the Umayyad dynasty, began its reign over Jerusalem.**

686AD - the first year of rule of the Roman Papacy *independent of Constantinople*.

These dates can all be found on the chart on the "HOME" page.

The office of the "man of sin" **was created by Satan as part of his counterfeit form of Christianity. It involves one person ruling a church in the place of Jesus Christ, and invariably leads to that person being revered as an idol. It also sees that person seeking to overrule the laws of God. History clearly shows the immeasurable evil perpetrated by those who have occupied this office.**

Unfortunately, the Laodicea era of the true Church of God has also largely succumbed to this Papal form of Church government, i.e. "one man" rule. Such leaders have led God's Church into much error. In fact, the final Church era has seen the adoption of far more tenets of Catholicism than most brethren realise. See the articles "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD" and "THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF GOD" for more information.

From II Thessalonians we learn that God permitted the deceptions of false Christianity to emerge. By allowing such "strong delusion" **(II Thes 2:11), God is testing whether His people have a** "love of the truth" **(II Thes 2:10) or instead** "have pleasure in unrighteousness" **(II Thes 2:12).**

In II Thessalonians 2:8 we are told that Christ will destroy the office of the "man of sin" **at His return.**

As well as identifying the Papacy as the "man of sin" **in II Thessalonians 2:3, it is also logical to conclude that this office is synonymous with** "the Antichrist" **mentioned in I John 2:18 and** "the false Prophet" **in Revelation 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10.**

DOES GOD HAVE A 7100 YEAR PLAN?

Do the Scriptures teach a 7,000 or a 7,100 year plan?

This might seem like a strange question, but for those who have been in the Church of God for some length of time, it will be an issue they have had to face.

Revelation 20:4-5 mentions the "first resurrection" **of saints who will reign** "with Christ for a thousand years"**. This one thousand year period is undoubtedly the seventh one thousand year period since Creation, pictured by the seventh day Sabbath and usually referred to as "the Millennium".**

In Revelation 20:5 there is also an insert that reads, "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished"**, referring to a second resurrection. Regarding this, the explanation given by the Churches of God is that all people who have ever lived will be resurrected to physical life *after* man's 7,000 years on Earth have come to an end. Isaiah 65:20 is then put forward as part of this explanation. It states:**

"No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed"**.**

Putting Revelation 20:5 and Isaiah 65:20 together, the Churches conclude that after the Millennium there will be a 100 year period when all who have ever lived will be physically resurrected and hear the true gospel, resulting in many receiving salvation. This leads to the uncomfortable conclusion that God is not working out a 7,000 year plan with man, but rather a 7,100 year plan.

In all my years in the Church, I have never been able to accept this explanation. There are good reasons for this:

If you read the page "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT", you will see that there is no place for an additional 100 years in God's perfect Creation week picture. It is inconceivable that the Great Mathematician would depict a period of 7,100 years using a seven day week. Surely, when this number was first suggested, alarm bells should have been ringing?

Also, the latter part of Isaiah 65 is about the millennial rule of Christ. Therefore, taking verse 20 in isolation and placing its fulfilment *after* the Millennium is removing it from its context.

Nevertheless, this theory keeps on being taught as if there is no problem and no alternative.

So, is there a better explanation? I think there is a very simple and logical one:

In Revelation 20:4-5, God is talking about two resurrections. The Churches claim that the first one is spiritual, but the second is physical. Does this really make sense?

Let me quote these two verses with a simple explanation added in brackets:

4 "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years**.**

5 But the rest of the dead **(in Christ)** did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection**".**

This explanation considers both resurrections spoken of here to be <u>spiritual</u> resurrections.

Just prior to the beginning of the Millennium there will be the *first* spiritual resurrection of those who in Revelation 14:4 are called "firstfruits"**. At the end of the Millennium there will be the *second* spiritual resurrection.**

This allows the *physical* resurrections to take place over the course of the Millennium, when all who have ever lived (who are not firstfruits) will be resurrected to "judgement" **(Matt 11:21-24, 12:36, Jn 5:29), and the true gospel will be preached to all people. This will lead to an enormous** "ingathering" **harvest (Ex 23:16, 34:22) of those who qualify for salvation.**

This work is therefore spread out over a thousand year period, which makes much more sense.

And, crucially, it leaves the 7,000 year plan intact.

30

THE END TIME ELIJAH

A conviction strongly adhered to by many in the end time Church of God is that Herbert W Armstrong fulfilled a role supposedly prophesied in Matthew 17:10-11, that of the so-called "end time Elijah", as seen for instance in this article. I realise not all Churches of God hold to this doctrine, and some put a different spin on it, but it is nevertheless a widely held belief.

The author of this website himself held this belief virtually unquestioned for some 25 years.

The full passage in question reads:

Matthew 17:10 "And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

11 Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things**.**

12 But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands"**.**

13 Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist"**.**

Those in the Churches of God who adhere to the "end time Elijah" doctrine explain verses 10-11 as applying to Herbert Armstrong, and verses 12-13 to John the Baptist.

However, very few of them know that Herbert Armstrong was influenced by the writings of a former Seventh Day Adventist minister named G. G. Rupert, who understood the truth about the validity of God's law, including the annual holy days. Rupert believed that *he himself* was the "end time Elijah" and mentions others before him who believed that *they* were the "end time Elijah".

Click here to read the G. G. Rupert article from 1919 that shows these things.

So the concept of and belief in an "end time Elijah" did not originate with Herbert Armstrong.

Although the words of Christ, "Elijah is coming first, and will restore all things"**, do not say what** "all things"

refers to, this Scripture has usually been explained as pertaining to Church doctrines; G. G. Rupert thought so too.

If this is correct, it creates an enormous problem: Ministers from the Church that Herbert Armstrong (HWA) attended for many years, the Church of God Seventh Day (COG7), say that most of what HWA taught after he left them and went his own way, was already taught by them. Taking into account the teachings of the COG7 and G. G. Rupert, how many doctrines were actually "restored" to the Church by HWA?

Herbert Armstrong himself claimed that the Sabbath keeping brethren he began to fellowship with early on, people he incorrectly labelled as "the Sardis era", had lost most Biblical truth. In an article written late in his life he states, "By the early part of the 20th century much of God's purpose and truth had been lost - but the struggling true Church still had the name Church of God, the Ten Commandments including the Sabbath, and also tithing" ("Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God" - June 24, 1985).

However, a little bit of research into old Church writings paints a very different picture. The author was able to compile a list of 40 beliefs the Church of God had prior to the time of Herbert Armstrong:

1) The Ten Commandments

2) The seventh day Sabbath

3) The name "Church of God"

4) Tithing

5) Baptism by immersion

6) Non-baptism of children

7) Physical circumcision is replaced by spiritual circumcision

8) The Great Whore of Revelation 17 is the Catholic Church

9) Catholic doctrine originated in Babylon

10) The dead do not go to Heaven or Hell

11) Mortality of the soul / the dead are asleep

12) The resurrection of the dead

13) Christ was in the grave three days and three nights

14) The days Christ was in the grave ran from Wednesday till the Sabbath

15) Christ died in the middle of a "week" as prophesied by Daniel

16) Sunday is the Mark of the Beast

17) The Mark of the Beast concerns the forehead (seat of intellect) and the hand (sign of labour)

18) Rejection of the symbol of the cross

19) Rejection of Christmas

20) Rejection of Easter

21) Christians are to keep the Ten Commandments by the power of the holy spirit

22) Clean and unclean foods

23) Christ is the Mediator between God and man, not Mary or someone else

24) The existence of a "True Church"

25) The Church is the Bride of Christ

26) The Church is the Family of God

27) The keeping of Passover on the 14th of Abib

28) The keeping of Pentecost

29) The validity of the annual holy days (G. G. Rupert, Clarence Dodd)

30) British Israelism (various identifications of tribes taught by different individuals, e.g. G. G. Rupert, D. Paul Ziegler)

31) The belief that the return of Christ is imminent

32) The rejection of military service

33) Knowledge of the "day for a year" **principle of interpreting prophecy**

34) Knowledge that a prophetic year is 360 days

35) Knowledge that a "time" **in prophecy equals 360 days**

36) The "seven times" **mentioned in Leviticus 26 picture 2520 years of the treading down of Jerusalem, a period known as** "the times of the Gentiles"

37) The "time, times and half a time" **mentioned in Daniel 7:25 equals 1260 years of persecution by the Papacy**

38) Knowledge of the identity of the nations that constitute the Daniel 2 statue

39) The four beasts of Daniel 7 are the same four world ruling empires of the statue of Daniel 2

40) The "little horn" **of Daniel 7 is the Papacy**

Since drawing up this list it has been pointed out to the author that it is by no means exhaustive.

These beliefs and practices were all taught by HWA, and most of them can also be found in "A History of the True Religion" by Andrew Dugger and Clarence Dodd, ministers of the COG7.

Click here to read "A History of the True Religion" by Andrew Dugger and Clarence Dodd.

(Please note that the author of this website does not agree with three of the above listed beliefs. I do not believe that the reference to the middle of a week in Daniel 9:27 applies to the day of Christ's death, but rather to the middle year of the 70th "week" of the Seventy Week Prophecy. See the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES" for an explanation of this. I also believe in a somewhat different interpretation of the Mark of the Beast, i.e. that it is Sabbath breaking, rather than merely Sunday keeping. See the page "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST" for more about this. I also believe in a significantly different interpretation of the Daniel 2/Daniel 7 "Beast" powers, i.e. that the third beast is Greco-Rome, and the fourth beast is Islam. See the page "DANIEL 2 - INTERPRETATION ERRORS" for a thorough explanation.)

It was claimed by HWA that the brethren he associated with in the COG7 did not accept the annual holy days, however the "Sabbath Sentinel" magazine of September 1988 makes two startling statements on page 8 that refute this:

1) "In the Spring of 1937, Elder C.O. Dodd of Salem, West Virginia, began publishing a paper called The Faith, advocating the Feasts of Leviticus 23".

2) "During the Churches of God (7th Day) Feast of Tabernacles that Fall (1938) in Warrior, Alabama, ...".

So the doctrine of the annual holy days was obviously accepted by enough brethren in the COG7 to warrant organised meetings in the 1930's. The claim that leading Church figures did not accept the keeping of the Biblical holy days is also proved incorrect by the simple fact that the Churches that have continued on from Clarence Dodd still keep these Feasts today.

The then well-known doctrine of British Israelism, with a variety of explanations, was likewise accepted by a number of ministers, including G. G. Rupert and D. Paul Ziegler. Former Church of God Seventh Day minister Ziegler's book, "Israel: Past, Present, Future" (1919) explains, among many other things, Israel's "seven times" of punishment (Lev 26) coming to an end when they rose to prominence as the Anglo-Saxon peoples and north-western European nations.

The much-cited book on British Israelism, "Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright" (1902), written by non-Sabbatarian minister J. H. Allen, served as the template for HWA's "The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy", the latter copying much of the former's content, including phrases, examples, headings, story flow and chapter arrangement.

This doctrine had been around for a long time, and was already known to King James I of England, of King James Bible fame, who believed that as King of England he had been made King of *Israel,* and even had coins minted alluding to this. British Israel views were at various times published in the COG7 newspaper, the "Bible Advocate", even though these beliefs were not taught by the majority of ministers. Church doctrines and beliefs were then not as strictly and centrally controlled as they are today.

From all the above information, as well as from many other articles on this website, we can see that HWA's

claim that God raised him up to "restore all things" **does not stand up to close scrutiny.**

The "Elijah" **prophecy in Matthew 17:10-11 has been taken by the Churches of God as referring to a prophet who appears just before Christ's *second* coming. However, when the disciples asked Christ,** "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" **(v10), Christ acknowledged that** "Elijah" **was to appear prior to Himself (v12, referring to Mal 4:5), *but made it clear that he had already come in the person of John the Baptist*.**

In addition, if Matthew 17:11 is read as "Elijah indeed comes first" **(Green's Literal Translation),** "and he is to restore all things" **(RSV), which John the Baptist did, this Scripture makes perfect sense in its *first century* fulfilment.**

Also, when we read the parallel account in Mark 9:12: "Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected?" **(NIV), we can see that the** "Elijah" **who restores all things appears *before* Christ's suffering. This suffering, as we know, occurred at Christ's *first* coming. When He returns, He will do so in power and glory, not again to suffer.**

The Churches of God, however, claim that John the Baptist did not restore any doctrines and therefore rule him out as being the one who fulfilled Matthew 17:10-11. Indeed, I have personally heard it shouted from a Church of God pulpit: "John the Baptist restored nothing!".

This, however, does not align with the Scriptures. John was prophesied to "turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children', and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" **(Lk 1:16-17). Jesus Himself said that John was the greatest man ever born of a woman (Matt 11:11) - greater than all the prophets! Therefore we can be sure he fulfilled what he was *prophesied* to fulfil.**

What exactly did John restore?

<u>John the Baptist restored true religion to the land of Israel, turning the hearts of many people back to God.</u>

When Jesus Christ began to preach, the Scriptures tell us that "the people heard Him gladly" **(Mk 12:37) and said that** "All things this man **(John)** spoke of Him **(Christ)** were true" **(Jn 10:41).**

Why did the common people respond in this way? Because John the Baptist had prepared them, presenting the truth of God to them with such clarity that they were moved to repentance, and thus greatly motivated to receive their Messiah.

Throughout the centuries after the Jews' return to the Holy Land from Babylonian captivity, much of God's truth had become distorted and misapplied. The Jewish religious leaders were heavily criticised by both John and Christ for turning God's true religion into one focused only on physical rituals and compromised by "the tradition of men" **(Mk 7:8). It was this significant departure from correct understanding and practice that John was sent to address.**

John the Baptist was given the holy spirit from his mother's womb (Lk 1:15). This is a very rare thing. A very special work is to be expected from such a person.

It is claimed that the man who had the holy spirit from the womb "restored nothing", but he who did not have the holy spirit from the womb "restored all things".

If Herbert Armstrong's restoration work was greater than John the Baptist's, why didn't *he* have the holy spirit from the womb?

A big part of the problem has been a misunderstanding of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse".

The "Elijah" **mentioned in this passage clearly refers to John the Baptist, and was understood that way by Christ. Unfortunately, however, the phrase** "day of the Lord" **has been explained, in the final era of the Church, as being mainly applicable to the time of Christ's second coming. A close examination of this phrase in Scripture, however, shows that it is used for a variety of occasions when God intervenes in the affairs of mankind in a major way.**

Look, for example, at the book of Joel, where the phrase "day of the Lord" **occurs five times *without any of them applying to the time of Christ's return*. This book was written before Judah went into captivity. In Joel 1:6 it says that a** "lion" **is going to devour the land. Daniel 7:4 compares the first** "beast" **power to a lion. Elsewhere in Daniel this power is identified as Babylon. Joel describes this conquest of his people as a** "day of the Lord" **in Joel 1:15, 2:1 and 2:11. It should not surprise us that Joel uses this phrase, because Jeremiah does the same thing in Lamentations 2:22, referring to it as** "the day of the Lord's anger"**. Jeremiah personally witnessed the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and describes it graphically in that book. Likewise, Zephaniah speaks at length of this Babylonian conquest, calling it a** "day of the Lord"**. Obadiah refers to it by this term as well.**

In Joel 2, God shows that a remnant of the Jews is to be brought back from Babylon to Israel. In Joel 2:28-29 we are given a chronological marker, referring to the time of Christ's first coming and the establishment of the Church: Joel 2:28 is quoted in Acts 2:16-18 with regard to the pouring out of God's spirit. Most of the Jews, however, would reject Christ and so Joel 2:31 (quoted in Acts 2:20) predicts another "day of the Lord"**. This came in the form of the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem. This is the same** "day of the Lord" **prophesied in**

Malachi 4:5-6, which would involve striking the "earth" **of Israel with utter destruction. It is also referred to in I Thessalonians 5:2.**

Joel 3:1 predicts the restoration of the Jews after their 2520 years of punishment has ended. God says that He will "bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem" **and they will never again be uprooted from their land (Amos 9:15). This event is again called a** "day of the Lord" **in Joel 3:14, encompassing WW2 and the Holocaust, after which the Jews were liberated from their oppressors and were able to return to the Holy Land. This** "day of the Lord" **is also referred to in Zechariah 14:1.**

So in Joel we see the phrase "day of the Lord" **used five times without once referring to Christ's return. Therefore the application of Malachi 4:5-6 by the Churches of God to a supposed "end time Elijah", and Christ's second coming, is wholly unwarranted.**

In fact, the Scriptures do not foretell the rise of any specific, individual prophet of God between the completion of the New Testament and the second coming of Christ. On the contrary, Zechariah 13:4 states, concerning *false* prophets, that after Christ's return "it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied"**.**

Instead, all of God's spirit-begotten people are, when they speak God's truth, prophets. Acts 2:17 states, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams"**.**

We see this in practice throughout the book of Acts: The deacon Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9), a group of "prophets from Jerusalem"**, including Agabus, came to Antioch and prophesied (Acts 11:27-30), and men taking turns at speaking in a Church meeting are called** "prophets" **in I Corinthians 14:29-30. In verse 31, Paul goes on to say,** "you can all prophesy one by one"**. Note that he says *all*.**

In Deuteronomy 18:15 Moses states, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren**.** Him you shall hear"**. John 1:45 and 6:14 tell us that this prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus Christ; He was the prophet of whom it is said** "Him you shall hear"**. Therefore, it does not make sense that after *the Prophet* has come and given us all the wisdom and instructions recorded in the New Testament (Jn 14:26), that God would then need to send another individual human prophet.**

The same applies to the government of God's people. In earlier times God used human leaders as types of Christ. However, at Christ's first coming He became the Head of the Church, so no physical man can occupy that office any longer. This is explained further in the article "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD".

Under the New Covenant, all spirit-begotten believers are kings under the King of kings, all are priests under the High Priest, and all are prophets under *the* Prophet (Rev 1:6, 5:10, I Cor 14:29-31).

Therefore, since the time of Christ no individual physical leader should rule over God's spiritual people. As this website makes clear, such a person inevitably ends up being placed above Christ and becoming an object of worship. This is exactly what has happened in the Laodicea era of the Church, with the result that Christ is pictured standing outside, knocking on the door of the Church, trying to be heard.

The explanations given in this article show the folly of the doctrine of the "end time Elijah" who "restored all things". They also clearly expose the Laodicea Church era problem of claiming to be "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" **(Rev 3:17) when the opposite is the truth. Please see the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" for more information.**

TEN BROKEN COMMANDMENTS

In the message to the Laodicea Church era, Jesus Christ describes His people as "naked" **(Rev 3:17) and counsels them** "to buy from Me ….. white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed"**.**

In the Scriptures, nakedness is associated with sin as early as the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree. The Bible narrative informs us that man's sinful, "naked" **state can be clothed with God's righteousness, through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as payment for our transgressions, followed by the forsaking of sin and the embracing God's law.**

Indeed, Psalm 119:172 proclaims, "All your commandments are righteousness" **and Revelation 19:8 says of Christ's bride,** "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"**.**

On a personal level "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" **(Rom 3:23). In the final Church era message, however, Christ is exposing the wholesale acceptance of unsound beliefs and sinful practices within His Church, and counselling His people to** "open the door"**, i.e. His Word, and be taught by Him personally how to obtain His righteousness.**

Jesus Christ famously said, "By their fruits you shall know them" **(Matt 7:16), so let's examine some of the fruits of the Laodicea era of God's Church.**

It is my intention to focus on the failure of the Church leadership to adhere to the spirit of the Ten Commandments in light of the warning to religious leaders in Malachi 2:8, "you are departed out of the way: you have caused many to stumble at the law"**.**

1) You shall have no other gods before me

God's Church in the Laodicea era has seriously transgressed the first commandment. This is described at length on the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" where it is shown that the commencement of this current era coincided with the emergence of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA), led by its false prophetess Ellen G White (EGW), in the middle of the 19th century.

In the 1950's, Radio Church of God founder Herbert W Armstrong (HWA), a former minister in the Church of God 7th Day (COG7), which had previously split from the SDA's over the leadership role of EGW, also went on to introduce the rule of a single individual into his Church, calling it "the restoration of the government of God".

The truth, however, is that this blasphemous form of government was modelled on the Papacy, the institution that heads false Christianity, which arose when "the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God" **(II Thes 2:3-4).**

It also betrays the spirit of Simon the sorcerer who claimed that he "himself was some great one" **(Acts 8:9), and** "Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence" **(III Jn 9).**

In 1968 HWA renamed his organisation the *Worldwide* Church of God (WCG), in the image of the Catholic "*Universal*" Church. This better reflected his belief that God's people, though scattered all over the world, should conform to the opinions of a sole human leader. Since the break-up of the WCG after HWA's death, various remnant groups have continued this unscriptural form of Church government.

It is true that government over the *physical* nation of Israel under the Old Covenant often took the form of individual leaders who ruled as *types of Christ*. Moses is the best known of these. As described in Numbers 1, under Moses there were *twelve leaders* over the twelve *physical* tribes of Israel.

Under the New Covenant however, Jesus Christ fulfils the role that Moses typified. He is in charge of the *spiritual* nation of Israel, i.e. the Church. While He was on Earth, He trained *twelve apostles* to administer the Church under Himself.

For Church members to accept a human being in the role of Christ, i.e. ruling as the head of the Church, whether he be labelled a Prophet, a Pastor General, or a Pope, is to put that person in the place of God. This is a blatant transgression of the first commandment and explains why the Laodicea Church era message shows Christ standing outside the Church, effectively locked out, knocking on the door in order to get its attention (Rev 3:20). Please see the page "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD" for a full explanation of this subject.

2) <u>You shall not make unto you any graven image</u>

Christians of this world often use statues and pictures portraying Christ, Mary, Popes and "Saints", in their worship. Other religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism do much the same thing with their "deities". Images of the stars of sport and entertainment are also venerated by their many fans in a way that closely resembles religious devotion. Although the Church of God has historically always condemned the use of images in

worship, now, in the Laodicea era of the Church, we frequently find pictures of Herbert Armstrong, or whoever the new leader is, adorning homes, Church offices and meeting places etc. The SDA's do the same with Ellen G White.

While the physical transgression of the second commandment is problematic enough, the spiritual aspect is truly alarming.

In the Laodicea era, a *false image* of current or former leaders is deliberately portrayed by many of the Churches of God. Unlike the Scriptures, which show both the commendable and the less flattering traits of people such as Abraham, David, Solomon etc, the Churches of God habitually only show their leaders in the most positive light, giving a far more favourable impression of them than their actual record deserves.

In the case of Herbert Armstrong, significant negative aspects of his life are left out of his lengthy, two-volume autobiography. For example, his biased efforts at handling his erring son Garner Ted, his opulent lifestyle, and his $200,000 plus expenses annual income *from God's tithes*, which would equal many times that much today, are all conveniently overlooked. One Church of God which republishes HWA's autobiography has gone even further, removing content deemed embarrassing to modern readers and making other adjustments to deliberately create a different impression than the original version intended.

The end result of such cover-ups is that Churches create false images of their leaders and worship those images. Try to speak out against such an image and you will find out how much it is worshipped. Try to speak against the Catholic worship of Mary and you will get the same response.

3) <u>You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain</u>

This commandment is about properly representing God. In the Laodicea era, many leaders of Sabbath keeping Churches have seriously misrepresented God, even making the true religion an embarrassment and a source of ridicule.

The dictatorial form of Church government, the "executive level" incomes taken from God's tithes, the hobnobbing with the rich and famous, the taking of Biblical titles, the ascribing of prophecies to oneself, the favouritism shown to one's family, and the ever stranger "prophetic" pronouncements, all blaspheme the true God. They are foreign to the humility, the selflessness and the sound-mindedness of the Church that Christ established, but abound in this lukewarm era of the Church of God.

Those who take on Christ's name and call themselves *Christian*, should in all things endeavour to be Christ-like.

4) <u>Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy</u>

The Laodicea era of God's Church has seen possibly the most liberal approach ever taken to God's weekly holy day. Many new brethren are initially shocked by the careless attitude displayed towards doing business on the Sabbath.

Unbelievably, excuses like "the place would have been open anyway" are sufficient for brethren to be given the green light to visit restaurants, coffee shops, bars and fast-food outlets on God's Sabbath. Even on annual holy days, meals are organised in restaurants without a second thought.

However, Nehemiah 10:28-31 and 13:15-22 leave no doubt as to God's view on this subject.

Most new Church members would have read literature about the Sabbath prior to attending services. In the case of the WCG, that would certainly have included Herbert Armstrong's booklet "Which Day Is The Christian Sabbath?". This work of over a hundred pages, which can be easily located in PDF form online, on the whole makes a very strong case for the Saturday Sabbath, so one would expect the above mentioned two passages from Nehemiah to be quoted and discussed at length. Surprisingly though, only the second passage is quoted, and then only three of the eight relevant verses. This can be seen on page 76 of the 1976 version of HWA's booklet. Those three verses are Nehemiah 13:15, 17 and 18. Verse 16 is left out.

In verse 17, Nehemiah states, "I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?"**". By only quoting verse 15 prior to this, which mentions Jews transgressing by working, transporting wares and conducting business with their fellow Jews in Jerusalem on the Sabbath, the impression is given that this is the only reason why Nehemiah contended with the Jews regarding the Sabbath.**

Verse 16, however, mentions another sin, namely that Jews were also conducting business with *Gentiles* on the Sabbath. Nehemiah 13:16 reads, "Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem"**.**

By omitting verse 16, HWA is obscuring part of Nehemiah's grievance with the Jews on this subject. In doing so, he is hiding this same issue from his readers.

And so what we see today is that while most Sabbath keepers would agree that buying and selling goods *with each other* should not be done on the Sabbath, a different view exists among many of these same people in regard to doing business *with non-believers* on the Sabbath, even though the Scriptures make no such distinction.

In a sermon given on October 23, 1981, regarding Sabbath keeping, after initially making very strong points in defence of the Sabbath, Herbert Armstrong begins to stumble somewhat over his sentences. He says that someone has asked him if it's okay to go to restaurants on the Sabbath and HWA claims that he has never given the matter any thought.

Firstly, this seems rather odd, because Sabbath keepers, especially in the early days of their conversion, are often unsure of what to do and what not to do on the Sabbath, and consequently give these things *much* thought.

Secondly, the careful selection, and omission, of verses from Nehemiah 13, as related above, seems to indicate that much thought *had* in fact gone into the matter. Those verses not in support of the long established WCG practice of purchasing food on the Sabbath were carefully left out of HWA's booklet. Please read all of Nehemiah 13:15-22. How could such a powerful Sabbath keeping example be omitted from a publication used to instruct new converts about the weekly holy day?

The same applies to the other passage in Nehemiah that HWA omitted from his booklet, where Nehemiah, as part of renewing the Jews' covenant with God, states, "... if the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day ..." **(Neh 10:31).**

Armstrong further states in his sermon that people would be working on the Sabbath anyway, implying that our frequenting of their eateries is of no consequence. The same argument could be made regarding Nehemiah's "men of Tyre"**, but obviously that's not how Nehemiah saw things. Then HWA gets to the crux of the matter: He says that, when travelling, there is nothing else a person can do but go to a restaurant on the Sabbath, *which he admits is what he does, and professes that he has never thought anything of it!!***

Listen to this sermon at:

http://www.herbert-w-armstrong.com/radio/B811023B.MP3

especially from the 17.45 minute mark.

When saying that there is nothing else a person can do but eat out on the Sabbath when away from home, perhaps HWA had a luxurious three course meal in mind, rather than the raw food Christ's disciples ate in the field on the Sabbath as recorded in Matthew 12, where we find the Biblical example of what people did when away from home on the Sabbath. It shows them being humble and making do with the most basic things at hand. *There is certainly no hint whatsoever of money changing hands or business being conducted.* Rather, the question being debated was how much labour a person might reasonably use on the Sabbath to prepare a meal.

Think about this:

Do you really think Jesus Christ would go to a restaurant on God's holy Sabbath?

In ancient times, defiling the Sabbath for *the purpose of one's personal pleasure* was contrary to God's law (Isa 58:13). In the future it will be contrary to God's law (Isa 66:23). Why would it be any different today? Israel was sent into captivity for its Sabbath breaking.

In Nehemiah's time, the sellers of wares were coming to the Israelites. Today, many "Sabbath keepers" don't wait to be approached by vendors, instead they go to them! Words fail to describe the depths to which Laodicea era "Sabbath keeping" has descended. Brethren from previous eras suffered torture, imprisonment and death for upholding this precious law of God.

Some brethren like to justify their conduct by pointing out that in our houses we turn on the tap, turn on light switches and flush our toilets on the Sabbath, whilst people are at work at all these service providers. This is a Laodicean argument. These are all automated services that we are more or less dependent on in our modern homes. Not so with attending restaurants, which for us is totally a matter of choice. Never in history has it been easier to prepare for the Sabbath than it is today, and God's Word does give us instructions concerning the Preparation Day (Ex 16).

However, leniency has only increased over time, and it is now common for brethren to purchase all types of items deemed necessary for Sabbath services, on the Sabbath itself.

By conducting business on the Sabbath the Church of God is setting a shameful example for those on the outside, as well as new people God is calling!

How is this "restoring all things", which HWA claimed to have done, if it was never done before? If we heedlessly make purchases on the Sabbath, what is the difference between a Sabbath keeper and a Sabbath breaker? Where in Scripture do we see Christ or His followers doing business on the Sabbath?

For an excellent in-depth discussion about attending restaurants on the Sabbath, please see:

https://www.friendsofsabbath.org/G&S/www.giveshare.org/HolyDay/sabbathrestaurants.html

5) Honour your father and your mother

The author once asked a COG Regional Director, "How are your parents?" Answer: "No idea, I haven't spoken to them for years". The reason? They moved to a "rival" Church of God years ago. Christ did say, "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" **(Matt 10:37). However, at no time did Christ say that He was doing away with the fifth commandment. Just because our parents follow** "Paul"**, while we prefer** "Apollos"**, doesn't mean we can neglect our responsibilities to them.**

Christ strongly criticised the Pharisees for sanctioning a ruse that enabled a man to avoid his duty of caring for his parents by declaring his assets as "Corban", or devoted to God. The result, Christ said, was that they were guilty of breaking the fifth commandment.

Our responsibilities to our parents are not merely of a financial nature, however. Neglect of their emotional and physical needs, by cutting off contact with them, also violates the fifth commandment.

From a spiritual perspective, this final Church era has also neglected to honour our spiritual Father, by honouring physical leaders ahead of Him. Whenever there is doubt, it is most common for the opinion of men to override the Word of God.

Our spiritual mother, the Church, is also dishonoured by those who refer to the Philadelphia era brethren as "Sardis" or "dead". Members today are oblivious of the teachings of Church ministers who lived only a few hundred years ago. The way many speak disparagingly of brethren of the Philadelphia era, while at the same time attempting to usurp their place in history, goes against the spirit of the fifth commandment.

The belittling of the knowledge, the achievements, the sacrifices and the sufferings of brethren in *all* previous Church eras dishonours our "mother".

Please see "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" for more on this.

6) <u>You shall not murder</u>

Jesus Christ taught that being angry towards your brother without a cause is akin to murder. The fragmentation of the Church of God in the latter stages of the Laodicea era has often led to mean-spirited accusations between different branches of the Church. The author has heard leaders of one COG repeatedly accuse members of other COG's of "worshipping the Devil", saying they will go into the "lake of fire" if they don't bow down to their particular leader, who they deem to be a prophet. This in spite of the fact that they are indistinguishable from other COG's in their core teachings.

Why *does* one follow Paul and another Apollos? Who is the author of all this rivalry, sectarianism, and discord? Leaders who promote these divisions are playing into Satan's hand.

If men didn't have selfish ambition and a desire for power, we wouldn't have so many divisions of the Church of God.

7) <u>You shall not commit adultery</u>

The idolising of men has gone so far in this Laodicea era that, as a requirement of admission to some COG's, new converts must pledge their unreserved belief in various claims Church leaders make *about themselves*. Loyalty and obedience to the person who heads the organisation, to local ministers, and even to dead "prophets" is obligatory in these groups. Even when members know their ministers are in error, they are led to believe that God will bless them for their obedience regardless.

This is spiritual adultery, i.e. in a religious sense putting a person ahead of God.

The Church of God should be first and foremost faithful to Christ and His truth as expressed in the Scriptures, rather than to the pronouncements of men and their organisations.

8) <u>You shall not steal</u>

In this final era of the Church of God some self-appointed "one man" rulers have stolen Jesus Christ's leadership position. Some have also stolen His titles and claimed them as their own, including "The Prophet" and "King". Others have erroneously believed themselves to be the fulfilment of Biblical types such as Elijah, Elisha, Zerubbabel and Eliakim. In the process they have also misappropriated God's tithes and offerings.

In the Laodicea era message we see Christ figuratively knocking on the "door" of His people, through the pages of the Bible, because sound Biblical understanding has been taken from them and replaced with illogical, and sometimes laughable explanations.

While some leaders are preoccupied with finding prophecies about themselves or explaining prophecies along the same lines as their deceived former leader, they have neglected to study the many demonstrably *fulfilled* prophecies of Scripture. As a result, they are potentially stealing the opportunity of their followers to learn the truth of God's Word and receive the blessings that come from it. No wonder the Laodicea era has been given such a bad description.

9) <u>You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour</u>

There is no doubt that the Churches of the Laodicea era will be held accountable for the lies that they are proclaiming in order to protect established doctrines and interpretations, in the face of clear evidence to the

contrary. See the pages "THINGS THAT DON'T ADD UP" and "DOCTRINAL ERRORS" for a great many examples of this.

Denying God's verifiable, historical fulfilments of prophecy, many of which are attested to on this website, and instead insisting on implausible, and often bizarre explanations, is *bearing false witness*. See the page "FULFILLED PROPHECIES".

Each of the Churches of God believes that they are the custodian of all truth. They in effect say that they are "rich, increased in goods, and have need of nothing" **(Rev 3:17). Jesus Christ, however, responds that in fact they are all** "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" **(NIV). Who should we believe?**

Please read the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" for a deeper understanding of this problem.

10) <u>You shall not covet</u>

In addition to the undeniable covetousness that often exists with regard to the collection of God's tithes, some of the end time Churches of God also have a love of pursuing "estates". Even though the Scriptures direct people to leave an inheritance for their descendants, and the law of Israel stipulated that every 50 years possession of land was to be restored to the families of its original owners, it seems to be considered a great success to pull in the estate of a deceased member. The number of court cases this has led to is difficult to determine, as the Churches do not usually divulge this information to their members. On the contrary, they deliberately hide it if the circumstances are at all controversial.

If there is a genuine desire to faithfully represent God to outsiders, surely the taking of people's money and rightful inheritances should be the last thing the Churches would want to do. Jesus Christ abhorred covetousness and strongly rebuked those "which devour widows' houses" **(Mk 12:40).**

What kind of an impression do we give of the true Church of God, when we go to court with people *over money*? What a dreadful and embarrassing misrepresentation of God!

Christ said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth" **(Matt 6:19).**

Throughout *the history of the Church of God* there is no recorded example of greed comparable to the pursuit of wealth witnessed in the Laodicea era Church.

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Many more examples could be added to the above list. The regrettable conclusion is that although the Churches profess to keep the Ten Commandments, in reality they are in many ways seriously failing to apply the spiritual intent of God's laws.

It is therefore not surprising that Christ figuratively describes the final era of His Church as "naked"**.**

However, He urges His people to repent and to diligently study His Word, in order to obtain His righteousness, symbolised by "white garments"**, to cover their** "nakedness" **(Rev 3:18).**

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THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

In this end time, just prior to the return of Jesus Christ and the setting up of God's Kingdom on Earth, there is a specific and crucial area of doctrine that has been seriously misinterpreted and misapplied by many sections of the true Church of God.

This doctrine represents a much-cherished belief of the Church, which is, however, not backed up by the Scriptures. It concerns the concept of "the Government of God".

It is the intent of the author to prove beyond doubt that "one man government", which was employed by God in various ways over *physical* Israel, has under the New Covenant been superseded by "one God government" over *spiritual* Israel, i.e. Jesus Christ as Head of the Church (Col 1:18).

The Origin of One Man Church Government

In recent times much has been made of "the government of God" that Herbert W Armstrong (HWA) is said to have restored to the Church, and which is commonly referred to as "one man rule". Since HWA's death many Churches of God (COG) have continued to employ this form of government. Even those that choose not to, will usually state that there is nothing wrong with it in principle.

However, below is a quote from Herbert Armstrong's booklet "Who or What is the Prophetic Beast?" (1960, p26), showing that he himself strongly criticised this form of government.

The bracketed writing within HWA's text is mine, as is the underlining of his text:

"Where, then, did human church government derive its present form? "The first pope, in the real sense of the word, was Leo I (440-461 A.D.)", says the Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, volume 7, page 629. To him the form of government of the Roman Empire **(one man rule by the Emperor)** was the most marvelous thing on earth. He applied its principles to the church, organized the church into a government, forming the papacy **(one man rule by the Pope).** This church government or organization is the image of the beast. Says Myers' Ancient History: "During the reign of Leo I, the Church set up, within the Roman Empire, an ecclesiastical state [government] which, in its constitution and its administrative system, was shaping itself upon the imperial model". This church government, then, according to this historical authority, is in fact a model, a counterpart, an image of the beast which is the Roman Empire government. The Britannica calls it an ecclesiastical world empire! This image, man-designed and man-ruled **(one man ruled)** church government, compelled people to worship the

church **(worship the Pope, just like the Emperor was worshipped**)! And since the church was organized into a worldly government **(identical to that of the Beast powers)**, this was worship of the image, false worship **(of the man at the top, rather than God)**, idolatry!"

Herbert Armstrong here says that to Leo I the office of the Roman Emperor embodied the ultimate form of government, and consequently Leo created the Papacy in its image. As HWA states, by introducing this office into the Roman Catholic Church, Leo became "the first pope, in the real sense of the word". We see therefore that the whole concept of a Pope, also known as a "universal bishop", is a Catholic invention.

How utterly amazing then that Herbert Armstrong established this same "image of the beast" **office *for himself*, labelling it "Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God".**

A good example of how leadership used to function in the early Church is that of Polycarp, a leading minister who lived in the second century AD. Polycarp was Bishop of the city of Smyrna in Asia Minor. Indeed, every city where Christians dwelt had its bishop (or overseer), but no particular bishop had the pre-eminence. The fact that Polycarp is specifically designated as "Bishop of Smyrna" shows the limits of his territory. See "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" for more about Polycarp.

There is no Biblical record of an office of "universal bishop" ever having been created by God for a man. It is certainly not the New Testament equivalent of high priest, for that office today belongs to Christ (Heb 4:14).

Moses, Aaron and Joshua as Types of Christ

The first leader of the nation of Israel was Moses, a prophet of God, i.e. one who spoke God's words (Deut 34:10). He was used by God as mediator between Himself and His people. Moses led Israel out of Egypt, a type of sin; he led them away from Pharaoh, a type of Satan; he taught them God's law, and he judged disputes between the people.

Moses was therefore a type of Jesus Christ in His role as Head of State (Deut 18:15-18, Jn 1:1,45, Acts 3:22-26, I Tim 6:15).

Moses' brother Aaron was high priest and also Moses' prophet, i.e. the one who spoke on Moses' behalf (Ex 7:1-2). The book of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus Christ is now the spiritual High Priest (Heb 3:1, 5:1-10).

Aaron was therefore a type of Jesus Christ in His role as Head of Religion.

After Moses' death his role was filled by Joshua, while after Aaron's death his role was passed on to his son Eleazar and then his grandson Phinehas.

Under Moses and Aaron God subsequently appointed *twelve leaders*, one from each of the *twelve tribes* as seen in Numbers 1 and 10. God also instructed Moses to meticulously organise and encamp the twelve tribes, as seen in Numbers 2 and 3. This attention to detail extended to the way they travelled, as described in Numbers 10 and 33, and the orderly way that the twelve tribes later occupied the land of Israel, as shown in Numbers 34 to 36 and Joshua 13 to 21. This was no haphazard undertaking. Clearly God wanted His nation to reflect his own high standards of structure and organisation.

The significance of the number twelve can be seen throughout the Scriptures. Here are some examples:

Twelve tribes of Israel descended from the twelve sons of Jacob

Twelve stones in Aaron's ephod

Twelve pillars at Mount Sinai

Twelve spies who went into Canaan, one from each tribe

Twelve stones set up by Joshua at the crossing of the Jordan

Twelve Judges in the Judges period, almost certainly one from each tribe

Twelve stones in Elijah's altar over which he poured twelve buckets of water

Twelve oxen under the "molten sea" **in the Temple**

Twelve cakes on the golden table in the Temple

Twelve gates and twelve foundations in New Jerusalem

Twelve months in a regular year, twelve hours in a day

Twelve apostles of Christ, sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28)

Twelve stars on the crown worn by the woman picturing the Church (Rev 12:1)

Twenty-four priests heading twenty-four divisions of priests (2 x 12) (I Chron 24:1-19)

Twenty-four Levites heading twenty-four divisions of twelve musicians (2 x 12) (I Chron 25)

Twelve military leaders heading twelve divisions of twenty-four thousand men (I Chron 27)

Twenty-four elders seated on twenty-four thrones (2 x 12) (e.g. Rev 4:4)

One hundred and forty-four thousand firstfruits of salvation (12 x 12) (Rev 7 and 14)

No leader like Moses or Joshua was appointed after Joshua's death. Even while Joshua was still alive, the

account in Joshua 22 shows that the *twelve tribal leaders* were soon governing the country, under, and in consultation with, the high priest (a type of Christ).

At that time a serious misunderstanding almost led to civil war, but Joshua did not get involved in solving the problem. Instead, the leaders of the ten tribes living west of the Jordan (very likely those named in Numbers 34:16-29), in cooperation with the high priest's son and representative, Phinehas, defused a stand-off with the leaders of the tribes on the east of the Jordan. Note that it was Phinehas who had the final word on the dispute (Josh 22:30-33).

As stated, no single ruler was appointed after Joshua. If Israel had not then strayed from God, the raising up of the Judges would not have been necessary; government of the state would have remained with the twelve tribal leaders of Israel under the high priest.

It makes sense that Christ's role as High Priest retained a physical counterpart in Israel, though not His role as Head of State, because the high priest's role pointed forward to the one that Christ was yet to fulfil as atoning sacrifice to reconcile God and man. Meanwhile, the invisible Christ, as Head of State over Israel, would provide for them, protect them, and bless them.

God's Government Rejected by God's People

Over time, Israel rejected Christ as invisible Head of State, and requested instead to be ruled by a human king, like the nations around them.

Three hundred and fifty years after Joshua divided up the land of Israel among the twelve tribes, King Saul began to reign. After some time, however, Saul disobeyed God and became demon possessed. Having someone with an unsound mind in charge placed the nation in a very difficult position. In a system where twelve govern and one goes astray, the other eleven can deal with the situation. This is what happened with the tribe of Benjamin, as shown in Judges 19 and 20, when it was severely punished by the other eleven tribes for doing great evil. This is also what happened in the case of Judas Iscariot, when his demise led to the eleven remaining apostles, with God's help, determining who should take his place. Government by a body of twelve, as long as it consists of a majority of God-fearing men, is a safeguard to the truth and to those who are governed.

When *one man* ruling as sovereign goes astray, the consequences are enormous.

If the Worldwide Church of God had not been under one man government when Herbert Armstrong died, and his successor, Joe Tkach Sr, had instead been one of a group of twelve leaders, he could never have led the Church to change its major doctrines. His abominable agenda would have been rejected by the other eleven.

In reality, Herbert Armstrong's "restoration of the government of God" brought the Church he presided over to the brink of destruction after his death.

One man government is *not* the government of God under the New Covenant. On the contrary, one man government is what the Church adopted in the Laodicea era when it *rejected* the government of God. Just like Israel in the days of Samuel, they said, "We don't want to be ruled by God; we want to be ruled by a man". See I Samuel 8:5.

Jesus Christ is Head of the Church

In the same way that there were twelve tribes of Israel with twelve leaders over them, Christ appointed *twelve apostles* when He established His Church. He could have appointed just one man, but He didn't. He could have chosen one apostle and eleven ministers of lower rank, but *He didn't do that either.*

In Matthew 23, after criticising the Jewish religious leaders, Christ tells His disciples, "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren" **(v8). In other words, they were all on one level under Christ.**

When the Worldwide Church of God adopted "one man", "image of the beast" **government in the late 1950's, it sealed its own fate. This change over time led to the alienation of God's people from Him and His law, as they looked more and more to a man for direction rather than having a personal, close relationship with God. See the page "TEN BROKEN COMMANDMENTS" for additional information.**

This was followed, after the death of HWA, by the collapse and fragmentation of the Church, with a slew of men each now claiming to be "some special one" **(Acts 8) and seeking to draw believers after themselves. The damage done to the longsuffering people of God is incalculable.**

If ever there has been a time in history when believers once again say "I am of Paul" **or** "I am of Apollos" **or** "I am of Cephas" **(I Cor 1:12, 3:4), then this must be it. Truly, there is nothing new under the sun.**

It is common to hear it said in the Churches of God today that if only all the "Laodiceans" would unite behind their particular "one man", all would be well. This is total nonsense. The Catholics are all united around their Pope, but what does that achieve? All the people in the world uniting behind a man will not solve our problems.

The real problem is that we are transgressing God's law, i.e. His Ten Commandments.

As already stated, there have been many instances of God using one man for a particular job in Old Covenant times. Noah, Moses, Joshua and the Judges are some examples. All these men were types of Jesus Christ, as a lawgiver, provider, protector, deliverer, mediator, prophet etc. None of these men, however, were permanently set up by God as a one man government that was to have ongoing successors.

Successive "one man rule" was not found in Israel until it became a kingdom, which God asserts was a rejection of His government (I Sam 8:7) and which brought punishment on the nation.

Under the New Covenant, God gave the Church "one God" government under Jesus Christ. In the Laodicea era, however, many people in God's Church have once again rejected Jesus Christ as King and instead accepted a man as king. The Philadelphia era message is referring to this when it warns, "let no man take your crown" **(Rev 3:11 - KJV). See the page "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS" for more on this.**

Physical succession was also found in the physical priesthood, but it has been replaced by a spirit-led priesthood, comprised of all believers (I Pet 2:5,9, Heb 13:15-16). The physical high priesthood was symbolic of the position now occupied by Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews confirms that Christ is the High Priest (Heb 4:14-15), and the book of Revelation confirms that the place of regular priests is now occupied by members of the Church (Rev 5:9-10).

Israel as a physical nation was organised with twelve tribal leaders working in consultation with, and under the direction of, the *physical* high priest. Likewise, the Church was organised with twelve apostles working with, and under the direction of, their *spiritual* High Priest.

The Apostle Peter

It is true that the apostle Peter sometimes took a leading role among the twelve, but others did also (Acts 15:13-21, Gal 2:9). In Peter's case this can be seen for instance in his address to the crowd on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, as well as his part in the calling of the first Gentile, Cornelius, in Acts 10. However, such examples do not justify the one man government doctrine which the Catholic Church calls "the Primacy of Peter". At no time did the responsibility that Christ gave Peter translate into domination of the other eleven, nor did any of Peter's words or actions give the impression that he believed he was over the other apostles.

All the apostles were of the same rank, not one man in charge over eleven others of a lower rank. Peter was sanctified for his particular role among the twelve, according to his abilities, but not elevated over the others. Otherwise, he would have received a higher office than the other apostles.

In Mark 10:35-40, James and John ask Jesus to grant that they might sit next to Him in His Kingdom, one on His right hand and one on His left. However, if Peter had been given a higher rank than the other disciples, surely

the two brothers would have expected that Peter would occupy one of these places in the Kingdom?

Immediately after this, Christ emphasises this point, telling the disciples, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you" **(Mk 10:42-43).**

Matthew 16:19 is often cited to allege that Peter alone had the authority to "bind and loose", setting him high above the others. However, only two chapters later, in Matthew 18:1,18, *all twelve apostles* collectively are told that they have the authority to "bind and loose"**. This explains the cooperation so evident between them at the Acts 15 Church conference.**

Some Special One

Where did one man government *over the Church*, under *the New Covenant*, originate? Look at Acts 8. Simon Magus came claiming to be "some special one"**. He was possessed and inspired by Satan the Devil, who also claims to be some special one. Can you imagine Satan having the humility to sit down as one of twelve, like the apostles in Acts 15, and willingly submit to the consensus of the overall group as guided by Christ? Simon Magus went on to lay the foundation of false Christianity in Rome, as discussed on the page "THE MAN OF SIN". See also the page "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST" under the subheading "The development of false Christianity".**

Herbert Armstrong was stripped of his ministerial credentials by the Church of God (Seventh Day) (COG7) in 1937, but not because of doctrines that he believed in and that others wouldn't accept. The COG7 *permitted* ministers and members to have personal views on Biblical matters, and even to publish these. A number of ministers had their own publications, just as HWA did when from 1934 he published The Plain Truth for years whilst still continuing as a COG7 minister. Rather, HWA had his ministerial licence revoked because he wouldn't cooperate or work with other ministers. He wanted to be the "one man". Many matters have been left out of Herbert Armstrong's Autobiography, but his ambition to be "some special one" **is evident from beginning to end. You would have to erase the whole book to hide that fact.**

Sometimes a Church leader will point to Ephesians 3:5 and 4:11-13, claiming to be an apostle or a prophet and to exclusively represent God's government on Earth. These same Scriptures, however, prove the opposite.

Ephesians 3:5 states, "which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets"**. This speaks of apostles (plural) and prophets (plural), not one man government. The same applies to the roles listed in Ephesians 4:11-13 and I Corinthians 12:28.**

In addition to the core leadership group of twelve, the New Testament mentions at least eight other apostles by name. It also mentions many prophets (people who prophesy, i.e. speak God's word) and in I Corinthians 14:29-

32 some basic principles are given for how they are to conduct their speaking in an orderly fashion at each assembly.

On the other hand, the apostle John writes about a Church member seeking to elevate himself above others, "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church" **(III Jn 9-10).**

The apostle Paul also warns about "grievous wolves" **and men speaking** "perverse things" **seeking to acquire a personal following from among God's people (Acts 20:29-30).**

In the Church era messages, we see Christ commending this same Ephesus era for withstanding the overtures of such men seeking pre-eminence: "you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars" **(Rev 2:2).**

The Pergamos era is when the Papacy came to the fore, and so we find that era being warned about this domineering form of church government, labelling it "Satan's throne" **(Rev 2:13). It appears that in some areas the true Church had begun to follow the Papal model at that time.**

The bottom line is that God's people are *God's* people. Christ is their Head (Eph 1:22) and Chief Apostle (Heb 3:1), and it is not for any man to put himself in the place of Christ. Not a Pope *or* a Pastor General.

Summary

Satan the Devil is the current sole ruler of this world, who doesn't want to share power with anyone. He has been permitted to set up kings, emperors and tyrants in his own image throughout his almost 6000 years of rule. The terrible results of this satanic form of government fill the pages of history.

God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son are two God beings who live in perfect harmony in a loving family relationship, and desire all men to become part of their family (Jn 1:12, 3:16, I Tim 2:4).

Human beings have been created physically in the image of God and Christ, with the potential of being transformed into their spiritual image as well. As part of the process by which this family building plan is being carried out, the nation of Israel was created. *Israel the physical nation is a type of Israel the spiritual nation*, the ultimate family that God and Christ are creating.

Israel the physical nation was brought out of Egypt, a type of sin, by a man (Moses) who was a type of Christ. Israel the spiritual nation is brought out of sin by Christ Himself.

Physical Israel in general did not have the spirit of God and so could not see things from God's spiritual point of view. Moses, however, was given the holy spirit so that he could be an intermediary between God and the people of Israel.

This physical leader, Moses, was a type of Jesus Christ in His role as Head of State, i.e. lawgiver, provider and protector. Aaron the high priest, who served alongside Moses, was a type of Christ's other role as Head of Religion, which included making atonement for the sins of the people.

Therefore, physical Israel was given Moses and Aaron, and after them Joshua and Eleazar, to picture these two roles. Even when Israel rejected God's direct form of government and demanded a king, the picture continued through the reigns of the kings alongside the high priests.

However, when Christ became a man he was born into the bloodline that descended from King David (Lk 1:32-33, Jn 18:37), and through His perfect sacrifice He was made a High Priest after the order of Melchisedek (Heb 7:17).

Therefore, Jesus Christ, the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Tim 6:15, Rev 19:16), is now Head of State and Head of Religion over the spiritual nation of Israel - the Church.

These roles have ceased to be filled by human beings. Fittingly, the last physical high priest died in the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70AD.

Dictators love to be worshipped, *just as Satan wants to be worshipped* (Matt 4:9, Rev 13:4). History records few better examples of this than the Roman emperors whose statues the people were forced to worship and make offerings to. The penalty for non-compliance was death. The Roman Empire is pictured in the Scriptures as a component of the "beast", i.e. the powers that controlled Jerusalem for 2520 years. The great false church imitated the form of government of this "beast" power and created what Revelation 13:15 calls the "image of the beast", which in this case is referring to the Papacy created in the image of the Roman emperor. See the page "REVELATION 13 - THE BEAST" for a full explanation of the term "image of the beast", and its application to all Beast powers.

For God's Church to have such *one man* government is simply idolatry. As explained above, Jesus Christ fills both leadership roles under the New Covenant. No such roles remain for a human being to fill, as types of Christ, *in New Covenant times*.

What do remain are the roles Christ established, those of the twelve apostles, which correspond to the twelve tribal leaders of Israel, and the Church, a.k.a. the twelve *spiritual* tribes (Jas 1:1, Rev 7:1-8, 12:1), which correspond to the twelve *physical* tribes of Israel.

For any man to take on a "one man" leadership role in the Church under the New Covenant, and thus usurp a role that belongs to Jesus Christ, is for him to adopt the "image of the beast"**. Such a man** "as God, sits in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God" **(II Thes 2:4). Herbert W Armstrong introduced this office of the** "man of sin" **into his branch of God's Church in its final era. Since then, others have followed his example. Please see "THE MAN OF SIN" for more on this.**

Closing Comments

It is noteworthy that during the 2520 years of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah being punished and deprived of their blessings, they suffered under dictators and tyrants. Most historical persecution of Christians also occurred under this form of rulership. However, as soon as Israel's time of punishment was over and they started to receive their blessings, they also began receiving representative governance as one of those blessings!

This by its nature involved dialogue, and people being humble enough to think and work together for the good of a nation. This happened with the northern European nations, Great Britain, the United States of America and also the State of Israel in 1948. In the case of Israel, with its 120 member Knesset, this again involves a multiple of the number 12.

Nations of Israelite origin *led by a body of God fearing men*, have been the most blessed and prosperous of all nations. It is only when their leaders have distanced themselves from God that their nations have begun to suffer mounting curses. We see this particularly in modern times. See the page "BABYLON IS FALLEN" for more information.

In closing, note these two Scriptures:

"Without counsel purposes are disappointed, but in the multitude of counselors they are established" **(Pr 15:22).**

"When the righteous **(plural)** are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked **(singular)** bears rule, the people mourn" **(Pr 29:2).**

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BAPTISM INTO THE TRINITY

On the day that I was baptised by a Worldwide Church of God minister in 1989, I experienced one of the greatest shocks ever in all my time in the Church. Just before one of our local ministers put me under the water, he said he was baptising me "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". I remember going down into the water in absolute bewilderment.

In the three years prior to my baptism, I had studied many of Herbert Armstrong's (HWA) writings, including his teaching on the Trinity, and was in no doubt that mainstream Christianity's view on this subject was incorrect and founded in paganism. I knew that the Godhead is composed of God the Father and God the Son, as made clear in John 1 and elsewhere in Scripture. Also, I believe I was already aware at that time of the fraudulent insert in I John 5:7 that was placed there by believers in the Trinity.

Hence my absolute shock at hearing the trinitarian formula used at my Church of God (COG) baptism.

Amazingly, this formula is still used by most ministers in the COG's today.

Since I had never attended a baptism before, I was unaware that this phrase would be used. Looking into this matter later, I learned that it is taken from Matthew 28:19. I periodically wondered about this questionable passage of Scripture and had lingering doubts as to its authenticity, but I had no real evidence to challenge it.

Over the years I heard it said that the apostle Matthew wrote his gospel specifically for the Jews. Then I learned that it was probably also written originally in Hebrew. This makes sense because a Jew writing for Jews would most likely write in Hebrew.

If Matthew wrote in Hebrew, one might expect to find evidence of this from some early Christian sources. This is indeed the case:

-- Papias of Hierapolis in the first half of the second century wrote: "Matthew compiled the sayings in the Hebrew language ….." (quoted by Eusebius, Church History 3.39)

-- Irenaeus in the second half of the second century wrote: "Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect" (Against Heresies 3.1.1)

-- Origen of Alexandria in about the mid third century wrote: "..... the four gospels ..... first to be written was by Matthew ..... who published it in Hebrew for Jewish believers" (quoted by Eusebius, Church History 6.25)

-- Eusebius in the first half of the fourth century wrote: "Matthew had first preached to Hebrews and …. transmitted in writing in his native language the gospel according to himself ....." (Church History 3.24)

-- Jerome in the latter half of the fourth century or early fifth century wrote: "Matthew, who wrote the gospel in the Hebrew language ....." (Epistle 20:5)

In researching this subject some years ago I found a book called "Hebrew Gospel of Matthew" by Professor George Howard, which contains a Hebrew version of Matthew from the 1300s with an English translation.

Reading this version of Matthew is similar to reading an alternative translation of the Scriptures. The stories are familiar, but the wording is somewhat different with some interesting variant readings, omissions, additions etc.

The big shock however, comes at the very end of chapter 28. The entire phrase "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" is missing!

This book, Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, refers to early writings and their quotations from Scripture, particularly by Eusebius (c 263 – 339AD), one of the most significant Christian historical writers.

This is where things get really interesting.

Eusebius wrote a lot about the Scriptures and frequently quoted from them. In his book published in English as "The Proof of the Gospel" (Original title "Demonstratio Evangelica"), my version of which has a Scripture index in the back (1981 version - Baker Book House), it can be found that he quoted Matthew 28:19 no less than seven times - sometimes in part, sometimes in full.

However, not once in Eusebius' seven references to Matthew 28:19 does the phrase "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" appear!!

When he quotes the whole sentence, it reads as follows:

"Go, and make disciples of all the nations in My Name, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you".

(The Proof of the Gospel, 132a – as shown below)

ancient legislators, poets, philosophers, and theologians, and of giving them power, and of promulgating them so that they should last on unconquered and invincible for long ages? But our Lord and Saviour did not conceive and not dare to attempt, neither did he attempt and not succeed.

(132) With one word and voice He said to His disciples: "Go, and make disciples of all the nations in My Name, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," and He joined the effect to His Word; and in a little while every race of the Greeks and Barbarians was being brought into discipleship, and laws were spread among all nations opposed to the superstition of the ancients, laws inimical to dæmons, and to all the deceits of polytheism, laws that have made Scythians, Persians, and the other barbarians temperate, and revolutionized every lawless and uncivilized custom, laws that have overturned the immemorial habits of the Greeks themselves, (b) and heralded a new and real religion.[1] What similar daring has been shewn by the ancient sorcerers before the time of Jesus, or even after Him, which would make it plausible that He was assisted in His sorcery by others? And if the only answer to this is that no one has ever been like Him, for no one was the source of His virtue, surely it is time to confess that a strange and divine Being has sojourned in our humanity, by Whom alone, and for the first time in (c) man's history, things unrecorded before in human annals have been effected.

Matt. xxviii. 19.

In such wise I will conclude this part of the subject. But I must again attack my opposer, and inquire if he has ever seen or heard of sorcerers and enchanters doing their sorcery without libations, incense, and the invocation and presence of dæmons. But no one surely could venture to cast this aspersion on our Saviour, or on His teaching, or on those even now imitating His life. It must be clear even to the blind that we who follow Jesus are totally opposed to such agencies, and would sooner dare to sacrifice our (d) soul to death than an offering to the dæmons, yea, would

[1] What Apologist would have written thus in fifty years' time? Did the State recognition of Christianity hinder a great moral triumph of the Church?

The Proof of the Gospel was completed a decade or two before the Council of Nicea in 325AD, at which time Constantine began to force the doctrine of the Trinity on the established church. Eusebius was a contemporary of Constantine and attended the Council of Nicea as Bishop of Caesarea.

After the Council of Nicea, Eusebius' new writings all of a sudden contain the trinitarian baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19, whereas in all Eusebius' works prior to Nicea this reading is not found. Incredibly, a total of 16 partial or full quotes of this Scripture can be found in his writings prior to Nicea; all of them read "in my name" **rather than "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". It seems quite evident that Constantine forced theologians from this point on to toe the Catholic line.**

If one looks at the entire passage from Proof of the Gospel 136: a-d (shown below), it is nearly impossible to come to any conclusion other than that in the decades prior to Nicea the trinitarian phrase in Matthew 28:19 did not exist in the text used by Eusebius.

Whereas He, who conceived nothing human or mortal, see (136)
how truly He speaks with the voice of God, saying in these
very words to those disciples of His, the poorest of the Matt.
poor: "Go forth, and make disciples of all the nations." xxviii. 19.
"But how," the disciples might reasonably have answered
the Master, "can we do it? How, pray, can we preach to
Romans? How can we argue with Egyptians? We are
men bred up to use the Syrian tongue only, what language
shall we speak to Greeks? How shall we persuade Persians,
Armenians, Chaldæans, Scythians, Indians, and other bar- (b)
barous nations to give up their ancestral gods, and worship
the Creator of all? What sufficiency of speech have we to
trust to in attempting such work as this? And what hope
of success can we have if we dare to proclaim laws directly
opposed to the laws about their own gods that have been
established for ages among all nations? By what power
shall we ever survive our daring attempt?"

But while the disciples of Jesus were most likely either
saying thus, or thinking thus, the Master solved their
difficulties, by the addition of one phrase, saying they should (c)
triumph "In My Name." For He did not bid them simply
and indefinitely make disciples of all nations, but with the
necessary addition of "In my Name." And the power of
His Name being so great, that the apostle says: "God has Phil. ii. 9.
given him a name which is above every name, that in the
name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,
and things in earth, and things under the earth," He
shewed the virtue of the power in His Name concealed (d)
from the crowd when He said to His disciples: "Go, and
make disciples of all nations in my Name." He also most
accurately forecasts the future when He says: "For this
gospel must first be preached to all the world, for a witness Matt. xxiv.
to all nations." 14.

These words were said in a corner of the earth then, and
only those present heard it. How, I ask, did they credit
them, unless from other divine works that He had done
they had experienced the truth in His words? Not one
of them disobeyed His command: but in obedience to (137)
His Will according to their orders they began to make
disciples of every race of men, going from their own country
to all races, and in a short time it was possible to see His
words realized.

Eusebius here specifically explains what he thinks "in my name" **means (quoting it twice), as it follows the sentence** "Go, and make disciples of all the nations"**.**

Surely he couldn't quote it and comment on it, if it wasn't there in the text.

Remember that this was written somewhere around 310AD, well before Nicea, and well before the later-known copies of Scripture that include the trinitarian phrase in this place.

In Eusebius' Church History 3:5 he again quotes, "Go and make disciples of all nations in my name" **as he does in many of his other works. Eusebius seems to have taken this to be a very significant command from Christ. Again, how can this be if it wasn't in the text?**

Just to be very clear, other early church writings prior to Eusebius sometimes do contain references to the Trinity. This is no surprise as we know that many cultures worshipped a threefold godhead, as elaborately detailed in Alexander Hislop's "The Two Babylons". This concept was likely introduced into the false church by Simon Magus and his followers. Threefold washings were also practised long before the time of Christ in the rituals of these religions.

Whether Eusebius had access to the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew only, or in Greek as well, is not clear. Either way, it is *very* clear how the correct text read to him in his time.

See the following quotes by Jerome (around 400AD) and the "discrepancies" that had crept in. Note that Pamphilus was the predecessor of Eusebius in Caesarea, and that Eusebius worked in the library mentioned.

"Matthew also called Levi, apostle and aforetimes publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek though by what author is uncertain. The Hebrew itself has been preserved until the present day in the library at Caesarea which Pamphilus so diligently gathered".

- Jerome "Lives of Illustrious Men" Chapter 3

"I am now speaking of the New Testament. This was undoubtedly composed in Greek, with the exception of the work of Matthew the Apostle, who was the first to commit to writing the Gospel of Christ, and who published his work in Judaea in Hebrew characters. We must confess that as we have it [Matthew] in our language it is marked by discrepancies, and now that the stream is distributed into different channels we must go back to the fountainhead".

- Jerome "Preface to the Four Gospels"

Below are quotes from a range of different sources regarding this matter:

"Eusebius cites in this short form ["in my name"] so often that it is easier to suppose that he is definitely quoting the words of the Gospel, than to invent possible reasons which may have caused him so frequently to have paraphrased it. And if we once suppose his short form to have been current in MSS of the Gospel, there is much probability in the conjecture that it is the original text of the Gospel, and that in the later centuries the clause "baptizing ..... Spirit" supplanted the shorter "in my name".

The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament
S. Driver, A. Plummer, C. Briggs
A Critical & Exegetical Commentary of St. Matthew
Third Edition, 1912, pages 307-308

"The historical riddle is not solved by Matthew 28:19, since, according to a wide scholarly consensus, it is not an authentic saying of Jesus, not even an elaboration of a Jesus-saying on baptism".

The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1, 1992, page 585

Matthew 28:19 - "the Church of the first days did not observe this world-wide command, even if they knew it. The command to baptize into the threefold name is a late doctrinal expansion. In place of the words "baptizing ..... Spirit" we should probably read simply "into my name," i.e. (turn the nations) to Christianity, "in my name," i.e. (teach the nations) in my spirit".

Peake's Commentary on the Bible, 1929, page 723

"It is clear, therefore, that of the MSS which Eusebius inherited from his predecessor, Pamphilus, at Caesarea in Palestine, some at least preserved the original reading, in which there was no mention either of Baptism or of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It has been conjectured by Dr. Davidson, Dr. Martineau, by the present Dean of Westminster, and by Prof. Harnack (to mention but a few names out of many), that here the Received Text could not contain the very words of Jesus".

History of New Testament Criticism, F C Conybeare, 1910, page 75

"This formula is perhaps a reflection of the liturgical usage of the writer's own time".

Footnote to Matthew 28:19

The Jerusalem Bible (1974 version)

The page "THINGS THAT DON'T ADD UP" has the 1966 version of this footnote.

Appendix 185 in the Companion Bible reflects how much confusion exists regarding this passage. Its author

sees that the command of Matthew 28:19 has not been carried out by the Apostles, as testified in the book of Acts, and therefore assigns it a place yet in the future after Christ's return. Only then, supposedly, will the nations be baptised "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"!

Young's "Literal Translation of the Bible" puts the trinitarian phrase in Matthew 28:19 in brackets.

It is also noteworthy that Sabbath keeping author George Carlow, writing in 1724, quotes Matthew 28:19-20 as "Go disciple all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" **("Truth Defended", reprinted in 1847 as "A Defense of the Sabbath", this quote from p8). Carlow doesn't elaborate on the absence of the trinitarian phrase in his quote. However, knowing that this post-Reformation generation was desperately trying to weed out errors introduced into Christianity by Rome, and that the rite of baptism *by immersion* was one of the first things identified as absent from the practices of Catholicism, it is logical that the *words* spoken during the baptism ceremony would also have been something given deep consideration.**

A few more Scriptural points add weight to the argument:

1) In 1 Corinthians 1:13, Paul asks, "Is Christ divided, was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptised in the name of Paul"? **From this statement, it certainly appears that believers ought to be baptised in the name of the One who was crucified for them. As Acts 4:12 says,** "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"**. Romans 6:3 says that we** "were baptised into Christ Jesus"**. The next verse says,** "we were buried with him"**.**

2) The disciples are never on record as having baptised anyone in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit:

(Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5, 22:16)

3) The parallel account in Luke 24:47 seems to add weight to the argument that Matthew 28:19 has been tampered with: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached <u>in his name</u> among all nations"**.**

4) Christ himself frequently used the expression "in my name"**:**

(Matt 18:5, 18:20, 24:5)

(Mk 9:37, 9:39, 9:41, 13:6, 16:17)

(Lk 9:48, 21:8)

(Jn 14:13, 14:14, 14:26, 15:16, 16:23, 16:24, 16:26)

Other than (supposedly) Matthew 28:19, there is no record of Christ using anything like the phrase "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".

5) Baptism is intrinsically linked to Passover. We are baptised into Christ's death, and the Passover annually commemorates His death. It is His body and His blood that were broken and shed. Scripture calls it the Lord's Passover. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that we would be baptised in His name.

It is quite astonishing that with all the information available today, the trinitarian baptismal formula is still used by the Churches of God as they continue to follow HWA. Although he supposedly "restored all things", he was blissfully unaware of this satanic insert in Scripture.

PRIVATE INTERPRETATION

A total misinterpretation of II Peter I:19-21 has greatly contributed to the quagmire the Church of God finds itself in today, at this crucial stage of Church history.

These verses read as follows:

19 "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"**.**

This passage of Scripture has been used to convince Church members that it is impossible for them to come to an understanding of the Bible on their own, especially regarding prophecy. As a consequence, brethren have allowed themselves to be misled into accepting erroneous explanations given by Church leaders who claim that they alone can understand God's Word.

However, notice that the brethren were told by Peter in verse 19 to "heed" **the prophecies. Now how were they meant to do that? Did Peter write an authorised commentary on all the prophecies, and hand out copies of it wherever he preached? Of course not.**

The meaning of this passage is so basic that misunderstanding it can only be attributed to the "pitiful" **(Rev 3:17 - NIV, ISV) effort at studying Scripture that is prevalent in the Church in this Laodicea era.**

Most commentaries have little trouble explaining these verses.

They agree that verse 20 is not talking about the *interpretation* of prophecy, but rather where prophecy *originated,* a conclusion verse 21 makes obvious.

The Greek verb *genetai* translated "is" **in the phrase** "is of any private interpretation" **has the following**

dictionary meanings: "to cause to be, to generate, to become, to come into being, to be brought to pass" (Strong's Concordance).

Let's re-read this passage with this one word translated more correctly:

19 "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture <u>came into being</u> of any private interpretation,

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"**.**

(Check the Companion Bible, Clarke's Commentary or Green's Interlinear Bible)

Notice how the three verses together now make perfect sense. This passage tells us that prophecy did not *originate with men,* but rather that *men of God were moved by God's spirit to record His words*. How simple and logical!

The brethren are told by Peter that they can personally study, understand and heed the prophecies, knowing that they did not originate in the minds of men, but rather came from God.

The explanation we have traditionally been given of these verses is the 180-degree opposite of what they actually mean.

We have been told it says, "don't read the prophecies because you can't understand them", whereas God emphatically *is* trying to get each and every one of us to read the prophecies!

The message from these verses is that our Father in Heaven *does* want to talk to us personally and individually, *does* want to answer our questions, *does* want to see us open His Word and with His help understand it. He wants to have a meaningful and beneficial relationship with all His children.

This website encourages its readers to overcome the "pitiful" **attitude of the Laodicea era by studying the Scriptures for themselves and taking to heart God's dire warnings.**

35

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

As a rule, the Churches of God (COG) misidentify which of the New Testament genealogies pertains to Jesus Christ and which pertains to His stepfather Joseph.

Understanding the genealogy of Christ is a classic example of Proverbs 25:2 in action. This verse states, "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out" **(RSV).**

The first clear giveaway is the placement of the books in which these genealogies are found, i.e. Matthew and Luke. As Matthew is the gospel that was originally written for the Jews, in Hebrew, it serves as a connection between the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament Scriptures, and is therefore rightfully placed as the first book of the New Testament.

The last words recorded in the OT are those of the edict of Cyrus, found at the very end of II Chronicles. This edict begins the fulfilment of the Seventy Week Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, which predicts the timing of the first coming of Christ. The NT commences at the 69 "week" stage of this prophecy, i.e. with the begettal and birth of Christ, which is why His genealogy is recorded at the very beginning of Matthew's gospel.

In Matthew's genealogy, the words translated "husband of Mary" **literally read "man of Mary" and should be understood as "father of Mary", her father and her husband both having the same name, Joseph. Mary's husband therefore is not mentioned in this genealogy, only her father, who is named Joseph. There are two known Hebrew manuscripts of Matthew dating from the 16th century that read** "father of Mary" **in this place. One of these is located in the digital library of the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, and can be viewed online. See an article about this here.**

Matthew 1:18 gives added weight to this interpretation. This verse states that there are three sets of 14 patriarchs in Christ's genealogy. However, when we add up the generations, we soon see that this is not the case in our current Bible translations. If, on the other hand, we identify Joseph as Mary's father rather than her husband, we see that the numbers in Matthew 1:2-16 add up perfectly, giving us 14 generations from Abraham until David, 14 generations from Solomon until Jehoiachin, and 14 generations from Shealtiel until Christ.

Some may object to there being a woman in this list of male ancestors. In the case of Jesus Christ, however, there is no alternative because He had no human father. In addition, the presence of a woman in Christ's genealogy is foreshadowed in Genesis 3:15, where God, after Satan has deceived Eve, tells Satan, "I will put

enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel"**.**

Note also that the genealogy recorded by Matthew was meant to convince Jewish readers that Christ was a direct descendant of David. If, however, this genealogy is that of Christ's stepfather Joseph, as is commonly taught, it would not prove Christ's ancestral link to David.

On the other hand, Luke clearly states in Luke 3:23 that his genealogy is that of Christ's stepfather Joseph. As Matthew and Luke's genealogies vary significantly, they cannot both be Joseph's. The COG's commonly say that Luke's genealogy is that of Mary, but Mary is not even mentioned in his list, only in that of Matthew.

Additionally, in I Chronicles 22:9-10 God tells David that He will establish his son Solomon's throne "forever"**. It is not surprising therefore to read in Luke 1:32-33 that Christ will reign from David's throne** "forever"**, as it is Christ who fulfils this role in perpetuity. Only Matthew's genealogy contains Solomon's name, so *it* must be the record of the bloodline to Christ. Luke's genealogy runs through a different son of David, namely Nathan.**

Some point to Jeremiah 22:24-30 which says of King Jehoiachin, the grandson of King Josiah, "For none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah" **(v30), and for this reason deny that Christ is a descendant of Jehoiachin, as found in Matthew's genealogy. However, the word here translated "descendants" is alternatively translated as "seed" or "children", and is also used in verse 28 where it can only mean "children", as Jehoiachin was only 18 years old at that time (II Kings 24:8). Additionally, Jeremiah 22:30 states that this prophecy about Jehoiachin takes place** "in his days"**. Therefore verse 30 is referring to his literal sons. Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon and indeed none of his sons ruled as kings over Judah. Jeremiah 22:24 figuratively describes the removal of Jehoiachin's children from the kingly line of Judah as the removal of the signet ring from God's right hand.**

However, the books of Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah tell us of Jehoiachin's grandson Zerubbabel returning to Jerusalem as governor, under Persian rule. God thereby restored Jehoiachin's line, which was the bloodline to Christ, to the land of Judah. His descendants continued to live there until the time that Mary gave birth to Christ.

Furthermore, in Haggai 2:23, God promises Zerubbabel, "I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts"**. God here takes the concept of rulership over Judah from the physical to the spiritual plane, as this prophecy alludes to the promise of rulership with Christ in His Kingdom.**

It is significant that Solomon and Zerubbabel, the builders of the first and second Temples respectively, are both in the bloodline to Christ, who is the builder (Matt 16:18) and "chief cornerstone" **(Eph 2:20) of the spiritual Temple.**

Christ's bloodline differs from the kingly line. In Matthew's account these two lines are shown to be one and the same up until Josiah's descendants at the fall of the Kingdom of Judah. At that time God separated the two: the bloodline continued through Jehoiachin, whereas the kingly line continued through Zedekiah, the last king of Judah.

As explained by the "British Israel" theory, the kingly line from David through Solomon was preserved through one of Zedekiah's daughters (Jer 43:6), and transplanted to Ireland, Scotland and finally England. The British Royal House continues this line today, and it is this throne that Christ will accede to upon His return (Lk 1:32).

The claim that Matthew's genealogy is that of Christ is further strengthened by the total number of generations it contains. As can be determined from Genesis 5 and 11, and as seen on the chart on the "HOME" page, there are 19 generations from Adam until Terah, Abraham's father.

If we then add the 41 generations from Abraham to Mary, listed in Matthew 1, we see that there are exactly 60 generations leading to Christ. This corresponds with Solomon's Temple (a type of Christ and the firstfruits of salvation) being completed and dedicated in the year 3000AM, the 60th Jubilee year from Creation.

From all the evidence presented here we see that there is ample proof for identifying Matthew's genealogy as that of Jesus Christ.

36

THE CALENDAR OF GOD

In addition to the weekly Sabbath, God commands His people to observe seven designated sacred days in specific months of the year. These "holy days", and related observances, listed in Leviticus 23, were to be kept in conjunction with the yearly harvests in the land of Israel. To achieve this the people employed an observation-based calendar which harmonised lunar cycles with the solar year, and which unfolded as the year progressed.

The Churches of God (COG) nevertheless claim that Jesus Christ, at the time of His first coming, kept the holy days according to the pre-calculated Hebrew/Jewish calendar in use today. They sometimes even refer to it as "the calendar of God" and say that it is part of the "oracles of God" **given to the Jews (Rom 3:2).**

However, it can be shown from the Jews' own writings that even centuries *after* Christ this calendar did not yet exist.

All available information indicates that, in both Old and New Testament times, the beginning of a new month was determined by observation of the moon, rather than by any method of calculation.

In Emil Shurer's 1890 "A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ" we read "they did not in the time of Jesus Christ possess as yet any fixed calendar" and "they began a new month with the appearing of the new moon" (First Division, Vol 2, p366).

Professor Sacha Stern, in "Calendar and Community - A History of the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century BCE - 10th Century CE", writes, "the calendar in the first century was set empirically, without conforming to any fixed or calculated cycle" and states "it is well known that the rabbinic calendar was originally based on the appearance of the new moon, which involved a procedure of observation" (2001, p64 and p103).

The first written record of the laws of Judaism, known as the Mishnah, was compiled about 200 years after the time of Christ. This lengthy body of writings contains the opinions of many Jewish rabbis on various aspects of their law, and detailed information about Jewish practices dating back to the time when the Second Temple was still in existence. This includes the methods by which the calendar was determined. Many entries in this book deal with what to do when months or years fall in a variety of ways, showing that in those days *no prior knowledge existed of the exact length of a calendar month or a calendar year.*

The Mishnah describes a system where witnesses of the first crescent of the moon would come to Jerusalem

and be examined by members of the Sanhedrin to determine the beginning of each month. Three judges would make a decision, after which, in those months that were significant for the keeping of Feasts, messengers would be sent to outlying Jewish communities to relay the information. Procedures were also in place to work out the beginning of a new year, a determination which was often not made until late in the 12th month of an existing year.

Had there been a fixed calendar in use, no such arrangements would have been necessary.

By using the method of observation, the calendar is kept synchronised with the heavenly bodies, as God intended. The Hebrew calendar on the other hand is often seen to be out of alignment with the moon, sometimes by as much as two days.

This problem initially came about when the Hebrew calendar was being formulated. In that process, the start of the seventh month, Tishri 1, was incorrectly determined from the conjunction of the sun and the moon, rather than from the first crescent of the moon, a determination from which the rest of the year was calculated. The issue was further complicated by the use of the so-called "laws of postponement" in the calculations. These laws of postponement were originally drawn up by the Jews to ensure that certain perceived problems wouldn't arise when keeping the holy days of the seventh month.

One aim was to prevent the commanded day of fasting, the Day of Atonement, from falling on a Friday or a Sunday, the days before and after the Sabbath. Another aim was to prevent the 7th day of the Feast of Tabernacles from falling on a Sabbath, presumably because this was the commanded day to take down one's temporary booth. To accomplish this, the first day of the seventh month, i.e. the Feast of Trumpets, would be postponed by a day or two, as thought necessary.

However, as other Jewish calendar "laws" stipulate that there are to be 163 days between Passover and the Feast of Trumpets, the day assigned as the Feast of Trumpets automatically affects when the day of Passover falls, meaning that Passover is often not kept on its designated day of the lunar cycle. It is not uncommon for the Hebrew calendar to lead the Jews and the COG's to keep Passover as early as the 12th day of the lunar cycle, rather than its designated 14th day. In other words, the Hebrew calendar may indicate the 14th day of the month, when in fact it is only the 12th day of the lunar cycle.

Here are a few examples from the Mishnah, pertaining to calendar matters, which show that today's predetermined Hebrew calendar, with its laws of postponement, was not in use in the first and second centuries:

**** Pesahim 7:10, in discussing the burning of the remains of Passover, says that this should be done on Nisan 16, unless that day falls on a Sabbath, in which case the burning of the remains moves to Sunday the 17th of Nisan. That however would mean that Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, could fall on a Friday, which by the rules of postponement is impossible.**

**** Menahoth 11:7 mentions the Day of Atonement falling on a Friday. However, this is not possible by the rules of postponement. According to the pre-calculated calendar in use today, the Day of Atonement can only fall on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Saturday.**

**** Megillah 1:2, dealing with the Jewish festival of Purim (Adar 14 or Adar II 14, whichever is the last month of the year), shows that this festival can fall on a Sabbath, but by the rules of postponement this never happens. The Mishnah likewise makes provision for this day falling on a Monday, but this also cannot happen by the rules of postponement.**

**** Taanith 2:10 mentions the Jewish fast of Av, which is on Av 9, falling on the day before the Sabbath. By the rules of postponement, it never does.**

**** Arakin 2:2 says, "There are never less than four full (30 day) months in the year". This does not line up with the current fixed Hebrew calendar that the Churches of God follow, as there are always more than four 30 day months in a year on the Hebrew calendar. The least number of 30 day months there can be in a year on that calendar is five.**

**** Erubin 3:7 states, "If at the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) a man feared that the (sixth) month might be intercalated (made a 30 day month) .... ". However, there is nothing to "fear" with the fixed Hebrew calendar, as all is known in advance; the sixth month *always* has 29 days on the pre-calculated Hebrew calendar.**

**** Eduyoth 7:7 says, "the year could be declared a leap year (an intercalated year, where a 13th month is added) any time during Adar; whereas it had been taught: only until Purim (the middle of Adar)". This does not apply to the calendar the Churches of God use, as all the leap years are known in advance.**

There are many more such examples in the Mishnah.

A gradual development of the calendar can be seen by studying the Mishnah (200AD), the Tosefta (approx. 300AD), the Jerusalem Talmud (4th Century) and the Babylonian Talmud (5th Century), the last three being commentaries on, and further developments of the Mishnah. However, even the Babylonian Talmud does not contain all the Hebrew calendar laws as they exist today.

For instance, the Feast of Trumpets could in the times of the Babylonian Talmud still fall on a Sunday, whereas by the calculated Hebrew calendar it can only fall on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday.

The claim by the Churches of God that Christ observed the holy days using the calculated Hebrew calendar flies in the face of the evidence shown above.

What proof do they provide for their claim?

The only "proof" being offered by the Churches of God that Christ kept the fixed Hebrew calendar concerns the day on which Passover fell in the year of His death, 31AD.

Specifically, they claim that observation would have led to a different day of the week for Passover than if the calculated Hebrew calendar had been used. They say that only by using the rules of postponement of the Hebrew calendar would Passover in 31AD have fallen on a Wednesday, the day of the week attested to in the Scriptures.

See the partial email exchange from April 2010 between the author and MN (name withheld), Philadelphia Church of God "calendar expert" below, which refutes this "proof". The information referred to can now be found in the article "The Hebrew Calendar's Authority Proved!" at www.thetrumpet.com.

Writing in (brackets) and underlining have been added by the author.

From: Ron Mey

Location: Australia

Date: April 24, 2010 7:46:41 AM CDT

Subject: [FEEDBACK] Re: God's Sacred Calendar (Part Two)

... if I may I would really like to ask a question regarding the working out of Tishri 1 in the year 31 AD as stated in your article. It says that the new moon (molad) was at 23:52 on Thursday night. To the best of my information however (Googling "new moon visibility") the new moon is only visible for about half an hour just after sunset (until moonset) which is why the Jews would look at sunset or just thereafter for the new moon. This new moon therefore that occurred by CALCULATION late on Thursday night would not have been VISIBLE until Friday sunset. If my reasoning is correct, wouldn't this mean that observation on the one hand and the rules of postponement on the other would lead to one and the same day for Tishri 1 in 31 AD?

Kind regards and all the best,

Ron Mey

... as you mentioned, it comes out <u>the same</u> this year whether you go by the calculations and postponement rules or if you go by visual location and postponement rules.....

M N

Greetings Mr N,

Thank you for responding to me so promptly ..... but now I'm left somewhat confused. The before mentioned trumpet.com article says that Tishri 1 in 31 AD falling on Saturday and therefore Passover in the same year falling on a Wednesday is proof that Christ kept the laws of postponement. If, as you confirm, visual observation alone as well as visual observation combined with the laws of postponement lead us to the same Saturday for Tishri 1, 31 AD, how can it be proof of Christ keeping the laws of postponement?

All the best,

Ron Mey

I believe the (that) I can clear this point up. The new moon is visible any time after sunset, not "just" after sunset. It is normally not visible during the day light hours because the light of the sun overwhelms the faintness of the crescent moon. *That means the new moon would have been visible in 31 A.D. from 11:52 until sunrise.*

I hope this is helpful.

M N

(Insert by the author: The italicised statement above demonstrates sheer ignorance. I hope the reader can recognise the absolute folly here. It comes from modern living, with a calendar on the wall, and never actually going out and observing the heavenly bodies as God intended. Research "new moon visibility" and learn about this if you are as ignorant as I was before doing this study).

Greetings Mr N,

Sorry to bother you again and I really don't want to be contentious, but if you don't mind, I'd like to present the following points. When you say that the new moon is in the sky during the day, but cannot be seen, that is absolutely correct. To quote an internet source: "At the astronomical new moon (conjunction), the moon is positioned between the sun and the earth, and cannot be seen at all. After a day or so, the moon has moved slightly out of the almost direct line between sun and earth and so the sun illuminates a slight crescent of the moon. This however cannot be observed during the day either, because of the sun's light, <u>until sunset</u>, when for <u>a short period of time</u> this crescent is visible from earth, until the earth's ongoing rotation spins the observer away from the moon, which is moonset. No moon is visible for the rest of that night at this early stage of the lunar cycle, as the moon is still positioned between the earth and the sun, not on the dark side of the earth where it is night time".

Following are a number of quotes (*only one reproduced here, as this point is so obvious*) to show the time of visibility of the new moon.

"...the new moon is only visible at a specific time of the day; between sunset and moonset. At this stage of the moon's orbit, <u>the interval between sunset and moonset is often not more than half an hour</u>. It is only in this short period of time, when the sun is isolated from the moon and deep enough below the horizon, that the sky becomes sufficiently dark for the thin moon crescent to become visible against its background" (p100,

"Calendar and Community - A History of the Jewish Calendar 2nd Century BCE - 10th Century CE" (Rabbi) Professor Sasha Stern - Oxford University Press).

All the very best,

Ron Mey

Such is the proof offered for Christ keeping the fixed Hebrew calendar with its laws of postponement; the proof doesn't exist.

What we actually find in this case is that the erroneous determination of the first day of the month, calculated by the conjunction of the sun and the moon rather than by the first crescent, is inadvertently corrected by the application of a one day postponement. In other words, two wrongs in this instance make one right. In most years, however, such lucky corrections do not occur.

The greatest authority on the Hebrew calendar that the author is aware of is Professor (Rabbi) Sacha Stern of the University College in London. His thesis "A History of the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century BCE - 10th Century CE" would have to be some of the most in-depth and detailed research done on this subject. In light of the above discourse, here are two relevant quotes:

1) "The use of the present-day rabbinic calendar for ancient Jewish datings is an anachronism which unsuspecting historians ..... too frequently commit" (p136, footnote 111).

2) "Contemporary rabbinic sources ..... reflect rabbinic wishful thinking rather than historical reality" (p83).

What Professor Stern proves in his thesis is that the fixed Hebrew "rabbinic" calendar did not come into general use until the 10th century AD. The much quoted "Hillel", who according to current Jewish sources and the Churches of God first recorded the way to calculate the calendar in the 4th century AD, is not mentioned in either of the Talmuds and is not referred to in any Jewish writings until the 11th century!

As late as the 9th century AD, Jewish sources still show debate on whether to intercalate the year, showing that even then the calendar was not yet fixed. What this means is that it is not possible to use the current Hebrew calendar to count back and determine dates like the day that Passover fell on in the year Christ died. Professor Stern's thesis proves that Jesus Christ did not keep the fixed Hebrew calendar with its laws of postponement, simply because it did not exist in His time. Rather, the calendar in Christ's day was kept by visual observation.

Some point to I Samuel 20:18 to make a case for the existence of a calculated calendar in the early days of the kings of Israel. David and Jonathan appear to have foreknowledge of when the "new moon" is to appear. See the page "THE 'NEW MOON' MISTRANSLATION" for a logical explanation of the passage of Scripture in which this verse appears.

This is what we can gather from God's Word and Creation concerning the keeping of time:

Genesis 1:14 states right from the beginning that the sun and the moon were intended to be used "for seasons **(Heb. *moedim*, lit. "appointed times", the same Hebrew word used in Leviticus 23 to denote holy days)**, and for days and years"**, or in other words to determine time in general, as well as specific times appointed by God. The only method that Adam and Eve and their immediate descendants had at their disposal to track the passing of time was *observation* of these two heavenly bodies.**

The sun indicates the start and the halfway point of the solar year by the two equinoxes. God tells us in Exodus 12:2 and 13:4 which of the equinoxes begins the solar year (in the Northern Hemisphere): it is the season of new grain (indicated by the Hebrew word "Abib"), the time we call spring.

Here are a number of examples of where the beginning of the year is mentioned in Scripture: In II Samuel 11:1 the KJV reads, "after the year was expired"**, and its marginal reading says,** "at the return of the year"**. This verse continues by stating that this is** "the time when kings go forth to battle"**, as winter has passed and conditions are more favourable for warfare. In I Kings 20:22 we read:** "at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee"**. And I Chronicles 20:1 states,** "And it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out to battle, Joab led forth the power of the army"**. The words** "expired" **and** "return" **in these four quotes are all translations of the Hebrew word "teshuvah", which refers here to the first, or spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere, which begins the solar year.**

Here are some examples from Scripture of the second equinox of the solar year, which occurs at the start of the season we call autumn: Exodus 34:22 states, "And thou shalt observe ..... the feast of ingathering at the year's end"**. The KJV marginal note for** "year's end" **says** "revolution of the year"**. Many other Bible versions translate this as** "turn of the year"**. We read in II Chronicles 24:23,** "And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him"**. Many Bible versions render this as** "turn of the year"**. The words** "end"**,** "revolution" **and** "turn" **are all translations of the Hebrew word "tekufah", which refers here to the second, or autumnal equinox of the solar year in the Northern Hemisphere. The Feast of Ingathering, or Tabernacles, always occurs *after* the autumnal equinox at the halfway point of the solar year, as long as the spring equinox and first month of the year are determined correctly.**

The fact that the sun determines the starting point of the solar year is shown in Bible typology. In Joseph's dream recorded in Genesis 37:9-10, the sun is a type of the husband (and of Christ) and the moon is a type of the wife (and of the Church). And just as Christ is the leader, and the Church is obedient to him, so the sun determines the *start* of the solar year at the spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere, and the first new moon that *follows* begins the lunar or calendar year. On the calculated Hebrew calendar, however, the first day of the lunar year frequently falls *before* the spring equinox, which is contrary to the spiritual picture just presented.

This typology also shows the error of using the conjunction of the sun and the moon as the beginning of the month. The conjunction pictures Christ and His bride coming together (Rev 14:1, 19:7), which is to occur *at the*

end of God's work with His firstfruits, _not at the beginning_. This also confirms the general principle that when there is doubt, the typological, spiritual picture usually makes the meaning clear.

The equinox can be determined, as long as the sun is shining, by using a gnomon (e.g. a stick fixed upright in the ground) and some markers placed on the ground periodically, to measure the progress of the shadow cast by the gnomon. This needs to be done daily for two or three weeks around the time of the equinox. On the exact day of the equinox the markers will form a perfectly straight line, rather than a curved one.

Months are kept by observing the moon, thereby keeping the calendar synchronised with the moon. The first lunar crescent after the spring equinox marks the first day of the first month. When observation is not possible, 30 days per month are counted, as seen in the account of Noah on the ark, until observation is restored and the months are brought back into harmony with the moon. There are most often 12 months in a year, but a 13th month is added if the spring equinox has not been clearly observed to have occurred before the 12th month comes to an end.

The year of the Exodus can be shown from Scripture to have been a 13 month year, as can the year in which the prophet Ezekiel began to lie on his sides for a total of 430 days, as directed by God.

Obviously, the methodology outlined above differs greatly from what the COG's present as "the calendar of God".

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The author acknowledges that we will not see all people keeping a calendar in the way God intended, and therefore the holy days correctly, until the promised "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). However, some form of observation-based calendar could certainly have been implemented by the COG's, and indeed some small groups have done just that. The Churches should be open about this matter and admit that the calendar by which most of them keep these days is not what was used in Biblical times, but was a later invention of the Jews. The Hebrew calendar is certainly not part of the "oracles of God" (Rom 3:2), as has been commonly taught by most COG's.

Where does this leave sincere Christians with regard to the keeping of God's holy days? Should they attempt to work out a calendar themselves in order to keep these days correctly? Some have indeed done so, including the author. But what about the fact that God has commanded them to be "holy convocations"? Some brethren have decided to attend with their regular congregation on the days it has appointed, if possible, and also keep the days that they have identified as the correct ones for their locality, either alone or with other likeminded people. It was, however, declared to Moses that "you shall proclaim" these days, as seen in Leviticus 23:2 and 23:4. Therefore the onus is on the leadership of the Churches to make the right Biblical decisions.

However, an even bigger issue than the technical aspects of working out the calendar needs to be addressed: Regardless of what methods are used and what dates are arrived at, we as the Churches of God should strive to keep holy those days that we have determined to be "holy days".

That being the case, why do many professed Sabbath keepers visit coffee shops and restaurants, and even organise large, combined gatherings at eateries on holy days during Feasts and on weekly Sabbaths, when this is totally contrary to the Biblical instructions found in Nehemiah 10:28-31 and 13:15-22? See the page "TEN BROKEN COMMANDMENTS" for more about this.

THE "NEW MOON" MISTRANSLATION

In a number of places throughout the Scriptures we find mention of the "new moon"**. These occurrences have created much confusion to many a Bible reader, as new moons appear to be presented in these passages as days of worship. This is in stark contrast with Leviticus chapter 23, where a full list of God's appointed days of assembly is provided, without any mention of a monthly celebration of the new moon.**

The term "new moon" **or** "new moons" **is found 20 times in the King James Version of the Old Testament, all of which are translated from the Hebrew word "chodesh", or its plural "chodeshim".**

However, the words "chodesh" and "chodeshim" are found in many other places in the Old Testament where they are translated "month" **or** "months"**.**

Here are a few examples to demonstrate the point:

*** Genesis 7:11** "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month **("chodesh")**, the seventeenth day of the month **("chodesh")** ..... **".**

*** Exodus 12:2** "This month **("chodesh")** shall be unto you the beginning of months **("chodeshim")**: it shall be the first month **("chodesh")** of the year to you"**.**

*** Leviticus 23:5** "In the fourteenth day of the first month **("chodesh")** at even is the Lord's passover"**.**

*** Judges 11:37** "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months **("chodeshim")**, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity"**.**

*** I Kings 5:14** "And he sent them to Lebanon ten thousand a month **("chodesh")** by courses: a month **("chodesh")** they were in Lebanon, and two months **("chodeshim")** at home"**.**

The Scriptures use this Hebrew word more than 250 times, in connection with dates, timespans, commandments, etc. A perusal of Strong's Concordance will show the details.

Let's now look at the rare instances where "chodesh" has been translated as "new moon"**, instead of** "month"**, in order to get an insight into what may have motivated translators to do so:**

1) I Samuel 20:5 "And David said unto Jonathan, behold, tomorrow is the new moon **("chodesh")**, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even"**.**

It should be noted that there is no separate Hebrew word for "new" in this verse, rather "chodesh" has been translated as two words, i.e. "new moon"**. This applies to all the examples given here.**

If one were to translate "chodesh" as "month"**, the verse would say** "tomorrow is the month"**, which sounds odd. Therefore, the translators have *interpreted* this verse as speaking of a new moon. However, there are no observations of the moon mentioned in I Samuel 20; all that is clear is that David and Jonathan have prior calendrical knowledge concerning the coming of a particular day.**

2) I Samuel 20:18 "Then Jonathan said to David, tomorrow is the new moon **("chodesh")**: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty"**.**

3) I Samuel 20:24 "So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon **("chodesh")** was come, the king sat him down to eat meat"**.**

These two verses add a little more information to I Samuel 20:5, and it is clear that a dinner is being held on the special day in question, which David is expected to attend, but which he is trying to avoid.

How do we identify this special day? Where in Scripture do we find particular days that are coupled with the Hebrew word for "month" **and are also commanded assemblies? Leviticus 23 lists six days of sacred assembly that fall in the first and seventh *months*, and a seventh day, the day of Pentecost, which falls in the third *month*. Pentecost is counted from another specified day, the day of the Wavesheaf, which occurs during the feast of Unleavened Bread held in the first *month*. Additionally, a special assembly is appointed for the 14th day of the first *month,* i.e. the day of Passover. Throughout Leviticus 23 the word** "month" **is translated from the Hebrew word "chodesh".**

We find that Leviticus 23 lists a total of ten designated days of sacred assembly, one being the weekly Sabbath, and nine being designated days of designated *months*, to be observed once a year. Seven of these nine days are

commanded to be kept free of regular work and are each considered to be a "holy day" **(Neh 10:31).**

As stated, the 14th day of the first month is the day of Passover. Originally, God commanded this day to be kept as a memorial of the events in Egypt, when the firstborn male Israelites were spared while their Egyptian counterparts all died. Passover was kept in a family setting, with a lamb sacrificed, roasted and eaten in the evening at the start of the 14th day of the first month of the year.

This fits very well with what we find in I Samuel 20:6, where David says to Jonathan, "If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked permission of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family'**".**

The NKJV, quoted above, says "a" **yearly sacrifice, but Green's Interlinear Bible renders** "a" **as** "the"**, as do at least ten other translations. Most translators, however, being by and large unaware of what** "the yearly sacrifice" **is, have opted to go for the more general** "a yearly sacrifice"**.**

The website Yeshiva.co, which specialises in Judaic studies, when approached by the author, asserted that the correct translation of I Samuel 20:6 is: "If your father is mindful of me, you shall say, 'David took leave of me to hasten home to Bethlehem, his city, for it is <u>the</u> yearly sacrifice there for the whole family'"**.**

Therefore, with verses 5 and 6 translated correctly, we can see which festival is being kept here in I Samuel 20:

"And David said to Jonathan, "Indeed tomorrow is the **("chodesh")**, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third day at evening. If your father is mindful of me, you shall say, 'David took leave of me to hasten home to Bethlehem, his city, for it is the yearly sacrifice there for the whole family'""**.**

What was being commemorated that evening was not a "new moon"**, but rather** "the yearly sacrifice"**.**

There is only one yearly, family sacrifice commanded in Scripture, and that is Passover.

We can see now that in this particular context "chodesh" does not mean month, but rather a monthly appointment, i.e. a day of the *month* commanded by God to be kept as a special observance.

Therefore, I Samuel 20:5 properly reads, "And David said to Jonathan, "Indeed tomorrow is the monthly *appointment*, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third day at evening"**.**

This interpretation is strengthened by verse 27, once it is correctly translated. The NKJV reads, "And it happened the next day, the second day of the month, that David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to eat, either yesterday or today"**". This follows on from the translators' belief that "chodesh" means new moon, and now for some unknown reason the second day of the month is being celebrated as well!**

However, the text literally says, "And it happened the next day, the "chodesh" the second, that David's place was empty"**. The customary Hebrew letter L indicating "of" does not appear here before "chodesh" for it to mean "of the month", as in the NKJV above. Nor does the Hebrew word for "day" occur connected with "second", as the NKJV translation renders it.**

This verse should therefore be translated: "And it happened the next day, the second monthly *appointment*, that David's place was empty"**.**

This makes perfect sense, for Leviticus 23 shows, and every holy day keeping Christian knows, that the day after Passover is the first day of Unleavened Bread (ULB). This holy day commences with an evening dinner, and is called "a night to be much observed" **(Ex 12:41-42). Hence, we see King Saul and his entourage partaking of these two successive special evening meals.**

David's mention of the third evening, in verse 5, refers to the day following these two special days, when the first holy day of ULB was over.

It appears that in the same way the commanded daily sacrifice over time came to be known simply as the "daily"**, as seen in Daniel 8:11-13, 11:31 and 12:11, likewise each of the commanded monthly appointments came to be known simply as a** "monthly"**. In the Churches of God, these days have over time acquired the name "annual holy days", although this exact term is not found in Scripture.**

Knowing what was being commemorated in I Samuel 20 helps us to understand the remaining passages of Scripture containing the phrase "new moon"**.**

4) II Kings 4:23 "So he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon **("chodesh")** nor the Sabbath"" **(NKJV).**

This verse appears in the account of the Shunnamite woman and the prophet Elisha. The woman wanted to visit Elisha, leading to her husband making the above statement. From the information gathered from I Samuel 20, we can see that the last sentence should simply be rendered "It is neither monthly *appointment* nor Sabbath"**. This makes sense as those were the days on which religious meetings were commanded.**

5) Psalm 81:3 "Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon **("chodesh")**, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day" **(NKJV).**

Various translations of this verse are found. The one given above contradicts itself, as the new moon and the full moon are two different things. The Hebrew words for moon ("yareah") and month ("chodesh") do not appear in the phrase translated "at the full moon"**. Rather, the Hebrew word just means "full" or "fullness" and refers back to "chodesh". The word** "solemn" **is also an addition.**

The most likely interpretation is that "chodesh" in this verse means "monthly *appointment*"**. Therefore, the literal translation would be** "Blow the trumpet in the monthly *appointment*, when it has fully come, on our feast day"**.**

6) Isaiah 1:13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New Moon **("chodesh")** and sabbath, the calling of assemblies - I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly" **(NASB - 1995).**

Literally, the latter part of this verse reads "Month and Sabbath, the going to meeting - I cannot endure evil and the assembly"**.**

As the new moon is not a commanded time of "meeting" **or** "assembly"**, the word "chodesh" should be understood as** "monthly *appointment*"**, like those commanded in Leviticus 23 and seen in the examples above.**

7) Isaiah 1:14 "Your New Moons **("chodeshim")** and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them" **(NKJV).**

The above two verses in Isaiah are consecutive, and the subject is assemblies and appointed times, so again this should be rendered "Your monthly *appointments* .....".

8) Isaiah 66:23 "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon **("chodesh")** to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord"**.**

This verse from the last chapter of the book of Isaiah has always been problematic for the people of God. The

fact that under the New Covenant believers would congregate before God every Sabbath is logical, because God's fourth commandment instructs us to do that. However, to do likewise on new moons is not found in any commandment. What *is* commanded of course is the keeping of God's annual holy days.

Therefore logic dictates that "chodesh" should be translated as "monthly *appointment*"**, rendering the verse** "And it shall come to pass that from one monthly *appointment* to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me, says the Lord"**.**

9) Ezekiel 45:17 "And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons **("chodeshim")**, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel"**.**

The subject here is the sacrifices to be made on the Leviticus 23 "solemnities"**, or** "appointed feasts" **(NIV, NASB), so "chodeshim" should be translated** "monthly *appointments*"**.**

10) Ezekiel 46:1 "Thus says the Lord God: "The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon **("chodesh")** it shall be opened"" **(NKJV).**

This is a passage concerning the "Ezekiel Temple", a vision given to the prophet to show the Jewish captives in Babylon the Temple they could build upon their return, after their 70 years in Babylon had been completed. See the page "GOG IN EZEKIEL 38 AND 39" for more on this.

The "chodesh" in this verse is contrasted with "working days"**, but equated to the** "Sabbath"**. With the exception of the Feast of Trumpets, the first day of each month is a regular working day, so "chodesh" cannot here be referring to the first day of every month. Rather, on the seven annual holy days listed in Leviticus 23, the same as for weekly Sabbaths, we are commanded to abstain from regular work.**

Therefore, this verse should read, "Thus says the Lord God: "The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the monthly *appointment* it shall be opened"**.**

11) Ezekiel 46:3 "Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the entrance to this gateway before the Lord

on the Sabbaths and the New Moons **("chodeshim")" (NKJV).**

This verse follows on from Ezekiel 46:1 mentioned above. It is added here that this is about days of "worship"**. Clearly** "monthly *appointments*" **are intended in this passage as well.**

12) Ezekiel 46:6 "On the day of the New Moon **("chodesh")** it shall be a young bull without blemish, six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish" **(NKJV).**

Ezekiel 46:4 and 5 detail offerings that were to be made on Sabbaths at the "Ezekiel Temple", while verses 6 and 7 list the offerings for the monthly appointments.

Therefore Ezekiel 46:6 should be translated: "On the day of the monthly *appointment* it shall be a young bull without blemish, six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish"**.**

13) Hosea 2:11 "I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast *days*, her New Moons **("chodeshim")**, her Sabbaths - all her appointed feasts" **(NKJV).**

This verse sums up the subject perfectly, when translated correctly. As it is translated here, it contains a contradiction, because new moons are not "appointed feasts"**. In Leviticus 23:4 God states** "these are my Feasts"**, but nowhere does the chapter mention monthly new moon celebrations. It *does* speak of monthly appointments ("chodeshim"), Sabbaths and Feasts.**

14) Amos 8:5 "Saying: "When will the New Moon **("chodesh")** be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the scales by deceit"" **(NKJV).**

Here we find dishonest traders being rebuked because they can't wait for God's holy days to be over so they can do their business. God's weekly Sabbath command prohibits work on that day, and Nehemiah 10:28-31 makes it clear that God forbids work on holy days as well.

However, there is no Biblical command against trading on the day of the new moon.

That being the case, these traders would have been the first to point this out to any authorities trying to prevent them doing business.

Therefore, the logical conclusion is that the traders were saying, "When will the monthly *appointment* be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat?"**.**

They would have been referring to the seven annual holy days and the weekly Sabbath, but not to Passover or the day of the Wavesheaf, when business *was* permitted unless those days fell on a Sabbath.

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There are six additional passages of Scripture that contain the phrase "new moons" **in English, translated from "chodeshim". These are I Chronicles 23:31, II Chronicles 2:4, II Chronicles 8:13, II Chronicles 31:3, Ezra 3:5 and Nehemiah 10:33.**

These six passages concern God's commanded Temple sacrifices, all of which are listed in Numbers 28-29. They include daily, weekly, monthly and annual animal sacrifices. The word "chodeshim" in each of these cases should be translated as "months"**, meaning specifically, as stated in Numbers 28:11,** "in the beginning of your months"**.**

The New Testament

The New Testament KJV only contains one instance of "new moon"**. It is found in Colossians 2:16:** "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths"**.**

A quick perusal of the words "moon" **and** "month" **in a Concordance will show that they are translated from two very different Greek words:**

1) the word "selene", which is always translated "moon"**.**

2) the word "men", which is always translated "month"**.**

There is only one exception, and that is found in the above-mentioned Colossians 2:16. Here the translators have rendered the Greek word "noumenia" ("nou" from "neos" meaning "new", and "men" meaning "month") as "new moon"**, when they should have translated it** "new month"**.**

For the correct interpretation of Colossians 2:16 please see the page "THE SANCTITY OF THE SABBATH".

Final comments

In both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures the term "new moon" is an invention of men. I do not believe it will be found in newly produced copies of the Bible in God's Kingdom.

One last thing needs to be addressed in this article. It concerns the Biblical instructions given in Numbers 10 and 28 regarding the first day of each month.

Numbers 10:10 states that trumpets were to be blown "at the beginnings of your months" **("chodeshim"). This command enabled people to keep a standardised calendar based on observations of the moon that were made by appointed officials. Numbers 28:11 likewise says,** "At the beginnings of your months **("chodeshim")** you shall present ....."**, followed by a list of offerings to be made by the priests on the first day of each month.**

Note that if the word "chodeshim" by itself can mean "new moons"**, as most translators seem to think, there would have been no need to add the Hebrew word for** "beginnings" **in front of "chodeshim" in these two verses.**

The Scriptures studied in this article confirm that the Hebrew word "chodesh" means month, but that it is also used for specific days of the month which God has designated as appointed times in Leviticus 23.

38

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF GOD

The pages of this website identify Catholicism/false Christianity as the eighth head of the "Beast", the combine of powers described in Daniel 2 and 7, and Revelation 13 and 17. These are powers that oppose God by conquering and defiling His land, and persecuting His people.

It is quite alarming therefore to be able to identify many Catholic doctrines and practices in the Churches of God in this Laodicea era. However, the facts don't lie.

Below is a brief list, but no doubt more points could be added.

1) Image of the Beast Church government

(a.k.a. "the primacy of Peter" or "one man rule")

Not every Church of God (COG) practises this, but quite a number of large ones do, as they follow in the footsteps of Herbert W Armstrong (HWA).

See "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD" for a full explanation.

2) Trinitarianism

This erroneous belief is held by most Seventh Day Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists and Messianic Jews, and was also introduced into the Worldwide Church of God after the death of HWA.

3) Baptism in the name of the Trinity

The trinitarian baptismal formula found in Matthew 28:19 was not used in apostolic times. This formula was

fraudulently inserted centuries after Matthew's gospel was written. New Testament baptisms were always performed in the name of Jesus Christ.

See the page "BAPTISM INTO THE TRINITY".

4) <u>Futurism rather than Historicism</u>

The Churches of God have in this end time largely adopted a Catholic method of interpreting prophecy known as Futurism. In earlier times the general opinion had been that prophecy provides an overview of history given in advance, an interpretation method known as Historicism. Therefore it was understood that the prophesied times in Scripture are usually of long duration.

For instance, the prophecy about the "man of sin" **(II Thes 2:3) was, at the time of the Reformation, commonly accepted by both Protestants and true Christians as referring to the office of the Papacy, and that** "power was given unto him to continue" **for 1260 *years*, not a literal** "42 months" **(Rev 13:5).**

During the Catholic Counter-Reformation, however, in order to deflect suspicion from the Papal office, an explanation was concocted by the Catholic Church that most major prophetic events, and especially those found in the book of Revelation, were yet in the future and would be fulfilled in a final apocalypse. Thus arose the unfortunate philosophy of Futurism, which over time made its way into other churches and also, in the 19th century, into God's Church.

See "REVELATION IS HISTORY" and "TRUTHS LOST IN LAODICEA" for more information.

5) <u>Believers cannot interpret God's Word</u>

Only the Priest/Apostle/Prophet/Minister/Church can interpret the Scriptures. Difficult questions from regular members regarding Biblical matters are generally not appreciated. Differing opinions regarding God's Word are generally not tolerated.

See the page "PRIVATE INTERPRETATION" for more on this.

6) Images depicting leaders or former leaders

As in Catholicism, the Churches will deny that these images are worshipped.

7) Infallibility of the leader

This is a hangover from HWA's time and does not apply to all COG's.

See the article "THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD" for more on this subject.

8) The Church's authority overrides God's Word

God says no food is to be purchased on Sabbaths (Neh 10:31 and 13:15-22), but the Church says it's okay. God's Word says we shouldn't follow what the Gentiles do when they cut down a tree, set it up and decorate it (Jer 10:1-5), but some Sabbath keeping Churches do exactly that as they participate in Christmas celebrations.

9) Traditional Christian standards applied to Sabbath keeping

As long as one goes to Church on the Sabbath, there are few limitations on what brethren may do with the rest of the day. Since even frequenting restaurants is allowed by most COG's, there is little motivation to apply restraint in other areas.

10) The use of relics

As an example, some years ago the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG) identified what it believed to be Herbert Armstrong's "prayer rock" in Oregon and transported it to their Oklahoma headquarters. HWA mentions this rock in his Autobiography. The PCG now teaches that this relic has replaced "Jacob's pillar stone", the stone that used to be under the Coronation Chair in Britain, as being indicative of where God's throne is located today!

11) Clapping for leaders

When the Pope appears at St Peter's Square, or anywhere for that matter, the crowds clap for him. Since Herbert Armstrong's reign we have also begun witnessing this strange phenomenon in Church services when the leader appears. Many of us find this disconcerting to say the least, and are hesitant to join in. Is the Church of God a theatre or a circus? Should leaders in God's Church be idolised like pop stars or movie stars or, amazingly, even like the Pope?

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The book of Revelation clearly identifies the Roman Catholic Church as "Babylon the Great" **and** "Mother of Harlots" **(Protestant daughter churches) (Rev 17:5). As explained at length on this website, she is the** "little horn" **of Daniel 7 who sought to change God's laws and persecuted His people for 1260 years.**

In Revelation 18, God's people are admonished to "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" **(Rev 18:4). Although this Scripture is often quoted in the Churches of God, lamentably most members have failed to understand its significance.**

39

TRUTHS LOST IN LAODICEA

I am not aware of anyone having compiled a list of truths that were *lost* in the Laodicea Church era under Herbert W Armstrong, so I have made such a list here.

1) At the time when Herbert Armstrong (HWA) first came into contact with the Church of God (COG) in the 1920's, its general belief was that they had long been in the "lukewarm" Laodicea era described in Revelation 3:14-22. However, this did not suit HWA's agenda as the supposed "end time Elijah" who restored all doctrines to the Church, so he proclaimed that he headed the highly praised Philadelphia Church era instead, causing a crucial truth to be lost to his followers.

As a result, many of God's people for the best part of a century have been oblivious to the fact that the Laodicea message specifically applies to them. Since HWA's death, subsequent Church leaders, employing a variety of narratives, have continued to deny that the final Church era message applies to their teachings and practices. Consequently, the severe rebuke God is giving them is not being taken to heart.

2) The Church of God in the Philadelphia era (mid-1400's until mid-1800's) knew that one man government *in a Church* was one of the major tenets of what was then commonly referred to as "Popery". Herbert Armstrong acknowledged this in the early days of his ministry, but then amazingly had a complete change of mind and went on to implement "one man" government in his branch of the Church, placing *himself* in that role, and thereby taking the place of the true Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. Thus he caused another great truth to be lost.

This autocratic form of government sees the person at the top as the sole conduit of God's teachings to the Church. In previous eras, however, it was understood that God works with and teaches Christians on an individual basis, just like human parents do with their children. Serious students of Scripture know that God does not filter the teachings of the Bible through one man, or even a group of men at the head of the Church. On the contrary, in the message to Laodicea, Christ exhorts individuals to go against the flow of the many erroneous teachings of the Churches of God and be taught by Him directly from His Word (Rev 3:20).

3) Following on from the previous point, brethren of the Philadelphia era had a much closer connection to the Bible. It was far more widely read, and considered to be the authority on all matters.

In the Laodicea era today, however, it is common for sermons to be sourced from the writings of Church leaders rather than from the Bible. In some groups, the reading of Scripture by members is even subtly discouraged in favour of Church literature.

Consequently, a far less Biblically literate generation has emerged in God's Church, and the close relationship the Philadelphia era had with God, developed through diligent study of His Word, has been lost.

4) Up until the 19th century, the people of God generally explained prophecy according to the school of interpretation known as Historicism. The departure from this method in the Laodicea era has done great damage to the Church, leading to the loss of much prophetic understanding.

For example, the seven trumpets of Revelation 8 to 11 used to be understood as seven major events in history, from the first coming of Christ until His return. They were considered to foretell such things as the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem, the fall of pagan Rome, the "Christianisation" of the Roman Empire, the Dark Ages and the Crusades. In other words, these prophecies were seen to be a sequence of historical turning points throughout the fifth and sixth millennia, which, together with the rest of the Scriptures, cover the first 6000 years of God's dealings with man.

However, from the middle of the 19th century, Seventh Day Adventist leader Ellen G White, and subsequently Church of God (Seventh Day) leader Andrew N Dugger, began to derive some of their prophetic interpretations from Futurism, a Jesuit/Catholic school of thought which puts off the fulfilment of most prophecies in the book of Revelation until the very end time. In the 20th century Herbert Armstrong introduced even more Futurist explanations into his branch of the Church. Because of this, most COG's today teach that the greater part of Revelation is yet to be fulfilled. The same treatment is also given to many other Biblical prophecies.

Sadly, this had led to the fulfilment of Revelation 3:17 which says that the final era of the Church will have become "poor" **and** "blind"**. It is a fact that literally hundreds of HWA's prophetic pronouncements throughout his long ministry were erroneous, so it is surprising, to say the least, that most of his Futurist ideas are still adhered to by the Churches of God and have never been seriously re-examined.**

As a result, most of the Churches of God are still waiting for the arrival of an Antichrist, a "Great Tribulation", a "ten-toed" European "Beast" power, the Two Witnesses, the battle of Armageddon etc. They also have fanciful Futurist explanations for the prophecies concerning the 1260, 1290, 1335 and 2300 *days* found in the book of Daniel, when wiser students of Scripture from previous eras could see that these numbers refer not to days, but to *years*, and therefore concern major long-term events. This is perfectly logical, because the main purpose of prophecy is to prove the existence and power of God, who alone can fulfil prophecies over long stretches of time. As God Himself states in Isaiah 46:9-10, "I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done"**.**

Please read this very interesting history of the origin of Futurism (the same article is linked on the page "REVELATION IS HISTORY"): https://www.gospeltruth.net/futurismandthebible.htm

5) God's people in the Philadelphia era, though often likely to suffer persecution, were far more dedicated to keeping God's Sabbath day holy than most Church members are today. If we look at the statements from Henri Misson and George Carlow from the 1600's and 1700's, as quoted in the article "THE TRUE CHURCH ERAS", we see at that time a Nehemiah level of dedication (Neh 10:28-31; 13:15-22). This is far removed from the casual attitude displayed in our present Laodicea era Churches of God, where the practice of keeping the Sabbath to Biblical standards has been largely abandoned. The example set by HWA of doing business on the Sabbath has been instrumental in this decline.

6) The Church of God before Herbert Armstrong's time believed that ministers ought to live a simple and non-extravagant lifestyle. This knowledge, however, was totally abandoned by him in the latter decades of his reign.

When HWA was a Church of God (Seventh Day) minister in his early days in Oregon, he argued *against* tithes being received centrally at its headquarters in Stanberry, Missouri. Later however, when he was in charge, he implemented this very practice. The inherent danger of this method is that one person, or a group of people, come to be in control of large amounts of money, and are therefore able to set their own salaries and determine their own expenditure. This has sometimes led to great excesses, including in the case of HWA himself who was almost certainly the highest paid minister of all time in the Church of God.

The practice of receiving tithes centrally is now commonplace in the end time Churches, and is one of the reasons why so many Churches of God exist. Gaining a market share of the tithes has proved to be a great motivating factor. Well does Scripture prophesy: "they shall with feigned words make merchandise of you" **(II Pet 2:3).**

In ancient Israel there were 48 Levitical cities (four in each of the twelve tribal allotments) where the priests and Levites lived and received the tithes *locally*. Churches of many persuasions have historically operated along the same lines as ancient Israel, providing for the needs of congregations locally. From the last century onwards however, due to technological advancements, the world has witnessed significant numbers of people becoming exorbitantly wealthy through preaching "Christianity" and soliciting money. In many ways their mindset and practices have rubbed off on the Churches of God.

7) In the early years of his ministry HWA correctly taught a 7,000 year plan of God, including the physical resurrection of all who have ever lived, *during* the Millennium. He had learned this truth in the Church of God (Seventh Day). However, after being challenged on the meaning of Revelation 20:5, he changed his teaching to an illogical 7,100 year plan which claims that all who have ever lived are to be physically resurrected *after*

Christ's millennial rule. Alas, another truth was lost in the Laodicea era.

8) The Church of God in the Philadelphia era had a better understanding of I Corinthians 14 than we do today. They realised that because God gives His spirit to *all* His people, "you may all prophesy, one by one" **(speak God's word) in Church meetings (or publications) and so add to the overall fund of Church knowledge (v31). However, once the Church turned to authoritarian leaders who wanted to control the narrative, alternative opinions became undesirable.**

9) The Church of God already knew in the time of the book of Acts that the symbolic rite of physical circumcision has been done away under the New Covenant and therefore should no longer be practised. Strangely, Herbert Armstrong recommended physical circumcision to the Church, and consequently some COG brethren still practise it today.

10) One of the most noticeable things that seems to have been lost today, both in the world and in the final era of God's Church, is common sense. God is perfectly logical, and therefore Church teachings should be too. Regrettably, this is often not the case.

Here are some examples:

*** After the coming of *the* Prophet, Jesus Christ, and the completion of the Holy Scriptures, it is not logical that God would send another human prophet for us to follow. Those who profess to be such are false prophets (Zech 13:3-4).**

*** Numbers in prophecy should be interpreted consistently. If *days* mean *years* in one prophecy of duration, then the same must apply to all such prophecies, otherwise deciphering them would be impossible. For example, if in Revelation 2:10 *days* mean *years*, they must do so in Revelation 11:3 as well.**

*** It is not logical that most of God's prophecies would be fulfilled in the last few years before the return of Christ, rather than gradually throughout history. If they did all pertain to the end of this age, they would only benefit the brethren of the final generation, rather than be a proof of God's existence to all believers throughout time.**

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From the above examples we see that significant understanding has been lost in the final era of the Church of God. Although Christ's warning rings loud and clear throughout Revelation 3:14-22, it has not been heeded by most brethren. The dire consequences are foretold by Christ in the same passage of Scripture.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

This website began with a list of things that don't add up in the teachings of the final era of the Church of God.

I have been a (WCG, PCG, UCG) Church member for some 40 years, but only in recent times have I come to the painful realisation of how widely the message to Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22 applies.

Our Creator is a magnificent God who has made man with the ultimate purpose of being born into His Family. For almost 6000 years He has been testing people on their willingness to be part of this amazing endeavour (I Pet 4:17).

However, the Laodicea Church era is in far worse shape than has been portrayed by its leaders to its adherents. The reason for this is that these same leaders have been, and continue to be, central to the problem. If we don't wake up now and open the door to Jesus Christ (Rev 3:20), who speaks to us through the pages of the Bible, *I fear this will have eternal consequences for God's people* (Dan 12:2).

Many members of the Church of God in this end time believe that Herbert W Armstrong (HWA) was "the end time Elijah" and that he "restored all things" including "the government of God" to the Church. This website, however, shows that John the Baptist fulfilled the role of the prophesied Elijah and that HWA was in significant ways the *opposite* of John the Baptist.

This website also shows that the teachings of Herbert Armstrong can be largely traced back to the times prior to him, including the keeping of the annual holy days (G. G. Rupert) as well as the British Israel theory (J H Allen, D Paul Ziegler and others).

For Herbert Armstrong to have asserted that most Biblical truth was "lost for 1900 years" until his time, was not "the plain truth", as he called his magazine; rather, it was plain dishonest.

When he boastfully claimed to have "restored all things", he was in effect stating, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" **(Rev 3:17 - KJV).**

In the early 1930's the Church of God Seventh Day (COG7) attempted to restore Scriptural government to the Church, and at the time Herbert Armstrong was all in favour of it. He participated in a ballot where names were drawn from a box, after petitioning God, to fill the positions of a group of twelve leading ministers based on the office of the twelve apostles, and a group of seventy subordinate ministers, as well as a group of seven deacons

as per Acts 6. As it turned out HWA was chosen as one of the seventy (Dugger and Dodd, "History of the True Religion", Chapter 22).

As time passed however, HWA became unhappy with his lot and made the decision to start up his own Church, with himself solely in charge, claiming that he was an apostle.

This form of Church government was not the New Covenant "government of God", as he claimed, but instead was based on the Papal model, and symptomatic of what the book of Revelation calls "the image of the beast"**. Armstrong later went on to create for himself the office of Pastor General. Through this whole process HWA introduced into the Church of God the office of** "the man of sin"**, i.e. one man Church government, when in reality the One over the Church is Jesus Christ.**

Herbert Armstrong did not restore the government of God; rather, he committed a coup d'etat against the government of God.

When the majority of brethren in the Laodicea Church era adopted "one man government", Jesus Christ was effectively shut out of His Church. The Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) had gone down this same road long before HWA did, with their allegiance to their supposed prophetess Ellen G White. This fits well with SDA belief that the Laodicea era began in the middle of the 19th century.

This entire unfolding of events was permitted by God (I Cor 11:19) in order to test the loyalty of His Church. So where does this leave us? What should we do?

1) <u>We need to personally respond to Jesus Christ's rebuke specifically directed towards this final Church era</u>

In Revelation 3:19 Christ admonishes the Laodicea era, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" **(KJV). This applies to all of God's people in His Sabbath keeping Churches. Whether Seventh Day Baptist, SDA, COG7, Church of God, Messianic Jew, or any of their offshoots, we have all been taught many errors by these groups. We desperately need the** "eye salve" **(Rev 3:18) that Christ promises upon repentance, to have our eyes opened to the truth.**

2) <u>We need to put reading and studying the Scriptures before all other reading and studying</u>

Through God's writings we grow closer to God; through the writings of men, we grow closer to men. In this era we have ready access to God's Word, so why don't we allow it to have the final say on all issues in the Church of

God? Christ says in the message to Laodicea, "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 dine with him, and he with Me" **(Rev 3:20 - NKJV). This is about Christ speaking directly to us through the Bible.**

Unfortunately, however, His people have shut Him out, preferring the opinions, the reading material and the doctrines of men.

3) <u>We need to put loyalty to God ahead of loyalty to human beings. Putting a man, or the teachings of men, ahead of God breaks the first Commandment</u>

Most of us will claim that we already do this, not realising that many of our cherished beliefs and interpretations originated in the imaginations of men. Until we accept that the Laodicea Church era message in Revelation 3 describes all of the Sabbath keeping Churches collectively, we will not take to heart the strong rebuke God is giving us in this passage when He tells us that we are "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" **(Rev 3:17 - NIV).**

4) <u>We need to stop blatantly transgressing God's Sabbath, the fourth Commandment</u>

Sabbath breaking has been "the mark of the beast" **all throughout man's time on Earth. This has been a test from God for all of His firstfruits (Rev 20:4). The main reason many Church members today have no problem conducting business on the Sabbath, including frequenting eateries and coffee shops, is because of Herbert Armstrong's lukewarmness on this subject. The Word of God instructs us very differently (Neh 10:28-31, 13:15-22).**

5) <u>We need a sound Bible Chronology</u>

One of the main causes of Laodicean blindness is ignorance of the structured plan God is working out on Earth. In the Creation account, at the very beginning of the book of Genesis, we are given an overview of time, i.e. a "blueprint" of the 7000 year period during which God is bringing salvation to mankind. Each of the seven days of Creation pictures a one thousand year period within which certain specific events are prophesied to take place. However, as a rule the Churches of God do not take these 1000 year periods into account when determining the timing of important Biblical events, such as the year of Christ's death, and the year of Christ's second coming.

Therefore the correct chronological picture eludes the Churches, and our current place in Bible Chronology is, to

them, unknown. This in turn leads to incorrect conclusions, such as Christ's return being still many decades away, or the year 6000 having already been passed.

6) <u>We need to drastically re-evaluate our prophetic interpretations</u>

The method of prophetic interpretation known as Futurism, largely applied by the Churches of God since the time of Herbert Armstrong, is of Roman Catholic origin. It has left the final Church era "blind" **to the fact that many major Biblical prophecies have long been fulfilled. Worse, it sees the Churches of God assigning these prophecies fictitious future fulfilments.**

The First and Second World Wars, the slaughter of six million Jews in the Holocaust, the re-establishment of the Jews in Jerusalem three and a half years after the end of WW2, the Suez Crisis and its aftermath, the Six Day War, the demise of traditional Christianity, and the flood of non-Christian migrants into the formerly Christian nations are all fulfilments of Bible prophecies, as explained on the pages of this website.

The Churches of God should be widely proclaiming all these things as proof of the validity of Scripture and the existence of an all-powerful God who foretells and brings to pass the major events of history.

7) <u>We need to practise baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, instead of "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"</u>

Baptism is our entry point into the Church of God and our begettal into the Family of God. It is our acceptance of the New Covenant, and the starting point of our life of overcoming sin, as we acknowledge that the death of Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for our transgressions of God's Law.

However, the Church has been greatly deceived in regard to this highly symbolic ceremony. The abovementioned baptismal formula alluding to the Trinity was inserted into Matthew 28 by Roman command, after the 325AD Council of Nicea, in order to give credence to this false concept of God.

Does this mean baptisms performed in the name of the Trinity are invalid? Not necessarily. It would depend on the beliefs of the person being baptised.

Nevertheless, it is a matter of principle and a matter of obedience, to baptise "in the name of Jesus Christ" **(Acts 2:38) or** "in the name of the Lord Jesus" **(Acts 8:16 and 19:5), just like the early Church did, and it makes perfect sense since Jesus Christ is the One who died for our sins.**

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The message to the Laodicea era of the Church reads as follows in the King James Version of the Bible:

Revelation 3:14 "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".

When Christ describes His own people as "lukewarm" **and** "poor, and blind, and naked"**, He is talking about *all* the Sabbath keeping Churches. His strong rebuke is related to the fact that God's people in this era have been in a more advantageous situation than all those that preceded them, but have largely failed to appreciate and make use of this.**

There are four major ways in which the Church in this era has been uniquely well positioned in history:

1) Lack of Persecution

All previous Church eras suffered serious persecution from governing authorities. In this era, in Western countries, where the Churches of God are headquartered, they have been free for the most part to practise their religion without interference.

2) Ready access to God's Word

This final Church era, especially in Western countries, has had access to the Word of God in a huge variety of languages and translations. Personally owning one or more copies of the Bible is something most have taken for granted in our day, but this was not the case historically.

3) Fulfilled Prophecy

The Laodicean Church has been in a better position than any previous era to understand God's prophecies, because of the large number of them that have been fulfilled in our time. The failure to notice these fulfilments is the main reason why this era is called "blind"**.**

4) Access to Information

The final era of God's Church has had almost unlimited access to Biblical, historical and archaeological information, due to the rapid development of technology. Research today has never been easier.

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However, with all these privileges comes an enormous responsibility, for "everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" **(Lk 12:48).**

Therefore we can see why Christ so strongly rebukes the Churches of the Laodicea era. Although they have been given great blessings, they have not grown in knowledge, and have even regressed in their understanding of the Scriptures. At the same time, however, Christ provides the solution to this predicament, inviting each of His people individually to open "the door" **(the Bible) and be taught by Him in person.**

CHRONOLOGICAL CHARTS

From the very first chapter of Genesis, God shows us that His work on Earth is being carried out according to a predetermined timeline. The better we understand that timeline, the better we can see God's hand throughout man's history.

The first chart on this page, a Bible chronology from the time of Adam until our present time, is the same as the one found on the "HOME" page.

Chart 1: Full Bible Chronology

The second chart focuses on the period known as the Divided Kingdom. It starts with the year after Solomon's death, when the 12 tribes of Israel had split into the Kingdom of Israel, comprising ten tribes led by Jeroboam, and the Kingdom of Judah, comprising two tribes led by Solomon's son Rehoboam.

The chronology of the Divided Kingdom has proved to be one of the most difficult challenges Bible students have had to face. In previous centuries Archbishop James Ussher and Sir Isaac Newton studied this subject at length. In more recent times, Martin Anstey, Edwin Thiele and Floyd Nolen Jones have contributed fresh ideas to this field of endeavour.

Whereas for many years Ussher's numbers were the benchmark, of late it has been Thiele who has been the most quoted and referenced.

Time has caught up with Ussher's chronology, in that it no longer fits the "seven day blueprint" that Genesis 1 and 2 provide (see "THE SEVEN DAY BLUEPRINT").

Thiele, on the other hand, is considered by many to have solved all the difficulties the Biblical text contains regarding the period of the kings of Israel and Judah. Unbeknown to most Bible students, however, Thiele did this by setting aside many clear passages of Scripture, and instead giving more credence to the Assyrian records, which he pronounced to be "sure", "established" and "historical truth".

Thiele's famous work "The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings" expounds his theories. It contains throughout, a line of thought that calls the Biblical record into question. For instance, on page 134 (of the 1983 version of this book) he states, "When the editors of Kings were bringing that book into its final shape, they did not understand dual dating [a dating method invented by Thiele] for Pekah; and this fact was responsible for the synchronisms of II Kings 17 and 18".

The first issue here is that Thiele doesn't seem to acknowledge the divine authorship of the Scriptures. Secondly, he claims that the "synchronisms" mentioned in these chapters are in error. Which synchronisms is he calling into question?

In II Kings 18:9-10 we are given the highly significant information that Samaria fell to the Assyrians in the 9th year of Hoshea, king of Israel, which it states is the 6th year of Hezekiah, king of Judah. Thiele says on page 135, "A careful survey of the account of Hezekiah's reign shows that when he began his reign Hoshea and the nation of Israel were gone". In other words, he is saying that the account in II Kings 18:9-10 is wrong!

This is a total denial of the validity of God's Word. This highly regarded scholar doesn't believe that the numbers God has given us can be trusted. More can be found about Edwin Thiele's work on the page "BIBLE CHRONOLOGY".

When I first began my study of Bible chronology, I too had some doubts, having heard from various sources about the problem of "scribal errors". Now, however, after a detailed study of the chronological numbers of Scripture, which has lasted for well over a decade, I can honestly say that I am not aware of any that cannot be logically explained.

There are certainly many difficulties in constructing a Bible chronology. This, however, is precisely in line with what the Author of Scripture Himself states in Proverbs 25:2: "it is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out"**. God is saying that if we are prepared to put time and effort into the study of His Word, we *will* be able to** "search things out"**.**

The complex manner in which Biblical numbers are presented, as indeed *all Scripture* is presented, is just another proof of divine authorship.

Some chronologists would have us believe that ancient Israel started the year in autumn, while Judah started it in spring, or vice versa. Some also claim that at times kings arbitrarily switched from one method of recording their regnal years, to another. However, the fact is that whatever methods these kings might have used is irrelevant, as the Scriptures were inspired by God, and He is not bound by the recording methods of men.

God tells us in Exodus 12:2 when the year is meant to start. He consistently employs the method of starting the regnal years of kings on Abib/Nisan 1. The arguments raised against this have all been negated, as briefly explained in the legend on Chart 2, and no alternative methods are required to work out the details.

<u>Chart 2: The Divided Kingdom of Israel and Judah</u>

The third chart focuses on the chronology of the most confusing period of the Divided Kingdom, namely the reign of King Ahaz of Judah. Some verses about him appear to be contradictory and therefore many chronologists assert that errors have crept into the text. However, a close examination with the assistance of a chart clears up these issues. It can be seen that a total of ten years of the reign of Ahaz were spent in co-regency: eight years with Jotham, who preceded him, and two years with Hezekiah, who followed on from him.

Amazingly, this ten year period also appears to be figuratively pictured in the account of Hezekiah's sickness and Ahaz' sundial, found in II Kings 20:8-11. The sundial, a time measuring device, miraculously went back ten steps as a sign from God to Hezekiah.

<u>Chart 3: Ahaz co-regencies with Jotham and Hezekiah</u>

CHRONOLOGY OF THE YEARS OF MAN SINCE CREATION IN ANNO MUNDI (AM) YEARS

AM	AD	Books	Event
1			Adam & Eve created on sixth day of Creation (Gen 1-2) (3969BC)
130			Seth's birth (Gen 5:3)
235			Enos' birth (Gen 5:6)
325			Cainan's birth (Gen 5:9)
395			Mahalaleel's birth (Gen 5:12)
460			Jared's birth (Gen 5:15)
622			Enoch's birth (Gen 5:18)
687			Methuselah's birth (Gen 5:21)
874			Lamech's birth (Gen 5:25)
930			Adam's death (Gen 5:5)
987			Enoch's "translation", having lived 365 years (Gen 5:21-24; Heb 11:5)
1056			Noah's birth (Gen 5:28-29)
1558			Shem's birth (Gen 11:10)
1656			Death of Methuselah on day of Passover 1656? (Gen 5:27). The Flood until 1657 (Gen 7:6). Genesis 7:6, 7:11 and 8:13 show that the ages of men are synchronised with calendar years. Noah is stated to be 600 years old and in his 600th year at the very same time.
1658			Arphaxad's birth (Gen 11:10)
1693			Salah's birth (Gen 11:12)
1723			Eber's birth (Gen 11:14)
1757			Peleg's birth (Gen 11:16)
1787			Reu's birth (Gen 11:18)
1819			Serug's birth (Gen 11:20)
1849			Nahor's birth (Gen 11:22)
1878			Terah's birth (Gen 11:24)
1996			Peleg's death, aged 239. The 1996th year is the last possible year for the separation of the nations after the Tower of Babel (Gen 10:25,32; 11:18-19)
2006			Noah's death (Gen 9:29)
2008			Abram's birth. Renamed Abraham by God in 2107 (Gen 11:26,32; 12:4)
2083			Abram leaves Haran on the first day of Unleavened Bread, aged 75, commencing the "sojourning of the children of Israel". God makes "promises" to Abram (Gen 12:1-4; Ex 12:40-41; Acts 7:2-4; Gal 3:16)
2107			God's covenant with Abraham and the promise of the birth of Isaac. This is when God "chose the fathers" (Gen 17; Acts 13:17-20). Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18-19)
2108			Isaac's birth (Gen 21:5)
2114			Isaac's weaning & mocking by Ishmael. The commencement of 400 inclusive years of affliction (Gen 15:13, 21:8-12; Gal 4:28-29)
2168			Jacob & Esau's birth (Gen 25:26)
2183			Abraham's death (Gen 25:7)
2288			Isaac's death (Gen 35:28-29)
2298			Jacob & family enter Egypt (Gen 47:9)
2315			Jacob's death (Gen 47:28)
2513		Books of the Law	Israel's Exodus from Egypt on the first day of Unleavened Bread, led by Moses (Ex 12:40-41; Gal 3:16-17). Law given at Sinai and First Covenant made between God and Israel (Ex 19-24) (1457BC)
2514			Tabernacle raised up on 1st day of 1st month (Ex 40:17). Israel departs from Sinai one solar year after covenant is made with God. 10 out of 12 spies return bad report about the land of Canaan (Deut 24:5; Ex 19:1, 24:7-8; Num 10:11, 13:25-33)
2552			Defeat of Sihon king of Heshbon, and capture of surrounding area prior to crossing into Canaan (Deut 1:3-4; 2:7,14,16-19,24-35). Death of Aaron (Num 33:38) and Moses (Deut 34:5)
2553		Joshua	Israel enters Promised Land under Joshua after 40 years of wandering (Num 33:38; Deut 2:7; Ex 7:7; Deut 34:5-7; Josh 1:1, 4:19, 5:10)
2559			Land of Israel divided up in the seventh year from beginning of conquest (Num 1:1, 13:1-16; Josh 14:6-7,10)
2585		Judges Ruth I Sam	(Approx) Death of Joshua (Judg 2:8; Ex 33:11)
2607			Chushan-Rishathaim oppression - Othniel judge (Judg 3:8-11)
2647			Moab, Ammon, Amalek oppression - Ehud and Shamgar judges (Judg 3:12-31)
2727			Canaan oppression - Deborah (religious) and Barak (military) judges (Judg 4:1 - 5:31)
2767			Midian and Amalek oppression - Gideon judge (Judg 6:1 - 8:28)
2807			Tola judge - (internal oppression including by Abimelech) (Judg 8:29 - 10:2)
2830			Jair judge (Judg 10:3-4)
2836			Samuel (aged approx 5) at Shiloh under Eli (aged approx 65, thus being 7 years into 40 year period as (religious) judge) (I Sam 1-3, 4:15,18)
2851			Jair's final year - first year of 18 year oppression by Philistines and Ammonites (Judg 10:5-8 - "that year")
2852			Jephthah judge (Judg 10:6 - 12:7) - 300 years since Israel took Heshbon at the end of the year prior to entering the Promised Land (Judg 11:26)
2858			Ibzan judge (Judg 12:8-10)
2862			(Approx) Foretelling of birth of Samson (if 20 at beginning of judgeship) (Judg 13:2-5)
2865			Elon judge (Judg 12:11)
2868			Last year of 18 year oppression by Philistines and Ammonites (Judg 10:8)
2869			First year of 40 year Philistine "dominion" (Judg 13:1, 14:4, 15:11) - Death of Eli (aged 98) and sons - Samuel religious judge aged approx 38 (I Sam 4)
2875			Abdon judge (Judg 12:13-15)
2883			Samson judge (Judg 13-16)
2902			Samson's final victory and death (Judg 16:21-31)
2903			Samuel sole ruler over Israel
2908			Samuel (aged approx 77) defeats Philistines ending 40 year dominion - Saul's accession year (I Sam 7, 10:17-24)
2909			Saul king over Israel (I Sam 9-10; Acts 13:21)
2949		II Sam	David king over Judah (I Sam 16:13; II Sam 2:1-11)
2956			David king over all Israel, ruling from Jerusalem after capturing the city from the Jebusites (II Sam 5:4-5; I Kings 2:11)
2989		I Kings Prov Job Song Ecc	Solomon king over Israel (I Kings 2:12, 4:1, 11:42)
2992			Solomon commences foundation of 1st Temple in the second month (I Kings 6:1,37)
2993			Solomon commences construction of 1st Temple (I Kings 6:37-38). 2993 is the first year of the 7th seven year cycle of the 60th Jubilee period since Creation
2999			Solomon completes 1st Temple in 8th month (I Kings 6:37-38). 2999 is a Sabbatical year; it is the 7th year of the 7th seven year cycle of the 60th Jubilee period since Creation
3000			Temple dedication at Feast of Trumpets lasting seven days (II Chron 5:3,11-14), followed later in month by Feast of Tabernacles (II Chron 7:7-10; I Kings 8:65-66); Ark of the Covenant brought into the Temple (I Kings 8:1-6; II Chron 5) - 60th Jubilee Year since Creation
3012			God warns Solomon that idolatry will lead to Him removing Israel from the land and from Jerusalem (I Kings 9:1-11, 6:37-38, 7:1) - Solomon's idolatry must have commenced 5 years after this warning was given (see 3017, 3400 and 3406)
3017			Commencement of Solomon's idolatry
3028			Division of the nation of Israel into the 10 tribe Kingdom of Israel, and the 2 tribe Kingdom of Judah, after Solomon's death (Lev 26:18; I Kings 11:42 - 12:20) (942BC)
3029			Rehoboam king over Judah; *Jeroboam king over Israel* (I Kings 11:42 - 12:20, 14:21)
3046			Abijam king over Judah (I Kings 15:1-2)
3049			Asa king over Judah (I Kings 15:9-10). 1 year pro-regency with Abijam 3048, which was Jeroboam's 20th year, due to Abijam's war with Israel (I Kings 12; I Kings 14:21; I Kings 15:1,9 and II Chron 13)
3090			Jehoshaphat king over Judah (I Kings 22:41-42) - 4 year co-regency with Jehoram 3111-3114 (II Kings 3:1, 8:16)
3111		Jonah Amos Hosea Isaiah Micah Nahum Joel Hab Zeph Jer II Kings Lam Oba	Jehoram king over Judah (II Kings 8:16-17) - 5 year pro-regency with Jehoshaphat 3106-3110 (II Kings 1:17, 8:16-17), 4 year co-regency with Jehoshaphat 3111-3114 (II Kings 3:1, 8:16), 1 year pro-regency and accession year of Ahaziah 3117 (II Kings 9:29), 1 year co-regency with Ahaziah 3118 (II Kings 8:25-26)
3118			Ahaziah king over Judah (II Kings 8:25-26) - 1 year pro-regency with Jehoram 3117 (II Kings 9:29). Joash year of birth
3119			Athaliah reigns over Judah (II Kings 11:1-4) although royal line continues through baby Joash. *Jehu's first year of rule over Israel*. Land of East Manasseh, Reuben and Gad captured by Hazael, king of Syria, during the reign of Jehu (II Kings 10:32-33)
3125			Joash king over Judah (II Kings 11:21, 12:1). Joash's first regnal year, when Joash is 7 years old, is Jehu's 7th regnal year in Israel
3165			Amaziah king over Judah (II Kings 14:1-2)
3194			Azariah king over Judah (II Kings 15:1-2)
3246			Jotham king over Judah (II Kings 15:32-33) - 8 year co-regency with Ahaz 3254-3261
3254			Ahaz king over Judah (II Kings 16:1-2) - 8 year co-regency with Jotham 3254-3261 (II Kings 15:27,30,32-33, 16:1, 17:1), 1 year pro-regency with Hezekiah 3267, 2 year co-regency with Hezekiah 3268-3269 (II Kings 17:1,6, 18:1,9-10)
3264			East Manasseh, Reuben, Gad, and other territories of Israel go into Assyrian captivity at the hand of Tiglath-Pileser, after Ahaz reached out to him for help against Syria and Israel. Pekah, king of Israel, slain (II Kings 15:29-30, 16:5-9, 17:1; I Chron 5:26)
3268			Hezekiah king over Judah (II Kings 18:1-2) - 1 year pro-regency with Ahaz 3267, 2 year co-regency with Ahaz 3268-3269 (II Kings 17:1,6, 18:1,9-10)
3273			Israel and its capital Samaria (in Ephraim - Isa 7:9), under the rule of King Hoshea, falls to Assyria; Israelites taken away in captivity (II Kings 18:9-12, Lev 26:21) (697BC)
3297			Manasseh king over Judah (II Kings 21:1)
3329			Territory of Israel repopulated by foreign peoples over a 65 year period from the death of Rezin, king of Syria at the hands of the Assyrians (Isa 7:8-9; II Kings 17:24-41; Ez 4:2,10 - see Divided Kingdom chart)
3352			Amon king over Judah (II Kings 21:19)
3354			Josiah king over Judah (II Kings 22:1)
3371			Josiah reinstitutes Passover in his 18th year (II Chron 35:1-19)
3384			Jehoahaz king over Judah (II Kings 23:31) - 3 month reign after Josiah's death, but during Josiah's final year; Josiah killed in war during summer, Jehoahaz never started a regnal year
3385			Jehoiakim king over Judah (II Kings 23:36; II Chron 36:5-6)
3387			Nebuchadnezzar, in his accession year, besieges Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's 3rd year. Daniel and others taken to Babylon (Dan 1:1-7)
3388			Nebuchadnezzar king over Babylon (Jer 25:1, 46:1-2; Dan 1:5 "three years" = 3387-3389)
3389			Prophecy of the Daniel 2 image given in Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd year, 6 years before Nebuchadnezzar captures Jerusalem (Dan 1:18-19, 2:1,16)
3395			Babylonian Empire (First beast of Dan 7; first head of Rev 13 and 17) captures Jerusalem (Lev 26:24; Rev 11:2). Jehoiachin king over Judah (II Kings 24:8-12; II Chron 36:9-11) - 3 month/10 day reign in Jehoiakim's 11th and final regnal year (575BC)
3396			Zedekiah king over Judah (II Kings 24:17-18). Jehoiachin, Ezekiel and many others taken to Babylon (II Chron 36:10; Eze 40:1)
3400			Ezekiel given prophecy relating to 390 years of whole House of Israel's sins and 40 years of Judah's sins (Eze 1:1-2, 4:4-6) - the 40 inclusive years apply to the period from Judah's rejection of Christ in 31AD until Jerusalem's destruction in 70AD
3404			Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem in Zedekiah's 9th year, which is also the 9th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (II Kings 25:1-2; Jer 39:1, 52:4; Eze 24:1-2)
3405			Jeremiah imprisoned in Jerusalem while the city is under Babylonian siege (Jer 32:1). Ezekiel prophesies against Egypt (Eze 29:1)
3406			Destruction of Jerusalem (Lev 26:28) and 1st Temple by Babylonians in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year - Zedekiah captured in his 11th year (II Kings 25:8-10; Jer 52:12-14; Eze 40:1) (564BC)
3410			Final Babylonian removal of Jews by Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar's general; remaining Jews flee to Egypt (Jer 39:10, 40:9-12, 52:30; II Kings 25:26)
3411		Eze Dan	First of 70 Land Sabbaths in Judah (II Chron 36:21; Jer 25:9-11; Eze 33:28-29; Lev 26:33-35,43)
3476			Cyrus captures Babylon under Belshazzar; Cyrus' uncle Darius the Mede (Josephus Ant. 10:11:4; Herodotus Hist. Bk 1), son of Ahasuerus, becomes ruler of "the realm of the Chaldeans" (incl. Jerusalem) (Jer 25:12, 29:10-14; Isa 45:1-13; Dan 5:31-6:1, 9:1). If Eze 45:12 in Septuagint is correct, Dan 5:25 "mene, mene, tekel, upharsin" = 3476-5995 (494BC)
3477			Darius the Mede issues decree to all 120 provinces under his jurisdiction regarding "the God of Daniel" after Daniel survives being thrown into the lions' den (Dan 6, 9:1-2)
3480			Last of 70 Land Sabbaths in Judah (II Chron 36:21; Jer 25:9-11; Dan 9:2; Lev 26:33-35,43)
3481		Ezra Est Hag Zech Mal Psalms Neh I Chron II Chron	Medo/Persian Empire (Second beast of Dan 7; second head of Rev 13 and 17) commences. Cyrus, after deposing his grandfather Astyages and uniting the Empire under himself (Herodotus Hist. Bk 1), lets Jews return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4; Isa 44:28). 3481-6000 = 2520 inclusive years (489BC)
3482			Zerubbabel commences the Jerusalem Temple reconstruction in second month (Ezra 3:8-13)
3494			Reconstruction work in Jerusalem is stopped in the accession year of Darius the Persian/the Great, aka Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:7-24)
3496			Darius in his 2nd year allows Jerusalem work to resume (Ezra 4:24-6:13 / Darius = Ahasuerus = Artaxerxes; Hag 1 and 2)
3500			Jerusalem Temple completed in Darius' 6th year, according to God's, Cyrus' and Darius' command (Ezra 6:14-15 - "Darius even Artaxerxes")
3501			Ezra's second journey to Judah in Darius' 7th year to re-establish the law of God (Ezra 7:1-7) - Darius (Ahasuerus) marries Esther (Est 2:16-18)
3506			Jews survive Haman's plot in Darius' 12th year (Est 3-9)
3514			Nehemiah, after being made Governor of Judah in Darius' 20th year, makes second journey to Jerusalem - Wall completed (Neh 2:1, 6:15)
3526			Nehemiah's 12th and final year as Governor of Judah in Darius' 32nd year (Neh 5:14)
3529			Nehemiah seals the OT Scriptures (II Macc 2:13) completing the first 7 "weeks" (49 years) of the 70 Week Prophecy (Dan 9:24-25)
3637			Greco/Roman Empires (Third beast of Dan 7; Greece is the third head of Rev 13 and 17) commence rule over Jerusalem. Alexander the Great (the "great horn" of Dan 8:8) defeats Darius III (333BC)
3669			Ptolemaic Kingdom captures Jerusalem (Fourth head of Rev 13 and 17) (301BC)
3770			Seleucid Empire captures Jerusalem (Fifth head of Rev 13 and 17) (200BC)
3803			Seleucid leader Antiochus Epiphanes defiles Jerusalem Temple (Dan 11:31; I Macc 1)
3830			Hasmonean semi-autonomous rule of Jerusalem commences (140BC), leading to 210 inclusive year practice of Judaism in Jerusalem until 4039 (Eze 39:12-14 Geneva Bible, NRSV)
3907			Rome captures Jerusalem after victory by Pompeius (Sixth head of Rev 13 and 17; little horn of Dan 8:9. Note: Rome comes "out of one of them", i.e. out of one of the 4 Greek divisions) (63BC)
3963-65	(AD yrs)		Completion of 69 "weeks" of the 70 Week Prophecy in 3963, "after" which, in 3964, the Word is "cut off" from the Godhead and begotten in Mary's womb, and born in 3965 (5BC) (Dan 9:24-26; Lk 1:26)
3970	1		*(The 3970th AM year equals 1AD, the originally designated birth year of Jesus Christ, hence termed Anno Domini (AD) or "Year of our Lord". Years prior to this termed BC)*
3996	27		Beginning of Jesus' ministry after the "Great Temptation" (Matt 4:1-11; Lk 3:23). 3996 = 666x6 = sin conquered by love - Ex 20:13; Matt 5:21-26; Lk 6:27-28; Jn 3:16 (27AD) (Christ aged 31)
3997	28		First full year of Christ's ministry in the 16th year of Tiberius Caesar, Christ having begun preaching in the 15th year, about 6 months after John the Baptist began his work (Lk 3:1)
4000	31		Death and resurrection of Christ at Passover/ULB, after three and half year ministry (Lk 4:24-25), ending Old + commencing New Covenant (Lk 22:20; Heb 8:13). Church founded on Pentecost. 80th Jubilee Year since Creation; "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:19)
4001	32		(Approx) Satan "cast out", i.e. confined to Earth and no longer able to come into the presence of God in Heaven, leading to great persecution of the Church (Deut 24:5; Jn 12:31; Rev 12:10-17; Acts 8:1)
4035	66		Church flees Jerusalem after the miraculous withdrawal of Cestius from besieging Jerusalem and the Temple (Josephus War of the Jews 2:19:1-9; Matt 24:15-19; Luke 21:20-23)
4036	67		Vespasian, Titus and successors, conquer Galilee, Samaria and Judea (67-73AD) destroying the Jewish nation. Final "week" of 70 Week Prophecy ("upon thy people and upon thy holy city" - Dan 9:24), which did "confirm the covenant" (Dan 9:27)
4039	70		Roman destruction of Jerusalem after 40 inclusive years of signs and warnings since Christ's death in 31AD (Eze 4:6; Lk 19:41-44; Matt 12:39-41; Jonah 3:4; Bab. Talmud Yoma 39b; Eusebius Ecc. His. 3 ch 7 & 8; Josephus War 6:5:3) (Trumpet 1 of Revelation)
4042	73		Roman conquest of Masada, the last remaining rebel stronghold in the First Jewish Revolt, completing the seven year war which fulfils the 70th "week" of the 70 Week Prophecy (Dan 9:27; Rev 12:16)
4069	100		(Approx) Smyrna Era of Church commences after the death of all the original apostles. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, aged approximately 30
4101	132		Commencement of Bar Kokhba War (until 136AD) after construction of Hadrian's temple in Jerusalem. Jerusalem rebuilt by the Romans as a pagan city called Aelia Capitolina, and Judea renamed Syria Palaestina (Trumpet 2 of Revelation)
4272	303		Ten years of severe Church persecution initiated by Diocletian and carried on by various other Roman rulers until early 313AD (Rev 2:10)
4281	312/13		Edict of Milan (Feb 313AD) by Constantine and Licinius permitting freedom of religion, ending the Diocletian Persecution. This decree was preceded by Constantine's conversion to "Christianity" in 312AD
4294	325		Council of Nicea - "Christianity" united under the guardianship of Roman emperor Constantine. Commencement of Christianisation of Jerusalem (Trumpet 3 of Revelation)
4299	330		Constantine moves capital of Empire to Nova Roma/Constantinople, which is Istanbul in modern day Turkey
4348	379/80		Edict of Thessalonica issued by Roman emperor Theodosius makes Nicene Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire (Feb 380AD)
4498	529		Justinian Code adopted - banning all religion in the Roman Empire except Catholicism
4583	614		Sassanid Empire, aka the Neo-Persian Empire, captures Jerusalem, briefly reviving the second head of the Beast - until retaken by the Romans in 629AD
4606	637/38		Mecca/Medina (Islam) (Fourth beast of Dan 7; seventh head of Rev 13 and 17) under Rashidun leader Caliph Omar captures Jerusalem from Roman Empire in Jan 638. Commencement of Islamisation of Jerusalem (Trumpet 4 of Revelation)
4630	661		Umayyad rule begins over Jerusalem (Horn 1 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) (until 750AD)
4653-55	684-86		Constantinople grants Rome autonomy to appoint Popes in 684AD. Pope John V takes office 685AD; 686AD being his first regnal year, starting 1260 inclusive year rule of "little horn" / later the 8th head of Beast (see 1099AD + 1945AD) (Dan 7:8,25; Rev 11:3)
4660	691		Construction of the Islamic Dome of the Rock on the site of God's Temple i.e. the Temple Mount, making this false temple dominate the city of God - at the same time banning the "daily sacrifice" of Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount (Dan 12:11). The Umayyad ruler Abd al-Malik commences the Dome's construction in 4660, and completes at least its exterior in 4662. 4662 = 666 (lawlessness) x 7 (faith), depicting the false religious faith which has defiled the Temple Mount, God's dwelling place on Earth, for longer than any other. The Dome of the Rock, which contains blasphemous inscriptions about Christ, completed its 1335th inclusive year in 2025/26
4719	750		Abassid rule begins over Jerusalem (Horn 2 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) (until 878AD and again from 904AD until 939AD)
4725	756		Papal States confirmed by French/Roman treaty; territories on Italian peninsula over which the Papacy had sovereignty (until 1870AD)
4847	878		Tulunid rule begins over Jerusalem (Horn 3 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) (until 904AD)
4908	939		Ikhshidid rule begins over Jerusalem (Horn 4 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) (until 969AD)
4938	969		Fatimid rule begins over Jerusalem (Horn 5 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) (until 1073AD and again from 1098AD until 1099AD)
5042	1073		Seljuq rule begins over Jerusalem (Horn 6 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) (until 1098AD)
5064	1095		Pope Urban II launches First Catholic/Christian Crusade, commencing "5 months", or 150 years, of medieval Crusades fought over Jerusalem (Rev 9:1-12) (Trumpet 5 of Revelation), and one "time" (Rev 2:21), or 360 years, for "Jezebel" to repent
5068	1099		First Crusade captures Jerusalem from Fatimid Caliphate. First period of rule over Jerusalem by the Catholic/Christian "little horn" of Dan 7:8, which at this point becomes the eighth head of the Beast (Rev 17:11)
5153	1184		Inquisitions begin in France initiated by Catholic Church (Rev 2:24 - "the depths of Satan")
5156	1187		Ayyubid rule begins over Jerusalem (initially under Saladin) (Horn 7 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17), after defeating the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem (until 1229AD and again from 1244AD until 1260AD)
5198	1229		Frederick II gains control of Jerusalem after surrender of Ayyubid Sultan Al-Kamil. Second period of rule over Jerusalem by the Catholic/Christian "little horn" of Dan 7:8, aka the eighth head of the Beast (Rev 17:11)
5213	1244		Ayyubids defeat Crusaders in Siege of Jerusalem, 150 inclusive years after the Crusades commence (Rev 9:5,10)
5229	1260		Mamluk rule begins over Jerusalem (initially under Sultan Baybars) (Horn 8 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) commencing some 250 years of Mamluk control over the city (until 1516AD)
5316-22	1347-53		Black Death kills 50-80% of Europe's population (peak between 1348AD and 1351AD), 666 years since independence of the Papacy (Rev 2:21-23)
5351	1382		John Wycliffe translates Latin Vulgate Bible into Middle English
5422	1453		Fall of Constantinople, capital of the Roman Empire, to the Ottoman Empire
5424	1455		Johann Gutenberg produces first printed Bible paving the way for a myriad of translations and publications of God's Word. The "open door" (Rev 3:8)
5485	1516		Ottoman rule over Jerusalem begins (Horn 9 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) after defeat of Mamluks (until 1831AD and again from 1840AD until 1917AD)
5486	1517		Protestant Reformation commenced by Martin Luther. Luther publishes German New Testament in 1522AD and first full German Bible in 1534AD
5504	1535		First English Bible produced from Hebrew and Greek by William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale - pulpit size Bible designed for church use
5527	1558		Queen Elizabeth I coronated Queen of England - Protestant monarch for 45 regnal years
5529	1560		Geneva Bible published by exiled English scholars in Switzerland, containing historicist annotations in Revelation denouncing the Catholic Church as the "Romish harlot" led by the "Papistrie" riding the "beast"
5546-49	1577-80		Francis Drake circumnavigates the world. Drake's endeavours end Spanish dominance of the seas and New World, paving the way for England to become a global empire
5548	1579		Francis Drake claims the West Coast of future USA as "Nova Albion" on behalf of England, first year after 2520 year period ends since Israel's division (Lev 26:18)
5557	1588		Destruction of Spanish Armada in battle with English navy led by Charles Howard and Francis Drake, greatly curtailing Catholic influence in the world and advancing English naval power
5576	1607		English theologian and minister John Sprint laments "Sabbatary Christians": Christians who observe the seventh day of the week as holy
5580	1611		King James Bible published, authorised by King James I of England, following a range of English language Bible translations
5589	1620		European settlement of the future USA begins in earnest with the arrival of the Mayflower
5597	1628		Theophilus Brabourne writes first of 66 known pro-Sabbath publications issued in England between 1628AD and 1745AD; at least 60 British Sabbath keeping congregations during this period
5640	1671		First American Sabbath keeping church established in Rhode Island. Members call themselves Sabbatarians, Sabbatarian Baptists, and later, Seventh Day Baptists
5650-51	1681-82		Founding of Pennsylvania (1681AD) and Philadelphia (1682AD) by William Penn - the city has a crucial place in US history
5670	1701		William Penn writes "Charter of Privileges", legislating religious freedom for Christians in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania is deemed by Penn a "Holy Experiment"
5676	1707		United Kingdom of Great Britain formed (England, Wales and Scotland)
5743-44	1774-75		First and Second Continental Congress held in Philadelphia, seeking independence from Great Britain; each attended by representatives from the twelve Colonies
5745	1776		US Independence declared in Philadelphia, 4th of July; thirteen Colonies become the United States of America
5756	1787		US Constitution written in Philadelphia by delegates from twelve States in the twelfth year of Independence, at the conclusion of five month Constitutional Convention
5757	1788		Election of first President of the USA George Washington; descendant of King Edward III of England
5758	1789		US Bill of Rights guaranteeing freedom of religion drafted, but not ratified by all States until 1791AD, at which point Philadelphia is US capital
5759	1790		First USA President George Washington takes residence in Philadelphia's President's House. Philadelphia becomes US Capital for 10 years until completion of Washington DC
5769	1800		United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland formed (England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland)
5772	1803		USA's Louisiana Purchase; USA territory approximately doubles in size
5780	1811		New York Sabbath keeping minister Henry Clarke lists 11 congregations containing almost 1800 baptised US members; referred to as Sabbatarians and Seventh Day Baptists
5792	1823		USA's (Manasseh) Louisiana Purchase payment finalised - 2520 inclusive years since the defeat of Israel, and the fall of Israel's capital Samaria (see also next line)
5792	1823/24		Anglo-Dutch treaty completed March 1824AD, granting Singapore to Britain (Ephraim), completing the worldwide framework for the British Empire - see side bar
5800	1831		Alawiyya rule begins over Jerusalem (under Muhammad Ali) (Horn 10 of Dan 7:7, Rev 13 and 17) (until 1840AD)
5810	1841		Seventh Day Baptist Register publication mentions the church has approx 50 US congregations, 62 ministers and around 5500 baptised members
5828	1859		Charles Darwin releases his book "On the Origin of Species" putting forth the theory of Evolution
5829	1860		Seventh Day Adventists form under James and Ellen White, splitting from other Sabbath keeping adventists like the Church of God (Seventh Day) (Rev 3:11)
5830	1861		US Civil War commences (continuing until 1865AD), a turning point in US history
5883	1914		World War I commences (continuing until 1918AD), followed by worldwide Spanish Influenza pandemic. The 32 year period from 1914-1945AD (Rev 9:15) sees two World Wars facilitate Jewish return to and control of Jerusalem (Trumpet 6 of Revelation - until 5919)
5886	1917		British Empire captures Jerusalem from Ottoman Empire. Referred to at the time as "the last Crusade", retaking the city for Christianity. Third period of rule over Jerusalem by the "little horn" of Dan 7:8 (Rev 17:11)
5887	1918		Battle of Megiddo, Sept 1918AD, the final stand of the Ottoman Empire in the Holy Land, the last remaining horn of the seventh head of the Beast, resulting in its demise at the hands of Allied forces (Rev 16:16 - "Armageddon")
5898	1929		Creation of Vatican City State facilitated by Italian leader Benito Mussolini. US Stock Market crash. Great Depression commences leading to worldwide economic collapse lasting into WWII; in the USA this period also incorporates the "Dust Bowl"
5902	1933/34		Herbert W Armstrong commences radio ministry (Jan 1934AD), leading to establishment of Radio Church of God, later renamed Worldwide Church of God
5908	1939		World War II commences under direction of German leader Adolf Hitler; the deadliest military conflict in history. Estimates of total combined civilian and military deaths vary between 70 and 85 million
5914	1945		WWII ends - Nazi Germany defeated after killing 6 million Jews (approx. one third of Jews in the world - Rev 9:15,18). Last of 2520 inclusive years, or "seven times", of punishment of the Jews (Lev 26:24; Dan 2:27-45; Dan 4:16-17)
5917	1948		Israel restored (May 1948AD) three years after WWII ends in Europe (May 1945AD); West Jerusalem (90% of the city) captured six months later (Nov 1948AD) during First Arab-Israeli War of 1948-1949AD (Rev 11:11-13; Zech 14:1-2)
5918	1949/50		The Knesset relocates from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; West Jerusalem declared capital of Israel, Jan 23 1950AD, making 5919 the first Jewish regnal year over Jerusalem, 1260 inclusive years since the construction of the Dome of the Rock (Dan 12:7,11)
5919	1950		The "Law of Return" enacted by the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, July 5, allowing all Jews around the world to return to the land of Israel (Rev 11:12) (Dan 12:7 - lit. "when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" - RSV)
5925	1956		Second Arab-Israeli War (Suez Crisis/Sinai War) leads to expulsion of Jews from Egypt and many other Middle Eastern countries 2520 inclusive years after Babylon's second capture of Jerusalem under Zedekiah (Lev 26:28; Isa 11:11-12; Isa 27:13)
5936	1967		Israel captures final 10% of Jerusalem in Third Arab-Israeli War (Six-Day War) (see 5917). Foreign armies (mostly Jordanian) driven out of Jerusalem whereby the "sanctuary (is) cleansed", 2300 inclusive years after Greek rule of Jerusalem starts, the beginning point of Gentile occupiers enforcing false religions, defiling Temple/Temple Mount (Dan 8:14)
5949	1980		The "Jerusalem Law" makes the city Israel's undivided capital, annexing East Jerusalem, July 30, 1290 inclusive years after the construction of the Dome of the Rock (Dan 12:11)
5988	2019		Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak in China, becoming a worldwide epidemic the following year, greatly curtailing freedom of movement until 5991 - death toll estimated between 19 and 36 million (Hab 3:5)
5992	2023		Large-scale Arab attack against Israel on Oct 7 after nightlong idolatrous Israeli dance party during Feast of Tabernacles. Islam v Israel war commences (Zech 12:9; Rev 11:18) (leading to Christ's 5994 coronation in Heaven, beginning Trumpet 7 of Revelation?)
5994	2025/26		Return of government sanctioned Jewish worship on Temple Mount. Downfall of Iran, the final leader of the 7th head of the Beast, through massive Israeli/USA attack starting Feb 2026AD. Nation of Israel becomes invincible military powerhouse, as "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" (Dan 12:7,12 RSV; Lev 26:7-8). 5994 = 666x9 = lawlessness overcome by justice
5995	2026		5995-6001 is typified by Joshua's 6 year conquest and 7th year settlement of the Holy Land. 3476-5995 = 2520 inclusive years - see 3476
6000	2031		Christ's accession to the throne of the world commencing His Millennial rule. 120th Jubilee Year since Creation
6001	2032		First year of Christ's Millennial rule. 5917-5995 = 78 years, typified by Jacob (Israel) who was 78 when he was betrothed to Rachel. 5995-6001 is typified by Jacob working 7 inclusive years before marrying Rachel. Jacob and Rachel are types of Christ and His bride (the Church)

DAY 1 (of Creation + millennial event) "Day" & "Night" created (Gen 1:5) = God and Satan revealed to mankind

DAY 2 "God divided the waters" (Gen 1:6-7) = The nations separated (Gen 10+11)

DAY 3 "Earth" and "Seas" separated; vegetation and trees created (Gen 1:9-13) = The creation of Israel and its separation from the Gentile lands. Israel pictured as various types of fruit trees; created to bring forth "fruit" for God (Earth = Heb. "Eretz"; Land of Israel = Heb. "Eretz Yisrael")

DAY 4 "the greater light and the lesser light" and "the stars also" (Gen 1:14-16) = Christ and the Church manifested + Commencement of the creation of the family of God (Gen 37:9-10; Isa 9:1-2; Matt 4:12-16; Matt 5:14-16; Rev 12:1)

DAY 5 "the great sea monsters" and "every winged bird" (Gen 1:21) = Separation of demons and angels: Satan and demons permanently excluded from the presence of God (Jn 12:31)

DAY 6 "Let us make man in our image" (Gen 1:26) = Birth of the firstfruits of the family of God at the return of Christ (before the 6001st year, otherwise it would no longer be the sixth millennial day)

DAY 7 God "ended His work" (Gen 2:2) = Millennial rule of Christ

2083-2513 = 430 exact lineal year sojourn (Ex 12:40-41; Gal 3:17)

2114-2513 = 400 inclusive year affliction of Abraham's descendants through Isaac

2107-2559 = 453 inclusive years, or "about 450 years", from the choosing of the fathers until the division of the land (Acts 13:17-20 NIV, NASB, YLT)

2513-2992 Temple started in 480th Year (479 years + 1 month) after Exodus (I Kings 6:1)

2513 years from Creation and Adam and Eve's sin until the Exodus

Had Israel not incurred an extra 39 years of wandering in 2514, they would have taken possession and dwelt peacefully in the Holy Land 2520 years after man's first sin, because the conquest and division of the land took seven inclusive years

2552-2852 = 300 years from Heshbon's capture until Jephthah's statement to the Ammonites in Judges 11:13-28

2909-3410 = 502 inclusive years of Israel and Judah's time in the Holy Land from their rejection of God as King, until their full removal by the Babylonians

These years contain 70 (unkept) Sabbatical years, or Land Sabbaths

(Lev 26:34; II Chron 36:21)

3017-3406 = 390 inclusive years from Solomon leading Israel into idolatry, until all Israel has gone into captivity (Eze 4:4-6)

3028-5547 (942BC-1578AD)

3273-5792 (697BC-1823AD)

= 2520 inclusive years ("seven times") of Ephraim (Britain) and Manasseh's (USA) birthright being withheld and Israel in general deprived of their blessings (Lev 26:18,21)

"Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you" (Gen 35:10-11)

See also all of Gen 48

History shows that the USA became the "nation", and the British Empire became the "company of nations" here foretold

3395-5914 (575BC-1945AD)

3406-5925 (564BC-1956AD)

= 2520 inclusive years of persecution and punishment of Jews starting with Nebuchadnezzar's first and second capture of Jerusalem and enslavement of Jews, ending with the liberation of Nazi Germany concentration camps, and the Suez Crisis / Sinai War, leading to the return of the Jews to the land of Israel from the Christian and Islamic nations (Lev 26:24,28; Rev 11:2-3; Isa 27:13)

From 4655 until 5914 (686AD-1945AD) are 1260 inclusive years during which the Jews (the Two Witnesses) were given into the hand of the "little horn" (Dan 7:25; Rev 11:3, Rev 13:5)

Prior to 4655 (686AD) the Papacy / Christianity was not autonomous and so was not yet a "horn"

In 5914 (1945AD) the little horn / eighth head of the Beast had his dominion taken away, after which the Jews stood back up on their feet and once again took possession of their country and holy city three and a half years later (Dan 7:26; Rev 11:11-13)

Dan 7 Beast 1 Babylonian rule over Jerusalem 3395-3476 (575BC-494BC) Gold in Dan 2 statue

Dan 7 Beast 2 Medo/Persian rule over Jerusalem 3476-3637 (494BC-333BC) Silver in Dan 2 statue

Dan 7 Beast 3 Greco/Roman rule over Jerusalem 3637-4606 (333BC-638AD) Bronze in Dan 2 statue. The two thighs depict Rome and Constantinople (See below for continuation as the eighth head of the Beast)

Dan 7 Beast 4 Mecca/Medina's Islamic rule over Jerusalem, three times interspersed with Catholic / Christian rule 4606-5914 (638AD-1945AD) Iron and clay in Dan 2 statue

The two iron lower legs depict the two "holy cities" of Islam in Arabia, as the Rashidun caliphate conquered and ruled Jerusalem 4606-4630 (638AD-661AD): a "short space" (Rev 17:10)

The feet and toes of iron and clay picture the 10 Islamic dynasties that ensued, having their "hour" in history (Rev 17:12), starting with the Umayyad dynasty and ending with the Ottoman Empire

The bronze nails or claws of this beast (Dan 7:19) refer to the three instances when the eighth (Catholic/ Christian) head of the Beast, which is the continuation of the third beast, three times reconquered (clawed back) Jerusalem

Babylon falls after 70 inclusive years since destroying Jerusalem

Ephesus Church Era ~4000-4069 (30-100AD)

Smyrna Ch. Era ~4069-4281 (100-313AD)

Pergamos Church Era ~4281-5064 (313-1095AD)

Thyatira Church Era ~5064-5316 (1095-1347AD)

Sardis Ch. Era ~5316-5424 (1347-1455AD)

Philadelphia Church Era ~5424-5829 (1455-1860AD)

Laodicea Church Era ~5829 until Christ's return (1860AD-?)

70 inclusive yrs of Judah's Land Sabbaths (II Chron 36:21; Jer 25:9-11)

3481-3963 marking 7+62 = 69 "weeks" of 70 Week Prophecy (Dan 9:24-27)

3481-3529 = 49 and 3530-3963 = 434

Total = 483 inclusive years

70th "week" of 70 Week Prophecy

4660-5919 (691AD-1950AD) = 1260 inclusive years from construction of the Dome of the Rock until the restoration of Jewish government in 90% of Jerusalem captured by the State of Israel in the War of Independence, and enactment of "Law of Return" (Dan 12:7,11; Rev 11:12)

4660-5949 (691AD-1980AD) = 1290 inclusive years from when "the daily sacrifice is taken away", meaning Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount was prohibited, at the time the Islamic "abomination of desolation is set up" i.e. when the Dome of the Rock was built, until the Israeli government annexation of final 10% of Jerusalem by enactment of "Jerusalem Law" (Dan 12:11)

4660-5994 (691AD-2025AD) = 1335 inclusive years from the construction of the Dome of the Rock, until "the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end" (Dan 12:7,12 RSV)

70 inclusive years of Jerusalem's desolation (Dan 9:2)

3637-5936 (333BC-1967AD) = 2300 inclusive years from commencement of Greek rule over Jerusalem (the vision of the he-goat - Dan 8:5) leading to successive Greek, Roman and Islamic enforced defilement of the Temple / Temple Mount, until Jerusalem is cleansed of foreign armies in the Six-Day War (Dan 8:13-14: literally 2300 evenings and mornings; Genesis 1 shows that an evening and a morning constitute one day)

Roman AD years are converted to AM years by adding 3969, but years begin Abib 1, not Jan 1

Note: Years start on the 1st of Abib in the Northern Hemisphere (Ex 12:2, 13:4, 23:15)

This means that regardless of a person's date of birth in their "birth year", the following calendar year, starting with the first day of the first month, is counted as the first year of one's age. This same rule applies to the reigns of kings, i.e. the year that a new king acceded to the throne was his "accession" year, but the first day of the first month of the following year commenced his first "regnal" year (2314BC)

For a detailed chart of the Divided Kingdom period, between the years 3029 and 3406, see the page "Chronological Charts" at www.lettertolaodicea.net

Regarding the identity of the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther: Esther 1:1 states that the realm of this Persian ruler stretched from India to Ethiopia. The historic writings of Herodotus show that India was captured by Darius the Great, whilst Egypt and Ethiopia were subdued by Darius' predecessor Cambyses. Under the Persian ruler after Darius the Great, Xerxes, the extent of the empire began to shrink, so the Persian Empire reached its fullest dimensions under Darius the Great. As there was more than one Ahasuerus - Darius the Mede's father was also called Ahasuerus (Dan 9:1) - Esther 1:1 explains that the story of this book is about the Ahasuerus who ruled the territory described here which can only be Darius the Great (Confirmed in the Greek version of Ezra called Esdras. Compare Est 1:1-3 with I Esdras 3:1-2).

Regarding the Greco/Roman Empires: Dan 7:6 states that the third "beast" has four heads, but Dan 8:8-9 mentions that it has six horns, i.e. six parts. "Heads" are independent major rulers over Jerusalem, and history reveals the four heads as shown on the chart. Of the four divisions of Alexander's kingdom (which was the first head), called "four prominent horns" in Dan 8:8 referring to the four original leaders, only two, the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties, ruled over Jerusalem. Rome, the "little horn" (Dan 8:9), emerged from a former Macedonian colony at Palatine Hill, became "exceedingly great", and conquered Jerusalem as the fourth head of the Greek "beast".

"No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years .... of the reign of Elizabeth. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. And its effect ..... was simply amazing. The whole temper of the nation was changed. The whole nation became, in fact, a Church." J R Green - A Short History of the English People (1874AD).

Regarding the Philadelphia era: The quality of a Church era is determined by the work that God is able to do within His people during a given period of time. The people of the Philadelphia era not only exceeded later generations in sheer hard labour, endurance and the splendour and ingenuity of their physical achievements, they were also made of much sterner stuff than we are today spiritually. They displayed a significantly higher level of Godly character compared to our Laodicean era which has become weak and compromised through prosperity and the influence of the world during the last century and a half before Christ's return. Qualities like unwavering loyalty to God (rather than to men), deep devotion to the study of God's Word, and genuine humility have long since been replaced by far more shallow, carnal and egocentric character traits among the people of God.

The Roman year running from spring 1823 to spring 1824AD marked the 2520th Biblical year since the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and its capital, Samaria. As I Chron 5:1 states, the birthright that had belonged to Reuben (France) had fallen to Joseph (Britain and the USA), but was withheld for "seven times" or 2520 years, according to Lev 26. Leading up to the completion of this time period, many wars were fought between these three nations. According to Gen 28:14 the Israelites would spread to the North, South, East and West of the Earth. The greatest beneficiary of this blessing was to be Britain. Britain is located in the North, held substantial portions of Canada to the West, South Africa and Australia to the South, and India and Ceylon to the East, as well as many other territories. The Anglo-Dutch treaty of March 17, 1824AD (the last month of the 2520 year period), gave Britain possession of Singapore - the "gate" to the Far East. This finalised the framework on which the British Empire was constructed over the following hundred-plus years, in accordance with the prophecies of God's Word.

Compiled by Ron Mey and subject to ongoing updates
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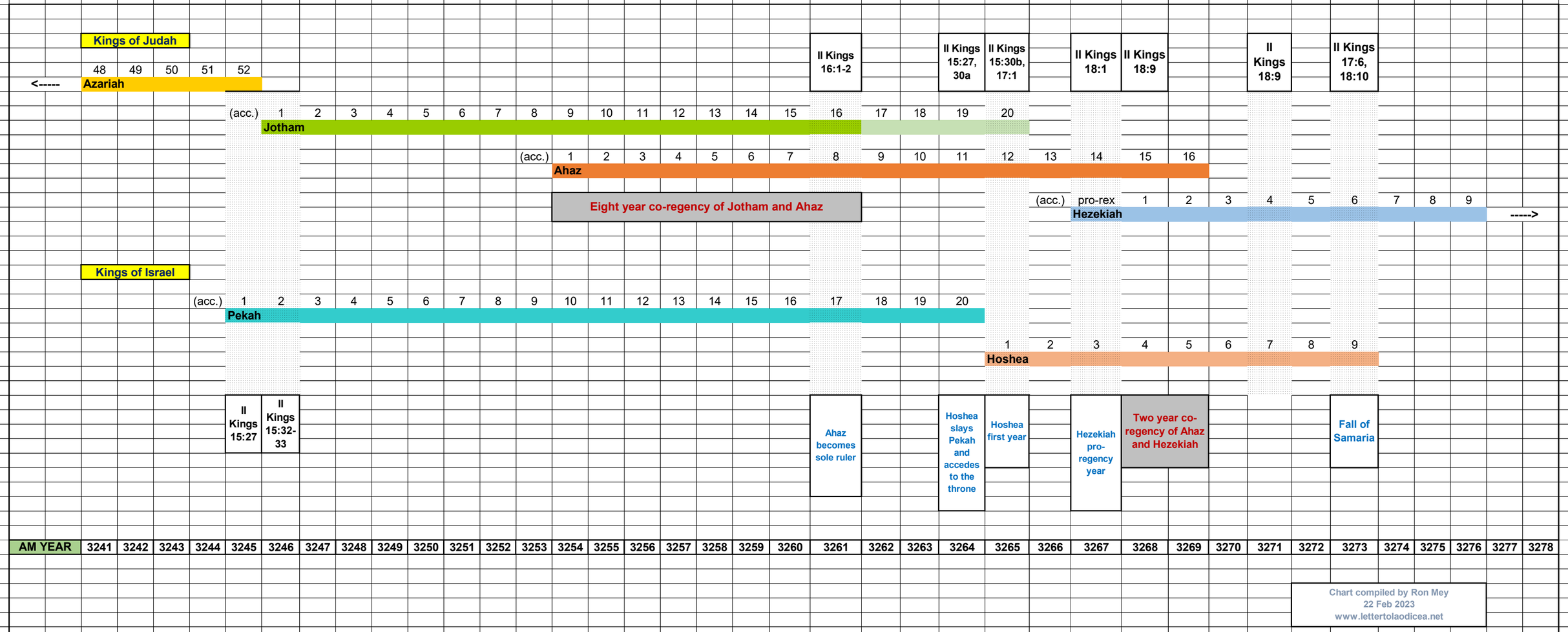
Chronology and Harmony of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah from the division after Solomon's death until the fall of Jerusalem in the 11th year of Zedekiah

AM Year begins Abib or Nisan 1 Ex 12:2	Kings of Judah (x) = regnal year (Tx) = Total regnal years	Kings of Israel (x) = regnal year (Tx) = Total regnal years	Scriptural references and Notes
3029	Rehoboam (1) (T17)	Jeroboam (1) (T22)	I Kings 11:42-12:20, 14:20-21. All of Judah's kings ruled from Jerusalem. Jeroboam appears to have ruled from Shechem and Tirzah - I Kings 12:25 and 14:12,17 (941BC)
3046	Abijam (1) (T3)	Jeroboam (18)	I Kings 15:1-2
3047	Abijam (2)	Jeroboam (19)	Asa appointed caretaker ruler (pro-regent) in Jerusalem most likely because of Abijam's large scale warfare against Jeroboam and Israel - II Chron 13
3048	Abijam (3), Asa (pro-regent)	Jeroboam (20)	I Kings 15:9 - Asa pro-regent. Accession year of Asa. This cannot be Asa's first year, because Jeroboam's 22nd year is Asa's 2nd year and Nadab's first year, when Baasha conspired against Nadab
3049	Asa (1) (T41)	Jeroboam (21)	Accession of Nadab as co-regent with Jeroboam. If "the Lord struck him (Jeroboam)" during this year (but he died the next year), it would explain Nadab's coronation as co-regent - II Chron 13:20
3050	Asa (2)	Jeroboam (22), Nadab (1) (T2)	I Kings 14:20, 15:25. Jeroboam (22) co-regent with Nadab (1) - Baasha "conspired against" Nadab (after the death of Jeroboam), having himself coronated rival king - I Kings 15:27
3051	Asa (3)	Nadab (2), Baasha (1) (T24)	Nadab (2) co-regent (in rivalry) with Baasha (1), until slain by Baasha - I Kings 15:25-28, 33. Baasha ruled from Asa's 3rd to 26th year - I Kings 15:33. He ruled from Tirzah - I Kings 15:21,33, 16:6
3053	Asa (5)	Baasha (3)	Start of 10 year period of peace in Judah, until Asa (14) - II Chron 14:1
3063	Asa (15)	Baasha (13)	II Chron 15:10 - celebration after defeat of Ethiopians. I Chron 15:19 - "35th year" means of the Kingdom of Judah, therefore 15th year of Asa. "Reign" is also translated "kingdom"
3064	Asa (16)	Baasha (14)	II Chron 16:1 - "36th year", as above, is the year of the Kingdom of Judah, or as Abijam refers to Judah, "the Kingdom of the Lord" - II Chron 13:8
3073	Asa (25)	Baasha (23)	Accession year of Elah. Elah's appointment as co-regent might be explained by the warning given to Baasha in I Kings 16:1-7, leading to Baasha trying to shore up his family's hold on the throne
3074	Asa (26)	Baasha (24), Elah (1) (T2)	I Kings 16:8-10. Baasha (24) co-regent with Elah (1). Baasha's 24 years span the 3rd to the 26th year of Asa - I Kings 15:33. Elah ruled from Tirzah - I Kings 16:8-9
3075	Asa (27)	Elah (2), Zimri (7 days)	Zimri rules from Tirzah for 7 days - I Kings 16:15-17. Zimri kills all of Baasha's family, including Elah, in this year - I Kings 16:10-11. Accession of Omri and Tibni - I Kings 16:15-16,21
3076	Asa (28)	Omri (1) (T12), Tibni (1) (T4)	Omri (1-4) co-regent (in rivalry) with Tibni (1-4) - I Kings 16:15-23. Tibni probably ruled from Tirzah, perhaps favoured by locals there over Omri
3077	Asa (29)	Omri (2), Tibni (2)	
3078	Asa (30)	Omri (3), Tibni (3)	
3079	Asa (31)	Omri (4), Tibni (4)	Death of Tibni, upon which Omri rules as sole ruler - I Kings 16:22-23 - "12 years" = from Asa (28)
3080	Asa (32)	Omri (5)	Omri's first year as sole ruler - I Kings 16:15,16,21-23. Omri ruled from Tirzah for 6 years, this being most probably the first of those six years - I Kings 16:22-24
3085	Asa (37)	Omri (10)	After building Samaria, Omri moves there for his last two years, his son Ahab being made co-regent at the same time, perhaps to bolster power in the new capital - I Kings 16:23-29
3086	Asa (38)	Omri (11), Ahab (1) (T22)	I Kings 16:29. Omri (11-12) co-regent with Ahab (1-2) because Omri's 12 years began in Asa (28). Ahab ruled from Samaria and Jezreel - I Kings 16:29, 18:45, 21:1
3087	Asa (39)	Omri (12), Ahab (2)	Asa begins to develop sickness in his legs - II Chron 16:12
3088	Asa (40)	Ahab (3)	Jehoshaphat's accession year to pro-regency with Asa, almost certainly because of Asa's worsening condition - II Chron 16:12
3089	Asa (41), Jehoshaphat (pro-regent)	Ahab (4)	I Kings 22:41 must be referring to a pro-regent year for Jehoshaphat - see line below. Accession year of Jehoshaphat.
3090	Jehoshaphat (1) (T25)	Ahab (5)	From I Kings 22:51, 22:40 and 16:29 we derive that Ahab's 22nd and final year must be Jehoshaphat's 18th year. Therefore Jehoshaphat's 1st year must be Ahab's 5th year
3095	Jehoshaphat (6)	Ahab (10)	Marriage of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab (approx. year) - II Chron 18:1, II Kings 8:25-27
3096	Jehoshaphat (7)	Ahab (11)	Birth of Ahaziah, future king of Judah (see 3118), from the marriage between Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram, future king of Judah, and Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, king of Israel - II Kings 8:25-27
3105	Jehoshaphat (16)	Ahab (20)	Accessions - Jehoram to pro-regency in Judah; Ahaziah to co-regency in Israel - due to Jehoshaphat and Ahab planning joint war with Syria? War provoked following year by withholding tribute to Syria? War in 3107 when Ahab dies in battle - I Kings 22, II Chron 18. Ahaziah commences ship building with Jehoshaphat - I Kings 22:48-49, II Chron 20:35-37
3106	Jehoshaphat (17), Jehoram (pro-reg. 1)	Ahab (21), Ahaziah (1) (T2)	I Kings 22:51. Ahab (21) co-regent with Ahaziah (1). Accession year of Joram, Ahaziah's brother, after Ahaziah sustains fall, badly injures himself, and dies the following year - II Kings 1
3107	Jehoshaphat (18), Jehoram (pro-reg. 2)	Ahab (22), Ahaziah (2), Joram (1) (T12)	I Kings 22:40, II Kings 1:17, 3:1. Ahab (22) co-regent with Ahaziah (2) and Joram (1). Both Ahaziah and Joram were Ahab's sons. Joram ruled from Jezreel - II Kings 8:29, 9:15-37
3108	Jehoshaphat (19), Jehoram (pro-reg. 3)	Joram (2)	
3109	Jehoshaphat (20), Jehoram (pro-reg. 4)	Joram (3)	
3110	Jehoshaphat (21), Jehoram (pro-reg. 5)	Joram (4)	Accession of Jehoram to co-regent with Jehoshaphat - due to war with Moab and Ammon? - II Chron 20
3111	Jehoshaphat (22), Jehoram (1) (T8)	Joram (5)	Jehoram (1-4) co-regent with Jehoshaphat - II Kings 3:1, 8:16-17
3112	Jehoshaphat (23), Jehoram (2)	Joram (6)	
3113	Jehoshaphat (24), Jehoram (3)	Joram (7)	
3114	Jehoshaphat (25), Jehoram (4)	Joram (8)	
3115	Jehoram (5)	Joram (9)	Jehoram's first year as sole regent (5-7) in Joram's 9th year - I Kings 22:42, II Kings 3:1, 8:16-17, II Chron 21:1,5
3116	Jehoram (6)	Joram (10)	Ahaziah's accession to pro-regent with Jehoram, due to Jehoram being struck down with severe illness - II Chron 21:1,18-19; "two years" reckoned as 3117-3118
3117	Jehoram (7), Ahaziah (pro-regent)	Joram (11)	II Kings 9:29, 8:25-26 - Ahaziah pro-regent. Accession year of Ahaziah, due to Jehoram's worsening condition - II Chron 21:1,18-19
3118	Jehoram (8), Ahaziah (1) (T1)	Joram (12)	Ahaziah (1) - II Kings 8:25-26, co-regent with Jehoram (8). II Chron 22:2 "42 years" = 42nd year of Omri's dynasty. Accession of Jehu after he kills Joram and Ahaziah - II Kings 9-10. Athaliah usurps the throne in Judah. Birth year of Joash, also being the first year of his hiding - II Kings 11:1-4, II Chron 22:10-12. The six years of Joash's hiding are 3118-3123
3119	Athaliah (1) (T6)	Jehu (1) (T28)	Athaliah's first regnal year - II Kings 11:1-3. Jehu's first regnal year - II Kings 9:1-6,23-27, 10:12,17,34-36. Jehu ruled from Samaria. Joash's first calendar year of life
3124	Athaliah (6)	Jehu (6)	II Kings 11:4-20, II Chron 23. Athaliah's death and Joash's anointing in the 6th year of Joash's life, which is the 7th year of his hiding
3125	Joash (1) (T40)	Jehu (7)	II Kings 11:21, 12:1, II Chron 24:1 - Jehu's 7th regnal year is Joash's first regnal year when Joash is 7 years old
3146	Joash (22)	Jehu (28)	II Kings 10:35-36
3147	Joash (23)	Jehoahaz (1) (T17)	II Kings 13:1. Jehoahaz's first regnal year. He ruled from Samaria
3160	Joash (36)	Jehoahaz (14)	Jehoash's accession to pro-regent, probably due to Israel's weakened state after war with Syria - II Kings 13:6-10
3161	Joash (37)	Jehoahaz (15), Jehoash (pro-regent 1)	II Kings 13:10. Jehoash's three year pro-regency commences
3162	Joash (38)	Jehoahaz (16), Jehoash (pro-regent 2)	
3163	Joash (39)	Jehoahaz (17), Jehoash (pro-regent 3)	II Kings 13:1. Jehoash's accession to regent
3164	Joash (40)	Jehoash (1) (T16)	Joash slain by his servants after being wounded in battle - II Chron 24:22-25:3. Accession of Amaziah - II Kings 12:1,19-21
3165	Amaziah (1) (T29)	Jehoash (2)	II Kings 14:1-2. (Approx.) Elisha prophesies that Jehoash will deliver Israel from Syrian oppression - II Kings 13:5,14-25
3178	Amaziah (14)	Jehoash (15)	II Kings 13:13. Accession of Jeroboam II to co-regent, due perhaps to Jehoash being stricken because of his assault on Jerusalem and taking away of Temple items? - II Kings 14:13-14
3179	Amaziah (15)	Jehoash (16), Jeroboam II (1) (T41)	II Kings 14:23. Jehoash (16) co-regent with Jeroboam II (1) - Jeroboam II already "sat on his (Jehoash's) throne" when Jehoash dies - II Kings 13:13
3193	Amaziah (29)	Jeroboam II (15)	II Kings 14:2
3194	Azariah (1) (T52)	Jeroboam II (16)	II Kings 15:1-2 "27th year"= Jeroboam's age. Last year of Amaziah's life (30) in Lachish exile; killed 15 years after death of Jehoash. Year not counted as regnal - II Kings 14:1-2,17,19,23
3219	Azariah (26)	Jeroboam II (41)	II Kings 14:23
3220	Azariah (27)	Zachariah (1) (T12)	II Kings 14:29. Zachariah first regnal year. He ruled 12 years, likely from Tirzah
3231	Azariah (38)	Zachariah (12)	Zachariah moves to Samaria for the last 6 months of his life (in his 12th year of rule) after which he is killed by Shallum - II Kings 15:8-10. Accession of Menahem - II Kings 15:17
3232	Azariah (39)	Shallum (1 month), Menahem (1) (T11)	Shallum not coronated until this year - II Kings 15:13. Menahem coronated in Tirzah in Azariah (38) and rules one year from Tirzah and 10 years from Samaria - II Kings 15:13-17
3243	Azariah (50)	Pekahiah (1) (T2)	II Kings 15:23. Pekahiah's first regnal year. He ruled from Samaria
3245	Azariah (52)	Pekah (1) (T20)	II Kings 15:27. Pekah's first regnal year. He ruled from Samaria
3246	Jotham (1) (T16)	Pekah (2)	II Kings 15:30,32-33,38, II Chron 27:1-9. Jotham's first regnal year. He ruled 16 years from Jerusalem. Jotham ruled as pro-regent (caretaker) during the last years of his father's rule (II Chron 26:21-23)
3253	Jotham (8)	Pekah (9)	Ahaz's accession as co-regent with Jotham, perhaps because of Jotham going out to war with the Ammonites - II Chron 27:5
3254	Jotham (9), Ahaz (1) (T16)	Pekah (10)	Ahaz (1-8) co-regent with Jotham - II Kings 16:1-2 ("17th year of Pekah" refers to Ahaz's sole rule in Jerusalem), 17:1, 15:27,30,32-33
3255	Jotham (10), Ahaz (2)	Pekah (11)	
3256	Jotham (11), Ahaz (3)	Pekah (12)	
3257	Jotham (12), Ahaz (4)	Pekah (13)	
3258	Jotham (13), Ahaz (5)	Pekah (14)	
3259	Jotham (14), Ahaz (6)	Pekah (15)	
3260	Jotham (15), Ahaz (7)	Pekah (16)	
3261	Jotham (16), Ahaz (8)	Pekah (17)	II Kings 16:1. Ahaz sole ruler in Jerusalem - see 3246, 3265. As II Kings 15:37 says "began to send" in Jotham's days, the full attack by Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, described in II Kings 16:5-9, must have occurred after Jotham's death or his period of rule ended, and certainly came as a result of Ahaz's evils - II Kings 16:3,4,10-18, II Chron 28:1-6
3262	Ahaz (9)	Pekah (18)	Ahaz sole regent in Jerusalem - II Kings 15:32-33. Most likely year for the prophecies of Isa 7-10 and the attack on Judah by Rezin and Pekah, who were both dead within about two years
3263	Ahaz (10)	Pekah (19)	
3264	Ahaz (11)	Pekah (20)	Death of Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, after Ahaz had reached out to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, who killed Rezin and captured large parts of the territory of Israel - II Kings 15:29; II Kings 16:5-9, I Chron 5:26. Pekah slain by Hoshea - II Kings 15:30. Hoshea's accession year. Likely year of Ahaz's visit to Assyria - II Kings 16:10-16
3265	Ahaz (12)	Hoshea (1) (T12)	II Kings 15:30, 17:1. Hoshea's first year is Ahaz's 12th year and Jotham's "20th year", seemingly indicating a 12 year co-regency between Ahaz and Jotham. However, as Jotham only ruled 16 years, the co-regency lasted for 8 years, as shown. The "20th year" statement must be given for chronological reasons, unless it indicates that Jotham was deposed as ruler by Ahaz in Jotham's 16th year, but he is still alive in 3265. Hoshea ruled from Samaria
3266	Ahaz (13)	Hoshea (2)	Hezekiah's accession to pro-regent, most likely in response to the invasion by Edom and Philistia, and Tiglath-Pileser's oppression of Ahaz - II Chron 28:17-21
3267	Ahaz (14), Hezekiah (pro-regent)	Hoshea (3)	II Kings 18:1. Hezekiah pro-regent. Accession year of Hezekiah - most probably for the same reasons as previous year
3268	Ahaz (15), Hezekiah (1) (T29)	Hoshea (4)	II Kings 18:9-10. Hezekiah (1-2) co-regent with Ahaz for 2 years (15-16). II Kings 17:1, 18:1-2 and II Chron 28:1 show that Ahaz was only 10 years old when he begat Hezekiah
3269	Ahaz (16), Hezekiah (2)	Hoshea (5)	
3270	Hezekiah (3)	Hoshea (6)	II Chron 29:3. Hezekiah's first year of sole reign, when he cleanses and rededicates the Temple and keeps the Passover in the second month - II Chron 29-30
3271	Hezekiah (4)	Hoshea (7)	Assyrian siege of Samaria commences - II Kings 18:9
3273	Hezekiah (6)	Hoshea (9)	Samaria captured by the Assyrians, ending the Kingdom of Israel - II Kings 18:10 (697BC)
3297	Manasseh (1) (T55)		II Chron 29:1, II Kings 20:20-21:1
3352	Amon (1) (T2)		II Kings 21:17-19
3354	Josiah (1) (T31)		II Kings 21:23-22:1
3384	Jehoahaz (3 months)		II Kings 23:28-34. Jehoahaz rules for 3 months; replaced with Eliakim, renamed Jehoiakim, by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Jehoiachin's accession to pro-regent - II Chron 36:9, II Kings 24:8
3385	Jehoiakim (1) (T11), Jehoiachin (pro-regent 1)		II Kings 23:34-36, II Chron 36:5-6. Jehoiakim's first regnal year. Jehoiachin's first year as pro-regent, probably installed because of the instability in leadership in the previous year
3387	Jehoiakim (3), Jehoiachin (pro-reg. 3)		Nebuchadnezzar, in his accession year, besieges Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's 3rd year. Daniel and others taken to Babylon (Dan 1:1-7)
3388	Jehoiakim (4), Jehoiachin (pro-reg. 4)		Nebuchadnezzar king over Babylon (Jer 25:1, 46:1-2; Dan 1:5 "three years" = 3387-3389)
3395	Jehoiakim (11), Jehoiachin (3 months)		II Kings 24:8-12, II Chron 36:9-10, Jer 22:18-19. Death of Jehoiakim, upon which Jehoiachin accedes to the throne. He reigns 10 days into his third month, at which time he is captured by the Babylonians in Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year, and taken to Babylon the following year. Zedekiah made king by Nebuchadnezzar (575BC)
3396	Zedekiah (1) (T11)		II Kings 24:17-18, II Chron 36:11. Eze 40:1 shows 11 years between the two falls of Jerusalem, confirmed by II Kings 25:1-2; Jer 52:4 and Eze 24:1-2, the latter of which shows that Zedekiah's regnal years are equal to Jehoiachin's "captivty" years, as used by Ezekiel throughout his book.
3406	Zedekiah (11)		Jerusalem captured by the Babylonians, ending the Kingdom of Judah in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar - II Kings 25:8-10; Jer 52:12-14 (564BC)
			*** All regnal years are counted from Abib 1 / Nisan 1 - Ex 12:2
			*** The last year of one king is the accession year of the next king, except in the case of co-regencies
			*** Both Israel and Judah had years where more than one king occupied the throne on the first day of the year - indicated by highlighting as below
	15 years of co-regency	12 years of co-regency	This colour highlighting = years commenced in co-regency involving two or more kings
			*** There are no inter-regnums, i.e. years when no king ruled
			*** Years of reign require: 1) coronation/anointing into the kingly office, and 2) rulership
			*** Pro-regency (caretaker rule) involves a person ruling in some capacity, but without having been coronated/anointed or officially having taken up rule
			*** Many chronologists advocate that regnal years were not enumerated consistently in the Scriptures, and that they supposedly started at different times of the year in the two kingdoms. This defies logic, goes contrary to God's own words in Ex 12:2, and is wholly unnecessary to reconcile the data. The supposed proof of these assumptions is based on interpretations of I Kings 6:1,37-38, Josiah's reforms in II Kings 23 and the "20th year" statements in Neh 1 and 2. All of these "proofs" have been logically rebuffed by other chronologists: - I Kings 6:1,37-38 = the Temple was 7 years under construction, meaning years 5 to 11 of Solomon's reign. In year 4 (2992) the foundation of the Temple was laid, before construction began the next year. - II Kings 23 = Josiah's reforms were not completed when he organised Passover in the first month of his reign. The cleansing of the country might well have continued for many years. - Neh 1 and 2 = the "20th year" in Neh 1 pertains to Nehemiah's years of palace service, not the regnal years of the king given in Neh 2. Nehemiah must have begun work in the palace in Artaxerxes' accession year.
	Chart compiled by Ron Mey Latest update: 23 February 2026 www.lettertolaodicea.net		

Ahaz co-regencies with Jotham and Hezekiah



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