

**THE REVELATION**  
**OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE APOSTLE JOHN:**  
**A COMMENTARY**

**By Apostle Don McIndoo**



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## *Forward*

*A*s one author mentioned, there are almost as many interpretations of the Book of Revelation as there are commentators. As I began to look at some of the literature concerning Revelation, it became obvious to me that the most common interpretations of this book, as well as the most popular, were steeped in a heresy that arose near the same time as the Restoration of the Gospel; namely, that of the rapture and a latter-day “antichrist”.

*I* found that many of my own ideas concerning this book were erroneous and needed to be changed. In talking with others of the Church of Christ, it seemed obvious that many of us held incorrect understandings of this important book of the Bible. So my primary motivation was to gain a better understanding of this revelation of Jesus Christ to the Apostle John.

*Soon*, in my study I discovered there were four primary ways of interpreting the entire book. These will be discussed under the title of Alternate Views on Pages Six through Eleven. Recognizing this fact helped me understand the vast differences I had come across in various commentaries and notes in my Bible.

*Now* I do not suppose to have the final word in understanding this difficult book. Nor do I claim any miraculous inspiration for all that I have written with the exception of something clearly revealed to me, and which I mention in Chapter Sixteen: The Sixth Vial. However, I do believe the Lord has significantly opened my understanding of many things I did not once comprehend.

*My* purpose soon became broader, and I desired that everyone in the Church of Christ would be able to resist and counter the heresies that are so widely accepted by multitudes of Christians. As I was not aware of any great movement within the church to write or teach about this book, I volunteered to present my study up to that time to the ministry of the church at the August Ministers’ Conference.

*This* brought forth a lot of comment, both pro and con. For that I am grateful, for it has become a topic of conversation, and teaching within the church. Many of the ideas presented to me helped enlarge my understanding. And I have had to modify sections previously written, and this may prove to be a continuous task.

*So* I prepared this commentary for the membership of the Church of Christ. I trust you will read it prayerfully. Although I have tried to express my own understanding, the concepts of many others are also included to give you more food for thought. If further modification is necessary, I wish to be so informed. My prayer is that we shall be, as a people, inspired of the Lord to an open communication and a better understanding of the Book of Revelation and those events that lie before us.

*Don McIndoo*

*The Revelation of Jesus  
Christ*

THE REVELATION  
OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE APOSTLE JOHN

SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

*It* would seem wise to present some basic assumptions to help us in a study of the book of Revelation. We shall proceed on the assumption that the author of the book was the Apostle John, while in exile on the Isle of Patmos.

a. Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was a personal friend of John, and Irenaeus was a personal friend of Polycarp. Irenaeus gave a clear testimony that John was the author of Revelation.

b. Andrew, bishop of Caesarea, in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, writes that Papias, Irenaeus, Methodius and Hippolytus all give witness to John's authorship of the book.

c. Justin Martyr was a Christian philosopher who lived shortly after John's supposed death and knew many of John's contemporaries. I wrote "supposed" death because both the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 13: 17, 18 and latter-day revelation) tell us that John did not suffer death.) He was a believer in the millennium and wrote, "And a man from among us by name John, one of the Apostles of Christ, in a revelation made to him has prophesied that the believers in one Christ shall live a thousand years".<sup>1</sup>

2. Another basic assumption we shall make is the book was written about A.D. 96, during the final years of the reign of the emperor, Domitian.

a. On this point, the testimony of the early church fathers is quite uniform.

b. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John. He writes concerning the Revelation: "It was seen no long time ago, but almost in our age, at the end of the reign of Domitian."<sup>2</sup>

c. Clement of Alexandria confirms this by speaking of John returning from his exile "...after the death of the tyrant." He also refers to him as being then "...an infirm old man."<sup>3</sup> The term, tyrant, could refer to either Nero or Domitian. This is important, because the persecution of Nero was in A.D. 64.

d. Jerome, another early church father, wrote that John saw the Apocalypse while on the isle of Patmos, "...when banished thither by the Roman emperor Domitian."<sup>4</sup> This will be our assumption in this study.

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<sup>1</sup> Barnes, Albert, *Notes on the New Testament: Revelation*, W.G. Blackie & Co. 1851, Glasgow, p. xxxii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xlvii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xlvii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xlvii.

3. A third basic assumption is the events unfolding in the book of Revelation are basically sequential in nature. However, it is admitted many scholars see indicators that all the details of Revelation do not follow one another chronologically. Also, many see some passages as being parallel passages to events that had been described earlier. Taking all this into consideration, it will yet be helpful to view the prophecy as basically sequential in nature.

4. The Lord had previously revealed to Nephi (I Nephi 3) a prophetic view of historic events that would unfold in the future. Nephi's vision is basically chronological in nature. Since it covers the same time frame, it will help us to find parallels in these two visions of world history so we might better understand the chronology of Revelation. In one sense, this is precisely the reason for which the Book of Mormon came forth. Its purpose is described in II Nephi 2:19-23:

*"Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; And that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, Unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, And bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; And also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord."*

5. Verse Nineteen of Chapter One demonstrates how the vision will unfold in an orderly manner: Jesus instructed John to do the following:

- a.) *"Write the things which thou hast seen,* (Chapter 1)
- b.) *and the things which are, and* (Chapters 2 through 5)
- c.) *the things which shall be hereafter;"* (Chapters 6 through 22)

(Here we must realize those things which shall be hereafter refers to things after John's day, not necessarily after our own day.)

6. As we read the book, we find seven seals were opened successively. This was followed by seven angels with trumpets which sounded successively. Then seven vials of God's wrath were poured out upon the earth, one by one. Even the language John used throughout the book gives us the idea of the sequential occurrence of the events unfolded to his view: He writes, *"And after these things I saw..."* and *"After this I beheld..."*,

7. One might also assume it is likely those ancient readers of the book of Revelation understood it better, and with less difficulty, than do we. They were familiar with both the customs of the times and with the apocalyptic style of writing which was common in Israel between 200 B. C. and 100 A. D.

# *The Revelation of Jesus* *Christ*

## CHAPTER ONE

*In* the opening verses of Chapter One we find it identified as “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass;*” (Revelation 1:1) This book is an inspired book which contains the revelation of Jesus Christ. Verse Three states in no uncertain terms this book is a “prophecy”. There was unfolded to the eyes of John a vision with a series of successive scenes that predicted events that were to transpire in world history.

2. With these few words I have introduced the *historicist approach* to the book of Revelation. Those who teach this view believe God revealed the entire “church age” in advance through the symbolic visions of the Apocalypse. The *historicist* approach endeavors to align specific historic events with certain details in Revelation. Those early Reformers who were of the *historicist* point of view and who lived after the year 1787, when Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was published, relied heavily upon his detailed work. That is because his unbiased history covered the very events that were prophesied in the Apocalypse, Chapters Six through Thirteen.

3. A unique characteristic of this line of interpretation is its advocacy of what is called the “*year-for-a-day principle*”<sup>5</sup> i.e., forty-two months (42 months of 30 days, or 42 X 30) equals 1,260 days, or years. Another great, and non-negotiable, concept of the *historicist* view is that the papacy represents the great “antichrist” of Revelation. This is the classic approach of the Reformers and early Protestants.<sup>6</sup>

4. Those in the past who took this point of view were John Knox, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Sir Isaac Newton, John Foxe and John Wesley. Elders of the Church of Christ, such as Hedrick, Haldeman, MacGreggor, Flint, Wheaton, Seibel and Sheldon, have long used the ideas and research of these Reformers in support of our concept of an apostasy and a restoration of the church. Basically, this report will incorporate the *historicist* point of view because none of the other systems are reconcilable with our teachings.

## ALTERNATE POINTS OF VIEW

*As* mentioned in the previous section, the points of view expressed in this study will primarily express the *historicist* approach of the early Reformers. It should be recognized, however, there are some alternate points of view about the book of Revelation held by many recognized scholars. We must also be aware of the fact that many of those events in the latter portions of Chapter Sixteen were yet in the future of most of these commentators. As we consider the final six and a half chapters of revelation we are all on common ground, for they are events yet in the future of the commentators. We must rely upon that which has been written in the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for our direction.

2. One of the alternate points of view is sometimes called the *spiritual* approach. Those espousing this viewpoint do not look for specific fulfillment of the prophecies of

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<sup>5</sup> Gregg, Steve, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*, Thomas Nelson, Pub., 1997, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Revelation in a natural sense. They believe the prophecies represent the great themes of triumph of good over evil, the vindication of martyrs and the sovereignty of God without reference to specific historical events. They believe the visions teach spiritual lessons and principles.

3. Another viewpoint common to many theologians is called the *preterist* approach. This point of view about the book of Revelation is based upon the belief by many that it was written during the persecution of Nero, rather than Domitian, and the entire vision pertains to the persecution of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. Others see the second half of the book as pertaining to the fall of Rome. In any event, it was all fulfilled during the early centuries of the Christian era. However, many of the proponents of this approach see the final chapters as describing the second coming of Christ. Many of these theologians are like those who believe the book of Daniel was written at a much later date, after the events had already transpired. They appear to have a far different view of prophecy than does the Church of Christ.

4. When Daniel MacGreggor wrote his great treatise about the Restoration of the Gospel, he documented it with quotations from dozens of Protestant commentators of the previous two centuries. We have already stated their point of view is known as the *historicist* approach. Today you could hardly find one of these authors, or their point of view, in a normal library or religious bookstore. They have become almost non-existent. I have purchased some of their books in used bookstores and some as reprinted volumes. I was also fortunate enough to find their viewpoints presented in a *Parallel Commentary of Revelation*. However, the author of this volume clearly states, "*In our time historicism is clearly not in vogue. My reason for including it in this volume alongside the other approaches is that it survives in most of the classic commentaries of the past few centuries which are still published and used today.*"<sup>7</sup>

5. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, reminds them that the gifts of the Spirit and the Ministry of Christ's church were given so "...we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine..." (Ephesians 4:14). We of the Church of Christ must be aware there is a powerful new "*wind of doctrine*" buffeting the evangelical churches of our day. The descendants of the Reformers are now in a new camp! It is called simply the *futurist* approach.

6. The *futurist* (sometimes called Dispensationalist) school of thought considers all the prophecies of Revelation after Chapters Four and Five relate to events which will take place in a relatively short period of time (the great tribulation) just prior to the return of Christ. The *futurist* tends to look at almost all aspects of the vision as being literal in nature. Unlike the other schools of thought, the *futurist* approach cannot be tested on the basis of historical fact since, from their perspective; the things predicted by John have yet to take place. They will not be embarrassed by any predictions they have wrongly made for they expect to be raptured before that time."

7. This is the popular, commonplace viewpoint today, and growing more popular and accepted by the minute. We shall discuss the reasons for its popularity. One recent reason for a growth-spurt in popularity is the large number of best-selling books in a series called *Left Behind*, by author Tim La Haye. The series covers every aspect of the Rapture and the expected tribulation to be initiated by the Antichrist. For many months

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

the series has been at the top of the best-seller list in the regular market place, to say nothing of the religious bookstores.

8. What had happened to the traditional Protestant *historicist* viewpoint? To counteract the Reformers' teaching that the beasts of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 were manifestations of the Holy Roman Empire and the "little horn" of Daniel 7 and the "man of sin" of II Thessalonians 2 was the pope, the Papacy devised a way to contradict these teachings. The Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, was organized to accomplish this end. Loyola, the founder of this society in 1540, had a definite martial viewpoint, in that he believed his new order "...will do battle in the Lord God's service under the banner of the Cross."<sup>8</sup> Novalis (1772 – 1801), in an essay about the Jesuits, writes of their mission:

9. The mission of the Jesuits will be "...to restore all that was old, ...to revive papal imperium (imperial sovereignty – dem) and restore it to its former majesty and supremacy. ...not even the Senate of old Rome could have laid out its design for world dominion with greater certainty of success."<sup>9</sup>

10. Critics of the *preterist* approach trace the origin of this line of thought to the Jesuits. The Jesuit, Luis de Alcazar<sup>10</sup> (1554 – 1613) proposed "...the fall of Babylon as described in John's Revelation was fulfilled by either the fall of Jerusalem or the fall of pagan Rome. Its mature interpretation advocates that Nero was the Antichrist and the tribulation was the ten persecutions waged by Roman Emperors against the Christians."

11. This concept had few adherents, and the Reformer's view of the pope as the "man of sin" continued unabated. Few Reformers of importance gave much credibility to Alcazar's hypothesis; however, scholars today point to his writings as the basis of the *preterist* approach (see page 6) to the book of Revelation.

12. To find the roots of the *futurist* approach we must return to the Jesuits. In 1585 another Jesuit, Francisco Ribera, wrote his *Apocalyptic Commentary*. To take the heat off the papacy, he wrote that the Antichrist would appear in a future dispensation and wage war on all true Christians. He was to be of the house of Dan and would be opposed by two witnesses for 3 ½ years. Upon killing these witnesses, he would rule the earth for the remaining 3 ½ years of the great tribulation. His conclusions gave rise to the *futurist* school of thought. This approach is sometimes called Dispensationalism.

13. The Society of Jesus was certainly successful in reaching many of their goals. Barthel informs us, "*The Counter-Reformation Pope Gregory XIII (1572 – 1585) was unwilling to deprive himself of the slightest tactical advantage in his struggle against Protestantism, so he decreed that every papal legate should have a Jesuit adviser on his personal staff.*"<sup>11</sup>

14. The real measure of their success is seen in the fact that while the Protestant movement stood firmly against Ribera's *futurist* approach for 200 years, it has now largely deserted its former position, leaving those of the Restoration largely alone,

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<sup>8</sup> Barthel, *The Jesuits*, 1984, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup> Moore, Bob, *Interpretation of Prophecy*, 1999, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barthel, p. 49.

except for the Seventh-Day Adventists, in their *historicist* view. Is this to be expected? I believe it has been prophesied:

*“And he said unto me, Behold, there are save two churches only: The one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; Wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations;”* (1 Nephi 3:220 – 222)

15. One might ask why the Protestants have left; no, better said, can't even remember their forefathers' *historicist* point of view. The answer to this question is also found in Book of Mormon prophecy:

*“And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; And if they shall do all these things, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them;”*  
(III Nephi 7:34, 35)

In truth they have lost the understanding of what they once had because of their rejection of the fullness of the Gospel. Jesus told His disciples, *“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”* (Matthew 13:12)

16. How did this great change come about? The year 1825 *“...was to prove memorable for the public commencement of a revolution in prophetic thought, a revolution which was to have far-flung influences upon the future of Protestant Christianity.”*<sup>12</sup> MacPherson summarizes the previous Protestant point of view concerning prophecy: *“During the Protestant Reformation many, if not most, of the reformers believed that the Roman papacy was the Antichrist. They thought that the prophecies of the book of Revelation would not be fulfilled in the future, but that the fulfillment had been taking place all throughout the church age.”*<sup>13</sup>

17. Concerning the impact of this revolution, Alexander Reese wrote a detailed book in which he reminded us, *“All down the centuries the Church expected Christ's Coming after the arrival of the Antichrist, according to the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. Only in 1830 did a school arise that treats with intolerance, and often with contempt, (Reese is speaking about the futurists who teach He will return before the arrival of the antichrist.) the attitude of those who had looked for Him in the manner just named. Not the slightest respect was paid to a view that had held the field for 1,800 years.”*<sup>14</sup>

18. We really need to focus in on this quotation of Reese for it shows us how Satan, the great adversary of Christ and His work, frequently operates. A perfect example is found in Exodus 7:9-12: *“When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you:*

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<sup>12</sup> Murray, Ian, *The Puritan Hope*, 1971, p. 188.

<sup>13</sup> MacPherson, Dave, *The Incredible Cover-Up*, 1975, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Reese, Alexander, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, 1937, p. 240.

*then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods."*

19. We see that when God's servant did as he was instructed, a miracle took place. But Pharaoh's magicians seemingly, for the moment, duplicated this miracle with a counterfeit. However, when the serpent produced by the Lord ate the product of the magicians, the counterfeit was exposed. Reese's quotation points out that in 1830, when God restored the Church of Christ to earth after 1260 years of apostasy, immediately the Adversary established a counterfeit, which has opposed the work of the Lord from that day forward.

20. This revolutionary point of view "...was finally introduced in Protestant circles by a Samuel Maitland in 1827."<sup>15</sup> Dr. Maitland, an Anglican minister, confessed his thinking had been influenced by Jesuit writers. He began expounding upon these concepts from the pulpit.

21. A few years before this, a minister of the Church of Scotland, named Edward Irving, published a commentary containing similar ideas which were new to the Reformation. His commentary was based upon a work purporting to have been written by a converted Jew, Ben-Ezra. It was later to be revealed "...that the real author was Manuel De Lacunza, a South American Jesuit ..."<sup>16</sup> Irving's book was entitled *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. By 1829 Irving was convinced the church should enjoy the gifts of the Spirit as in the days of the Apostles. Irving, and his followers, organized a church called the Catholic Apostolic Church. He endorsed a new Pentecostal movement in which a woman was to play an important role. The Pentecostal Church came into being and introduced new doctrines for the first time in history.

22. Samuel Tregelles, a commentator on prophecy, and a member of the Brethren in the early days of this movement, wrote, "*I am not aware that there was any definite teaching that there would be a secret rapture of the Church at a secret coming, until this was given forth as an 'utterance' in Mr. Irving's Church, from what was received as being the voice of the Spirit. It came not from the Holy Scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God...*"<sup>17</sup> An eye witness to these events was Robert Norton, and he knew this woman who was the originator of the pre-tribulation rapture theory to be a Margaret MacDonald.<sup>18</sup>

23. In 1830 the banner of the *futurist* interpretation was picked up by John Darby, leader of the Brethren. Of the Brethren one author writes, "...this group, more than any other, was to be responsible for replacing the old Puritan outlook on the future with a new 'orthodoxy'."<sup>19</sup> (The Puritan outlook was that they would one day preach the Gospel to

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<sup>15</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Murray, p. 190.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacPherson, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. Cit.* Murray, p. 197.

Israel. They were eager to teach the Native Americans also.) Darby popularized the concept that Christ would secretly appear before the millennium and the saints would be raptured before the “Great Tribulation” which begins with the reign of the “Antichrist”. He published books in every English-speaking nation. In the U.S. he was read and supported by Moody’s Bible Institute and Scofield’s Bible commentary. Today many fundamentalist seminaries have picked up Darby’s banner and are turning out a host of *futurist* ministers. This concept is now most popular and supported by almost all evangelicals.

24. John Darby has had great influence on Christian thought. One highly regarded theologian <sup>20</sup> speaking about a growing mistrust today of “organized religion” stated that it has grown out of two forces. One of these he identified as “anti-church Darbyism that pervaded the Bible-believing churches during the past generation.”

25. I recently read commentaries on the book of Revelation presented to a Baptist Convention in the 1970’s by three respected Baptist theologians. The three were all of the *spiritualist* persuasion. And yet the typical Baptist pastor and his congregation are *futurists* in their thinking, just as a long-deceased pope had once planned. It has become the most popular and widely read point of view.

26. Many of the scriptures used by the Restoration to support an apostasy of Christ’s church and a restoration of that divine church are at present being misused by fundamentalists to support their *futurist* point of view. They are also misused by mainline Protestant ministry to support their *preterist*, or *spiritualist*, points of view based on Calvinist doctrines. It seems obvious the false concept of the rapture is undeniably tied to the concepts of a seven-year tribulation and a coming antichrist as found in the *futurist* point of view. One is surely no more reliable than the other. This understanding is the primary motivation which prompted my study of Revelation. We of the Church of Christ need to stand firmly on the old, basic *historicist* principles of our forefathers.

27. Just as many of you, I had long considered some of the early chapters in the book of Revelation as being related to things which shall be fulfilled in the future. I now find myself at a place where I refuse to give comfort to that long-dead pope or the Jesuit strategy of deception that has overtaken the world. With the help of the inspiration of those early Reformers, the Book of Mormon and the Holy Spirit I believe we can find a better and, perhaps, more unified understanding of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

28. On the following page I include a very brief comparison of these four viewpoints for your consideration. It is based on the book mentioned earlier, *Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* by Steve Gregg. My comparison just relates to a brief portion of Chapter Nine of Revelation.

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<sup>20</sup> Adams, Jay, *More Than Redemption*, 1979, pp. 276, 277.



# *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

## CHAPTERS ONE THROUGH THREE

*Verse* Seven of Chapter One contains the theme of this book. It presents a majestic view of Jesus Christ, His dominion over heaven and earth and His imminent coming for His church. Allow me to paraphrase the wording of this verse:

- a. *“Behold, he cometh...”* John isn’t saying Christ will come some day in the future. No, he is saying *“I can see Him; He is on His way.”* Each successive event that unfolds brings His imminent arrival one step closer.
- b. *“His coming will be seen by all...”* There are churches today which say He is already here, but did we see Him? No we did not, and Jesus said of His coming, *“Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”* (Matthew 24:26, 27) These words of the Lord make me uncomfortable when I hear people of our church infer His presence in the Temple for a special endowment of the ministry prior to that great event when *“the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- c. *“His coming will bring great sorrow.”* Who shall be those who sorrow? Those who crucified and denied Him. Those who have ignored Him. Those who have opposed Him. Those who have believed, but have not prepared themselves for His coming.

2. In Verse Twenty of Chapter One, we are quickly introduced to another lesson basic to understanding the book of Revelation:

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

3. In this verse we find an example of the symbolism which will be used throughout the book. Here the seven churches of Asia are represented as seven candlesticks, while their ministerial leaders are seen as seven stars in the Lord’s hand. Apocalyptic writings,

such as Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and Revelation, are filled with such symbolism. One commentator writes that in the book of Revelation “...symbolism is the rule, and literalism the exception.”<sup>21</sup>

- a. Personal and national entities might be shown as a dragon, a beast, a lamb, locusts, etc.
- b. Political and social upheavals would be indicated as earthquakes, cosmic disruptions, etc.
- c. The church is shown as a woman, while the apostate church was always shown as a harlot.
- d. Warfare was indicated by a horse (Job 39:19-25; Pr. 21:31; Joel 2:1-4).

4. This symbolism of the apocalyptic literature admittedly makes it more difficult to understand. This is another way the Book of Mormon comes to our aid. When Nephi prophesied he tells us, “*I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out of Jerusalem with my father. For behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn.*” (II Nephi 11:6, 7)

5. But the church in the days of John was under siege. Her enemies were looking for reasons to destroy her. Jesus explained this to His disciples when He said, “*And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*” (Matthew 11:12) So the apostles, Paul and John, when speaking of enemies of the church, couched their words in the symbolism of apocalyptic language familiar to the Jewish people.

6. For more than three hundred years Greece and Rome had ruled this part of the world. They were at war with the people of God, both Jewish and Christian. When nations are at war, they develop codes with which to communicate. With recent technological skills codes are easier to break. One of the reasons for America’s success in the Pacific Ocean war zone of World War II was that the Japanese could never break the code we used in military communications. The government used Navajo “code talkers” to speak to one another, and the Japanese were never able to crack the code.

7. Between 200 B. C. and 100 A. D. hundreds of books were written using a symbolism understood by the believers, yet unintelligible to the pagan rulers. This became the style of the apocalyptic writers, and John made great use of such terminology. It would have been far easier to understand by John’s contemporaries than by educated scholars of our day.

8. Some of that ancient symbolism has found its place in today’s idiomatic English expressions. A case in point comes from a recent *U. S. A. Today*. In an article on August 1, 2001 about the many businesses now remaining open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, we find these words, “*24/7 isn’t just an expression. It’s a cultural earthquake (see paragraph 3b, above.) that is changing the way we live.*”

9. In this same Verse Twenty we are introduced to the Hebrew practice of assigning significance to certain numerical values. Foremost of these is the number, seven – it is

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<sup>21</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 12.

the “*number of completeness, or perfection*”<sup>22</sup>. There were seven churches, seven seals, seven thunders, seven beatitudes, etc.

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 4 & \text{(Number Signifying All of Creation)} & 4 \\
 + 3 & \text{(Number Signifying Deity)} & \times 3 \\
 \hline
 7 & \text{(A Perfect Number; Completeness)} & 12
 \end{array}$$

Multiples of These Perfect Numbers Also Indicate Completeness.

10. Was John’s message, revealed by Christ, intended for just seven churches in present-day Turkey? We have seen that by identifying them as *seven churches*, it was really intended for all the churches. One commentator further states that “...*those of the historicist school* (this refers to me, and I hope you as well) *have called attention to certain parallels between the individual letters and successive periods of church history, from John’s day, until the end.*”<sup>23</sup>

11. Considering this last thought, it might be interesting to contemplate for a moment the words of Jesus to the seven churches of Asia, while bearing in mind seven distinct periods of church history.

- Ephesus*                      the apostolic age (until about 80 A.D.)  
(You cannot bear those who are evil; You have patience and for Christ’s sake have laboured and not fainted.)
- Smyrna*                      the persecuted church (about 80 – 313)  
(Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer for ye shall have tribulation ten days)
- Pergamos*                      the church under Constantine (313 – 500)  
(You have them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.)
- Thyatira*                      the papal church (about 500 – 1500)  
(You suffered that woman Jezebel, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.) (I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, and I will kill her children with death)
- Sardis*                      church of the Reformation (1500 – 1830)  
(You have a name saying that you live, but are dead.)  
(There are a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white)

The next church is the church of Philadelphia. Spicer<sup>24</sup> relates that “*Coeceius (who died in 1669)*” assigned these seven eras of church history as I have outlined them here. Then he wrote of the church of Philadelphia as “*a church yet to come*”. We know that “*church yet to come*” was to be the restored Church of Christ.

- Philadelphia*                      church of the Restoration (1830 -     ) (You have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name.)

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> Spicer, W. A., *Beacon Lights of Prophecy*, Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., Washington D. C., 1935, p. 171.

(Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.)

Laodicea                      the liberal, humanistic church of the latter days

(You are neither cold nor hot: Because you art lukewarm,  
and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.)

(You say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;  
and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and  
blind, and naked.)

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTERS FOUR and FIVE

*John* saw a door opening into heaven; and then he heard a voice which said, “*Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*” The mind of man must first be prepared to receive such terrible and marvelous revelation as was about to be shown to John. Chapters Four and Five present an interlude that will prepare him for a glimpse of those things that are to come upon the world, beginning in Chapter Six.

2. Immediately he saw a throne and the Sovereign who sat upon the throne. John makes no attempt to describe Him. But out of the throne came lightning and thundering, just as the people experienced at Mt. Sinai when the Lord was present. John is made to know the sovereignty of God over the affairs of men upon the earth. Before the throne is a sea of glass, symbolic of peace, majesty and dominion.

3. Around the throne were seated 24 elders, clothed in white and with crowns of gold. Some see these as representing the twelve apostles and the twelve disciples of the New World; however, most *historicists* have a different view. Twenty-four is a multiple of Twelve, another perfect number, signifying completeness. So most commentators see them as representing the entire triumphant, resurrected church, one day to be in the presence of God. Hence, this view is to give strength and encouragement to the earthbound church in the midst of trials and tribulation.

4. Now John saw something that had been seen many years before by the prophet Ezekiel. Around the throne he saw four beasts, each with six wings and many eyes. They were quite similar to those seen by Ezekiel, who identified them in Hebrew as “living creatures”. Most scholars feel that is also a better translation of the Greek. One of these living creatures had the face of a lion, emblematic of dominion and authority. Another had the face of a young bull calf, symbolic of strength and endurance. The third living creature displayed the face of a man, designating intelligence, while the fourth had the face of an eagle, indicative of rapidity and power. Now this is symbolism at its utmost!

5. What are these strange living creatures? Ezekiel identifies them as cherubim. They seem to have great authority, given them of God. Remember how the Lord placed

cherubim at the eastern side of the Garden of Eden as guardians? (See Genesis 3:24) The wings of these cherubim indicate their readiness to do the will of the Lord, while their many eyes symbolize their constant vigilance.

6. The last verse of Chapter Four contains one of the fundamental themes of the Revelation, the majesty and omnipotence of God the Father. All present in this scene cried out, *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”*

7. Now in Chapter Five John sees in the hand of the Sovereign on the throne there is a book, and it is sealed with seven seals. In the days of John there were not printed books as we know them, so this must have been a scroll. To “seal” a book is to keep it from being read, or understood. These seals are so arranged that the opening of one seal only reveals one portion of the book. John is made sad, and he wept for there was no one worthy to remove the seals and open the book.

8. And then appeared the Lord Jesus, in the form of a sacrificial Lamb. He came forward and took the book from the One seated upon the throne. All those about the throne sang a new song: It was a song about the sacrifice and redemption made by the Lamb which brought them to this exalted station and which made Him alone worthy to open the book. All creation gave honor and glory to the Lamb forever. This is the second major theme of the book of Revelation, that redemption made possible only by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Only He is able to open the book and reveal the future history of man.

9. These two great themes found in Chapters Four and Five will be emphasized throughout the book of Revelation. One day all mankind will confess these two great themes before the throne of God.

## THAT WHICH SHALL BE HEREAFTER

*What* shall be presented in this study, in addition to my understanding, is an overview of *historicist* thought and writing about those things that were to take place in the world after the days of the Apostle John. Rejecting the *preterist*, the *spiritual* and the *futuristic* approaches (See section on Alternate Points of View) to Revelation, I look to the *historicist* to help me find some firm, stable ground within the quagmire of ideas that permeates the religious world today, especially concerning the book of Revelation.

2. Early on in my study of Revelation I was cited the following scripture: *“And then shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John, be unfolded in the eyes of all the people.”* (Ether 1:113) Then I was told that when the prophecies of John were fulfilled, we would easily be able to recognize to what they referred. Now if that be a correct understanding of what is said in the book of Ether, all the more reason to examine the pages of history to understand those events that began shortly after the days of the apostle. We find differing points of view even among the historicists, and we may need to further modify some of their thought to make it applicable to what we now know to be true. This overview is but our beginning point. Our spiritual journey begins with Chapter Six of the Apocalypse.

3. This is the chapter of the well-known “Horsemen of the Apocalypse”. Let us remember that the approach of the *historicist* is *“...to align specific historic events with certain*

*details in Revelation.*” Each new portion of the Revelation often ends with a concluding, or summarizing, statement. So it is with Chapter Six as the first six seals were opened. The chapter is summarized with these words: *“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:17) So we see the opening of these seals is all about the wrath of God being poured out upon those in the world. That will help us interpret the scenes correctly.

4. Simply stated, the pertinent question is “Upon whom shall the wrath of God first fall?” When we have the answer to that question, we know in what point of history to look for the fulfillment of this portion of Revelation. At a point in this chapter, with the opening of the fifth seal, John arrives at a scene unfolding in heaven (Revelation 6:9-11) where he sees the souls of Christian martyrs who had given their lives for their testimony of Christ. By whom were these believers martyred?

5. Christianity, quite by design, had her birthing during the very time when the fourth great beast of Daniel 7 had dominion over the known world. That fourth beast of Daniel’s vision represented the Roman Empire. Her pride and pagan beliefs and, above all, her demand for emperor worship, made her an enemy, both to God and His people. Yet I said by God’s design, for it would be by the Roman conquest of the known world, by Roman law and peace and by Roman roads that Christianity would be carried to the Gentiles, thus fulfilling the great purpose of Jesus Christ (See Matthew 28:19 and Acts 9:15).

6. Let us look again to the Book of Mormon for help in answering this all-important question, “Upon whom shall the wrath of God first fall?” Nephi, in his vision of world history, saw the beginning of the Christian era. He also saw the enemy of Christ and His church. He simply stated it like this: *“I saw the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb...”* (1 Nephi 3:88) This was Rome that Nephi saw; a nation that did not even exist when he had departed from Jerusalem. He described this enemy of God’s people in the following manner:

*“And I beheld that they were in a large and spacious building, like unto the building which my father saw. Behold the world and the wisdom thereof; And it came to pass that I saw... that the great and spacious building was the pride of the world;”* (verses 90, 91, and 93)

7. He also saw the growing enmity of the Jewish leadership toward the new Christian movement, and their willingness to use Roman law and authorities to persecute Christ’s people. However, by the time the apostle had received this Revelation of Jesus Christ (*circa* A. D. 96), the wrath of God had already fallen upon the Jewish nation; Jerusalem had been destroyed by Rome in A. D. 70 and her people carried into captivity.

8. So that which was seen by Nephi now relates to the empire of Rome. Nephi tells what is going to happen to this great enemy of Christ and His work. As we are accustomed to expect when reading the Book of Mormon, he states quite simply, *“And it fell; and the fall thereof was exceeding great. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying, Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”* (verses 94 and 95)

9. So I conclude *“that which shall be hereafter”* will begin with the wrath of God poured out upon the Roman Empire, bringing about its great collapse. Revelation 1:1 tells us its purpose is to show to the servants of Christ *“...things which must shortly come to pass.”* It wouldn’t do justice to the English language to suppose these events would be 1,900

years in the distant future. We would naturally look for their beginning in the time just subsequent to the days of John and the reign of Domitian, the cruel emperor of John's day. So the *historicist* looks to the history of Rome for those events that will correspond to those described in Chapter Six of Revelation. All the classical *historicists*, together with George Njeim of the RLDS and many ministry of the Church of Christ are in basic agreement about the removal of the first four seals and their interpretation.

## *The Revelation of Jesus* *Christ*

### CHAPTER SIX: THE APOCALYPSE

*John* saw the Lamb remove the first of the seals and was spoken to by one of the living creatures: “*Come and see.*” (Revelation 6:1) John looked and beheld a white horse. Upon it was a rider carrying a bow and wearing a crown. He went forth conquering and to conquer. There are five symbols used in describing this first event:

- a. A horse - This symbolizes fleetness, strength and war.  
“*The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord.*”  
(Proverbs 21:31)  
“*Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.*” (Zechariah 10:3)
- b. Its color was white - This denotes innocence, prosperity or triumph.  
To the Hebrew white was chosen to represent triumph. “*Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment,*” (Judges 5:10)
- c. Its rider held a bow – This is the symbol of the warrior, the hunter, one who has power over others.  
“*Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.*”  
(Genesis 48:22)  
“*But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob;*” (Genesis 49:24)
- d. He was given a crown - This denotes that he would be victorious.  
“*And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown;*” (1 Corinthians 9:25)
- e. He went forth conquering - He had the attitude of a conqueror.

2. The *historicist* equates this white horse with the Roman Empire during the reigns of the five emperors succeeding Domitian, from A.D. 96 to the time when Commodus, the sixth Roman emperor after John received the revelation, made peace with the Germans in A.D. 180. Those classical *historicists* who lived after 1787, when Edward Gibbon finished publishing his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, relied heavily upon

Gibbon's classic work. Their major concern is, therefore, can they find in the pages of history the unfolding of events that can be adequately portrayed by the symbolism used in Revelation?

3. Albert Barnes says this of the famous historian: "...a writer who, sceptic as he was, seems to have been raised up by Divine Providence to search deeply into historic records, and to furnish an inexhaustible supply of materials in confirmation of the fulfillment of the prophecies, and of the truth of revelation."<sup>25</sup>

4. And what did Gibbon have to say about this period of time that could relate to the very symbols John used to describe these events? He described how Emperor Trajan, the second Roman emperor after John's experience on the isle of Patmos, "...undertook an expedition against the nations of the East; He descended the River Tigris, in triumph, from the mountains of Armenia to the Persian Gulf. Every day the astonished senate received the intelligence of new names and new nations that acknowledged his sway."<sup>26</sup>

5. Then under Emperor Hadrian, the third in this succession of rulers, "...the empire flourished in peace and prosperity."<sup>27</sup> "If a man were called to fix the period of the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus."<sup>28</sup> The *historicist* commentator, Barnes, also states that during this period, "The crown was...the distinguishing badge of the Roman emperor."<sup>29</sup> Later it would be the diadem, an ornamental cloth headband which was worn as a crown. Had John lived after this period of history he described in Verse Two of Chapter Six and seen all that had transpired, he could not have chosen more accurate symbols to describe this era.

6. John's attention is caught by the voice of the second living creature, who calls him again to "Come and see." (Revelation 6:3) As the second seal is opened John sees a fiery red horse. To the rider of this horse was given a sword. It was granted unto him to take peace from the earth. In the Greek the word peace was accompanied with an article; hence, take *the peace* from the earth. Finally, people would be killing one another. Again there are five symbols John uses to describe this period of history. These symbols seem quite self explanatory.

- a. The horse - Symbolic of fleetness, strength and war.
- b. It is fiery red - This denotes carnage, discord and bloodshed.
- c. A sword - An emblem of authority, bloodshed and slaughter.
- d. To take away peace - The former peace replaced by discord and bloodshed.
- e. Kill one another - Implies internal chaos, strife and bloodshed.

7. Thinking of what time period John was speaking, it is natural to think of that which followed the opening of the first seal. The *historicist* relates the appearance of this fiery red horse to the reign of the emperor Commodus, A.D. 180 until the A.D. 284. We now

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<sup>25</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 142.

<sup>26</sup> Gibbon, Edward, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 1, Philadelphia, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>29</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 145.

look to the historians to describe this time period, to see if it indeed relates to John's description of his vision.

8. Gibbon devotes 147 pages to this period of Roman history, beginning with Commodus. He writes that during the first three years of his *reign* "...his hands were yet unstained with blood." But then, he wrote, "*When Commodus had once tasted human blood, he was incapable of pity or remorse.*"<sup>30</sup> Commodus was assassinated by his own court, since they feared for their very lives. The historian, Sismondi, in his *Fall of the Roman Empire*, writes, "*With Commodus' death commenced the third and most calamitous period. It lasted ninety-two years, from 193 to 284. During that time, thirty-two emperors, and twenty-seven pretenders to the empire, alternately hurried each other from the throne, by incessant civil warfare.*"<sup>31</sup> This state continued until Diocletian ascended to the throne in 284 A.D. Just as pronounced as the difference between a white and red horse was the difference between these two periods of Roman history. This last period saw the beginning of the collapse of the great empire.

### ROME'S DECLINE

*Now* the lamb opened the third seal. Again, John was commanded to "*Come and see.*" (Revelation 6:5) This time he viewed a black horse. The rider of this horse had a pair of balances in his hand. A voice from the throne of God said, "...a quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius..." The voice also said, "*Do not harm the oil and the wine.*" Again we have five symbols used by John to describe this period of history and its events.

- a. The horse - Still symbolic of strength, fleetness or war.
- b. Its black color - This color denotes famine, pestilence, taxation or invasion.  
*"We gat our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness. Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine."* (Lamentations 5:9, 10)  
*"The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the death. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up."* (Jeremiah 14:1, 2)
- c. A pair of scales - Denotes equity, justice or taxation and oppression.  
*"He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress."* (Hosea 12:7)
- d. The price of grain - When the balance is used in conjunction with sale of grain or food, it denotes scarcity and great distress.  
*"And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied."* (Leviticus 26:25, 26)
- e. Luxury items not to be harmed - It is difficult to find in the scripture references as to what this symbolizes, but the history of Rome recorded by Gibbon clearly

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<sup>30</sup> Op. Cit., Gibbon, pp. 138, 139.

<sup>31</sup> Op. Cit., Barnes, p 149.

reveals its significance.

2. In the previous period of history the emperor, Caracalla, had made all free people in the empire citizens of Rome. This was not to extend them great benefits, but to make their properties taxable by the empire. The historian, Gibbon, wrote, "The most wealthy families were ruined by the partial fines and confiscations, and the great body of his subjects oppressed by ingenious and aggravated taxes."<sup>32</sup>

3. The next period of Roman history finds the emperors imposing just such a rigid system of taxation; most especially was their cruelty extended toward the Christians during this time. Historians have written volumes about the cruel methods of the tax collectors and the great scarcity and suffering they caused. To explain the reference to the "oil and the wine", Gibbon translates an ancient Roman codex thusly: "If any one shall sacrilegiously cut a vine, or stint the fruit of prolific boughs, and craftily feign poverty in order to avoid a fair assessment, he shall, immediately upon detection, suffer death, and his property be confiscated." (Cod. Theod. page 358, note)<sup>33</sup> Once again, one finds that the symbolism used by John will be described in full by historians who shall write about that period.

4. As the fourth seal was opened, John was again invited to "Come and see." (Revelation 6:7) What he saw was a pale horse. Its rider was Death and Hell was seen riding with him. According to Strong's Concordance this word used for "hell" should be translated Hades, or the abode of the dead. This would seem to indicate the number of those killed would be so great as to make the earth appear as the abode of the dead. Power was given him to kill a fourth of the earth or, rather the Roman Empire. This rider would kill with the sword, with hunger and the beasts of the earth. What John saw is portrayed by eight symbols.

- a. A horse - Symbolic of fleetness, strength and war.
- b. Pale in color - Denotes the pallor associated with death, usually by pestilence or famine.
- c. Death and Hell (Hades) - This pictures legions of the dead and the abode of the dead.
- d. Power to kill - We should search history for some great calamity.
- e. The sword - Indicates we are to look for warfare.
- f. Hunger - The famine which accompanies warfare.
- g. With death - We should look for death aside from warfare, surely pestilence.
- h. Beasts of the earth - Beasts multiply and take advantage of the situation.

5. The events which bear out the symbolism of the fourth seal seemed to have occurred from about A. D. 250 until A. D. 284 in Roman history. The historicist Albert Barnes, quotes Gibbon, who described these events as faithfully as would a believer desirous of giving proof to Biblical revelation. Gibbon wrote, "During this calamitous period every instant of time was marked, every province of the Roman world was afflicted by barbarous invaders and military tyrants, and the ruined empire seemed to approach the last and fatal moment of its dissolution." (Vol.1., p. 135) He goes on to say, "...a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the present, and

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<sup>32</sup> Op. Cit., Gibbon, p. 189.

<sup>33</sup> Op. Cit., Barnes, p. 152.

the hope of future harvests.” (Vol.1, p. 159) Then he turns to another of the symbols: *“Famine is almost always followed by epidemical diseases, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. Other causes must, however, have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the year 250 to the year 265, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family of the Roman empire. During some time five thousand persons died daily at Rome; and many towns that had escaped the hands of the barbarians were entirely depopulated.”* (Vol.1, p. 159) Gibbon said nothing about beasts, but Eusebius<sup>34</sup> wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, *“Death waged a desolating war with...famine and pestilence....Men wasted away to mere skeletons, stumbling hither and thither like mere shadows, trembling and tottering. They fell down in the midst of the streets.... Some indeed were already the food for dogs.”*<sup>35</sup>

6. When the fifth seal was opened, John’s view was transferred to heaven, and the throne of God. Here he saw the souls of those who had been martyred for their testimony. (This scene is Biblical proof that the soul does not die, does not sleep nor lose consciousness as many believe.) These saints were concerned about the vengeance a just God might pour out upon their persecutors, but they were told to be patient and *“rest a little while longer”* (Revelation 6:11) until other servants would be martyred. They were given the white robes associated with the bride of Christ. This is borne out in other passages of the Revelation: *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 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.”* (19:7, 8) and *“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”* (Revelation 3:4, 5)

7. This vision that unfolded with the opening of the fifth seal is quite well placed in terms of the era we have just reviewed. Barnes writes, *“Diocletian ascended the throne A. D. 284 and resigned the purple A. D. 304. It was during this period ... that the tenth persecution of the Christians occurred – the last under the Roman power; for in A. D. 306 Constantine ascended the throne, and ultimately became the protector of the church.”*<sup>36</sup>

8. In *The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge* we read this: *“This seal seems a prediction of the terrible persecution of the church under Dioclesian (sic) and Maxamian, from A. D. 270 to 304, which lasted longer, and was far more bloody, than any or all by which it was preceded, whence it was called ‘the era of the martyrs’.”*<sup>37</sup>

9. As the sixth seal is opened, John sees the unfolding of cataclysmic events. First, he sees a great earthquake take place, followed by signs in the sun, moon and stars, so that heaven and earth seemed about to collapse. So ominous was the portent of destruction that all men, from kings to slaves, hid themselves in the rocks and begged the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. These verses are filled with symbolism, but it is readily explained.

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<sup>34</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 116.

<sup>35</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, pp. 156, 157.

<sup>36</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, pp. 160, 161.

<sup>37</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 118.

- a. The great earthquake - Symbolizes political or spiritual revolution.
- b. Signs in the sun, moon and stars - Represented earthly dignitaries and political authorities.
- c. Men pleading for the rocks to cover them up - This language denotes an awful fear of impending wrath.

10. Does history bear out the use of such symbolism? As we come to an end of the previous era of great Christian persecution, two momentous events are simultaneously taking place in the empire. In two years Constantine will ascend to the throne of the empire. This will constitute the great earthquake, or upheaval, seen by John. Constantine, who was a pagan sun worshipper, had some experiences that turned his thinking to Christ. *“Persecution of the Christians was ended. ...the Edict of Milan...granted toleration to Christians in the Roman Empire. As guardian of Constantine’s favored religion, the church was then given legal rights and large financial donations. The army was reorganized, and the separation of civil and military authority ...was completed. Constantine intervened in ecclesiastical affairs to achieve unity.”*<sup>38</sup> So we see an entirely new order of government established over the empire and a new religion became prominent.

11. The other, and much more alarming, event which would affect the dignitaries of the empire, was taking place simultaneously on the borders of the empire. From across the steppes of Russia came the unstoppable hordes of Atilla and his Huns. As they traveled westward, they conquered and made allies of other Germanic tribes. Now they were all poised on the banks of the Danube River. The threatened Goths, a Germanic tribe that had conquered and settled in the eastern reaches of the Roman Empire, now pleaded for aid from the Romans and were permitted to cross the Danube and take up residence within the boundaries of the empire. To those on the western shores of the Danube, it would seem that the end of the weakened empire was imminent. In the last verse of this chapter, John surely echoed the sentiments of the inhabitants of this once-great empire: *“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:17)

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTER SEVEN: AN INTERLUDE

*A*s Chapter Seven opens, John sees that four angels are holding back the four winds, symbolic of warfare and commotion. They seem to be blowing from every quarter of the earth. These winds of destruction will be held back until His servants can be sealed in such a way as to deliver them from the impending disasters to come. As the Lord told Lot before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, *“Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither.”* (Genesis 19:22) There will be some mark,

<sup>38</sup> *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, Vol. 7, p. 149.

sign or practice by which the believers would be recognized. Barnes believes His true servants needed deliverance from both the physical threat and the spiritual apostasy that is fast approaching. As we study Chapter Eight, we shall see how effective this seal was to be for the Christian community.

2. Most commentators see the number 144,000 of those who were sealed as being one of those perfect numbers (see Page Twelve), which would indicate all those worthy to be saved. In some of the events that will take place with the unfolding of Chapter Eight, we see the direct benefit of this sealing. All of the 144,000 are not necessarily of the house of Israel but, perhaps represent spiritual Israel, or the true followers of Christ. We might remember the words of Jesus in III Nephi 7:38: *"But if the Gentiles will repent, and return unto me, saith the Father, behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel;"* This number could include both men and women, both Israelite and Gentile believers.

3. But considering it refers only to Israel, a question is suggested. Could that Christian community of Rome include 144,000 people of Israelite inheritance? Most assuredly it did. Remember, the original Christian church was established in Rome by converts of the Apostle Paul from Macedonia and Asia. When Paul was later taken there for trial, he encountered many enemies among the Jews who lived there. *"... when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of..."* (Acts 28:18, 19). At the time of this next onslaught against Rome, almost 400 years had passed since the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. At that time all Israelites who had not been killed had been carried back to the city of Rome. No doubt many had been assimilated into the culture and even risen to high position, just as happened after the Babylonian captivity.

4. Apostle William Sheldon of the Church of Christ sees these 144,000 as those who shall be found standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb of God, *"...having his Father's name written in their foreheads."* (Revelation 14:1) More about this in a later section, but this does seem a more reasonable explanation of this multitude of Israelites. This interlude in Chapter Seven could also be a type of the time of the end before the Lord returns to gather His people. Verses Five through Eight identify the tribes and the numbers of Israel that are sealed.

5. Then in Verse Nine John sees *"...a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;"* In Verse Fourteen we find the apostle being informed by one of the elders *"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

6. The tribulation and destruction of the Roman Empire could well have been a "type" of the great tribulation that shall befall all who have warred against the Lord and His Gospel. The Prophet Isaiah saw the time when Israel would be restored once again, and it was to be a time of great tribulation: *"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."* (Isaiah 26:20, 21)

7. We know without doubt this will take place in such a time of great tribulation. In his vision which unfolded the history of the church, Nephi saw this time: *“And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon the great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth, And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots; And behold, thou seest all these things; And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose foundation is the devil, Then at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants which he hath made to his people, who are of the house of Israel.”* (Nephi 3:232-237)

8. The final three verses of Chapter Seven are very similar to the beautiful scenes in the closing chapters of Revelation, when the redeemed shall be gathered into the “holy city” and *“...he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”* (Revelation 7:15)

## *The Revelation of Jesus* *Christ*

### CHAPTER EIGHT: GOTHIC INVASION

*There* is an ominous silence in heaven as seven angels prepare themselves to sound their trumpets, announcing more woes to be poured out upon the weakened empire of Rome. Four trumpets will blow, one following the other. The *historicist* believes it is easy to identify four history-shaping events which will follow one another in rapid succession, and which seem to meet the specifications of the symbolism used by John and which continue to bring about the collapse of the Roman empire.

2. *“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.”* (Revelation 8:7) By reading Psalms 18:13, we recognize that hail and fire are symbols of God’s vengeance. David wrote, *“The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire.”*

3. As we finished Chapter Six, we saw with the approach of Attila and his Huns from the steppes of Asia, Alaric, the king of the Goths, had already crossed the Danube River by permission from Rome. Gibbon goes to great lengths in describing the peaceful pastoral nature of the peoples of this portion of the empire. Then he writes, *“This scene of peace and plenty was suddenly changed into a desert. His trees, his old contemporary trees, must blaze in the conflagration of the whole country...”*<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, Vol. 2, pp. 653, 654.

4. Then the famous historian, Gibbon, turns from his pastoral description to give attention to the city of Rome itself. *“During a period of six hundred and nineteen years, the seat of empire had never been violated by the presence of a foreign enemy”*<sup>40</sup> But this was about to change as Alaric, the king of the Goths, *“...encompassed the walls, commanded the twelve principal gates, intercepted all communication with the adjacent country, and vigilantly guarded the navigation of the Tiber...”*<sup>41</sup>

5. The fearful Senate was helpless to do anything except await the final blow. At last it came! *“At the hour of midnight the Salarian Gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. This occurred in A. D. 410.”*<sup>42</sup> How exactly this description by the secular historian coincides with the symbolism of the prophet!

6. In Chapter Seven we saw these winds of war and calamity restrained until the faithful servants of God could be sealed. The historian, Gibbon, demonstrates the accuracy of this symbol of God’s protective power. He writes of *“The proclamation of Alaric when he forced his entrance into the vanquished city ... He encouraged his troops boldly to seize the rewards of valour, and to enrich themselves with the spoils of a wealthy and effeminate people; but he exhorted them at the same time to spare the lives of unresisting citizens, and to respect the churches of the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul as holy and inviolable sanctuaries.”*<sup>43</sup> Gibbon also adds, *“According to Isidor, Alaric himself was heard to say, that he waged war with the Romans, and not with the apostles.”*<sup>44</sup>

7. Njeim writes that by A. D. 410 one third of the population of the western empire had died, both adults and children. This he equates with the trees and grass. Matthew Henry, usually standing with the historicists, sees this as possibly referring to *“heresies that swept the Christian church after Constantine.”*

8. *“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.”* (Revelation 8:8, 9). The sounding of this second angel announced the next invasion of the empire. This devastation was carried out by Genseric and his Vandals. These are a people who had migrated long before from the northern reaches of Europe. Now they occupied a fertile strip of African coastlands sandwiched between the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea.

9. Genseric *“...cast his eyes toward the sea; he resolved to create a naval power, and his bold resolution was executed with steady and active perseverance. He animated his daring Vandals to embrace a mode of warfare which would render every maritime country accessible to their arms...”*<sup>45</sup> He became known to historians as the *“Tyrant of the Sea.”*

10. His warfare against the empire began in A. D. 428. Barnes, writing of the Vandals, says they conquered the Roman colonies of northern Africa, *“harassed the*

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<sup>40</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, Vol. 3, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, Vol. 3, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, Vol. 3, p. 48.

<sup>43</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, pp. 198, 199.

<sup>45</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, Vol. 3, p. 209.

*neighboring islands, and the coasts of the Mediterranean by their predatory incursions, destroying the ships and the commerce of the Romans, and were distinguished in the downfall of the empire by their ravages on the islands and the sea. Thus they were moved along from place to place until the scene of their desolations became more distinctly the maritime parts of the empire;*" <sup>46</sup> Again, the symbolism of John could not have been better selected to portray the actual events!

11. *"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."* (Revelation 8:10,11)

12. We should remember a star portrays a dignitary or a great leader. The terrible destroyer who now fell upon the staggering Roman empire was Attila, leading his myriads all the way from the steppes of Asia. That he be called "Wormwood" is appropriate, since this is a plant which yields a very bitter tasting oil. Atilla certainly left a bitter taste in the mouth and minds of all Europe. His career extended from A. D. 433 to 453. Gibbon writes, *"In the reign of Atilla the Huns again became the terror of the world; and I shall now describe the character and actions of that formidable barbarian who alternately invaded and insulted the East and the West, and urged the rapid downfall of the Roman empire."* <sup>47</sup>

13. Gibbon writes that just as the Vandals were the masters of the sea, *"...the Huns were the masters of the rivers."* As they traversed the European nations of the Roman Empire, their route carried them beside all the great rivers of Europe. Some historians believe that 300,000 bodies lay slaughtered in the rivers. One wrote, *"Many had died, and still continued to die, that drank of the waters, through famine, disease and pestilence."* <sup>48</sup> Wormwood, indeed! Atilla was known to the world as the "Scourge of God."

14. *"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."* (Revelation 8:12)

15. We remember that these heavenly bodies are symbolic of luminaries of the kingdoms of the earth. The historicist has no difficulty seeing this fulfilled by the invasion of Odóacer. Odóacer was of a Germanic tribe that had migrated southward from the Baltic area into an area of the Roman Empire. He actually became a general in the Roman legions, but in A. D. 476 led a Germanic revolt against the rulers and set aside the emperor, Romulus Augustulus, and made himself king over Italy.

16. Odóacer became the King of Italy from A. D. 476 to A. D. 490. With the reign of this barbarian the existence of the Roman power came to an end. What Jerome, the early church father, had written after the conquest of Alaric (see Paragraphs Four and Five),

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<sup>46</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 201.

<sup>47</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 205.

<sup>48</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 160.

now had fulfillment with Odóacer: “*The world’s glorious sun has been extinguished.*” More apt are the words of the poet Byron: “*She saw her glories star by star expire,*”<sup>49</sup>

17. “*This was formerly looked upon as the date of the fall of the Western Empire.*”<sup>50</sup> (More about this in a later chapter.) Odóacer was later killed by the Ostrogoths who attempted to re-establish the Roman law, institutions and culture.

## *The Revelation of Jesus* *Christ*

### CHAPTER NINE: FALL OF THE EASTERN EMPIRE

*In* the historicist point of view, Chapters Six, Eight and Nine relate to the wrath of God as it is poured out upon the empire of Rome. Many years before, the prophet Daniel had seen in a night vision the four great empires of the ancient world (See Daniel 2:19-43). These four empires made up the body of a great image, the two legs of which represented the Roman Empire.

2. That the two legs of Daniel’s image were to represent the Roman Empire is very appropriate, for the empire had long been separated into two divisions. The western half of the empire was governed by its capital of Rome, while the eastern portion of the empire maintained Constantinople as its capital. This city had been formerly known as Byzantium, but when Emperor Constantine made it his capital the name was changed to Constantinople.

3. The Eastern, or Byzantine Empire “...had survived Germanic and Hunnic tribal migrations and raids in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries and had stabilized a reasonably secure eastern frontier against the ...Persian Empire, but it could not recover, hold, and govern the entire Mediterranean world.”<sup>51</sup> It now consisted of southeastern Europe, the northeastern portion of Africa and the Middle East as far as the Euphrates River.

4. By the middle of the sixth century, 570 A. D., the western half of this once-great world power had fallen, the emperor deposed and the empire broken into ten lesser, independent nations. Meanwhile, the Emperor Justinian of Constantinople was trying to restore the former majesty and geographical limits of the former Roman Empire. This is the setting as the fifth angel sounds his trumpet:

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<sup>49</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 209.

<sup>50</sup> *Encyclopædia Americana*, Vol. 20, p. 639.

<sup>51</sup> *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, “Byzantine Empire” Vol. 5, p. 95.

5. *“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.”* (Revelation 9:1 – 3)

6. As this fifth angel sounded it would appear to the Christian Byzantine world as if all the inmates of hell had broken loose upon the earth. Their leader would be known to the Eastern Empire as “*Destroyer*”. How appropriate the descriptive words of Verse Three, for just as the plagues of locusts in ancient times had come out of Arabia, so did this new enemy arise in Arabia to sweep across the eastern branch of the Roman Empire.

7. *“Between 634 and 642 (A. D. – dem), Arabs, inspired by a new religion, Islam, conquered Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. Constantinople weathered major Arab sieges in the 670s and in 717-718, and Byzantine Asia Minor survived almost annual Arab raids.”*<sup>52</sup> Their leader and general was none other than their prophet, Mohammad. He began his wars against Christendom in A. D. 629. How successful was he? Gibbon writes, *“One hundred years after his flight from Mecca the arms and the reigns of his successors extended from India to the Atlantic Ocean...”*<sup>53</sup>

8. *“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.”* (Revelation 9:13 – 16)

9. Barnes equates the sounding of this sixth angel with the invasion of the Seljuk Turks, who came from the eastern side of the Euphrates River. Just as the angel said to loose the angels bound in the Euphrates, these Turks conquered the Muslims and united with them. Gibbon writes that in 1058 A. D. the emperor of the eastern division of the Roman empire was *“... suddenly assaulted by an unknown race of barbarians, who united the Scythian valour with the fanaticism of new proselytes ... The myriads of Turkish horse overspread the frontier of six hundred miles from Taurus to Arzeroum, and the blood of 130,000 Christians was a grateful sacrifice to the Arabian prophet.”*<sup>54</sup>

10. Who was this unknown race of barbarians? Again, it is the historian Gibbon who gives answer: *“...a powerful and independent people, (who) were scattered over the desert from China to the River Oxus.”*<sup>55</sup> Today this river is known as the Amu Darya. To identify these people by name, they are the Uzbeks, Turkmen, Tadzhiks and Afghanis the United States is either allied with or fighting in her present war (A. D. 2003) against terrorism.

11. As these Turks swarmed out of central Asia, they conquered Persia and Syria, then, crossing the River Euphrates, they attacked the Byzantine Empire. The historian, A.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>53</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, Vol. 3, p. 410

<sup>54</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, Vol. 4, pp. 707, 708.

<sup>55</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, Vol. 4, p. 696.

Henri Sava, writes about their leader, "*Khalid fought many signal battles; an immense multitude of infidels were slaughtered, and spoils infinite and innumerable were acquired by the victorious Muslims. Khalid was known as the 'Sword of God, and the Scourge of the Infidels'.*"<sup>56</sup>

12. As Khalid began his campaign, he wrote to the Muslims of Arabia, "*This is to acquaint you that I intend to send the true believers into Syria to take it out of the hands of the infidels. And I would have you know that the fighting for religion is an act of obedience to God. His messenger returned with the tidings of pious and martial ardor which they had kindled in every province... Medina was filled with bands of Saracens who panted for action... The hatred of the Christians, the love of spoil, and the contempt of danger were the ruling passions of the audacious Saracens.*"<sup>57</sup>

13. A Christian city of the Eastern Empire, about to fall before the Muslim might, sent an envoy with a liberal offer of peace. The answer he received – "*...ye Christian dogs, you know your option: the Koran, the tribute, or the sword. We are a people whose delight is in war, rather than in peace; and we despise your pitiful alms, since we shall be speedily masters of your wealth, your families, and your persons.*"<sup>58</sup>

14. We should be aware this delight in war stems directly from the "*false prophet*". of Chapter Sixteen. "*The sword,*" said Mohammed, "*is the key of heaven and of hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer.*"<sup>59</sup>

15. Revelation 9:15 tells us the time denoted for this conquest of the Eastern Empire would be 391 years. Constantinople fell before the Turks, and the eastern branch of the empire was in their hands in A. D. 1453 (just four years after the time specified by Verse Fifteen). Revelation 9:17 states, "*...out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.*" Spicer tells us, "*It is remarkable that the siege of Constantinople was the first great siege in which firearms and gunpowder played the deciding part.*"<sup>60</sup>

16. Since the first conquests of the caliphs, the establishment of the Turks in Anatolia or Asia Minor was the most deplorable loss which the church and empire had sustained. By the propagation of the Moslem faith, Soliman deserved the name of Ghazi, a holy champion; and a new kingdom of the Romans was added to the tables of Oriental geography. It is described as extending from the Euphrates to Constantinople, from the Black Sea to the confines of Syria.

17. "*...the divinity of Christ was denied and derided in the same temple in which it had been pronounced by the first general synod of the Catholics. The unity of God, and the mission of Mahomet (sic), were preached in the moschs (sic), the Arabian learning was taught in the schools; the Cadhis judged according to the laws of the Koran; the Turkish manners and language prevailed in the cities; and Turkman camps were scattered over the plains and mountains of Anatolia. On the hard conditions of tribute and servitude, the*

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<sup>56</sup> Sayce, Archibald Henry, *Ancient Empires of the East*, Vol. 1, p. 259.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 267, 271.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>60</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, p. 243.

*Greek Christians might enjoy the exercise of their religion; but their most holy churches were profaned; their priests and bishops were insulted...*"<sup>61</sup>

18. "Concomitantly with the Seljuk entry into Asia Minor, frontier Muslim raiders and warriors called *ghazis* adhered to a semi-military organization dedicated to advancing the frontier of Islam; they supported themselves by raiding Christendom and by obtaining subsidies from interested rulers."<sup>62</sup>

19. Thus ended the might and grandeur of an empire which had ruled the world for more than a thousand years. Its shameful demise had come even as it had been revealed to Nephi in his vision so long before: "Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (1 Nephi 3: 95)

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTER TEN: INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH

*Most* historicists see Chapters Ten and Eleven as an interlude which takes place between the sounding of the sixth trumpet (sounding the destruction of the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire in Chapter Nine) and that of the seventh trumpet, which will sound in Revelation 11:15. This seventh trumpet will bring us to the final dispensation of time and the vials of God's wrath to be poured out upon the enemies of Christ. This will be covered in Chapter Sixteen.

2. After the fall of Rome and the western part of the empire, the power of the papacy, or, the "*man of sin*" of II Thessalonians 2: 3-7, arose to take its place. Chapter Nine ends on a sad note: Even though great woes were poured out upon the empire and Christendom, men were not repentant and continued in sin. The papacy itself was a primary source of corruption and evil. Barnes writes, "*The state of the world, as described in chapters 9: 20, 21, was such as to demand a reformation, or something that should be more effectual in purifying the church than the calamities described in the previous verse had been. Some such work as the Reformation is, therefore, what we should naturally look for as the next in order...*"<sup>63</sup> So most *historicists* view these chapters as relating to important things during the 1260 years of apostasy when the Catholic Church so strongly opposed the Reformation.

3. They see the "*little book*" of Revelation 10: 8-10 as being the Bible with the Reformation now beginning to take place. This book, which is in the hand of the angel, is not sealed; it is open, or ready for use and study. In A. D. 1382 John Wycliffe completed

<sup>61</sup> Op. Cit., Gibbon, Vol. 4, 721.

<sup>62</sup> *Collier's Encyclopedia*, "Turkey", Vol. 22, p. 537.

<sup>63</sup> Op. Cit., Barnes, pp. 248, 249.

the first English translation of the Bible and it was now being made available to the common man. The great men of the Reformation were using it to study and preach, speaking out against the false teaching of Catholicism. Probably because of this new interest in studying the Scriptures, The Council of Toulouse in 1229 forbade Catholics from reading it. Most Catholic priests had no access to the Bible. Even Martin Luther waited until after four years of university study before finding a copy of the Vulgate Bible in “...*the solitude and gloom of an Augustinian monastery.*”<sup>64</sup> The majority of the Catholic clergy were illiterate and ignorant of the Bible. While the Protestant approach to the Gospel would be through study and preaching, the Catholic approach had always been through the sacraments of the Church, through ceremony and ritual.

4. This thought is borne out by the letter of a Franciscan missionary to the Indians of sixteenth century America to his friends in Europe. He tells them “...*that he desired his friends would send him the book called the Bible; for he had heard of there being such a book in Europe, which might be of some use to him.*”<sup>65</sup>

5. Eating the little book represents the church’s happy reception of the Bible and the devouring of it by true Christians. It was sweet to the taste because it contained the beautiful words of Christ. John (perhaps representing the ministry) was commanded to prophesy, or preach, that which the book contained. The book immediately became bitter in his belly, indicating the awareness that its preaching would bring trouble and persecution.

6. In Paragraph Two, above, we quoted the words of the historicist, Barnes, saying there was a great need for “*a reformation, or something that should be more effectual in purifying the church...*” That something which would be more effectual was to be the restoration of the Church of Christ. With the restoration of this church came another book, the Book of Mormon, whose primary purpose was to be “...*the confounding of false doctrines*”. (II Nephi 2:21) It would, as did the Bible, bring great joy to those who read and believed it, but it would also bring great trouble and persecution to those who used it.

7. William Sheldon expresses his understanding that Verses Ten and Eleven of Chapter Ten refer directly to the Apostle John and a latter-day ministry that will be his. Brother Sheldon believes that John did not die, but has remained on earth as did the three Nephites. The Bible says, “*Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.*” (John 21:21, 22) In latter day revelation there was a revelation which came in answer to the queries of the brethren as to whether John had tarried upon the earth: “*And the Lord said unto me, John my beloved, what desireth thou? And I said Lord, give unto me power that I may bring souls unto thee. – And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desireth this, thou shalt tarry till I come in my glory.*” (Book of Commandments 6:1) Relating all this back to Chapter Ten of Revelation, Verse Eleven, the angel told John, “*And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*”

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<sup>64</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 252.

<sup>65</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Murray, p. 293.

# *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH (Cont.)

*In* the minds of most *historicists*, Chapters Ten and Eleven are linked together by the nature of their message. In these chapters the scene has shifted to examine the internal matters of the church and its ecclesiastical affairs during the period of the 1260-year apostasy. Here are those things that will bring to pass the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the culmination of the prophecy.

2. The symbolic language of this chapter would probably have been more easily understood by a first century Jew than by a 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian. John is first instructed to measure the various parts of the temple and those who worship in it, but to leave out the court of the Gentiles. The temple, in the Jewish mind, was the abode of God. The Jerusalem Temple had been destroyed by the Romans at least twenty years prior to the time when John received this command to measure it, so what do these words really signify? Under the New Covenant the abode of God had now changed. The abode of God, or the temple, would be recognized as the Church as the Apostle Paul clarified. *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”* (Ephesians 2:19 – 21).

3. This measurement of the temple would, therefore, be a determination of what constitutes the true Church of Christ and true membership. This indicates a close examination will be made of the true church, its practices and teachings. Njeim <sup>66</sup> (RLDS) wrote that this would serve as a *“blueprint”* of the church for future generations. Those who worship therein were also to be measured, providing a description of the true Christian and his life. The measuring rod could only be the Word of God, reminding one of Lehi’s *“rod of iron”*.

4. John was told not to measure the court of the Gentiles. This court would have appeared to the casual visitor as a part of the ancient temple, but all Jews knew it was an addition to the temple and all entry to the temple proper was forbidden Gentiles. In this revelation it would be symbolic of those who appear to be the church, but because pagan practices and false doctrines had found their way into the apostate church, it does not pertain to the true church or true worship. These are the Gentiles who shall trod under foot the holy city for 1260 years. (11:2)

5. Most *historicists* believe that the two witnesses of Verse Three consist of the long line of true believers who stood opposed to the pagan influences introduced by the Papacy. In Revelation 11:4 they are referred to as two candlesticks and two olive trees. In both Revelation 1 and Zechariah 4, the term *“candlesticks”* refers to the church, or the people of God. The number “two” signifies a few, yet competent by Judaic standards to be

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<sup>66</sup> Njeim, George A., *Insights Into the Book of Revelation*, 1970.

witnesses of the Word of God. They believe a continuous lineage of such witnesses can be traced from the sixth century forward, throughout the 1260 years of apostasy.

6. Verse Five indicates their testimony will be like coals of fire to their enemies, inciting them to vengeance. Verse Six indicates they will have power to bring down “*divine judgment*” upon their enemies. It is certainly true that throughout the Dark Ages terrible judgments were poured out upon Catholic Europe. Just think of the incessant warfare, that took place, and the terrible plagues that killed one fourth of Europe’s population. In Verse Seven we have our first mention of the enemy, the beast directed by Satan, the Roman Catholic Church with its papal office. *Historicists* believe that throughout this 1260-year apostasy whenever witnesses opposed the beast, they were persecuted and slain.

7. *Historicists* believe the death of those opponents of the apostate church could occur anytime within, and throughout, the 1260 years. In the twelfth century Pope Innocent declared war against all differing beliefs and the Inquisition began. By 1514 it seemed these witnesses had been all but silenced (killed). In that year the Fifth Lateran Council joyously declared, “There is an end of resistance to the Papal rule and religion, opposers there exist no more!”<sup>67</sup> Exactly three and one half years later Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg church. This is a common *historicist* view of the three and a half days, or years (Verse Eleven) they lay dead in the street of the great city (Verse Eight).

8. We are told in Verse Nine that their bodies lay unburied. This could be interpreted in two ways. It is true that the Catholic Church often denied burial to those who were considered heretics. This is also considered a treatment of contempt. So one might consider this expression to refer to the contempt of the Catholic world for the reformers.

9. For other interpretations as to the identity of these two witnesses, Spicer and Smith (Adventist *historicists*) and Njeim (an RLDS *historicist*) propose that these witnesses were the Old and New Testaments<sup>68</sup>. As Jesus said in John 5:39, “*They are they which testify of me.*” The Adventists see their death in the Roman Catholic decrees that forbade the reading of the Bible and the burning of the Bibles of the reformers. Njeim sees their death, at the conclusion of the 1260 years of witnessing, to have been brought about by the “*Age of Enlightenment*” and the nineteenth century rise of humanistic materialism.

10. Apostle William Sheldon views these two witnesses of Verse Three in light of their further description in Verse Four, where they are also called “*two olive trees*” and “*two candlesticks*”. In the prophecy of Zenos, found in Jacob 3:30-36, Israel is referred to as a “*tame olive tree*” and the Gentiles as a “*wild olive tree*”. In the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul uses this same terminology. In other words, they are Israelite and Gentile nations called as witnesses of God.

11. Let’s expand this idea a little. The term, “*candlesticks*”, had already been interpreted by no lesser authority than Jesus Christ. He told John, “*The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*” (Revelation 1:20)

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<sup>67</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 240.

<sup>68</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, p. 247.

12. John also saw two olive trees. In Verses Two, Three and Eleven of the Fourth Chapter of Zechariah mention was also made of a candlestick and olive trees. Yet in Verse Twelve the “*olive trees*” were changed to “*olive branches*”, and identified as the “*two anointed ones...*” Their purpose was to consistently bring the “*golden oil*” into the “*candlestick*”, or the church. It would, therefore, be easy for me to identify the two olive branches, or trees, with the authorized ministry of Jesus Christ, both in the Old World and the New, endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit into Christ’s church.

13. The time of their witness is established in Verse Three, and equivalent to the time set forth by both the Prophet Daniel and the Apostle John for the apostasy of the church, which had just been mentioned in the prior verse. During that time of Apostasy of the church, the authority of Christ’s ministry had been removed, both in the Old World and here in America. The Book of Mormon had been hidden up and the Holy Bible was under attack and finally, its use forbidden, by the Catholic Church.

14. Other commentators look for a *futurist* appearance of two literal individuals.

15. In the books of Daniel and Revelation there are three references to the length of time of the apostasy; namely, a thousand two hundred and threescore days, forty-two months and a time and times and the dividing of times. In my thinking, it would be an error to exclude the reference in Verse Eleven to three days and a half, or three years and a half, for it too could be equal to 1260 years if one figured a year of days. The *historicalist* has shown how for 1260 years the witnesses against the Roman Catholic Church were put to death, left unburied and generally treated with contempt. Others have shown how the Old and New Testaments were treated with contempt, burned and banned for that same period of time. Chapters Ten and Eleven are about this particular period of time.

16. I cannot resolve the issue as to the identity of the two witnesses; however, whether they be ministers of the Reformation, the Old and New Testaments or Israelite and Gentile witnesses, they have one thing in common. They were persecuted and killed for 1260 years by the Roman Catholic Church. It would seem to me that at the end of the 1260 years of apostasy, when the true Church of Christ was restored with an authorized ministry, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and with the Book of Mormon (an Israelite witness), these witnesses, whoever they might be, would indeed be brought to life again.

17. At the conclusion of the narrative concerning the two witnesses, Verse Thirteen says there was a great earthquake. An earthquake is symbolic of a political or social revolution. The time frame of the Restoration of the Gospel is identical with the time frame of the world’s greatest, and most unique, revolution. The struggle for independence and liberty, political and religious, which began in the United States in 1776, spread to the shores of Europe and Latin America. For the first time, Roman Catholic power would be subject to national law. France and other nations threw off the yoke of bondage placed upon them by the beast.

18. The early Reformers (*historicalists*) believed the downfall of the papacy and the 1260 years were concluded when French forces took the Pope prisoner in 1798. They looked for the subsequent coming of Christ and for all things to shortly be concluded, for in Verse Fifteen we read that the trumpet of the seventh angel sounded. This led to the establishment of the Adventist movement. Many who joined themselves to this movement in anticipation of the return of Christ, were to later become discouraged when

the predicted appearance did not take place. Many subsequently returned to their former denominations.

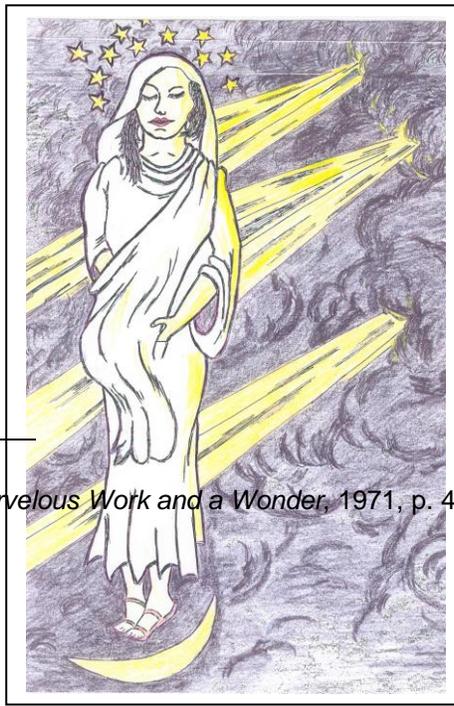
19. However, in Chapter Ten, Verse Six, we were told “...that there should be time no longer.” This is a strange expression whose meaning is somewhat obscure. Barnes (a noted *historical*) tells us the experts of the Greek language say the usage here would indicate “...that the thing referred to would not occur immediately, but would be hereafter.”<sup>69</sup> This would certainly fit our belief that only the restoration of the true church and the fullness of the Gospel could bring an end to the 1260-year apostasy. Certainly the early Reformers would be saddened to see the various divisions of the Reformation now aligning themselves ever more closely with the great harlot of the apostasy.

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTER TWELVE: A GREAT WONDER IN HEAVEN

*A*s we examine this chapter in light of that written by Protestant *historical* and writers from the Church of Christ we see definite and important differences taking place because of differing perspectives. Almost all commentators realize that the woman clothed by the sun is a representation of the “*true church*”. Daniel MacGreggor of the Church of Christ correctly identifies her as the Church of Christ.<sup>70</sup>

2. Many *historical* sun which clothes her as the true church. the viewpoint of many Restoration in saying spirit of revelation upon based. The basis for this Matthew 16: “*Blessed art for flesh and blood hath thee, but my Father I say also unto thee, upon this rock I will build*



identify the light of the the glory and beauty of MacGreggor expressed early believers of the that it represented the which the church is thought is a passage in *thou, Simon Barjona: not revealed it unto which is in heaven. And That thou art Peter, and my church; and the*

<sup>69</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 259.

<sup>70</sup> MacGreggor, Daniel, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 1971, p. 41.

*gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" (Verses 17, 18) They see this revelation to Peter as the rock upon which the church would be founded.

3. This beautiful vision saw the church in relation to the old Mosaic Covenant, as we shall see in the next paragraph. It would seem, therefore, necessary for the vision to demonstrate clearly the superiority and perfection of the New Covenant made in Jesus Christ. This new covenant in Christ is adequately portrayed by the illuminating light of the sun that bathes and illuminates the woman, even as she stands above the lesser light of the moon.

4. Most commentators are fairly consistent in identifying the moon upon which she stands as the lesser light of the old Mosaic covenant and the twelve stars with which she is crowned as representing the twelve apostles who were her special witnesses. However, there are many who see these twelve stars as the twelve tribes of Israel.

5. The woman is with child, and Verse Five tells us she brought forth a man child. Many consider this as being Christ, but Barnes, a Protestant *historicalist*, correctly reminds us that *"Christ is rather represented as the Husband of the church than the Son."*<sup>71</sup> The identity of this man child is thought by many of the Church of Christ to be twofold: MacGreggor identifies it as both the righteous portion of the body of Christ and the authority of the ministry placed within it.

6. But we must remember, Verse Two told us this *"man child"* was brought forth with great travail and pain. That authority of the true ministry of Christ has been brought forth, rising out of the suffering and blood of both the Master and his disciples. We remember the plaintive words of the Savior: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"* (Luke 13:34)

7. He was *"to rule all nations with a rod of iron."* I believe the key to his identity is found in Revelation 2:26 and 27. Here Jesus told John, *"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end...he shall rule them with a rod of iron."* The Apostle Peter saw the twofold nature of this man child as he told the church, *"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;"* (1 Peter 2:9). Apostle Brian McIndoo<sup>72</sup> of the Church of Christ concisely identifies the man child as the kingdom of God. This would include the following:

Christ as the head,  
the ministry as the officers,  
the Gospel as the law, and  
the true believers as its citizenry. This is what shall be caught up to heaven.

8. Verse Five tells us also that this man child *"...was caught up unto God, and to his throne."* In the letters of the Apostle Paul and in Acts we find the church constantly being reminded of evil and worldly influences that are entering into the flock. *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away*

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<sup>71</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 327.

<sup>72</sup> McIndoo, Brian E., Unpublished *Thesis on Revelation Twelve*, p. 4.

*disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*" (Acts 20:29-30) Many of the other disciples were also publishing such warning: *"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 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 the creation."* (2 Peter 3:3, 4) *"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."* (2 John 1:7, 8)

9. Over the years the church and even its ministry became increasingly adulterated with worldly concepts that no longer represented the kingdom established by Jesus Christ. At some point, whenever it was (see Paragraph Ten - dem), the true kingdom of God and the authority to represent it were caught up to heaven. MacGreggor writes, *"In them shall the seed of the church be preserved..."*<sup>73</sup>

10. There is a principle set forth in the Book of Mormon concerning that time when the patience of God finally comes to an end. *"And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fullness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity; for behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God, or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God."* (Ether 1:31, 32) That ripening in iniquity was completed when the last vestige of pagan Roman authority was removed and the Pope of the Roman church rose up to assume that authority. A Catholic historian, Cardinal Manning, wrote of the final destruction of the Roman Empire, saying it was carried out by *"...all the invasions of the Lombards extinguished utterly and destroyed the last vestige of the Roman Empire in Italy."*<sup>74</sup> This event took place in 570 A. D. The true kingdom of God and the authority to represent Him were taken into heaven, and only a mutant form remained on earth.

11. All *historicist* commentators are in agreement that the dragon of Verse Three refers to Satan. But there is confusion as to whether he is waging his warfare against God by the instrumentality of the pagan Roman Empire or Papal Rome. MacGreggor points out dragons signify nations and Rome at this time was the universal one. Satan was behind this idolatrous empire. The dragon had seven heads, which symbolize the seven hills of Rome and the seven forms of Roman government. It had seven crowns on these heads which represent the seven administrative heads of the empire through her history; namely, (1) kings, (2) consuls, (3) dictatorships, (4) decemvers, (5) tribunes, (6) emperors, and (7) exarchs.

12. The dragon also had ten horns, representing the ten parts into which Rome would become broken and with a king over each. Machiavelli, a noted Catholic historian, identifies them as follows: *"1. The Ostrogoths in Media. 2. The Visigoths in Pannonia. 3. The Sweves and Alans in Gasgoine and Spain. 4. The Vandals in Africa. 5. The Franks in France. 6. The Burgundians in Burgundy. 7. The Herulia and Turingi in Italy. 8. The*

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<sup>73</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, p. 44.

<sup>74</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, p. 77

*Angles and Saxons in Britain. 9. The Huns in Hungary. 10. The Lombards at first upon the Danube; afterward in Italy.*<sup>75</sup>

13. M. Harvey Seibel of the Church of Christ believes the warfare of the dragon waged against the church in this time period used the instrumentality of the pagan Roman Empire. This was the first enemy of God's people seen by Nephi in his vision and which he identified as a "*great and spacious building*" that represented "*the pride of the world*" (1 Nephi 3:88-94).

14. In Verse Six we see that the woman "...*fled into the wilderness...*", where she will be fed for 1260 years. Most Protestant *historicist* commentators see this wilderness place to which the church flees as a place of safety from Roman persecution. Seibel also thinks that Christians and Jews fled to the eastern lands where other religions were better tolerated, especially after the victory of the Muslims. Others see this flight into a wilderness as a decline in purity and spirituality. Barnes thinks it represents "...*the obscure, and humble, and persecuted state of the church...*"<sup>76</sup> While these latter two points of view are partially correct, it is only to a lesser degree. What is the position of the Church of Christ?

15. Although the authority of the priesthood to represent Jesus Christ and the pure Gospel law had been caught up to God, the woman, now the apostate church, was to tarry upon the earth. In Chapter 17:3 we find an angel of the Lord escorting John "...*into the wilderness*" (Strong tells us the Greek word translated *wilderness* actually means desolate) where he could see the apostate church, now so desolate she is identified as "*MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*" (17:5). She would flee into the wilderness where she would remain for 1260 years (Revelation 12:6). This is the great apostasy, or *falling away*, seen by the Apostle Paul (II Thessalonians 2:3). And why would she fall away? We are told "...*she would be nourished from the face of the serpent.*" (Revelation 12:14) Apostle Brian McIndoo<sup>77</sup> writes, "*The use of 'from the serpent' does not imply away from; rather, it is used like a baby received nourishment from its mother. The nourishment she received from the serpent would not be a spiritual nourishment; rather, a flood of lies and false doctrines...that support the agenda of the devil.*" MacGreggor adds, "...*a very questionable source of spiritual supply.*"<sup>78</sup>

16. Sheldon, MacGreggor and McIndoo identify the two great wings upon which she flew into the wilderness (Verse Fourteen) as representing the deception and idolatry of the Papal Roman church and the Eastern Orthodox division of the ancient Roman church which carried her into the wilderness of complete apostasy.

17. This would be the fulfillment of the prophesy in Amos 8:11, 12: "*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.*" The church with her ministerial authority, her sacred ordinances and gifts of the Holy Spirit had disappeared, and all that remains is a

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<sup>75</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, p. 43.

<sup>76</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 327.

<sup>77</sup> *Op. Cit.*, McIndoo, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, p. 44.

remnant of believers bereft for 1,260 years of the accouterments of the true Church of Christ.

18. Verse Sixteen states that “...*the earth helped the woman...*” The early church was continuously persecuted by one Roman Emperor after another until the rise of Emperor Constantine in the year 306 A. D.. Constantine was the first emperor to convert to Christianity, and that after a reported dream of Christ, followed by a vision of a cross superimposed over the sun’s face. He won that day’s battle and associated the cross of Christ with a victorious “*sun god*”. He became the protector of the church and passed legislation making her free from further persecution. But Constantine also meddled greatly in the affairs of the church and promoted further inroads of worldliness into her structure.

19. The dragon is now frustrated: All he can now do is “...*make war with the remnant of her seed.*” (Verse Seventeen) The next chapter will tell of the new instrument he would use in this warfare. The tool of Satan shall be Papal Rome, and the battle is carried on with an indescribable ferocity. Apostle William Sheldon quotes Scott about this warfare:

*“No computation can reach the numbers who have been put to death in different ways on account of their maintaining the profession of the gospel and opposing the corruption of the Church of Rome. A million of the poor Waldenses perished in France; nine hundred thousand orthodox Christians were slain in less than thirty years after the institution of the Jesuits. The Duke of Alva boasted of having put thirty-six thousand to death in the Netherlands, by the hand of the common executioner, during the space of a few years. The Inquisition destroyed by tortures, one hundred fifty thousand Christians, within thirty years.”*<sup>79</sup>

20. Elder Seibel quotes the historian, Will Durant: “*Compared with the persecution of heresy in Europe from 1227 to 1492, the persecution of Christians by the Romans in the first three centuries after Christ was a mild and humane procedure.*”<sup>80</sup>

21. On this point of the flight of the woman into the wilderness, we of the Church of Christ differ drastically with the Protestant *historicists*. They believe the “*church*” has always been present in the person of the reformers and protesters against the Roman Catholic Church. They must take this position or recognize they all have come out of the once universal Roman Catholic Church and received their ministerial authority only from her. They maintain the flight into the wilderness was only that the believers (whom they identify as the church) became hidden and obscure: Whereas, we believe the true church was not to be found on the earth and would have to be restored by the hand of God,

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<sup>79</sup> Scott, *The Seven Kingdoms*, p. 76.

<sup>80</sup> Durant, Will, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. 4, p. 784.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE RISE OF THE BEAST

*The* prophet, Daniel, had seen a vision about the apostasy of the church. In this vision he had seen four beasts rising from the great sea. The sea was the prophet's way of referring to the nations and peoples of the world in commotion, wars and tumults. The images he saw referred to the rising empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and pagan Rome. The Apostle John was now living during the reign of that fourth beast. In Chapters Six, Eight and Nine of Revelation John had seen the coming destruction of this last beast as the world was again in a state of great commotion and conquest by marauding tribes from northern Europe and Central Asia.

2. The beast now seen by John is rising out of that sea of commotion and warfare among the nations. Verse Two shows us this beast is a composite view of the previous four beasts seen by Daniel, showing the barbaric traits of each. The one dominant trait found most commonly among them each is their pagan, idolatrous nature. Verse Two goes on to say that this beast received its power from Satan.

3. Verse One gives us further information about the identity of the beast now seen by John. This beast had seven heads. Revelation 17:9 shows the importance of this identifying trait. *"And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."* This beast shall make its seat of government over the same seven mountains of Rome from which pagan Rome once had ruled the known world. Verse One also tells us this beast had *"...ten horns, and upon the horns ten crowns..."* The prophet Daniel, in his view of pagan Rome, saw something similar: *"And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise..."* (Daniel 7:24)

4. There is a small, yet very important difference between these two visions. The ten horns coming out of pagan Rome, as seen by Daniel, refer to ten kings that *"shall arise"* out of the Roman Empire when its rule is finally ended. The ten horns seen by the Apostle John are now wearing *"ten crowns"*. Pagan Rome had fallen and the kingdom has been divided among ten kings of the former empire.

5. The Roman beast which first persecuted the church had been vanquished by the successive soundings of the trumpets of Chapters Six, Eight and Nine. The beast now seen rising from the sea was the third enemy of God's people seen by Nephi. He identified it as *"a great and abominable church"* (1 Nephi 3:141). We believe this beast to be the papal system of the Roman Catholic Church. As we discover when this beast of Papal Rome rose to such heights of power, we shall know also when the 1260 years of complete apostasy began. This knowledge will further give us the time frame when we could expect the restoration of the Gospel and priesthood authority.

6. The Apostle Paul gave us definite direction as to when this time should be. He prophesied, *"And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed,"* (II Thessalonians 2:6-8) Of course, we know he referred to the power of the Roman rulers which hindered the rise of the Apostle Paul's *"man of sin"* and the *"little horn"* seen by Daniel which would make war with the saints.

7. Of this individual Daniel writes, *“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”* (Daniel 7:25) And the Apostle Paul described him in like manner: *“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:4) And how was this newly established beast identified to the Apostle John? *“...and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.”* (Revelation 13:1) This picture is amplified in Verses Five and Six: *“And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”*

8. In light of these three prophecies by men of God, MacGreggor quotes a pope’s words from Bolton’s *The Great Antichrist*: *“I do make holy and unholy; I do justify the wicked; I do forgive sins; I open and no man shutteth. If these things that I do be said to be done not of man, but of God, what do you make me but God? I, being above all prelates, seem by this reason to be above all gods; whereupon no marvel if it be in my power to change times and abrogate laws, to dispense with all things, yea, the precepts of Christ”*<sup>81</sup> These words of an early pope bring the papacy into focus as the subject of all three of these ancient prophecies.

9. Elder John Haldeman<sup>82</sup> of the Church of Christ has expressed a point of view that is common to the Protestant *historicists*. He informs us ecclesiastical power was given to the beast in A.D. 538, so the 1260 years of apostasy began at this time. This would take us up to the year 1798. In this year General Berthier of France took the Pope of Rome prisoner and put an end to his persecuting powers. He identifies this also with Revelation 13:3, which says *“one of his heads was wounded”*. Seventh Day Adventist commentators say this deadly wound was healed when papal power was restored in 1929 by Mussolini.

10. Because the 1260 years of apostasy shall terminate with the Restoration of the Gospel, most Restoration commentators take a different position. It is this position we shall explore. Seibel<sup>83</sup> quotes the second century Christian writer, Tertullian, in his famous *Apology*, Chapter 23, written about 197 A.D.: *“Christians are under a particular necessity of praying for the Emperor and for the continued state of the empire, because we know that dreadful power which hangs over the world, and the conclusion of the age which threatens the most horrible evils, is restrained by the continuance of the time appointed by the Roman Empire.”*

11. Seibel goes on to say that in 533 A.D. Emperor Justinian did give the pope ecclesiastical power by making him the head of the Christian church, but he was still subservient to the civil authorities of the empire. History records this fact: *“The Justinian Code enacted Orthodox Christianity into law. It acknowledged the ecclesiastical leadership of the Roman Church ... and ordered all Christian groups to submit to her*

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<sup>81</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, p. 57.

<sup>82</sup> Haldeman, John R., *Searchlight*, “Going Into the Wilderness”, August 1899.

<sup>83</sup> Seibel, M. Harvey, Unpublished thesis, *Chronology of the Bible*, 1999.

authority. *But ensuing chapters proclaimed the dominion of the emperor over the Church...*"<sup>84</sup>

12. There is a better explanation of Verses Three and Four: *"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?"* In Chapter Twelve we read that the dragon had seven heads, which symbolize the seven hills of Rome and the seven forms of Roman government. It had seven crowns on these heads which represent the seven administrative heads of the empire through her history; namely, (1) kings, (2) consuls, (3) dictatorships, (4) decemvers, (5) tribunes, (6) emperors, and (7) exarchs.

13. John saw one of these heads badly wounded, to the extent that it would have been fatal had it not been marvelously *"healed"*. In the time seen by John all of these forms of government had passed away but the last. Seibel writes, *"When the Exarch was separated from Rome by the Lombards, it seemed the beast was wounded unto death, but another rose out of the seven former, and he was the eighth, that is, Papal Rome."*<sup>85</sup> Yes, the world was contemplating the dissolution of the empire, but into the vacuum stepped the Pope of the Roman Church.

14. When did this marvelous *"healing"* of the wounded empire take place? MacGreggor quotes the Catholic Cardinal Manning, as saying the invasion by the Lombards *"...extinguished utterly and destroyed the last vestige of the Roman empire in Italy: it was utterly swept away, it existed no longer."* At that moment there was *"...one sole person who had been the father, the pastor, lawgiver, protector, head of the people... The line of the Roman pontiffs alone was left."*<sup>86</sup> MacGreggor then points out that the commentators and historians *"Elliott, Junkins, Bowers, and Gibbon inform us that it occurred in A.D. 570."*<sup>87</sup> This is the date which marks the beginning of the apostasy.

15. Many commentators, including some from the Restoration, believe one must take into consideration the eastern portion of the empire, centered in Constantinople, as well as the western portion of the empire, situated in Rome, when considering the fall of the Roman Empire and the time for the apostasy to begin. As Njeim (RLDS) points out, the great image of Daniel Two representing the four great empires of the ancient world showed Rome as being the image's two legs of iron, which he equates with the Western and Eastern divisions of the ancient Roman Empire.

16. We have shown that the western portion of the empire fell in A.D. 570 and the papacy rose to power. But what about the eastern division of that ancient empire? How does it fit into this time frame? MacGreggor quotes a Reverend Pearson: *"The Eastern apostasy had begun before or about the time that Mahomet (sic) was born."* MacGreggor continues, *"Mohammedanism, like Christianity, centers in its founder, and the birth of each was a great day for their respective churches. Nor is it surprising that the birth of Mahomet (sic) dates from the death, the apostasy, of the church, the beginning of the*

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<sup>84</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Durant, p. 112.

<sup>85</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Seibel, p. 150.

<sup>86</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, pp. 77, 78.

<sup>87</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, p. 75.

*papacy.*"<sup>88</sup> Funk and Wagnalls Encyclopedia<sup>89</sup> tells us "*Muhammad was born in Mecca in A.D. 570.*" This is far from being mere coincidence!

17. It was Satan who gave power and authority to Papal Rome. It was Satan who gave to Papal Rome its seat over the seven hills of Rome, thus inheriting the same seat of power as did Imperial Rome. This beast commanded the attention of the entire Roman Empire; thus "...*they wondered after the beast*". (Verse Three) The beast was also worshipped: "...*and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*" (Verse Four). MacGreggor<sup>90</sup> quotes Elliott, who wrote that the Sicilian ambassadors, prostrate before Pope Martin IV, cried out three times, "*Lamb of God! that takes away the sins of the world*".

18. Verse Seven tells us this beast shall make war against the saints. Njeim writes, "*The secular power of the government was used to execute the wishes of the spiritual. Thus the Catholic church used established government to continue its war against the saints.*"<sup>91</sup> We quoted somewhat about the extent and ferocity of such warfare in the last chapter.

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTER THIRTEEN (Cont.): THE SECOND BEAST

*It* would be well to remember there are several major approaches to the book of Revelation. One of these is the *Preterit* point of view, believing all the prophecies of this book were fulfilled in the days of John, or shortly thereafter. As they look at this second beast "*coming up out of the earth*", they think of the politics of ancient Rome. Thus David Clark writes, "...*this second beast is rightly recognized as the Pagan religion or pagan priesthood. This Pagan religion supported the imperial power. It supported the civil authority, and especially lent its aid in the persecution of the Christians, and the Christian church. Thus it served the cause and power of the first beast...*"<sup>92</sup>

2. A second major point of view is the *Spiritual*. Perhaps Hendriksen best summarizes the basic precepts of this camp: "*The second beast is the false prophet (Rev. 19:20). It symbolizes false religion and false philosophy in whichever form these appear throughout the entire dispensation.*"<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, pp. 92, 93.

<sup>89</sup> *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, "Muhammad", p. 152.

<sup>90</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, p. 56.

<sup>91</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Njeim.

<sup>92</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 294.

<sup>93</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 295.

3. The *Futurist* approach is to relegate all the prophecies after Chapter Four to a short period of time just before the coming of the Lord. Although there are several differing views about this chapter, Gaebelien presents today's popular view: "*The second beast is a Jew... He must be a Jew or his claim to being Israel's true Messiah would not be accepted by the Jews. The sphere of the second beast is Palestine.... This second beast is the final, personal Antichrist... He is a counterfeit lamb and his two horns are an imitation of the priestly and kingly authority of Christ.*"<sup>94</sup>

4. Commentators of the Seventh-day Adventists generally take the *historicist* approach; however, in their interpretation of this chapter they vary considerably from other *historicists*, believing that the United States is the second beast. The French essayist, De Torqueville, wrote of the new American nation as being the result of two distinct elements, "...the spirit of religion and the spirit of liberty..."<sup>95</sup> So the Adventist commentator, Spicer, concludes, "*The new nation arose 'out of the earth'. It possessed the two features of civil and religious liberty represented by the two lamblike horns.*" He concludes with this warning: "*But the prophecy pictures a future development and reversal that may well cause grave concern to all lovers of liberty and freedom of conscience.*"<sup>96</sup> Such commentators look forward to a time when religious activists will develop into a force "...other than purely Catholic – dominating affairs, so that organized religion again could lay hold of the arm of civil law for the enforcement of religious observance."<sup>97</sup>

5. Quite the contrary, it seems today that, in spite of powerful religious lobbies, civil authority daily imposes restrictions upon religious liberty and lessens her influence. Most Restoration authors, such as Sheldon, B. McIndoo, and Njeim take a *historicist* approach to the book of Revelation. They emphasize the second beast of Revelation 13:11 is distinct and different from the beast that arose from the sea (Verse One). This beast, coming "*up out of the earth*", gives the appearance of peace and righteousness, yet shows a wicked power and is a tool of Satan.

6. Njeim tells us this beast came up "*out of the earth*", like a plant growing out of the ground, not from the turmoil of the nations of the world like the other great empires seen by Daniel. Its lamb-like appearance indicates a religious nature, yet it is an evil, military power. It is obvious that these two horns symbolize power. He identifies the two horns of this beast (Verse Eleven) as the Papal Roman power in the west and the Orthodox religion of the eastern portion of the old Roman Empire.

7. Some Church of Christ writers, as do most *historicists*, relate this second beast to papal Rome. They visualize the horns as symbolizing the civil and ecclesiastical power of the apostate Roman church. Sheldon goes further to state that the intention of this second beast "...was the implementation of the papal will by the sword, and was fulfilled by Frankish kings of Europe in support of the papacy."<sup>98</sup>

8. King Charlemagne of France overthrew the Lombard kings in Italy in A. D. 774 and gave unlimited support and power to the pope. He then began a thirty-year conquest to

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<sup>94</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, pp. 295, 297.

<sup>95</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, p. 297.

<sup>96</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, p. 297.

<sup>97</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, pp. 299, 300.

<sup>98</sup> Sheldon, William A., *Babylon's Fall and the Way of Escape*, pp. 24, 25.

conquer and Christianize western and central Europe. On Christmas Day in A. D. 800 he knelt before an altar and *“Pope Leo III then placed a crown upon his head, and the people assembled in the church acclaimed him the great, pacific emperor of the Romans.”*<sup>99</sup>This civil (military) and ecclesiastical (papacy) combination gave rise to the Holy Roman Empire, which existed from A. D. 800 until 1806.

9. This new beast, *“The Holy Roman Empire was an attempt to revive the Western Roman Empire, which had ceased to exist.... During the turbulent early Middle Ages the traditional concept of a temporal realm coextensive with the spiritual realm of the church had been kept alive by the popes in Rome.”*<sup>100</sup>Thus we see the Holy Roman Empire both exercised *“...all the power of the first beast before him”* and causes the world *“to worship the first beast”* (Verse Twelve).

10. No religion has played on the minds of its followers to believe in and imagine more supposed miraculous events (Verses Thirteen and Fourteen) than has the Catholic Church throughout the ages. Every Catholic nation has its numerous shrines where some supposed miracle or miraculous sighting of Jesus, Mary or some saint has appeared to a believer. Many of these occurrences involve the pagan, or semi-pagan, beliefs of the indigenous inhabitants of the land. The church then uses the incident to garner believers from among the indigenous people. In Mexico there are numerous places where tens of thousands of believers gather on the anniversary of a sighting of Mary. These occasions are then used by merchants to enrich themselves by the supposed miracle.

11. I shall not forget a documentary entitled *“Return to the Sacred Ice”* relating to Catholic worship in the mountains of Peru. An ancient tradition tells of a young boy tending his llamas who reported to have seen Jesus as a child playing among the animals. Then the boy, Jesus, disappeared into a large rock on the hillside. The Catholic Church has built a chapel around this rock. Each year, on a specific date, thousands of Indians come to this chapel to worship. They first prepare themselves, then climb to the heights of a great glacier above the chapel. Upon returning they are always a few less in number, with the understanding that someone was used in sacrifice to the *“gods of the ice”*.

12. After their descent, they enter the chapel to receive the Holy Communion. Having done this, they return to a valley where they await the rising of the *“sun god”* over the ridge to the east of the valley. With them is their Catholic priest. His explanation for participation in such ancient pagan rituals is quite revealing: *“When Europe was evangelized it too had its pagan rituals. Rome is open to different forms of worship because there is no one single way of approaching God.”*<sup>101</sup>

13. Verses Fourteen and Fifteen tell us this second beast, or the Holy Roman Empire, shall *“...make an image to the beast”* and would insure that all who *“...would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”* This Greek word *“image”* means a representation or a likeness of something. First, we must recognize the image shall be of *“...the first beast (pagan Rome), whose deadly wound was healed”* (Verse Fourteen) because its motives, its unholy nature and its worship of the dragon was continued by

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<sup>99</sup> *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, “Charlemagne”, p. 32.

<sup>100</sup> *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, “Holy Roman Empire”, p. 163.

<sup>101</sup> *“Return to the Sacred Ice”*, a PBS documentary.

papal Rome. We have already shown in Paragraph Nine, above, that history records the purpose of the Holy Roman Empire was to restore the glory and pomp of the pagan Roman Empire. But how will it reflect the continuation of pagan Rome through the office of the papacy?

14. Apostle William Sheldon writes that in the eleventh century the Holy Roman Empire "...consented to the authorization or recognition of a College of Cardinals..." This body of men, originally seventy in number, is appointed by the pope. Upon the death of a pope, they in turn elect the new pope from among their number. Their primary function is "...to assist the papacy as a supreme governing body of the church."<sup>102</sup> So we see in them a mirror image of the pope and the continuity of his office. Further, during the time of the Inquisition, six of these cardinals constituted the Holy Office as chief inquisitors, who coerced the worship of the "beast" or suffered the heretics and unbelievers with torture and death, thus fulfilling verse 15.

## *The Revelation of Jesus* *Christ*

### CHAPTER THIRTEEN (Cont.): THE MARK OF THE BEAST

*No* portion of this study has aroused more interest, nor produced more conflicting thought than this section about the "mark of the beast". It seemed wisdom to me to enlarge upon this subject so as to present the many, and varied, thoughts about this issue, for it is inevitable and will affect all believers, as well as nonbelievers. Unless divine understanding is revealed, each of us must eventually make our decision about this "mark", what it means, and how it will be manifested.

2. As we learned in Chapter One, Alternate Points of View, there are several distinct schools of thought about the Revelation. One of these is known as the *Preterit*. Adherents to this viewpoint see the prophecies of Revelation as having been fulfilled in the distant past, concerned primarily with the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Many noted *preterists* believe that Nero (A. D. 62 – 68) was the beast referred to in this chapter. No one could buy or sell without using his Roman coins, upon which were engraved his picture. To them this engraving constituted the "mark". Yet others believe that Domitian (A. D. 81 – 96) was the beast inferred in the chapter. Domitian was emperor when John was held prisoner on Patmos.

3. Another school of thought supported by many respected scholars is the *Spiritual* point of view. Hendricksen well represents their thinking: "*The forehead symbolizes the mind, the thought-life, the philosophy of a person. The right hand indicates his deeds, action, trade, industry, etc. Therefore receiving the mark of the beast on the forehead or right hand indicates ... either preeminently in what he thinks, says, writes, or more emphatically in what he does – this antichristian spirit becomes evident.*"<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Op. Cit., Sheldon, p. 27.

<sup>103</sup> Op. Cit., Gregg, p. 303.

4. The most popular approach today is the *Futurist* viewpoint. They believe everything after Chapter Four will take place in a short period of time just before Christ returns. Many see in this passage the prediction of a future cashless, worldwide economy in which credit/debit numbers will replace the use of actual currency around the world. Eventually this number will be placed on the body of its possessor, possibly as an implanted computer chip or a laser-tattoo in order to eliminate the possibility of theft or credit card fraud. This imprinted number will constitute the “*mark of the beast*”.

5. Belief of the Church of Christ in the apostasy and subsequent restoration of Christ's church align us with the *Historicist* approach to Revelation. As we examine this approach, we still find a great diversity of opinion. To the historicist (and the Church of Christ) the language of Verses Sixteen and Seventeen show the universality of papal control and dominion over the peoples of the Holy Roman Empire. In order to buy, sell or participate in commerce, “*all*” must be recognized as giving allegiance to the papacy. Their recognition shall be by some identifying “*mark*”. This particular Greek word appears only in the book of Revelation. Its meaning is twofold: something etched or graven, such as a tattoo, or something sculpted, such as a statue, or idol. In this instance it was to make readily apparent one's allegiance to the beast.

6. Barnes, a noted historicist, writes, “*...this has eminently characterized the Papacy. All possible care has been taken to designate with accuracy those who belong to that communion, and, all over the world, it is easy to distinguish those who render allegiance to the Papal power.*”<sup>104</sup> And how are they readily identified? Often by the graven crucifix they wear. Always by the shrines with sculpted images and idols, where they kneel and with the right hand make the sign of the cross, touching first the forehead.

7. This point of view expressed by Barnes was once representative of the majority position of the Protestant world. Leaving this general Protestant viewpoint were the Seventh-day Adventists, who developed their own unique thinking during the early nineteenth century. Their position is defined by Spicer: “*The professedly Protestant development seeking to dominate the consciences of men ... seize upon that which is the mark, or sign, of papal power.*”<sup>105</sup> Of course, he is referring to a position such as we have just read in the previous paragraph.

8. Spicer continues, “*It is not a literal physical marking. We are dealing with symbols. It is some religious doctrine or institution that stands as the badge, a sign of ecclesiastical authority. What institution of the papal church which Protestants could be misled into taking up, the enforcement of which would be virtually compelling people to pay homage to the Papacy?*” To answer his own question, Spicer quotes from page 213 of a book, *Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today*, written by a Catholic scholar: “*The observance of Sunday by Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the church.*”<sup>106</sup>

9. The Adventists point to religious activists of the nineteenth century, such as the National Reform Association, founded in 1863. These groups were lobbying for the opportunity to use governmental power for religious purposes. Spicer quotes one of

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<sup>104</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 333.

<sup>105</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, p. 300.

<sup>106</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, p. 300.

these ministerial advocates: *“I want to see the day when the church shall be the arbiter of all legislation, national, State, and municipal; when the great churches of the country can come together harmoniously and issue their edict, and the legislative powers respect it and enact it into law.”*<sup>107</sup> So the Adventist movement is looking forward to the time in our country when religious groups will be able to make laws enforcing Sunday worship. It is this Sunday worship that is identified as the *“mark of the beast”*.

10. Njeim, a *historicist* and an evangelist of the RLDS Church, expresses yet another point of view: *“This mark is a spiritual one. The principal features of the lamb’s followers were pacifism, internationalism and Christian socialism (or stewardship). These disappeared when the woman fled into the wilderness. The marking of the beast is opposite: militarism, tribalism and individualism. It is more clearly seen now than at any point in history.”*<sup>108</sup>

11. Another well-known *historicist* and respected Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, writes, *“It is probable that the mark, the name, and the number of the beast may all signify the same thing – that they make an open profession of their subjection and obedience to the papacy, which is receiving the mark in their foreheads, and that they oblige themselves to use all their interest, power, and endeavor, to promote the papal authority, which is receiving the mark in their right hand.”*<sup>109</sup>

12. Apostle William Sheldon identifies the cross as an *“emblem of Satan, as a banner of his kingdom!”*<sup>110</sup> He quotes a footnote found on p. 107 of Mosheim’s History (the Murdock-Reed edition): *“The Christians at first used the sign of the cross to bring to remembrance the atonement of Christ on all occasions...So late as the second century, the Christians attached no particular virtue to the sign of the cross, and they paid it no adoration;... afterward powerful efficacy began to be ascribed to it.”*<sup>111</sup>

13. Sheldon then quotes Thomas Aquinas (Saint Thomas), as he is quoted by Montague: *“We say that a cross is to be worshipped with the worship due to God; and for this reason we supplicate a cross, we pray to a cross, as if Christ himself, hanging on the cross, were before us.”*<sup>112</sup>

14. Aquinas’ words should remind us of the story in Numbers, Chapter Twenty-One, wherein the Lord told Moses to make a brass serpent and set it upon a pole. Anyone bitten by one of the fiery serpents of the desert could look upon this brass image, a type of the saving power of Jesus Christ, and live. What a marvelous blessing! Yet, seven hundred years later we read that the righteous King Hezekiah broke this image into pieces because Israel had made an idol of it and paid homage to it (2 Kings 18:1-4). The Catholic Church and its members have made of the cross a basis of ritual and idolatrous worship. My conclusion is simply that it is this cult of the cross which serves as the *“mark”* identifying those who worship the beast.

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<sup>107</sup> *Op. Cit.* Spicer, p. 304.

<sup>108</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Njeim.

<sup>109</sup> Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1991, p. 2, 478.

<sup>110</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Sheldon, p. 35.

<sup>111</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Sheldon, p. 29.

<sup>112</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Sheldon, p. 31.

15. Of great interest to me was a 700-page history concerning the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church with the Jewish community of Europe. It is entitled *Constantine's Sword*. We remember that Constantine was the pagan Roman emperor whose vision of a cross, superimposed on the sun brought him to victory and to enter the Christian church with hordes of other pagans. The church would never be the same! A former Catholic priest, James Carroll, now a research associate at Harvard's School of Divinity, wrote this exhaustive study of the history of the church from the days of Constantine to the present.

16. Throughout his study, Carroll repeats, "*This is the story of the cross.*" He shows that the cross was the symbol that brought victory to Constantine and later brought him and a flood of unconverted pagans into the "church". The cross was the symbol of the spiritual and political unity of the church and the Holy Roman Empire. The cross was the symbol of the first Crusade, in 1095 A. D., which ravaged the Jews of Europe. The cross was the symbol of the torture chambers of the Inquisition by which millions of Jews and Reformers were put to death. The ultimate theme of his research, running through the pages of history, was that the cross of the Roman Catholic Church emotionally and spiritually prepared Europeans for the terrible, unthinkable Holocaust of Nazi Germany.

17. In the development of his theme, what Carroll unwittingly does is completely outline, step by step, the fall of the church into the depths of the great apostasy. Every step of the way he attributes to the "*cult of the cross.*" Over and over, he states, "*Always in this story there is the cross.*"<sup>113</sup> As did Brother Sheldon, this informed author states that the cross "*...is a ubiquitous (omnipresent) symbol of a certain religion...*"<sup>114</sup>

18. Those outside this communion could neither buy, nor sell (Verse Seventeen). Throughout the history of this beast, many popes have made such commerce unavailable to the heretic, or unbeliever. For example, Pope Alexander III, in 1178 A.D., ordered "*...no man presume to entertain or cherish them in his house, or land, to exercise traffic with them.*" Concerning the Waldenses, he ordered "*...no man should presume to receive or assist them in selling or buying.*"<sup>115</sup> Pope Martin V made a decree stating "*...they permit not the heretics to have houses in their districts, or enter into contracts, or carry on commerce.*"<sup>116</sup>

19. In the final verse we are told that the number of the man representing this beast is 666. This refers to the fact that words in Latin, Greek and Hebrew can be reduced to a numerical value. Perhaps the most commonly accepted understanding of this verse is that it refers to the Latin title once written on the miter of the popes, *vicarius fillii dei*, or representative of the Son of God, which was equal to 666. The earliest solution to the number of the beast was proposed by Irenaeus in the second century. He, and many others, believed it to stand for *Lateinos*, the Greek word for Latin man. Barnes, writing about the Roman Catholic Church, quotes a Dr. More: "*They Latinize everything: mass, prayers, hymns, litanies, canons, decretals, bulls are conceived in Latin. The Papal councils speak in Latin, women themselves pray in Latin. The Scriptures are read in no other language under the Papacy than Latin. In short, all things are Latin.*"<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Carroll, James, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews*, 2001, pp.241, 250, 273.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>115</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 306.

<sup>116</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 306.

<sup>117</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 365.

# *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE RESTORATION

*Throughout* his visions John had seen dreadful scenes of impending persecution of the church. Other sequences showed the wrath of God poured out upon the earth, particularly upon those agents of Satan who opposed the work of Jesus Christ. Interspersed between these terrible scenes, the Lord revealed occasional glimpses of events that were intended to encourage true believers upon the earth.

2. Such is the case in the opening scenes of Chapter Fourteen. First John sees the Lamb of God, and with Him are 144,000 redeemed saints. To the early *historicists* this was one of those perfect numbers which represent the great number of true believers who bore the Father's name, rather than the name or number of the beast. Being with the Lamb shows they are enjoying eternal life with Him. These are thought to be those saints who had been faithful during the 1260 years of the apostasy. This number of the redeemed could also be representative of the redeemed of Israel who had passed through the final period of tribulation, discussed in Chapter Seven, which lies ahead and will be described in Chapter Sixteen.

3. Almost all *historicist* commentators say that "*not defiled with women*" must be taken in a spiritual sense, such as not partaking of pagan practices. Njeim (RLDS) points out that in other passages this term "*women*" referred to churches. While the true church was hidden in the wilderness, these believers may have belonged to various sects but did not participate in apostate practices and beliefs. Their number may include the millions who valiantly suffered death rather than take upon themselves the identifying mark of the beast.

4. Apostle W. A. Sheldon sees these opening verses as a revelation of a future event. He foresees a literal number of 144,000 of Israel that will be sealed to God, 12,000 from each tribe. He assumes this will also include Ephraimite gentiles who have become Israel through adoption (Ephesians 1:5). Since they have not been defiled by the corrupt doctrines of men, they have qualified themselves as "*virgins*", and thus would be the saints of God. They are found, together with the Lamb, on "*mount Zion*". This is the place identified in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 as the "*mountain of the Lord*". He considers this is used as "*a symbol referring to both ancient Jerusalem (to be renewed by the Spirit of God in the future) and the 'New Jerusalem' to be built in America.*"

5. During the time of oppression and persecution occasioned by the apostasy, many of the reformers looked for a time of restoration such as that prophesied by Nephi: "*...then shall the fullness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the*

*Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed*" (1 Nephi 4:16). We shall identify the ideas of a few of these worthy saints.<sup>118</sup>

Sir Isaac Newton - *"About the time of the end, in all probability, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the prophecies, and insist upon their literal fulfillment in the midst of much clamor and opposition."*

Poiret - *"In the world's sixth, which is its old age, it shall by the favor of Jesus Christ receive one more Dispensation of his Grace, which will be the last the wicked world is ever to expect. It will consist, as the former did, in appearing, revelation and re-establishment of some ordinances."*

Roger Williams - *"He conceived that the church of Christ has so fallen into apostasy as to have lost both its right form and the due administration of the ordinances, which could only be restored by some new apostolic or specially commissioned messenger from above..."*

6. Now for those awaiting this restoration, there appears a most glorious scene. An angel is seen flying *"...in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."* (Verse Six) This is the angelic messenger expected by Williams, Poiret, Newton and Wesley. The *historicist*, Adam Clarke, writing at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century said, *"Whether this angel means any more than a particular dispensation of providence and grace, by which the gospel shall be rapidly sent throughout the whole world; or whether it means any especial messenger, order of preachers, people, or society of Christians, whose professed object it is to send the gospel of the kingdom throughout the earth, we know not."*<sup>119</sup> But we are fortunate in knowing exactly to what it refers, the restoration of the Gospel and a priesthood authorized and called by Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Church of Christ.

7. The enthralling vision seen by John was an accurate portrayal of what would, in the latter day, take place as the Lord would effect a complete restoration of His glorious church. We remember from our study of Chapter Twelve that the church would go into an apostasy for 1260 years. The authority of her ministry was taken from the earth and the pure church established by Jesus Christ was not to be found. The flying of an angel through the midst of heaven became a reality in the early years of the nineteenth century. The apostasy, which began in A. D. 570 was nearing the end of its duration of a specified 1260 years as found in the prophecies of Revelation 12 and Daniel 7.

8. In the year 1823 an angel from heaven did appear to a young man named Joseph Smith. He identified himself as Moroni, one of the servants of Jesus Christ who had lived in ancient America after the advent of the Lord to that land following His crucifixion and resurrection. That it was an angel could not be doubted as one reads Joseph's description of him: *"...his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his*

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<sup>118</sup> Phillips, A. B., *A Compendium of the Faith and Doctrine*, Herald House, 1947, p. 80.

<sup>119</sup> Clarke, Adam, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 1347.

*countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person.”*<sup>120</sup>

9. This angelic being related to young Joseph that the Lord had a work for him to do. He told Joseph of the history of some of the ancient inhabitants of America which had been hidden in the earth. He also said, “...*the fulness (sic.) of the everlasting gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants.*”<sup>121</sup> Along with the ancient records was the means by which it was to be translated.

10. The next words of the Angel Moroni foretold the coming of yet another angelic messenger more to the point of John’s vision as one “...*having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*” (Verse Six) He quoted to young Joseph the words of the prophet Malachi, “*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple...*” (Malachi 3:1). Who is this messenger who shall prepare the way before the coming of the Lord? Malachi 4:5 identifies the messenger and the time period of his coming: “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:*”

11. The messenger shall be Elijah, and his coming shall precede and prepare the way for the second advent of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. Jesus, himself, clarifies the identity of this messenger: “*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.*” (Matthew 17:11-13). It shall be John the Baptist, coming in the spirit of Elijah, who shall prepare the way for the return of Jesus Christ, by restoring all things. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples asked Jesus, “*Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things;*” (Mark 9:11, 12)

12. The vital thing to be restored was the authority of the priesthood, so the everlasting gospel could be preached “...*unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*” (Revelation 14:6) In May of 1829, while still translating the ancient records, Joseph Smith and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord about baptism. It was at this time the angelic presence of John the Baptist was manifest, fulfilling the beautiful vision of the Revelator. Give attention to the words of Oliver:

*“On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed in glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the gospel of repentance! What joy! What wonder! What amazement!...*

*“As in the ‘blaze of day’; yes, more – above the glitter of the May sunbeam, which then shed its brilliancy (sic) over the face of nature! Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, ‘I am thy fellow servant’ dispelled every fear! ...’Twas the voice of an angel from glory-’twas a message from the ‘Most High’!...*

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<sup>120</sup> Flint, B. C., *An Outline History of the Church of Christ*, 1953, p. 21.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

*“But dear brother, think...what joy filled our hearts and with what surprise we must have bowed...when we received under his hand the Holy priesthood, as he said: ‘Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth that the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.’”*<sup>122</sup>

13. Because of this restoration, a second angel could then announce (Verse Eight) that the final, ultimate fall of Babylon has begun. This is the first mention of the latter-day Babylon in Revelation, but it shall be prominent in later chapters. The repeated emphasis assures us the great city has fallen, to arise no more. Isaiah had prophesied, *“It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and Satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.”* (Isaiah 13:20-22)

14. The literal city, Babylon, had long since disappeared, but the name is properly used to denote a similar power – proud, arrogant, insolent and oppressive. So it came to mean pagan Rome, the proud enemy of God’s people. Barnes<sup>123</sup> states, *“Alike in this book and in Daniel, Rome Pagan and Papal is regarded as one power, standing in direct opposition to the gospel of Christ...”* He further states that her fornication is used to denote her spiritual uncleanness, heathen and superstitious rites and observances. A third angel (Verses Nine and Ten) gives voice to the warning of the Almighty to all who render idolatrous reverence to the power represented by *“the beast and his image...”* They are guilty of idolatry in its worst form – *“a perversion of Christianity, and practiced under the guise of the religion of the Savior.”*<sup>124</sup> Another noted commentator writes, *“...divine vengeance (will) overtake all those that obstinately adhere to the antichristian interest after God had thus proclaimed its downfall.”*<sup>125</sup>

15. Now, in Verse Fifteen, John sees yet another angel come out of the temple and cry with a loud voice, *“Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”* This puts us in mind of the prophecy in Jacob 3:136-138: *“And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard sent his servant; and the servant went and did as the Lord had commanded him, and brought other servants; and they were few. And the Lord of the vineyard said unto them, Go to and labor in the vineyard, with your mights. For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard: for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh;”* I believe this is a message the restored church has been commissioned to carry to the world.

16. The Gospel and the priesthood authority were restored in 1830. At this time the Lord performed His *“great and marvelous work”*, bringing forth the ancient records of Manasseh to this little restored church. I believe the words of these four angels contain the same message God revealed to His restored church. They are found in the opening chapters of the *Book of Commandments*. Our message will not only be opposed by the

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<sup>122</sup> *Op Cit.*, Flint, p. 36.

<sup>123</sup> *Op. Cit.* Barnes, p.344.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

<sup>125</sup> Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 2479.

beast of Revelation; it will be opposed by the very descendants of those reformers who once taught the same message.

17. This brings us to the last dispensation of God's timetable and to the very threshold of the future. The chapter concludes with a graphic picture of the wrath of God being poured out upon a world ripened in iniquity. Verse Twenty tells us this great outpouring of God's wrath will take place *"without the city."* Here the term, *"city"*, appears to refer to the city of Jerusalem, often portrayed as being the future abode of the redeemed.

18. We remember Verse One of this chapter showed the Lamb, together with the redeemed of Israel, standing upon *"mount Zion"* and, as Apostle Sheldon mentioned, this ties the abode of the future righteous to both Jerusalem and to Zion, or the New Jerusalem to be established upon this land (see 3 Nephi 9:56-59). It appears, therefore, the abode of the righteous in both Jerusalem and the New Jerusalem shall be places of protection during the great outpouring of the wrath of God.

19. Nephi's prophecies of the end time reinforce this concept of protection for the righteous even as the great tribulation unfolds:

*"And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together in multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; And they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory. And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon the great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth, And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots; And behold, thou seest all these things; And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose foundation is the devil, Then at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants which he hath made to his people, who are of the house of Israel." (1 Nephi 3:229-237)*

*"For the day soon cometh, that all the proud and they who do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned. For the time soon cometh, that the fullness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men: For he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it be so that the fullness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, They shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire. Behold, my brethren, I say unto you, that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come; And it must needs be upon the face of this earth; And it cometh unto men according to the flesh, if it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel: For behold, the righteous shall not perish;" (1 Nephi 7:33-41)*

*“And with righteousness shall the Lord God judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked; For the time speedily cometh, that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people; and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire.” (II Nephi 12:88–90)*

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTER FIFTEEN: A PRELUDE

*A*s John begins Chapter Fifteen he sees the seven last angels having the seven last plagues which will be poured out upon the earth. These last seven plagues are described in Chapter Sixteen, so this interlude is introductory to these last vials of God’s wrath. Although these vials seem to be poured out in rapid succession, they appear to cover several centuries of world history. This chapter seems to be a logical conclusion of the last chapter and the dire warnings given by the second and third angels of God’s chastisement upon the symbolic city Babylon.

2. In Verses Two, Three and Four we are shown again (as in Chapter Four) a “*sea of glass*”. This sea of glass is symbolic of the peace, majesty and dominion of God. Upon this sea John saw standing the saints of God; those who had overcome the wiles, deception and power of the beast, and all the enemies of God and Jesus Christ.

3. But Verse Two tells us at this point in time, the sea of glass was “*mingled with fire*”. The color of flames reflected in this sea of glass gives us a more complete description of that time period, for it indicates the wrath of God as it is being poured out upon the wicked. This fiery color gives us, as well, a more complete description of the nature of the Almighty. Not only is He a God of mercy and grace, slow to anger and quick to forgive, but now we can see an analogy of the justice of God as it finally comes into play.

4. The demands of God’s justice are clearly stated in the Book of Mormon:

*“Now the work of justice could not be destroyed: if so God would cease to be God. What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God. And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world. And thus cometh about the salvation and redemption of men, and also their destruction and misery;” (Alma 19:95, 107-109)*

5. Even as the justice of God was being carried out, the saints standing upon the sea of glass, perhaps more accurately stated – standing within the “*city*”, were singing the Song of Moses, a song of thanksgiving and praise for their delivery. (see Exodus 15:1-19 and Deuteronomy 31:19-22)

6. In Verse Eight John saw that “...*the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power.*”. The presence of such smoke has long been associated with the power and presence of God. In Exodus 19:18 we read, “*And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.*”

7. Verse Eight also tells us that such was the presence and power of God that “*no man was able to enter into the temple*”; in other words, no one could enter in order to make intercession, or divert God from His demand for justice.

8. The seven angels, God’s agents, had now been sent forth and would not return “*till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.*” As Alma had told his son, “*the work of justice could not be destroyed.*” (Alma 19:95)

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE WRATH OF GOD

*We* read in Chapter Fourteen of an angel flying “*in the midst of heaven*” to effect the restoration of Christ’s church upon the earth in all its glory and with its authorized priesthood. The Book of Mormon identifies the result of this heavenly visitation as the “*fullness of the Gentiles*” (I Nephi 4:16), the very expression the Apostle Paul used in identifying the time frame when Israel would once again hear and receive the Gospel (see Romans 11: 25, 26)

*“And now, the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fullness of the Gentiles, is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years and many generations, after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fullness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed;”* – 1 Nephi 4:16

*“That these sayings which ye shall write, shall be kept, and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles, that through the fullness of the Gentiles, the remnant of their seed who shall be scattered forth upon the face of the earth, because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me, their Redeemer.”* (III Nephi 7:28)

2. A revelation of the Lord given to the emerging Church of Christ in its very first year describes the conditions which shall prevail in this dramatic period of world history.

*“And this I have told you concerning Jerusalem, and when that day shall come, shall a remnant be scattered among all nations, but they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

*And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.*

*And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound; and when the time of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fullness of my gospel; but they receive it not, for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men; and in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled:*

*And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass, until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.”* - Book of Commandments 48:25-28

3. These verses set the scene for the unfolding of Chapter Sixteen. In Chapter Fourteen the Apostle recounted seeing a “*third angel*”, following the restoration of the church, who announced in a loud voice, “*If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation;*” (Revelation 14:9, 10)

4. The “*great and abominable church*” seen by Nephi (1 Nephi 3:167), the beast of Chapter Thirteen, still held sway on the earth and in the hearts of those millions who had received his mark. The passing of those 1260 years of apostasy did not mark the end of the existence of the “*beast*”. It did, however, bring an end to his ability “*to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.*” (Revelation 13:7). Because of the precepts of men, the fullness of the gospel was not well received, and iniquity abounded upon the face of the earth. For these reasons the Apostle John heard “*a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*” (Revelation 16:1)

5. The very first of these vial judgments was to be poured out upon the Catholic world, or “*...upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.*” (Revelation 16:2) This would signify to me that it would more strongly affect the nations of Europe, as they had come out of the ancient Roman Empire. As this vial was poured out upon the earth; “*there fell a noisome and grievous sore*” upon those people deserving of it. When the scripture uses the term *sore*, it denotes an ulcer such as fell upon the Egyptians or an ulcerating boil such as afflicted Job. The terminology of them being *noisome and grievous* describes them as being hurtful, evil, calamitous and bringing sorrow.

6. As is common with the book of Revelation, commentators view this chapter from differing perspectives. I shall continue to view it from the *historicist* approach and quote only those commentators who broadly adhere to this point of view. Even this does little to limit the variety of interpretation. I shall present a number of interpretations for your prayerful consideration. Brother William Sheldon <sup>126</sup> writes, “*I believe that Chapter Sixteen principally relates to the last days, future to our time.*” Brother Harvey E. Seibel <sup>127</sup> writes, “*It is certain, in my view at least, and from the language of the prophecy that these plagues are events that are yet to take place and have not as yet seen fulfillment in any form.*”

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<sup>126</sup> Sheldon, William A., In an unpublished manuscript, p. 31.

<sup>127</sup> Seibel, Harvey E., In an unpublished manuscript, p. 15.

7. On the other hand, most *historicists* view at least the majority of these plagues as having been accomplished. Uriah Smith, a *historicist* and an Adventist, looks at these plagues as being literal in nature. He writes, “*These plagues are almost identical with those which God inflicted upon the Egyptians as he was about to deliver his people from the yoke of bondage, the literality (sic) of which is seldom, if ever, called in question.*”<sup>128</sup>

8. Albert Barnes is typical of most *historicists* in believing the purpose of these last plagues is to weaken, and finally destroy the power of the papacy. He writes, “*In an important sense France has always been the head of the Papal power. The King of France has been usually styled, by the popes themselves, ‘the eldest son of the church.’ In reference to the whole Papal dominion in former times, one of the principal reliances has been on France, and, to a very large extent, the state of Europe has been determined by the condition of France.*”<sup>129</sup>

9. It is for this reason many *historicists* believe that the *noisome and grievous sore* which fell upon men was representative of the French Revolution beginning in 1789 and lasting until the dawn of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the power of the Catholic Church was greatly restricted and its clergy suffered disproportionate losses in the Reign of Terror which took 40,000 lives. Gregg writes, “*In the French Revolution, a foul and loathsome sore, that is, the moral corruption, atheism, and general dissolution of society, spread over those countries where the beast and his image were principally worshipped.*”<sup>130</sup>

10. A Latter Day Saint commentator takes an altogether different position. He believes *the noisome and grievous sore* “...*may be the economic problems.*”<sup>131</sup> of the world. His thought is that the *sore* was not noticeable until the Dark Ages when European man lived in serfdom. To relieve the pain people began to engage in commerce, which led to the exploitation of the world. This, in turn, led to conquest and continual warfare among the nations of Europe. Then, in the late eighteenth century, the Industrial Age began in England. Competition grew rapidly. “*Scholars generally agree that the Industrial Revolution occurred in France, Belgium, Germany, and the U. S. about the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; in Sweden ...toward the end of the century; in Russia and Canada just after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century...*”<sup>132</sup>

11. This commentator, Njeim, sees the machines of industry producing a new class of people, the industrial giants and financiers. Though they became rich, it did little to reduce the pain and suffering of the masses. The growing struggle between the classes developed into the three great economic systems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Capitalism, Communism and National Socialism (the Third Reich of Hitler). Their confrontation led the world into World War II.

12. My personal viewpoint stems from the wording of the revelation given to the developing church: “*And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass, until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.*” (Book of Commandments 48:28) This wording, as found in the Old Testament, could refer to any malady or calamitous punishment meted out by God. This generation

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<sup>128</sup> Smith, Uriah, *Daniel and Revelation*, 1897, pp. 769, 770.

<sup>129</sup> Barnes, Albert, *Notes on the New Testament, Explanatory and Practical*, 1949, p. 359.

<sup>130</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 354.

<sup>131</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Njeim, p. 183.

<sup>132</sup> *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, “Industrial Revolution”, Vol. 14, p. 73.

spoken of is that which would see the fullness of the Gospel restored to the earth. I believe the language of Chapter Fourteen points out the first vial of the wrath of God shall be poured out subsequent to the Restoration.

13. A more literal interpretation of the overflowing scourge and desolating sickness which shall cover the land could indicate the outbreak of a terrible and loathsome epidemic. Such an epidemic, the Bubonic Plague, known as the “Black Death” did spread over the nations of Europe during the Middle Ages and up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One of the first symptoms of this disease is the painful swelling of the lymph nodes in the groin and armpits. They continue to fester and grow until they reach the size of a chicken egg. *“The disease occurred in huge pandemics that destroyed the entire populations of cities throughout the Middle Ages. The last great pandemic began in China in 1894 and spread to Africa, the Pacific islands, Australia, and the Americas, reaching San Francisco in 1900.”*<sup>133</sup> The almanac stated that within two years of arriving in Europe, the plague had killed *“as much as half the population.”*<sup>134</sup>

14. An interesting fact for our consideration is that each of these interpretations (the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution or the Black Death) would fall into the general time frame of men who stood in that generation of the restoration of the Gospel.

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN (Cont.): THE SECOND VIAL

*The* Apostle John wrote, *“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.”* (Revelation 16:3)

2. Some *historicists*, such as Uriah Smith and W. A. Spicer, look for a literal fulfillment of these plagues of Chapter Sixteen. Most *historicists*, however, believe that just as the majority of the Revelation uses symbols to indicate exact historical events to come, the plagues described in this chapter are, likewise, symbolic of events which will be written on the pages of world history. We shall consider two views about the symbolism of verse three, describing the second plague.

3. Most *historicists* look at the second vial, that which was poured out upon the sea, as representing the terrible defeats suffered by the naval forces of the Catholic nations. The primary naval forces of the Catholic world during this period were those of Spain, Holland, Portugal and France. These nations were motivated by the desire to, both destroy the enemies of Catholicism, and carry the cross of the Roman Catholic Church into the entire world. They would be engaged in heated battle with English forces from 1793 until 1813.

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<sup>133</sup> *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, “Plague”, Vol. 21, pp. 42, 43.

<sup>134</sup> *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*, 1990, p. 499.

4. Does recorded history aptly portray the symbolism of verse three? Lambert writes that on June 1, 1794 the British naval forces, in a well-planned battle in the Atlantic, “reasserted the Royal Navy’s mastery in battle.”<sup>135</sup> In 1795 the French Mediterranean Fleet was soundly defeated by the British, and in 1797 a Spanish fleet of 27 ships was intercepted off Cape St. Vincent by 15 British ships and driven back to the harbor of Cádiz in disorder.

5. In 1798 Napoleon conquered Italy and invaded Egypt with 36,000 men aboard 400 transports and other warships. While the fleet was anchored on the Egyptian coast, Lord Nelson attacked, destroying the French fleet, stranding Napoleon’s army and his dream of an Eastern Empire. “*The Mediterranean became an English lake.*”<sup>136</sup>

6. At Cape Trafalgar, off the southern coast of Spain, England’s Lord Nelson positioned his experienced captains to penetrate the line of Franco-Spanish ships on October 21, 1805. The French and Spanish lost twenty ships and more than 6,000 men in a few hours of furious fighting. The historian, Miller, describes the sight: “*The coming of day revealed a scene of silent, smoking desolation. ‘An awful sight it was,’ recalled John Nicol, a seaman in Goliath. ‘The whole bay was covered with dead bodies, mangled, wounded and scorched, not a bit of clothes left on them but their trousers.’*”<sup>137</sup>

7. One of the Franco-Spanish ships had lost five-sixths of her crew and was sinking. “*Blood ran in streams about the decks, and in spite of the sand, the rolling of the ship carried it hither and thither until it made strange patterns on the planks,’ recalled a crewman.*”<sup>138</sup>

8. Certainly God’s wrath was poured out upon sea in those years of conflict, and those men who supported the Roman Catholic Church and the Papacy were the primary recipients of this wrath.

9. A completely different interpretation is given to the nature of this *second vial* by the RLDS commentator, Njeim. He sees as important the fact that the contents of this vial were poured out upon the sea, and not upon the earth as was the first vial. He writes, “*Out of the sea came the seven-headed monster of the thirteenth chapter, and was interpreted as ‘people, multitudes, nations and tongues.’ So this plague is peculiarly the lot of the powers which came out of the Roman Empire.*”

“*A dead man has no blood as such. The red corpuscles disintegrate and only a watery fluid remains. Once blood is gone, life is gone. Naturally, the Revelator has something else in mind other than the literal substance of blood. His language was symbolic, and the blood was used as a symbol of the Spirit of God. When the Spirit of God and of life is gone from man, man becomes a corpse. Our Lord put it this way: ‘without me ye can do nothing.’ Dependence now is on the intellect rather than on the spirit.*”<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Lambert, Andrew, *War at Sea in the Age of Sails*, London, 2000, p. 155.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>137</sup> Miller, Nathan, *Broadsides*, Canada, 2000, p. 208.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>139</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Njeim, pp. 187, 188.

10. Before commenting on Njeim's interpretation, let me reiterate: I believe the wording of Chapter Fourteen, Verses Six and Nine and the beginning of Chapter Sixteen point out that the plagues of the first portion of Chapter Sixteen have a relationship to the restoration of the Gospel. In the Book of Mormon this period of time is called "*the fullness of the Gentiles.*" (I Nephi 4:16 and III Nephi 7:28) In Chapter 48, verse 27 of the Book of Commandments it is referred to as "*when the time of the Gentiles is come in.*" Verses Twenty-six and Twenty-seven tell us "*the whole earth shall be in commotion.*" at such time, and their hearts shall be led by "*the precepts of men.*"

11. Now I believe in this time period there were righteous men living in the European nations, those nations upon which the wrath of God would be poured out. These were brave men and women used by the Lord to bring about, and sustain, the Reformation, many of them looking forward to the Restoration of Christ's church. They were led by the Holy Spirit of God and were among those "*saints*" with whom the beast made war. (Revelation 13:7)

12. I would take this viewpoint of Njeim a step farther with a question: What is it that would cause the Spirit of God to be withdrawn from the peoples of these nations, leaving them to their own intellect? Those years which introduced this pivotal era of time in Europe are well known for an epic movement, a revolution in our way of thinking. It is called the Age of Enlightenment:

*"A great premium was placed on the discovery of truth through the observation of nature, rather than through the study of authoritative sources, such as ... the Bible. Its thinkers ... saw the church – especially the Roman Catholic Church – as the principal force that had enslaved the human mind in the past ...."*

*"According to Immanuel Kant, the motto of the age should be 'Dare to Know'. A desire arose to reexamine and question all received ideas and values."*

*The Enlightenment "...marked a key stage in the decline of the church and growth of modern secularism..."*<sup>140</sup>

13. Moroni and Nephi correctly saw the day in which these things would all be fulfilled:

*"Yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches, and teachers, in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches;"*  
(Mormon 4:36)

*"And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another; and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance. And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people, Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; For behold, there is no God to-day, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men."* (II Nephi 12:5-7)

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<sup>140</sup> Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, "Enlightenment, Age of", Vol. 9, pp. 302, 303.

14. Spiritually, the Age of Enlightenment was a sore curse. Intellectualism, humanism, agnosticism and human secularism are its legacy to the modern world. This is why on any given Sunday in any nation of Europe, less than ten percent of its citizenry will be found in worship of the Lord.

## *The Revelation of Jesus* *Christ*

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN (Cont.): THE THIRD AND FOURTH VIALS

*Again*, I will present the classical *historicist* viewpoint of the third and fourth vials of God's wrath as it is poured out upon the world and, especially, upon those who "...worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God," (Revelation 14:9, 10)

2. Verse Four of Chapter Sixteen tells us, "*And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.*" The next two verses say that this was a righteous judgment because "...they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy." The language of these verses does, indeed, indicate it was to be those nations which supported the Papacy that shall suffer the curse of this vial. It shall be the headwaters and streams of their rivers which shall become bloody.

3. Barnes sees the fulfillment of this prophecy in the invasion of Italy by Napoleon and his French legions in 1796 and successive years. Great and bloody battles took place along the headwaters of the Po and Rhine Rivers "... from which Rome has never recovered..." <sup>141</sup> Barnes writes, "...this was the very region where the persecutions against the Waldenses and Albigenses had been carried on – the valleys of Piedmont. <sup>142</sup> How well this fits the description of those who "shed the blood of saints".

4. Njeim, the RLDS commentator, has a different perspective about this third vial worthy of consideration. In his interpretation of the second vial, Njeim made the point that the "sea" referred to those nations and tongues which had come out of the Roman Empire, the nations of Europe which later composed the Holy Roman Empire. <sup>143</sup>As their populations, commerce and industrialism grew, these nations were no longer self sustaining. They had to have colonies and dominions from around the world to supply their needs.

5. These colonies became the "*rivers and streams*" which fed that "sea". Just as long as these colonial empires were acquiescent and peaceful, all was well. But the shot fired in Lexington in April of 1775 was "*heard around the world*". The successful American Revolution began a pattern of violent struggles for freedom and independence

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<sup>141</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 364.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

<sup>143</sup> See Njeim's quotation in Chapter Sixteen: The Second Vial.

throughout the Americas. One by one the Spanish colonies in the New World achieved their independence through bloody revolution. Now we have lived to see the colonial empires of England, France, Spain, Holland and Germany in Africa and Asia rise up to gain their independence and turn bloody those rivers and streams which once sustained the nations of Europe.

6. Verses Eight and Nine of Chapter Sixteen say, *“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.”*

7. Barnes represents the classical *historicalist* interpretation of these verses. He identifies the series of wars that consumed Europe following the French Revolution as being the fulfillment of this calamity by which *“men were scorched with great heat.”* He writes, *“Europe seemed to be on fire with musketry and artillery, and presented almost the appearance of the broad blaze of the battle-field. The number that perished was immense. These wars were attended with the usual consequences – blasphemy, profaneness, and reproaches of God in every form.”*<sup>144</sup>

8. Njeim refers us to Ether 1:113 – *“And then shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John, be unfolded in the eyes of all the people.”* He believes our eyes have seen the completion of the necessary steps leading to the eventual fulfillment of this vial which is to be poured out upon the earth. He then quotes the words of the angel Moroni when he appeared to young Joseph Smith and who, in turn, quoted from the fourth chapter of Malachi:

*“For, behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud yea and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and they that cometh shall burn them saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”*<sup>145</sup>  
*Now when we read this verse in Malachi, it does not read exactly as quoted by Moroni. Rather than saying “and they that cometh”, Malachi says “and the day that cometh”.*

9. Njeim explains: *“Now in the light of the fourth judgment we can see why the change was made. ‘THEY’ refers to the inventions of people that will scorch men with great heat – deadly inventions in the hands of the kings of the East (verse 12) and the kings of the whole earth (Verse Fourteen).”*

10. *“Both Malachi and John are describing one eschatological (the aspect of theology that deals with death, resurrection, judgment and immortality - dem) event in different languages, and yet the meaning is the very same”*<sup>146</sup>; namely, nuclear warfare.

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<sup>144</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 365.

<sup>145</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Flint, p. 21.

<sup>146</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Njeim, p. 191.

# *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN (Cont.): THE FIFTH VIAL

*At* this point in Chapter Sixteen, the understanding of peoples of the Restoration would probably deviate considerably from that of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century *historicists* in many respects. From their perspective, the first five of these vials were poured out upon the earth within the ten years of the French Revolution (1789 – 1799) and the Napoleonic Wars which followed it. In their point of view the 1260-year reign of the Papacy had come to an end with the French Revolution. They now look for the culmination of secular history.

2. So popular was their viewpoint that members of many Protestant groups joined together into a movement expecting the “*advent*” of Christ by the year 1843. So they naturally looked for the fulfillment of all the prophecies in the book of Revelation by that time. When nothing happened at that time, many were discouraged and returned to their previous congregations. However, this movement gave rise to the Adventist Church. Within her ranks were to be found many of the *historicist* commentators.

*“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”* (Revelation 16:10, 11)

3. Njeim, the RLDS commentator, writes that this vial is to be poured out upon the seat of the beast, which he identifies as being “...*symbolic of governments of this civilization whether they be civil or ecclesiastical.*”

*“The people of this world are restless, and, naturally, they are looking to the different governments for help. They are staggering under the punitive measures inflicted by the vials of the preceding four angels. How can our economic problems be solved in a world resisting the message of Christ?*

*“Again, no one religion has found a solution to the problem. Like civil governments, all are hoping for relief, but the darkness continues to persist. In the descriptive language of John, the intensity of the darkness becomes so great that the governing powers ‘gnawed their tongues with pain’, but refused to listen to God who has the solution.”*<sup>147</sup>

4. I believe we can see clearly written on the pages of history the events describing the vial of the fifth angel. This vial is to be poured out upon the “*seat of the beast*”. Whether we are speaking of the old, pagan Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, or the Papacy, the seat of her power was always found in the center of Europe. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the population of Europe would more than double, bringing to light a multitude of

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<sup>147</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Njeim, pp. 191, 192.

social, economic and political problems. In 1818 a child was born to a Jewish couple who had recently converted to Christianity. This boy was born on the very eve of a great social revolution.

5. He was born just a few miles from the French border, in the old German city of Trier, ancient Roman capital of the north. Here the Emperor Constantine made his headquarters. Here was the very center of Roman Catholicism, the very “*seat of the beast*”. That boy’s name was Karl Marx. He was born in the center of the Holy Roman Empire. The society of Europe in that day consisted of three classes – the clergy, the nobility and everyone else. In his famous *Communist Manifesto*, Marx wrote, “*Let the ruling classes tremble at a communistic revolution.*”<sup>148</sup> Indeed, the entire Catholic world began to tremble.

6. Marx, whose education was influenced by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, was an avowed atheist. He, as most other Communist leaders, “...*discouraged religious worship because they considered religion a threat to Communism.*”<sup>149</sup> In his *Manifesto*, Marx taught the necessity for the capitalist class to be “...*overthrown and it would be eliminated by a worldwide working-class revolution and replaced by a classless society.*” In his theories, he postulated “...*the necessity for workers to seize political power by armed insurrection...*”<sup>150</sup> This is exactly what took place in Russia in 1917 and in countless countries around the world since that time – armed insurrection, revolution, terrorism and bloodshed.

7. Certain basic features have been shared by all Communist countries, whether they be found in Europe, Asia, Africa or Latin America. “*One of these features was totalitarianism. In totalitarian countries, the government controls almost all aspects of people’s lives.*”<sup>151</sup> Consider what happened in Russia when Stalin took control of the nation and in 1928 implemented his 5 Year Plan for the economy:

To remove resisting farmers from their parcels of land, he “...*sent about a million families into exile*” where millions starved to death. In the 1930’s Stalin set up his special police system. “*Millions of persons were executed or sent to labor camps. Fear spread through the U.S.S.R. as neighbors were ordered to spy on one another. The Soviet government broke up families, and it urged children to inform on their parents to the police.*”<sup>152</sup>

8. “The Roman Catholic Church ...had been a special target of violence...” *of the Paris Commune which ...proclaimed death to all tyrants, priests and Prussians.*”<sup>153</sup> Have you ever wondered why the Catholic Church was so silent during those years when Hitler was building his Nazi system? It is because Catholic Europe looked to Hitler and Mussolini as allies in their struggle against Communism and modernism. “...*the Church remained committed to monarchy, the authority that comes from above, not below.*” And the “*Communists had evolved into what they would remain for most of the twentieth century – the Catholic Church’s arch enemy.*”<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Carroll, p. 420.

<sup>149</sup> *World Book Encyclopedia*, “Communism”, Vol. 4, p. 892.

<sup>150</sup> *Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*, “Marx”, Vol. 17, p. 43.

<sup>151</sup> *Op. Cit.*, *World Book Encyclopedia*, p. 890.

<sup>152</sup> *World Book Encyclopedia*, “Stalin”, Vol. 18, pp. 826, 827.

<sup>153</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Carroll, p. 435.

<sup>154</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Carroll, pp. 511, 513.

9. The growing Communist movement has, indeed, brought about a great weakening of the Roman Catholic Church around the world. This is not as much the result of a direct assault upon the church, as from the fact so many impoverished people in Catholic nations have been caught up in the deception of Socialist and Communist doctrine.

10. Hanson writes, *“Both Communist and Fascist states battered the church between the First and Second World Wars. The European urban workers, especially in Catholic countries, had generally been won over to Socialism or Communism before the First World War.”*<sup>155</sup>

11. Much of the pain and darkness in the Catholic nations of Latin America is the direct result of a new theology that has been espoused by Catholic priests. It is termed Liberation Theology and one of its founders was Gustavo Gutiérrez, who points out *“... any consideration of this topic must start from two facts: class struggles exist, and neutrality in the struggle is impossible. The task of today’s Christian is the liberation of humanity.”*<sup>156</sup> It is no coincidence his edicts sound like the philosophy of Marx. *“Liberation theologians at first strongly advocated socialism and were unashamedly influenced by Marxism.”*<sup>157</sup>

12. Interestingly, in January of 1973, when Liberation Theology was beginning to raise its head in Latin America, the late Apostle Marvin Ely, of the Church of Christ, received a spiritual dream. In that dream he saw the crescent moon revolving rapidly around the earth about halfway between the horizon and the zenith. The leading edge was the color of the moon at night, but the remaining part was a blend of red and purple. Streaming behind the moon was a band of light of the same color.

13. He remembered that this apparition rotated around the earth about four times. Each time its color was dimmer. After the final revolution, it fell toward the earth and changed into the form of a star. It fell in front of a cloud that was gray in color, and then it dissipated. From that spot ashes began to fall upon the earth.

14. Apostle Ely wrote, *“The color was a cross between red and purple. The meaning of these colors were (sic) also plain to my understanding: The Red represented Communism; the Purple represented the Catholic Church.”* Apostle Ely wrote of his experience and gave it to the Council of Apostles, as well as others.

15. The late Apostle Archie Bell wrote, *“When I first read the account of this dream, the Spirit rested upon me, bearing witness that this was a Divinely inspired dream. The object looked like a new moon. This would be the shape of a crescent. The crescent was the emblem of Turkey, and became the emblem of Mohammedanism (sic), or the Moslem of today. This would indicate that Communism, and Catholicism will use the Arabs to their advantage. ...They will fall and eventually their influence will be destroyed.”*

16. In Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Brazil, Peru, Columbia and other Catholic nations in the Americas the depredations of both left-wing revolutionaries and right-wing

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<sup>155</sup> Hanson, Eric O., *The Catholic Church in World Politics*, 1987, p. 57.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>157</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, “Liberation Theology”, Vol. 17, p. 297.

death squads have brought decades of darkness, terror and gnawing pain to countless millions of people. Suffering most have been the impoverished Native Americans. And who is to blame for this misery? In 1980 Archbishop Lefebvre gives answer: *“In Central America, the Bishops have yielded to Communism. In South America only countries like Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay can join forces for the Catholic fight against Communism.”*<sup>158</sup>

17. In a sense, the United States contributed to that rise of Liberation Theology and its commitment to armed insurrection in that, in our fear of the growing Communist threat, we have supported repressive, right-wing dictators such as Somoza in Nicaragua, Batista of Cuba and Romero of El Salvador. These leaders kept their people in poverty and political subjection, making them receptive to the teachings of the Liberation Theologists.

18. Just as Apostle Ely’s dream of the eventual dissipation of the Communist/Catholic coalition, this threat *seems* to have largely come to a conclusion in the Americas. Only in Cuba and Columbia does the gnawing pain still assault the populace. However, this socialist influence is now making its presence felt in other countries of South America, such as Venezuela. Communist and/or Socialist Parties are still a strong voice in the politics of European nations, and in Africa the Communist/Muslim dictatorships of several nations causes great distress to the well-being of the common man.

19. The terrible darkness and pain brought upon the world by the growth of Communism, identified as another *“abomination of desolation”* by the late Apostle Archie Bell of the Church of Christ, has not been restricted to the Catholic Church: The entire world has been thrown into turmoil, revolution, and bloodshed. There is no doubt that worldwide Communism, with all its evils and abuses, has caused individuals and the nations of the world to gnaw their tongues with pain as they lived out their lives in the darkness of this system.

## *The Revelation of Jesus* *Christ*

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN (Cont.): THE SIXTH VIAL

*A*s the vials of God’s wrath are poured out, one by one, we are brought ever closer to the present day. For this reason alone, it would seem, our interest and attention grow with the outpouring of each successive vial.

*“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto*

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<sup>158</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Hanson, p. 104.

*the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” (Revelation 16:12-14)*

2. Concerning this “*sixth vial*” Njeim, the RLDS commentator, writes, “*The threat that came to the eastern empire and eastern Christianity (see Chapter Nine, the Sixth Trumpet – dem) came from the Euphrates (ch. 9:14). Could this mean the same thing? The river is merely used as a symbol of separation between the East and the West*”.<sup>159</sup>

*“The West has been drunk with its own power while the East has been dormant. The river that separates the two must be bridged. It is symbolic of technological and scientific progress. With scientific and industrial knowledge given to the kings of the East, certainly they will become more than a match for the West.*

*“The dreadful thing about the drying up of the waters of the Euphrates is the preparation – war preparation made by the kings of the East. The terrible effects of this will be felt when the marching signal is given. “*

*“Commentary on that which is to come will come from the pens of our children, and not from us. They will be able to fix the place for Armageddon...”*<sup>160</sup>

3. Let us look briefly at the understanding of the classical *historicists* of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The majority of these commentators believed that the reference to the “*great river Euphrates*” referred to the political power which was commonly identified with that description; namely, the Turkish Empire. We must remember that in the day of these commentators, this was the powerful Ottoman Empire, which included, not only Turkey, but Syria, Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Lybia, Algeria, Kurdistan and Daghestan. These were lands which were previously a part of the Christian Byzantine Empire before being conquered by the Muslims of the sixth trumpet.

4. They see the drying up of the Euphrates to indicate a diminishing of the Turkish Empire. Now this certainly did take place. After the Axis Powers (which included Turkey) were defeated in World War I, The Paris Peace Conference fragmented the ancient empire and it evolved into the distinct nations of the Middle East we know today. The historicist Caringola, living later and with the advantage of history, writes, “*The once mighty Turkish Empire was forever ‘dried up’ and ceased to exist as a result of World War I.*”<sup>161</sup>

5. Some *historicists*, Barnes and Elliott for example, see this as a prelude to the conversion of the “*kings of the east*” to Christianity, and the “*drying up*” of the river now allowed them to bring gifts to the Messiah. Other *historicists* equate the River Euphrates with the river Tiber because, as Matthew Henry writes, “*as Rome is mystical Babylon, Tiber is mystical Euphrates. It is therefore very probable that the downfall of popery, removing these obstructions, will open a way for both Jews and other eastern nations to come into the church of Christ. And, if we suppose that Mahomedism (sic) should fall at*

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<sup>159</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Njeim, p. 192.

<sup>160</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Njeim, 193, 194, 196.

<sup>161</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 382.

*the same time, there will be still a more open communication between the western and eastern nations...*"<sup>162</sup> History has not dealt kindly with such attempts at interpretation.

6. Tuesday morning found Apostle Jay Moser and myself in our hotel room in Danli, Honduras. We were beginning the day with prayer, when a knock came at our door. It was Brother Tommy Gill, and he told us we needed to go down to the lobby and watch the TV. As we did so, those terrible scenes of the devastation of September 11<sup>th</sup> were indelibly imprinted upon my mind. I cried bitter tears as I contemplated the possible withdrawal of one of God's great promises to America: *"And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles: and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. And I will fortify this land against all other nations;"* (II Nephi 7:18, 19)

7. In shock I watched a man free-falling after he had leaped from one of the devastated towers. He seemed to fall forever, and as I closed my eyes to remove the image from my sight, I heard a voice speak to my mind, as clearly as if it had been audible: *"Revelation Sixteen, Verse Twelve"*. That is all I heard, but I could sit there no longer without going to our room to read this passage:

*"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared."*

8. It seems no coincidence to me that when the sixth trumpet of Chapter Nine sounded and the *"four angels which are bound in the River Euphrates"* were loosed, a great horde swept out of Central Asia. First they conquered the nations east of the Euphrates and adopted their Muslim religion. Then Iraq and Syria fell before their onslaught, and they established their capital in Baghdad. This area west of the Euphrates was the Christian Byzantine Empire, the Eastern Orthodox Church, which was to shortly fall before the Muslim armies.

9. From whence came these fanatical warriors of Islam? It is the historian, Gibbon, who gives answer: *"...a powerful and independent people, (who) were scattered over the desert from China to the River Oxus."*<sup>163</sup> Today this river is known as the Amu Darya. To identify these people by name, they are the Uzbeks, Turkmen, Tadzhihs and Afghanis the United States is either allied with or fighting in its present war against terrorism.

10. Again the boundary between East and West is to be breached, and the *"way is to be prepared"* for the *"kings of the east."* It is important to establish the meaning of this expression, *"the kings of the east"* in biblical terms. When the Lord revealed through the prophet, Isaiah, *"Calling a ravenous bird from the east..."* (Isaiah. 46:11), He referred to Cyrus, King of Persia (present day Iran). When He revealed through His prophet, Ezekiel, *"I will deliver thee to the men of the east"* (Ezekiel 25:4), He was speaking of the king of the Babylonians (present day Iraq). So I need not suppose this reference to *"the kings of the east"* refers to China, India or Japan; rather, it signifies the same eastern kings we find in a biblical context.

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<sup>162</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Henry, p. 2480.

<sup>163</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gibbon, p. 49.

11. I believe the *historicist*, Spicer, correctly wrote back in 1917, “*The index finger of prophecy points, therefore, to this region of the eastern Mediterranean as the pivotal point in the closing history of the nations.*”<sup>164</sup>

12. These nations of the east have all become followers of Mohammed. While Muslim nations may no longer be interested in geographical conquest as they were a thousand years ago, every Muslim nation, as well as the U. S. and the nations of Europe, has schools and/or clerics that teach “*radical Islamic*” doctrines. Consider the remark of one such cleric made to his followers three days before Christmas, 2002: “*It is the duty of every good Muslim to kill Christians.*”<sup>165</sup> His teaching resulted in the death of three girls in a Pakistani Christian church during a Christmas service. Is such violence an anomaly, uncharacteristic of Islam?

13. From the pen of the Prophet as written in the Koran, in the chapter entitled “Women”, we read, “*You to whom the Scriptures were given! Believe in that which we have revealed, confirming your own scriptures, before we obliterate your faces and turn them backward, or lay Our curse on you as We laid it on the Sabbath-breakers. Those that deny Our revelations We will burn in Hell-fire. No sooner will their skins be consumed than We shall give them other skins, so that they may truly taste Our scourge.*” (pp. 362, 363)

14. Sayce writes, “*The sword,’ says Mohammed, ‘is the Key of heaven and of hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer.’*”<sup>166</sup> No, that radical cleric in Pakistan is typical of radical Islamic thought everywhere. The newspaper reports (May 24, 2003) that a popular Muslim cleric who had sought asylum in Iran, recently returned to Iraq “*with his 1500 fighters*”. Muslim clerics bear little resemblance to the Christian ministers with which we are familiar.

15. As I sit at my desk writing this late in the year 2003, it is difficult to predict what events will take place in the future. We presently find the United States, with but a few allies, still struggling against terrorists in Afghanistan while engaged in a deadly war with Iraq, the nation presently identified with the River Euphrates. Their objective is to break and remove the power of her despotic ruler which, as yet, has not been accomplished. After six months the intensity of the guerrilla warfare and terrorism is steadily increasing. Only God knows how such a war will affect our Muslim allies, who are even now coming under the gun of terrorism. And no one can estimate how these events will affect the ever-growing “*radical*” Islamic movement. Even now, every American, Christian and Jew is target for extremists among radical Muslims.

16. In Verse Twelve of Chapter Sixteen we read of the coming, or perhaps the present, confrontation between the “*kings of the east*” and the western world. Verses Thirteen and Fourteen are most interesting and should be very important to our thought today.

*“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto*

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<sup>164</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, p. 321.

<sup>165</sup> *Arizona Republic*, December 27, 2002.

<sup>166</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Sayce, p. 225.

*the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”*

17. These verses speak of an evil spirit of deception that will affect the whole world in the end times, calling *“unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.”* Why are these spirits likened unto frogs? Because frogs, such as those in the plague sent upon Egypt, can be pervasively present throughout the world. Likewise, frogs are venomous; hence, this deception shall be deadly. From whence comes this deception? Verse Thirteen tells us that it proceeds from three sources:

a. From the mouth of the dragon: This refers to Satan, and he is deceiving the world, yes, especially the Christian world, with the enticements of false and pagan religions. In today’s paper there was an explanation of the attraction of Buddhism to many in our nation: *“...the source of power for humans is within, not in some distant God, and there is no reliance on faith...”*<sup>167</sup> Who would be a more likely author of such thought than Satan? It is he who is promoting the increased worldliness, violence and hatred that are so rampant throughout the world today.

b. From the mouth of the beast: This is Roman Catholicism under the direction of the Papacy. They are laboring with all their might against the inroads of evangelical Christianity. They would also deceive the nations with the enticement of the ecumenical movement, one united Christian church in the latter day. Does that ever sound familiar to a believer in the Book of Mormon! They sponsored the teachings which have led to the false doctrines of the *“rapture”* and the *“antichrist”* of the latter day, diverting the attention of millions from the beast described in Revelation Thirteen.

c. From the mouth of the false prophet: This is the first mention of this individual. He is thought by many commentators to be Mohammed, the arch enemy of both Judaism and Christianity. Think of the numbers of former Christians that now proudly wear their new names of Islam. It is presently the fastest growing religion in the United States. What think you, are not the radical Muslim forces in the Middle East striving to bring both Israel and the world to the brink of war?

18. War! This was the very purpose behind the drying up of *“the great river, Euphrates”* (Verse Twelve). It is the purpose of these three deceiving spirits at large in the world today. They go forth *“...unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.”* When we think of warfare, our thoughts should not be altogether negative, for God has a purpose in addition to the punishment of the wicked in many, if not all, these vials which were to be poured out upon the world. Let’s consider one positive aspect of the wrath of God being poured out upon the world:

*“And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon the great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth, And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to*

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<sup>167</sup> *The Arizona Republic*, “The Valley Explores Buddhism”, May 27, 2003.

*the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots; And behold, thou seest all these things; And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose foundation is the devil, Then at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants which he hath made to his people, who are of the house of Israel.” (1 Nephi 3:232-237)*

19. The first step in fulfilling the covenant God has made with His people shall be that they hear the fullness of the Gospel preached and come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His gospel. Do I find it strange that the Lord has opened the door for this gospel to be preached by His little restored church in those very nations where unrest, revolution and terrorism are rampant? No, I find it to be the beginning of the fulfillment of these very words of Nephi. The very next verse (Verse. 238) in this vision of Nephi refers us to the Revelation of Jesus Christ to the Apostle John, the burden of this study. How it all fits together like *“hand in glove”*.

20. In Verse Fifteen John hears the words of Jesus Christ: *“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”* This verse, falling where it does, almost seems out of context. But no, the Lord is here speaking to His people, telling them the time of His coming is nigh. In the midst of ominous warnings of deception, warfare and destruction come these encouraging words of the Lord to His people, *“Be ready! Be prepared, and you shall be blessed.”* As He told His disciples, *“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”* (Luke 21:28)

21. Now in Verse Sixteen we read, *“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”* All history has been leading us to this moment. The nations of the world shall be gathered together to face the wrath of Almighty God. Jesus prophesied relative to that day, just prior to the establishment of the New Jerusalem and the gathering of Israel. *“And it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that the sword of my justice shall hang over them at that day; and except they repent, it shall fall upon them, saith the Father, yea, even upon all the nations of the Gentiles. And it shall come to pass that I will establish my people, O house of Israel.”* (III Nephi 9:56, 57)

22. Barnes points out the great variety of beliefs that exist about the Revelation of Jesus Christ to the Apostle John. He tells us, just concerning who shall gather the nations, one commentator says it refers to the *“spirits”*, another says the *“sixth angel”*, another says it is the *“devil”*, yet another that it is Christ.<sup>168</sup> Although this word, Armageddon, is found nowhere else in the Scripture, I believe it is referred to in several Old Testament prophecies. Let’s consider the prophecy of Joel:

*“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”* (Joel 3:1, 2) We see clearly it is the Lord whose purpose it shall be to bring about this gathering of the nations. The very word, Armageddon comes from the Hebrew *Har –Meggiddon*, which can be translated *“hill of rendezvous”*.

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<sup>168</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 373.

23. Keener explains the term, “*valley of Jehoshaphat*”, like this: “*The Old Testament site of the end was the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2, 12, 14), probably the strategic plain of Meggido in the valley of Jezreel and Esdraelon.*”<sup>169</sup>The purpose of that great rendezvous of the nations is clearly prophesied by Zephaniah:

*“Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.”* (Zeph. 3:8, 9)

Let us be watching and ready!

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN (Cont.): THE SEVENTH VIAL

*Verse* Sixteen found us observing the Lord’s gathering of the nations into a place called Armageddon. Although the very name seems ominous, we are given no specifics about what shall take place at this gathering of nations in this, nor subsequent chapters. However, the final verses of Chapter Nineteen lead me to believe this shall be the final judgment of God upon the wicked Gentile nations at the coming of the Messiah. The author takes the position it is all summed up in the typically symbolic, prophetic language of the pouring out of the seventh vial. He also foresees the specific fulfillment of many New and Old Testament prophecies in the general description of the seventh vial.

2. We have largely presented the Book of Revelation from a historical point of view. But as the seventh vial is poured out into the air over the earth, we are looking into the future, and the pages of history can only serve as possible types of those events which shall take place. In Chapters One through Three of this study we read that the number seven was a “*number of completeness, or perfection*”. This is certainly true of its use here as the seventh vial of God’s indignation is poured out upon the earth’s inhabitants. This is the final vial to be poured out upon the world and God’s judgments are now completed.

3. “*And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.*” (Revelation 16:17) This was not comment by John nor was it the voice of an angel which was heard by John; rather, this voice proceeded from the very throne of the Almighty. It was His voice that announced “*It is done.*” That voice shall one day resonate throughout the earth!

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<sup>169</sup> Keener, Craig S., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 1993, p. 804.

4. This final vial was poured out into the air above the earth. Barnes comments that even as storms and tempests are developed in the atmosphere, “...so *this destruction would come from some supernatural cause.*”<sup>170</sup> The vial shall be poured out into the atmosphere and whatever effects are produced, using the laws of physics as a guide, will be rapidly diffused over the entire earth. Verse Eighteen describes what takes place.

5. “*And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*” As I read these words and consider Barnes’ thought that the destruction would come from some “*supernatural cause*”, my mind goes to the vivid portrayal of the great destruction which fell upon the wicked inhabitants of ancient America:

*“And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, in the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land; And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder; and there were exceeding sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land. and there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But behold, there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward: for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempests, and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the exceeding great quaking of the whole earth;”*

(III Nephi 4:6, 7, 9, 10)

6. But there is another way of looking at this description found in Verse Eighteen. Many times in apocalyptic prophecies such as these, terms like “*voices, thunders and lightnings*” have symbolic meanings. I believe Verse Eighteen informs us of what shall happen as the nations are brought together at Armageddon. This shall be a tumultuous place of battle, warfare and judgment. In 1 Samuel 7:10 and Isaiah 29:5, 6 these very terms were used to describe the warfare and destruction that took place among the enemies of God’s people. I believe there are several Old Testament prophecies that we shall see fulfilled on the plains of Megiddo (Hebrew for rendezvous – Strong, 4023) and at the time of the pouring out of the seventh vial.

*“The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.”*  
(Isaiah 24:20-22)

7. Ezekiel, in his prophecy about Gog and Magog, also saw this terrible day of the Lord and recorded many interesting aspects of what shall one day occur. The words in boldface highlight major aspects of his prophecy.

a. “*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*

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<sup>170</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 377.

swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet.” (38:4, 5) Here we see Gog and his allies shall be inevitably drawn by the Lord, even as if He had placed hooks in their mouths.

b. “And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.” (39:2) So great will be the destruction of these enemies of the Lord, that only 16 % of them will escape. Gog and his allies will come from the “north parts”. Some commentators change this wording to read “from the northernmost part of the world.” Saying this brings confusion to most because they tend to have a picture of a 21<sup>st</sup> century world map imprinted in their minds. Our first task is to establish the identity of Gog and his allies, using the prophet’s map, not our own.

c. In Jeremiah 1:14 we read, “out of the north an evil shall break forth.” As we continue to read we find in Jeremiah 4:6 that this refers to the Babylonian invasion via the Fertile Crescent, or down from the headwaters of the Euphrates River. Again, in Jeremiah 50:2-13 we read about a “great nation from the north country.” In Chapter 51, Jeremiah explains this to be the Medes and Persians, peoples that still exist and who are enemies of both Israel and the United States.

d. In Genesis 10:2, Magog appears to be the second son of Japheth. He is shown as settling in the areas around the Black Sea, to the north of the Fertile Crescent. The common thought about Gog is found in the *Illustrated Dictionary and Concordance of the Bible*. It says that Gog is the “political and military leader of the nations of Meshech and Tubal in the land of Magog.”<sup>171</sup> Peloubet writes, “It (Magog) appears as a country or people of which Gog was the prince. Josephus identifies them with the Scythians, and the identification is generally accepted.”<sup>172</sup> The Scythians were a nomadic people who lived just north and east of the Black Sea. Spicer’s summary of those identified as from the north is apt: “The kings of the north in the early period of the prophecy was the power that ruled Syria and Asia Minor.”<sup>173</sup> Of a truth, those nations just to the north of the Black Sea and to the sides of it are presently a part of southern Russia. All these peoples have become converts of Islam, are struggling for freedom from Russia and share a desire for the destruction of Israel and those who support her. Going back to paragraph a., we see that the allies of Gog shall be “Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya”. Again we see those nations that shall go up against Israel in that day are Muslim nations.

e. They will be brought against the “mountains of Israel”. Mountains, in this usage, signify governments. We notice it is plural. The author believes this refers both to Israel, centered around Jerusalem, and to the New Jerusalem in America. This thought is emphasized in Ezekiel 38:10, 11. “...at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell

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<sup>171</sup> Wigoder, Geoffrey, (Editor), *Illustrated Dictionary and Concordance of the Bible*, “Gog”, 1986, p. 403/

<sup>172</sup> Peloubet, F. N., *Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary*, 1925, p. 380.

<sup>173</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Spicer, p. 326.

*safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.”*  
This description better characterizes America than any other place in the world.

f. These scriptures make clear to my mind we need look no farther than the present political climate and radical Islamic thought to find the preliminary steps that will bring about this world-wide turmoil and conflagration. The prophets Joel, Zephaniah and Zechariah also referred to this day in their prophecies.

8. Strong’s identifies “*earthquakes*” (7494 – Hebrew) as a “*quaking, commotion, vibration, bounding*”, while the Greek (4578) says “*a commotion, earthquake, tempest*”. It is interesting to note that Cruden’s Concordance states, “*Great alterations and changes are expressed in the scripture by a shaking of the earth. An extraordinary and unexpected alteration in the state of affairs, civil or ecclesiastical, is represented by a great earthquake.*”<sup>174</sup> This is exactly what we should expect with the pouring of the seventh vial.

*“And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.”* (Revelation 16:19)

9. We should expect to see a great alteration in the civil and religious affairs of spiritual Babylon. This term refers to the Roman Catholic Church and all those institutions affiliated with her. The resulting confusion and commotion will affect the economic and political stability of the entire world. It is interesting to note many of the strong Catholic nations are today bound to the majority of European nations in an economic and political alliance. Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen of Revelation add detail to the events which will transpire as God’s judgment is poured out upon present-day Babylon. The severity of her judgment is shown in verses twenty and twenty-one of this chapter.

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: JUDGMENT OF THE LAST ENEMY**

*As* Chapter Seventeen opens we hear one of the angels which had poured out the seven vials of God’s wrath upon the world speaking to the Apostle John. The angel gives to John an explanation or, if you please, an amplification of what shall transpire when the seventh vial (Chapter Sixteen, Verses 17–21) is poured out.

2. The angel speaks of the judgment that shall befall “*the great whore that sitteth upon many waters*”. This term, indicating a lewd, unholy woman is used in the scriptures in two ways. First, it is used to identify a corrupt and idolatrous city. Isaiah spoke of Jerusalem in this manner: “*How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.*” (Isaiah 1:21) It is used, as

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<sup>174</sup> Cruden, Alexander, Cruden’s Complete Concordance, “Earthquake”, 1949, p. 171.

well, to describe an apostate church that has turned away from the true worship of God to impure and heathen practices and beliefs. The fact she is sitting “*upon many waters*” is clarified in Verse Fifteen as her dominion over many peoples and nations of the world.

3. The identity of this ungodly woman is made clear in subsequent verses. Verse Three shows the woman as being carried on the back of a “*scarlet-colored beast*”. A beast in prophetic terminology represents a kingdom, or its ruler. Such description could bring images of both ancient, imperial Rome, whose emperors dressed in purple and scarlet, and modern papal Rome, for it is the color of the robes and carriages of the pope and cardinals of the Roman church. The next verse portrays the woman, herself, as being arrayed in purple and scarlet. Verse Nine states the seven heads of the beast she is riding are “*seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.*” This is a clear reference to the city of Rome, for everyone in John’s time knew the city had been built over seven mountains. So we see the analogy of a harlot as representing an apostate and idolatrous church or, on the other hand, a corrupt and idolatrous city is doubly applicable in this instance. For the woman represents the apostate Roman Catholic Church and her seat of government has always been established in pagan, idolatrous Rome.

4. The encyclopedia<sup>175</sup> informs us that the history of the ancient Roman Empire would slowly “*...merge with that of the papacy, the Holy Roman Empire....*” The pertinent question is to determine if this beast represents the ancient, pagan empire ruled by her emperors or the newer empire ruled by the Pope. Verse Twelve informs us that the ten horns of the beast represent ten kings, or kingdoms which shall arise out of pagan Rome. They had not come into existence during the days of John, but would rise out of the Roman Empire when her power would be diminished and her emperors removed. These would be the rulers of the nations of Europe and would be of the same mind - to give power to the beast. Ancient imperial Rome is “*the beast that was*” of Verse Eight.

5. The successive invasions of barbaric peoples from Asia and northern Europe would so reduce the power of imperial Rome and remove her emperors, it appeared she was “*not*”, or seemingly had become extinct. Then, in some way that original power invested in her emperors would be revived. Verse Eight also tells us this reviving power came from Satan, for it ascended “*out of the bottomless pit....*” One could now say the beast “*yet is*”, exercising power and dominion over the nations of Europe under the rule of the Pope. So this beast seen by John represents papal Rome.

6. Even as the power of Papal Rome came from the bottomless pit, she and her followers shall “*go into perdition....*” This is because they have partaken of the false doctrines of her deception, idolatry and corruption. The Scriptures tell vividly of her collapse and destruction:

a. “*And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and*

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<sup>175</sup> Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, Vol. 22, “Rome, History” p.390.

*mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”: (Revelation 18:1, 2, 5, 6, 8-10)*

b. *“And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon the great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth, And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots;”*  
(1 Nephi 3:232-234)

7. The woman being carried on the back of the beast (Verse Three) represents the apostate Roman Catholic Church. She obtained her political and military power and strength from the European nations of the Holy Roman Empire which *“...give their power and strength unto the beast.”* (Verse Thirteen). The rulers of these nations *“...and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”* (Verse Two). The *“fornication”* of the Catholic Church alludes to her perversion of the true gospel of Jesus Christ, adulterating His doctrine with human thought, superstition, and pagan practices. The inhabitants of the earth *“...having itching ears... shall turn away their ears from the truth...,”* (II Timothy 4:3, 4) no longer capable of sober judgment nor rightly dividing the Word of the Lord, intoxicated by delusions of false teaching.

8. Verse Five tells us there was a name written on the woman’s forehead: *“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”* This expression, *“THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS”* certainly has far-reaching implications that have been addressed by numerous Bible scholars:

a. *“Benedict 13<sup>th</sup>, in his proclamation of the Jubilee A.D. 1725, explains this sufficiently. His words are ‘This catholic and apostolic Roman Church is the head of the world, the Mother of all believers, the Faithful Interpreter of God, and Mistress of all churches.’”*<sup>176</sup>

b. Bishop Creighton<sup>177</sup> of the Anglican Church writes, *“The English Church spread and flourished a dutiful daughter of her mother church of Rome.”* (*Encyclopedia Americana*, “Papacy”, 1904)

c. Reverend Joseph C. Ayr, Ph.D.<sup>178</sup> states, *“The Roman church is not merely the mistress, she is the mother of all churches.”* (See *Development of the Appellate Jurisdiction of the Roman*, Volume 8, page 199.)

9. The angel tells John in Verse Ten there were seven kings, or forms of rule and administration in the first beast, or imperial Rome. Most historicist commentators agree these were, in order, Kings, Consuls, Dictators, Decemvers, Military Tribunes and Emperors. He tells John the first five had fallen *“and one is”*, and one is yet to come. In

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<sup>176</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Gregg, p. 402.

<sup>177</sup> *Op Cit.*, MacGreggor, p. 100.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, MacGreggor, p. 100.

John's day the form of rule, "*and one is*", was by the Emperor, the sixth on this list. The seventh form of rule is yet to appear. The angel further tells John the rule of this seventh form shall "*continue a short space.*"

10. There is a variety of thought about the one yet to come who shall continue but a short time (the seventh form of rule). Verse Eleven informs us that papal rule will be the eighth. So Barnes<sup>179</sup> writes, "*Now there can be no difficulty, I think, in referring this to that form of administration over Rome – that 'dukedom' under the exarchate of Ravenna, which succeeded the decline of the imperial power, and which preceded the rise of the Papal power.*" MacGreggor<sup>180</sup> quotes Cardinal Manning as saying, "*In like manner the successive invasion of the barbaric hordes and above all the invasion of the Lombards extinguished utterly and destroyed the last vestige of the Roman Empire in Italy; it was utterly swept away, it existed no longer.*" (*Independence of the Holy See*, pp. 13, 14.)

11. Verse Fourteen the angel tells John the kings of Europe "*shall make war with the Lamb....*" During the years of the Inquisition the Pope renounced both reformers and the heresy of Judaism. At his word, the Catholic rulers of cities and nations tortured and murdered millions of reformers and Jews. We should understand this war against the Lamb, or against His church, has not concluded. Let's consider the prophecy of Nephi concerning the end times:

*"And he said unto me, Behold, there are save two churches only: The one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; Wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; And she is the whore of all the earth. And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters; And she had dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues and people. And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; Nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; And their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw. And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together in multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God."* (1 Nephi 3:220-229)

12. Verse Fifteen makes us know the waters "*where the whore sitteth*" represent the peoples and nations of the world who have given allegiance and support to the great and abominable church. Now the angel tells John in Verse Sixteen something which is quite incomprehensible to our human wisdom. Those very nations that have given support and allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church through the ages shall come to "*hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*" (Verse Sixteen)

13. Such hatred and warfare against papal Rome began in the Catholic nation of France during the French Revolution, beginning in 1789. The next century would see the rise of communism in Germany, the seat of Catholic power at that time. The enmity between communism and Catholicism had great political consequence during the last two

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<sup>179</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p.391.

<sup>180</sup> *Op. Cit.*, MacGreggor, pp. 74, 75.

centuries. (See Chapter Fifteen of this study.) Yet the Book of Mormon clearly points out these were just the opening chapters in God's plan for the great and abominable church:

*“And the blood of that great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall turn upon their own heads; For they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads, and they shall be drunken with their own blood. And every nation which shall war against thee, O house of Israel, shall be turned one against another. And they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord. And all that fight against Zion, shall be destroyed. And the great whore, who hath perverted the right ways of the Lord; yea, that great and abominable church, shall tumble to the dust, and great shall be the fall of it.” (1 Nephi 7:26-31)*

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### **CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE FALL OF BABYLON**

*This* chapter continues and expands the theme of Chapter Seventeen; namely, the pouring out of God's wrath upon the great and abominable church and the papacy. John saw another angel crying with a loud voice, warning of the desolation to come. He cries with a loud voice, *“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”* (Verse Two)

2. We should not conclude from this wording the destruction has already taken place. The point is, her destruction is so determined by God and imminent one could speak of it as having already been accomplished. The angel employs the prophecy of Isaiah concerning ancient Babylon to show the completeness of her destruction. Of ancient Babylon Isaiah had written, *“It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and Satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.”* (Isaiah 13:20-22)

3. In Verse Three John is told the reason for her destruction: *“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”* In other words, her condemnation is a result of having deceived, enticed and corrupted the nations of the world with her false teachings, idolatry and luxurious style of living.

4. In the next verse (18:4) John states he heard *“another voice from heaven”* giving warning to the Lord's people. He did not say this voice came from the angel he had

previously heard. The message sounds as if the voice were from God, himself: *“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”*

5. Concerning this verse Barnes<sup>181</sup> writes, *“As applicable to Papal Rome...this means, (a) that there might be found in her some who were the true people of God; (b) that it was their duty to separate wholly from her...; (c) that they who remain in such a communion cannot but be regarded as partaking of her sin; and (d) that if they remain, they must expect to be involved in the calamities that will come upon her.”* In Verses Eight and Nine of Chapter Fourteen (see page 47) we found two angels giving warning of this impending destruction to those who continued in this condemned communion. For hundreds of years the Reformers had suffered and died in their efforts to warn members of the Roman Catholic Church of these judgments of God which are to come. Are there still some who have remained in the Catholic communion, having seen or having been made aware of her evils and false teachings, who could still be termed, as Barnes wrote, *“the true people of God”* ?

6. We can only hope and pray there might yet be within the Roman Catholic faith *“... a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; Nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err, because they are taught by the precepts of men.”* (II Nephi 12:16, 17) However, I do believe this prophecy of Nephi referred primarily to members of the Protestant churches. Yet even these daughters of the great and abominable church stand in danger today because of their growing opposition to the Book of Mormon and the restored Church of Christ. Nephi prophesied about our day when writing, *“And it came to pass that he said unto me, Look and behold that great and abominable church, which is the mother of abominations, whose founder is the devil. And he said unto me, Behold, there are save two churches only: The one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; Wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations;”*  
(1 Nephi 3:219-222)

7. Let's take a moment and analyze those factors that unify the Protestant daughters of the Roman Catholic Church with the great and abominable church of the last day:

- a. An opposition to the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 3:214-216, 3 Nephi 7:34, 35)
- b. Priestcrafts – (II Nephi 11:106, John 10:13; Mosiah 9:57-59)
- c. Popularity with the world – (I Nephi 7:50-57)
- d. Relaxed Moral Standards – (III Nephi 7:34-35)
- e. Ecumenical Movement – I Nephi 3:220
- f. Having partaken of the Catholic interpretation of a future antichrist

8. If it is still true in our day, that there are yet worthy, humble followers of God within these denominations, how great is our responsibility to assure they shall hear the true Gospel before it becomes too late for repentance and change. We know the time is short and *“... her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”* (Rev. 18: 8)

9. *“Come out of her, my people...”* The question remains within my mind: At this late point in history are there yet people of the Lord in the communion of the Roman Catholic

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<sup>181</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 397.

Church? A thought has been placed upon my mind some time ago concerning a different understanding of Chapter Eighteen which helps me better understand these words. Chapter Seventeen clearly showed a transformation of the Beast, which has been one of the primary subjects of Chapters Thirteen through Eighteen. Pagan Rome represented the Beast “*that was*” (Revelation 17:8). This Beast seemed to have been destroyed “*and is not*” (Revelation 17:8), but then it was revived again “*and yet is*” (Revelation 17:11). That revival was brought about by the transformation of Pagan Rome into Papal Rome. This transformed Beast was grander, more extensive and inclusive than was the original Pagan Rome.

10. The thought impressed upon my mind is that Papal Rome has also undergone a great transformation. It has grown in both size and influence through the centuries until it has culturally affected every modern nation of Europe. The Holy Roman Empire, formed of the Catholic nations of Western Europe, existed from 800 A.D. until 1806 A.D. The goal of her emperors was to reestablish all the pomp, glory and power of the first beast, the ancient Roman Empire.

11. For ten centuries the nations of Europe marched to papal orders coming from Rome; first to the Crusades and then to the beat of the Inquisition. Then the epic journeys of Marco Polo in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama in the 15<sup>th</sup> century opened the entire world to Catholic influence and western culture. World trade enriched the papal palace and the palaces and royal families of Western Europe as never before.

12. The indulgences and licentiousness of the Roman church created a society lacking in moral values and justice. Corruption and violence were commonplace. They have lasted five hundred years in Latin America and still deprive the poor and humble of the benefits of honest government. There is no way of measuring the evil, materialistic influence the Roman Catholic Church has maintained over the Western world.

13. During the twentieth century the power of the papacy has also been revived from earlier setbacks as well. Under the terms of the Lateran Treaty of 1929, Vatican City was recognized as an independent state. A few days after this event the pope addressed the diplomatic corps at the Vatican. One of his statements is quoted by Spicer<sup>182</sup> : “*This moment closes the past and opens the future.*” The Second Vatican Council, held during the early 1960’s, provided for changes that have shaped the very nature and strength of the Ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches.

14. Those nations that once comprised the Holy Roman Empire are today the center-piece of the powerful European Union. This union made of more than twenty European countries is now among the most prosperous alliances in World Trade Agreements and materialistic advancement. These nations are still committed to the worship of the Roman Catholic Church or one of her daughters (Revelation 17:5) who came out of her. Gregg<sup>183</sup> quotes the *historicist* commentator, Caringola: “*We must remember that the European Economic Community was formed with the Treaty of Rome, 1957. Roman Catholicism is totally intertwined with the heartbeat of Europe’s economic system. It is estimated by some scholars that the Vatican owns one-third of Europe’s real estate.*”

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<sup>182</sup> *Op Cit.*, Spicer, p. 386.

<sup>183</sup> *Op Cit.*, Gregg, p. 432.

15. One important facet of Catholic influence was the backlash it brought about in many European nations. The Age of Enlightenment beginning during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a philosophic revolution brought about by the excesses of the Catholic Church. Because of that “Enlightenment” many of the nations of the Western world today have a very small percentage of religiously active people. Western culture has become materialistic, atheistic, or at best agnostic. Her influence reaches out to the entire world through politics, commerce, music, movies, television and advertising. She cannot be separated from the centuries of close communion with the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy. This is the Babylon of Chapter Eighteen. Yes, many of the people of the Lord are still ensnared in her commercialism and materialistic enterprises.

16. Verses Nine through Nineteen of Chapter Eighteen reinforce the concept that luxurious living, international trade and commerce are the chief characteristics of latter-day Babylon. They are also the fuel that maintains and expands Western civilization. Can the two be separated? I think not!

17. In Verse Twenty-three we read again of her sin: “...*thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.*” The political, industrial and commercial leaders of the Western world look with disdain upon lesser nations and cultures and are quick to capitalize on their weaknesses. Western culture continues to subvert the nations of the world with its own values and standards. Verse Twenty-one warns us yet again, “...*with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*” Indeed, God’s people must remove themselves from the corrupt and materialistic Babylon of the latter-day.

## *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

### **CHAPTER NINETEEN: THE MARRIAGE SUPPER**

*The* first six verses of Chapter Nineteen describe the rejoicing in heaven as its inhabitants praised the Lord, Jehovah (this is the meaning of the word, Alleluia) as they are viewing the final and complete overthrow of the enemies of Christ. The rising smoke of Verse Three is reminiscent of the complete destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose smoke “...*went up as the smoke of a furnace.*” (Genesis 19:28)

2. In Verses Seven through Nine the relationship of Christ to His church is described as a bond of marriage. Nothing in man’s experience could be more intimate and fulfilling than this union of a man and his wife. The church will now be seen in a permanent, intimate and joyous union with her Savior,

3. Those who have been called to this marriage supper (Verse Nine) shall be arrayed in “...*fine linen, clean and white.*” Such bridal clothing of white has always been associated with purity and innocence. Sadly, this is but one more aspect of our religious cultural heritage that has lost its original significance. Here the allusion is to “...*the righteousness of the saints.*” Christ’s parable of the Marriage Feast (Matthew Twenty-two) indicates

there shall be some, considered members of Christ's church, who will not be dressed in those garments of righteousness and purity. They will not be discovered until the King, Himself, comes in.

4. In Verse Ten we see the Apostle John fall at the feet, the common form of worship, of the angel who is revealing to him this glorious scene. He is instantly rebuked, for the angel is also a creature of God. He identifies himself as a "...fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." Our worship belongs only to God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The message should be clear to those who worship the Virgin Mary and the deceased "saints" that such worship falls in the category of idolatry.

5. Now John sees the heavens open and a white horse with its rider. As in earlier chapters, this horse also is symbolic of swift warfare and conquest. Its white color denotes victory and its rider is called "*Faithful and True*". This rider is undoubtedly Jesus Christ who John called the "*faithful witness*" in Chapter One, Verse Five. Verse Sixteen in this chapter further strengthens his identity, for on his garment was written, "*KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*" The Apostle Paul had written earlier, "...until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of Lords;" (I Timothy 6:14, 15) Now He comes in judgment and to wage the final battle with His enemies.

6. We are told that upon His head "*were many crowns*". Many crowns must be symbolic of His universal reign soon to begin. In Verse Fifteen we are told "...out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword" with which to smite the nations. The Apostle Paul has described Christian warfare, and its offensive weapon is "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17) We are also told the nations opposed to Jesus Christ would be ruled with a "*rod of iron*". Here we find another reference to the Word of God. (See I Nephi 4:38, 39)

7. Verse Seventeen tells of the great battle to come. Symbolic of its extent, an angel calls to the multitudes of scavenger birds, inviting them to feast on the flesh of the enemies of reason it supper of Then Verse both the weak, both who follow slain in the come. The and of Israel together called in the



(Revelation enemies those, pagan, who spread of include, as well, those of the great and abominable church which "...did gather together in multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight

God. For that was called "...the the great God." Eighteen tells us powerful and the leaders and those them shall be great warfare to enemies of God shall be gathered "...into a place Hebrew tongue Armageddon." 16:16) These shall include all Muslim and have opposed the Christianity. It will

against the Lamb of God.” (1 Nephi 3:229) This was plainly revealed by Nephi many years before:

*“And the blood of that great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall turn upon their own heads; For they shall war among themselves, and the sword of their own hands shall fall upon their own heads, and they shall be drunken with their own blood. And every nation which shall war against thee, O house of Israel, shall be turned one against another. And they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord. And all that fight against Zion, shall be destroyed. And the great whore, who hath perverted the right ways of the Lord; yea, that great and abominable church, shall tumble to the dust, and great shall be the fall of it.” (1 Nephi 7:26-31)*

8. Verse Twenty tells us “...the beast was taken and with him the false prophet...” These were cast into the “lake of fire”; in other words, doomed to endless torment. The “beast” was identified in Verse Thirteen of Chapter Sixteen as the Papacy and Mohammed is seen as the “false prophet”. The last verse tells us the remnant, or more clearly said, the followers of these two “...were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse.” That sword was the word which “...proceedeth out of his mouth.” These armies were slain by His word, as surely and as rapidly as if by a sword of steel. I cannot explain how this could be, just as I cannot explain how the winds and the seas were calmed at His word, nor the dead made to rise again. There is another prophecy describing this destruction in another way: “

*“For the day soon cometh, that all the proud and they who do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned. For the time soon cometh, that the fullness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men: For he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it be so that the fullness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, They shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire. Behold, my brethren, I say unto you, that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come; And it must needs be upon the face of this earth;” (1 Nephi 7:33-39)*

9. This prophecy is also without understanding to our human wisdom. But ignoring our human wisdom, which is minimal, certainly that God who spoke and animal life and the burning stars were created, could speak again and the fiery indignation of His voice could extinguish His enemies as if by fire. But as this chapter is contemplated, let the believer focus on that marvelous, beautiful wedding supper prepared for the saints of God. As dire events commence in the world let us always keep in mind the prophetic words of Nephi: “Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, They shall be saved...” (1 Nephi 7: 37)

# *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

## CHAPTER TWENTY: THE MILLENNIUM

*In* the previous chapter an account was given of the destruction of two of the formidable enemies of Christ's church – the beast and the false prophet. This chapter tells what shall take place after that final destruction of the Papal and Muslim powers. Now the guiding, deceptive influence and power of Satan shall be removed from the earth for a specified time.

2. Here in Chapter Twenty, John sees an angel from heaven sent to accomplish this task (Verse One). Albert Barnes <sup>184</sup> writes, *"This may teach us that it is only a power from heaven that can destroy the empire of Satan in this world...."* Satan is cast into *"...the bottomless pit..."*, and Verse Two tells us that the angel *"...bound him a thousand years...."* – Adam Clark's commentary is typical of the confusion that exists about the meaning of these passages: *"In what this binding of Satan consists, who can tell? It no doubt refers to a time in which the influence of Satan will be greatly restrained..."* <sup>185</sup> However, the Book of Mormon does speak of this event:

*"And the time cometh speedily, that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory. And he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth; And he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; And there shall be one fold and one shepherd: And he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture. And because of the righteousness of his people, Satan has no power; Wherefore, he can not be loosed for the space of many years; For he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth."* (1 Nephi 7:55-62)

3. Verse Three says the angel then *"...set a seal upon him..."* Matthew Henry <sup>186</sup> comments, *"Christ shuts, and none can open; he shuts by his power, seals by his authority; and his lock and seal even the devils themselves cannot break open."* Now the last enemy of Christ, that author of deception and evil is to be shut up, isolated from the world for a thousand years. Some see this number as literal, while others think it to be figurative. Regardless, it shall be long enough to accomplish the Lord's purposes, and Satan *"...shall deceive the nations no more..."* We must remember, however, that when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be *"...be loosed a little season."*

4. In vision (Verse Four) John saw thrones which were occupied by persons who were going to pronounce a judgment, or determine the destiny of some portion of mankind. This same thought was first put forth by Jesus Christ, who said, *"...ye which have*

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<sup>184</sup> Barnes, Albert, *Notes on the New Testament: Revelation*, W.G. Blackie & Co. 1851, Glasgow, p. 459.

<sup>185</sup> Clarke, Adam, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*,

<sup>186</sup> Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1991, p. 2,483.

followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Matthew 19:28) And in the Book of Mormon we read, “... I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel, who shall be judged according to your works, by the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his disciples in the land of Jerusalem. And I write also unto the remnant of this people, who shall also be judged by the twelve whom Jesus chose in this land; and they shall be judged by the other twelve whom Jesus chose in the land of Jerusalem.” (Mormon 1:83, 84) It would be well to remember that many of Christ’s first apostles were beheaded for their testimony, but not all of them, nor were the twelve who were chosen on this land.

5. Verse Four, speaking of those whom John saw, tells us “...*them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus,..*” The commentator, Barnes, thinks only those martyrs who were beheaded for their testimony will be found enjoying the millennial reign of Christ. However, Matthew Henry <sup>187</sup> expands the list to include “... *those who had suffered for Christ, and all who had faithfully adhered to him, not receiving the mark of the beast, nor worshipping his image; all who had kept themselves clear of pagan and papal idolatry.*” And the commentators, JFB, <sup>188</sup> expand the list even farther: “*The extent of the first resurrection is not spoken of here. In 1 Corinthians we find that all ‘in Christ’ shall share in it.*”

*“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:22, 23, 51-53)*

*“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)*

6. I would add to this the definite testimony of the Book of Mormon, which certainly increases greatly the number of those who will have part in the first resurrection:

*“And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ: for so shall he be called. And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words, or all those that have kept the commandments of God, shall come forth in the first resurrection; therefore, they are the first resurrection. They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them: thus they have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death. And these are those who have part in the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not*

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<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2,483.

<sup>188</sup> Jamieson, Robert; Fausset, A.R.; Brown, David, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, Vol. III*, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1871.

*having salvation declared unto them. And thus the Lord bringeth about the restoration of these; and they have a part in the first resurrection, or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord. And little children also have eternal life.”*

(Mosiah 8:55-60)

*“Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life.”* (Mosiah 9:40)

*“And behold again it hath been spoken, that there is a first resurrection; a resurrection of all those who have been or who are, or who shall be, down to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Now we do not suppose that this first resurrection which is spoken of in this manner, can be the resurrection of the souls, and their consignation to happiness or misery. Ye can not suppose that this is what it meaneth. Behold, I say unto, Nay; but it meaneth the reuniting of the soul with the body of those from the days of Adam, down to the resurrection of Christ. Now whether the souls and the bodies of those of whom have been spoken, shall all be reunited at once, the wicked as well as the righteous, I do not say.... Behold it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself.”* (Alma 19:50-53, 65)

7. In February of 1831 the elders of the Church of Christ received a revelation speaking of this first resurrection. *“And my people shall be redeemed and shall reign with me on earth: For the great Millennial, which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come...”* (Book of Commandments 45:35, 36) The *“great Millennial”*: John’s Revelation speaks clearly about the length of this period when *“the bride, the Lamb’s wife”* (see Revelation 21:9) shall reign upon the earth where *“the harlot”* had once reigned for so long before her final destruction. Verse Five tells us *“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.”*

8. So the list of those having part in the first resurrection has grown considerably and makes the subject quite complicated:

- a. Those who were martyred for their testimony,
- b. The righteous followers of Christ, both living and those to be resurrected,
- c. Those who have died in their ignorance, and
- d. Little children who died in their innocence.

9. Alma’s testimony about being unsure if all these shall come forth at the identical time within the time-frame of the first resurrection adds to our uncertainty of all the aspects of this longed for moment. The wisest of commentators demonstrate an extreme lack of unity in their understanding of this momentous event. It would be well for us all to remember the word’s of Alma to his son, Corianton, as he first introduced the concept of the resurrection: *“Now I unfold unto you a mystery: nevertheless, there are many mysteries, which are kept, that no one knoweth them, save God himself.”* (Alma 19:31) It would seem natural to suppose that even wise and studious men would have differences of opinion about such a complicated subject, which seems indeed, a mystery. Let’s look at some of their uncertainties:

10. Barnes places great emphasis on the words, "...I saw the souls of them...." This leads him to write, "...this would seem to exclude the notion of literal resurrection.... there is not the slightest intimation that it would be a resurrection of the body..."<sup>189</sup> But Matthew Henry understands these words of John differently: "...they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." and declares, "They were raised from the dead, and restored to life. This may be taken either literally or figuratively..."<sup>190</sup> And the commentators, JFB,<sup>191</sup> write, "and they lived" implies their coming to life in the body again, so as to be visible....Christ will reign with His transfigured saints over men in the flesh."

11. It would be easy for one to become confused by the contradicting testimony of the most conservative and logical of commentators. We must remember the resurrection is one of the six fundamental principles of the Gospel: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ... Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." (Hebrews 6:1, 2) The very word, resurrection, is defined as "raised to life again" or "rise from the dead". (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible) So, for clarification, what do the Scriptures teach about the resurrection?

*"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)*

*"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:20,21)*

*"And behold again it hath been spoken, that there is a first resurrection; a resurrection of all those who have been or who are, or who shall be, down to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Now we do not suppose that this first resurrection which is spoken of in this manner, can be the resurrection of the souls, and their consignation to happiness or misery. Ye can not suppose that this is what it meaneth. Behold, I say unto, Nay; but it meaneth the reuniting of the soul with the body of those from the days of Adam, down to the resurrection of Christ." (Alma 19:50-52)*

*"Wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, And the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored, one to the other; And it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel." (II Nephi 6:28-30)*

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<sup>189</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 464.

<sup>190</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Henry, p. 2,483.

<sup>191</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Jamieson, Robert; Fausset, A.R.; Brown, David, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, Vol. III*, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1871.

12. Verse Five also tells us that the rest of the dead would not be resurrected until after the thousand years. And Verse Six informs us that those having part in the first resurrection “...shall be priests of God and of Christ...” Just what this entails is possibly explained by the position of many of the Apostolic Fathers of the early church:

*“(a) That at that period Christ will descend from heaven to reign personally upon the earth; (b) That he will have a central place of power and authority, probably Jerusalem; (c) That the righteous dead will then be raised, in such bodies as are to be immortal; (d) That they will be his attendants, and will participate with him in the government of the world; (e) That this will continue during the period of a thousand years; (f) That the world will be subdued and converted during this period, not by moral means, but by ‘a new dispensation’ - by the power of the Son of God; ...”*

13. Barnes goes on to write, “*The opinion here adverted to was held substantially by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others among the Christian fathers, and, it need not be said, is held by many modern expositors of the Bible...*”<sup>192</sup> It is noteworthy to recognize that these early church fathers were contemporaries of the Apostle John. Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was a personal friend of John, and Irenaeus was a personal friend of Polycarp. Andrew, bishop of Caesarea, in his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, writes that Papias, Irenaeus, Methodius and Hippolytus all give witness to John’s authorship of the book. Justin Martyr was a Christian philosopher who lived shortly after John’s ministry in Ephesus and knew many of his contemporaries. He was a believer in the millennium and wrote, “*And a man from among us by name John, one of the Apostles of Christ, in a revelation made to him has prophesied that the believers in one Christ shall live a thousand years*”.<sup>193</sup>

14. Who is it that shall be living upon the earth during this millennial period? This is the question (and it is even more complicated) I would like to address in the next few paragraphs. Chapter Twenty of Revelation does not give an inclusive understanding, but we have noted other passages that should help us arrive at a scriptural conclusion. Certainly all those who have had part in the first resurrection, as outlined in Paragraph Eight, above shall be present.

15. Albert Barnes, in Paragraph Twelve, above, summed up the beliefs of the early church fathers who were living in the dispensation of the Apostle John, as teaching, “...*the world will be subdued and converted during this period...*”. And Revelation 20: 6 mentions that those righteous dead who have part in the first resurrection “...*shall be priests of God and of Christ...*” Just who are those who shall be taught the principles of the Gospel during that time of peace when the world is free from the deceptions of Satan and thrives under the rule and dominion of Jesus Christ? From our list of those present it is easy to determine two groups that need the ministry of these “*priests*” of Christ. I refer to the little children who died in their innocence and the millions who have died in ignorance of Christ and His Gospel. This is made plain in the pages of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet Isaiah also strongly indicated that children would be born within the millennial kingdom:

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<sup>192</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 467.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, Barnes, p. xiv.

*“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.” (Isaiah 65:17-20)*

16. It is made plain in the Book of Mormon that all such need to be well taught in the precepts of the Gospel of Christ;

*“And these things does the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ; yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; And ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil; and also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you;” (Book of Mormon 1: 85-87)*

17. Here it is clearly stated for our understanding that every descendant of Adam shall be judged of their works and whether they have accepted and believed the Gospel message that they shall have had among them. However, it might be well to remember that the Book of Mormon also indicates that these who died in ignorance of the Gospel and little children who died in their infancy have been promised eternal life.

*“And these are those who have part in the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them. And thus the Lord bringeth about the restoration of these; and they have a part in the first resurrection, or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord. And little children also have eternal life.” (Mosiah 8:58-60)*

18. Verse Seven says, *“...Satan shall be loosed out of his prison...”* When the thousand years of peaceful learning have concluded, Satan will be for a time let loose again. He will be permitted to go about the world deceiving the nations once again, and many shall succumb to his deceptions. The commentator, Barnes <sup>194</sup>, writes, *“No intimation is given ‘why or how’ he would be thus released from his prison.”*

19. How blessed we have been to have received the Book of Mormon. Indeed, it clearly indicates the need for his release after countless generations have been taught the Gospel while basking in a spiritual paradise free of all deception and temptation. These verses show us, as well, the great need for those who never heard the Gospel message to be well taught during the Millennium before Satan is again released upon the earth.

*“And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ; yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; And ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil; and also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you; And also that the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus whom they slew, was the very Christ, and the very God;”*

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<sup>194</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 473.

20. Verse Eight tells us Satan will “...*deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle:*” In Biblical times Gog and Magog referred to heathen nations living to the north and east of Israel. These were barbaric nations clustered around the Black and Caspian Seas. They included the Assyrians and the dreaded Scythians, later to be conquered and peopled by the descendants of Genghis Kahn. Today these nations have all converted to Islam.

21. From the wording of Verse Nine it is obvious that Satan’s deceptions were readily received; peace and righteousness are no longer the ideal, they are gathered to do battle with the people of the Lord as they are seen surrounding “*the beloved city*”. Noting the nations referred to, this probably is speaking of Jerusalem, but it could also be true of the New Jerusalem since it also mentions “*the camp of the saints*”.

22. Their warlike intentions will all come to naught as “...*fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*” This expression of total destruction is quite common in the Scripture as it speaks of God’s wrath poured out upon His enemies: “*Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.*” (Isaiah 29:6) David writes, “*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.*” (Psalm 11:6) And the prophet, Ezekiel, prophesying against this very Gog, writes “...*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.*” (Ezekiel 38:22)

23. Now in Verse Ten we are to see the final end of Satan: “...*the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone....*” He is to be consigned to the same doom as the beast and the false prophet who had been aligned with him in deceiving the nations in rebellion against God. Albert Barnes <sup>195</sup> writes, “*All the great enemies of the church are destroyed, and henceforward there is to be no array of hostile forces; no combination of malignant powers against the kingdom of God.*” And this consignment to endless punishment is final!

24. In Verse Eleven the Apostle sees “...*a great white throne, and him that sat on it,*” All mankind will now view this scene, for it is the time of the final judgment of mankind. Sitting on that glorious throne is Jesus Christ, for the Father “...*hath committed all judgment unto the Son:*” (John 5:22) So glorious and majestic is the scene, so powerful and magnificent His being that even “...*the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*” The natural creation shrinks away in awe before the mighty Creator. David wrote, “*The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;*” (Psalm 114:3, 4, 7)

25. Verse Twelve states, “*And I saw the dead, small and great...*” This simply signifies that “*all the dead*” shall be present for this judgment, without regard to rank, gender or condition. The Apostle Paul clearly tells the church, “...*we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*” (Romans 14:10) And in 2 Corinthians 5:10 he states, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the*

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<sup>195</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Barnes, p. 477.

*things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*" So it appears that even those having part in the first resurrection shall be present, even though Verse Six informed us, *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power..."*. They are present, as stated by the commentators, JFB, <sup>196</sup> *"to have their portion confirmed for ever..."*

26. Now that all are present *"...the books were opened:"* Christ plainly told His disciples *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."* (John 12:48) The Book of Mormon is just as specific about this hour of judgment: *"For out of the books which shall be written, I will judge the world, every man according to his works, according to that which is written."* (II Nephi 12:66) The next few verses go on to describe the Holy Bible of the Jews, the Book of Mormon of the house of Joseph and other books that other tribes may have received. Our lives will be judged by our obedience to the *"Word of God"* which we have received.

27. In the same Verse Twelve we read, *"...and another book was opened, which is the book of life..."* This book contains the names of those who have known and served the Lord, those who had part in the first resurrection. *"For the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life; and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand."* (Alma 3:100) The Holy Bible affirms this also: *"And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life."* (Philippians 4:3) It would seem reasonable that the names of those people who were present during the millennium, and there received Christ and were obedient to Him even after Satan was released and caused the downfall of multitudes, would also have been recorded in that *"book of life"*.

28. Why would the righteous, whose names are written in the *"book of life"* be present at this time of judgment? This seems explained with the next few words: For they were all there to be judged *"...according to their works."* This is also a doctrine taught in the Book of Mormon: *"Therefore prepare ye the way of the Lord, for the time is at hand that all men shall reap a reward of their works, according to that which they have been:"* (Alma 7:42). All those whose names were written in the *"book of life"* are to have eternal life, but their reward will vary in accordance to their works. *"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."* (Matthew 16:27)

29. In Verse Thirteen we now read about those whose names were not written in the *"book of life"*. We are told *"...the sea...and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them..."* In other words, all the different regions where the bodies of the wicked (the sea and the grave) and their souls (hell, or outer darkness) had previously been, now relinquished them to the second resurrection. Their bodies and souls were reunited as they faced the judgment bar to be *"...judged every man according to their works."*

30. After all mankind has been resurrected, Verse Fourteen tells us, *"...death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."* This appears to be what the Apostle referred to when he wrote, *"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."* (1 Corinthians 15:26) There shall be no longer a need for a special place for those souls that have been separated

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<sup>196</sup> *Op. Cit.*, Jamieson, Robert; Fausset, A.R.; Brown, David, .

from the body. Now we go on to read, "*This is the second death.*" This second death is that from which there shall be no recovery.