

## OVERVIEW OF THE END TIMES

### INTRODUCTION

The study of the End Times is often referred to as *Eschatology*. Eschatology comes from the Greek word *eschatos*, which means “last” and *logos*, which means “word or study” and is therefore the theological term employed to designate the doctrine of last things; the doctrine of the end times.

- *What is included in the study of Eschatology?*
  - 1) Eschatology includes a study of significant events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ. These include: the rapture of the church; the seven year tribulation period; the second coming of Christ; the battle of Armageddon, the 1,000 year millennial reign of Christ; the Great White Throne Judgment and others.
  - 2) Eschatology also involves the study of topics such as death, heaven, hell, the New Jerusalem, the resurrection of the dead, judgments and the eternal state.
  - 3) Furthermore, eschatology includes the study of significant individuals who play a role in end time events, such as the glorified Christ; the two witnesses; the 144,000; Satan; antichrist, and the false prophet.
  - 4) Lastly, the study of Eschatology involves the study of end time’s theological positions such as dispensationalism and covenant theology. This includes: the timing of the rapture; the millennial reign of Christ; the future of Israel and other views and positions.
- *Why is it necessary to study Eschatology and End Times prophecy?*
  - 1) It Reminds us of God’s Sovereignty! In a world that often seems in chaos; in a world that seems to be in the grip of wickedness; we need to remember that God is in control of it all. The Bible proclaims the power and sovereignty of God and reminds us that His purposes for the future will come to pass. No one can thwart His mighty plans and purposes. Certainly we see God’s power on display in the book of Revelation as these future events unfold. We should be comforted in knowing that He is in control. We should be driven to worship Him, because of His great power.
    - In **Isaiah 40:12-26** the prophet Isaiah declared that God our Creator is not impressed with the assumed power of men and nations, which is anemic in comparison to His sovereign power. In fact, he asserted that God regards them as dust on the scales, as a drop from a bucket, and as nothing and meaningless.
    - According to **Psalm 2:1-12**, God is the king of the universe and in absolute power now and in the future.

- 2) It Provides us with Great Hope! The following passages emphasize how a focus on future events such as the Coming of Christ provide us with comfort and hope in times of grief or suffering.
- In fact **Titus 2:13** emphasizes that the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus is our blessed hope.
  - **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**; the key rapture passage is written by Paul to offer comfort and hope to those believers who were grieving over the loss of loved ones. So we can take comfort in times of grieving.
  - **Romans 8:18** and following emphasizes hope in times of present suffering. So we can take hope in the glory that is to be revealed to us although we may be going through times of present suffering. (cf. 2 Timothy 1:8-12; 1 Peter 4:12-13)
- 3) It Compels us toward Godly Living! Some passages emphasize a need to strive for personal holiness and godliness in light of future events.
- According to **1 Corinthians 15:51-58**, knowing that the Lord will return should motivate us to abound in the work of the Lord.
  - The judgment seat of Christ in **2 Corinthians 5:10** should motivate us toward good works.
  - **Titus 2:11-14** indicates that a focus on our blessed hope will move us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and drive us to live sensibly, righteously and godly.
  - **2 Peter 3:14** is a command that we be diligent to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in light of future events.
  - According to **1 John 3:2-3** in light of the coming of Christ we should be striving for purity just as Christ is pure.

## FOUNDATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF ESCHATOLOGY

### 1. Total Inerrancy of Scripture

What we believe about the future directly results from how we view the Scripture. In order to study this doctrine correctly, we must agree as to where we will go for our information and to what degree we will accept this information.

### 2. A Consistently Literal Method of Interpretation

In addition to accepting the authority of the Bible, a student of prophecy must use a proper system of Bible interpretation (called "hermeneutics"). This proper system is called the literal method of interpretation.

The literal method of interpretation is also known as the normal method. It employs the following elements into its system of interpretation:

- \* ***Historical*** - the cultural background and circumstances of the writer and recipients are considered.
- \* ***Grammatical*** - the words are taken in their normal sense unless it is evident that a figure of speech or symbol is used. Attention is paid to the original language of the text.
- \* ***Contextual*** - the words are considered in light of their immediate and broad context.
- \* ***Rhetorical*** - noting the special features of the particular type of literature used.

The literal method of interpretation allows for symbols and figures of speech and adheres to the golden rule of interpretation, "if the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense."

This concept is better understood when compared with its opponent, the allegorical method of interpretation. Under this system, the words are often understood in a symbolic sense that results in a different meaning of the text.

If the allegorical method was applied consistently, the Bible would be reduced to fiction, with the meaning of the text replaced by whatever representation the reader gives to the words.

Evangelicals who use this allegorical hermeneutical system do so usually in the area of prophecy while using the literal or normal hermeneutical system for the rest of Scripture.

### 3. A Distinction Between the Church and Israel in Scripture

Seeing a difference between the Church and the nation of Israel is the all-determinative conviction on which Dispensationalism is based. This distinction is based upon the normal, literal method of interpretation.

What does a distinction between the Church and Israel mean?

Simply put, whenever the Bible speaks of the nation of Israel it means Israel and whenever the Bible speaks of the church it means the church. Israel is not the church and the church is not the nation of Israel.

- ***Why do we believe in a distinction between the Church and Israel?***

#### 1-The church did not exist prior to Acts 2.

a. Jesus said "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18)

- Therefore, the church was at that point future.

b. The church began on the day of Pentecost

- Acts 1:5 gives the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 11:15-16 shows this promise was fulfilled in Acts 2.
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 shows that the baptism of the Holy Spirit forms the union of the believer into the body of Christ.
- Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:18 shows the church is called the body of Christ.

In summary, the church began on the day of Pentecost. It did not exist prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

## 2-Israel will be restored.

A great deal of OT prophecy teaches that Israel will one day be restored to the land since the covenants can not be fulfilled apart from a regathering - Isaiah 27:12; 43:5-7; Jeremiah 12:15; 24:6; Ezekiel 20:42; 28:25-26; Hosea 12:9; Joel 3:1; Amos 9:14-15; Micah 4:6; Zephaniah 3:20; Zechariah 10:10.

The disciples ask Jesus in Acts 1:6 when the kingdom will be restored to Israel. Jesus answers not that Israel will not be restored but that the timing of the restoration will remain hidden.

Finally, Paul affirms in Romans 11 that Israel has not been rejected forever but will be restored.

In conclusion, it is essential that Israel and the Church not be confused. God has made promises to Israel that He will fulfill and to attempt to claim that the church is fulfilling all of these promises requires non-literal interpretation.

## **CONDITIONS AT THE CLOSE OF THE PRESENT AGE**

### **Development of Apostasy**

#### 1. Definition of Apostasy

Based upon the Biblical usage, apostasy is a departure from the faith. This involves truth concerning a cardinal doctrine and therefore apostates are unbelievers who at one time gave mental assent to Christianity.

This is in contrast with heresy. Heresy refers to a division or faction that may possibly involve deviation from doctrine. Heresy therefore does not necessarily make reference to the salvation of the heretic but rather only to their party spirit. The heretic may be an apostate, but not necessarily.

#### 2. History of Apostasy

Apostasy has always been present, for example:

- Satan in Genesis 3

- Cain's refusal to offer a blood sacrifice (Genesis 4)
- Unbelief in the day of Noah (Genesis 6-8)
- Unbelief at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11)
- Apostasy of Israel, resulting in captivity
- Unbelief in the rejection of Christ by the Jews
- Modern liberalism

However, it appears there will be a climax of apostasy in the tribulation (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Apostasy will culminate with God's judgment (Revelation 17 - the judgment of the world church).

### 3. Problem of Apostasy

The New Testament gives much data regarding the conditions which the early church faced regarding apostasy:

- "Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings;" (Hebrews 13:9)
- "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." (Matthew 7:15)
- "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30)
- "But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3)
- "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel." (Galatians 1:6)
- "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves." (2 Peter 2:1)
- "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1)

In addition, there will be an increase in apostasy that will prevail in the last days:

"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." (1 Timothy 4:1)

### 4. Nature of Apostasy

- A denial of Christ (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:18)
- A denial of Christ's return (2 Peter 3:3-4)
- A denial of the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-2; Jude 3)
- A denial of sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3-4)
- A denial of Christian liberty (1 Timothy 4:3-4)
- A denial of morality (2 Timothy 3:1-8; Jude 18)

## 5. Proper Response to Apostasy

- Do not fellowship with false teachers (2 John 6-11)
- Do not cooperate with false teachers (2 Timothy 3:5)
- Do not join together with false teachers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)
- Reprove (expose) wicked teachers (Ephesians 5:11)
- Purge yourself of wicked teachers (2 Timothy 2:21)

### **Specific Signs of the End of the Present Age**

These signs are not conditions which must be met before the Lord returns but rather descriptions of conditions that will prevail during the tribulation. As we see these signs becoming more evident, the rapture of the church may be drawing nearer. Nevertheless it remains to be seen if one or all of these elements will develop prior to the tribulation period.

#### 1. The Revival of the Nation of Israel

From 70 A.D. to May 4, 1948, Israel did not exist as a nation. In history there have been three predicted scatterings of the people of Israel and their return:

- Genesis 15:13 predicted Abraham's seed to be exiled for 400 years and the return is seen in the exodus.
- Jeremiah 29:10 predicted that Israel would be taken captive for 70 years (cf. Isaiah 11:11) to Babylon, and their return is seen under Zerubbabel in 536 B.C.
- Deuteronomy 28:63-64 predicts a world-wide dispersion, where the nation will be scattered among all the peoples and would be torn from the land. The return is predicted in Jeremiah 23:7; Ezek. 39:28 and Amos 9:14-15, where they will not be rooted out from their land again.

The scatterings and first two returns were fulfilled literally to this point. We do not know if the return of Israel to the land in 1948 is the predicted return but possibly it is one step closer.

#### 2. Increased Importance of the Middle East

The Middle East is the setting of events that culminate the end of this age and as increased activity occurs in the region it may prepare the way for the future.

The Middle East is not only the focus of the Bible, but is crucial to the world economically, militarily and religiously (Islam, Judaism).

#### 3. Atheism in Government

Daniel 11:36-45 speaks of the anti-Christ, a king who will use his power to oppose God. Governments which deny the Creator allow a potential for such a world leader to rise to power.

#### 4. The Military Power of Eastern Nations

Revelation 9:15-16 and 16:12-16 refers to the "kings of the East". East and Southeast Asia are more powerful than ever before, economically and militarily, and have an enormous population base.

#### 5. Trend toward a World Government

Since the League of Nations after World War I, there has been an interest in consolidating the governmental powers. Today there is an unprecedented willingness for nations to cooperate together. Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 indicate there will be a world government just prior to the second coming of Christ.

#### 6. The Rise of the World Church

The World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement seek to bring all churches together. Revelation 17 suggests there will be a large world "church" existing during the tribulation period.

#### 7. The Trend toward Apostasy in the Church

1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy 3; 2 Peter 2-3; 1 John 2:18-22; and 2 Thessalonians 2-3 all point to an increase in apostasy in the last days.

#### 8. The Rise of Satanism and the Occult

1 Timothy 4:1 appears to be an indication that there will be an increase in demonic teaching as the end of this age approaches.

All of these signs may not be valid but it appears that they will signal the unfolding of the end of this present age.

Should we actively oppose the development of each of these events?

The developments that are clearly opposed to the will of God (Satanism, apostasy) must not be supported. However, a united government is not inherently evil, it is simply descriptive of the world during the tribulation period. One thing is certain, uniting the world under a common government will not bring ultimate peace apart from the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **KEY END TIME EVENTS**

This week we will focus on actual end time events. We will not cover every facet of the end times in detail. In fact we are simply taking an overview of the major events of the end times in chronological order. We will save the more specific details for the doctrine of eschatology class coming at some point in the future, hopefully before the events themselves.

## 1. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

### **The Rapture Defined:**

The term *rapture* comes from the Latin term RAPTURO, which is a translation of the Greek term HARPAZO, "*caught up*" in **1 Thessalonians 4:17**. The Greek term HARPAZO means, "to steal or take away forcefully." It emphasizes a snatching, stealing or tearing something away quickly and forcefully. The term is often used in the context of stealing or plundering. However, in the context of 1 Thessalonians 4 it carries the sense of catching away speedily, seizing by force, claiming for oneself, rescuing from danger and removing to a new place.

Three other Greek terms are used for the rapture in the Scripture:

PAROUSIA means, "*presence*" or "*coming*" and refers to the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; James 5:7-8; and 1 John 2:28.

APOKALUPSIS means, "*to uncover*," "*to unveil*" or "*to reveal*" and is used of the rapture in 1 Corinthians 1:7 and may refer to the rapture in Colossians 3:4; and 1 Peter 1:7, 13.

EPIPHANEIA means, "*to appear*" or "*to show*" and is used in reference to the rapture in 1 Timothy 6:14 and 2 Timothy 4:8.

### **The Rapture Described:**

Three key New Testament passages deal with the rapture of the church:

John 14:1-3

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

When these passages are taken together they provide the following description of the rapture:

- Christ will descend from heaven to earth with sounds that will herald His return (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
- The souls of dead church saints, Christians who have passed away, will descend with Christ at this coming (1 Thessalonians 4:14). When these church saints died, their souls left their bodies and went to be with the Lord in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-23).
- The bodies of dead church saints will be raised as immortal, incorruptible bodies and will be reunited with their returning souls (1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 52-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-16).



- The bodies of church saints who have not died before this coming of Christ will be changed instantly into immortal, incorruptible bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-58).
- Both the resurrected and changed church saints will be caught up together to meet Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17; John 14:3).
- The church saints will return with Christ to His Father's house in heaven to dwell with Him in living accommodations He has prepared for them beforehand (John 14:2-3).

*Do you live each day with anticipation for Christ's coming? What can you do differently in your life to prepare for His coming?*

## **2. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**

The Greek word, BEMA (judgment seat) refers to an elevated platform where victorious athletes went to receive their crowns. The term is also used in the New Testament to refer to the place of judging. The judgment seat was a tribunal where the judge sat.

It is used of the place where Pilate sat when he made the pronouncement concerning Christ (Matthew 27:19; John 19:13).

It is used of the place where Gallio sat when Paul was brought before him in Corinth (Acts 18:12-16).

Immediately following the rapture of the church will be the judgment seat of Christ. Just like the rapture this event only involves true believers in Christ. The judgment seat of Christ is the place where Christ judges Christians, immediately after their rapture. This judgment will be based on their conduct as Christians and will result in the receiving of rewards by some and a sense of loss for others. The issue will not concern the salvation of those being judged, for only those already belonging to the church will be judged at this time. No one will be present who does not trust Christ as their Lord and Savior. The issue will concern the life conduct of each person since they became a Christian. The primary issue will be faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4:2, 4). The purpose is to determine the degree of reward that they will receive. They will be called into account and receive what is due them.

### **Passages that emphasize the necessity of this judgment:**

- Matthew 12:36 emphasizes that we will be held accountable for our speech.
- Galatians 6:7 indicates that we will reap what we sow implying accountability for our actions.
- Colossians 3:24-25 indicates that we will receive a reward of inheritance and consequences for wrong actions.
- Romans 14:10-12 emphasizes accountability before the judgments seat of God.

- 2 Corinthians 5:10 indicates that we will be recompensed for our deeds at the judgment seat of Christ.

**Passages that emphasize the timing of this judgment:**

- Luke 14:14 indicates that we will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous (this is at the rapture of the church according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- 1 Corinthians 4:5 tells us that Christ's return, He will bring to light what is hidden in the darkness and reveal the motives of men's hearts.
- Revelation 22:12 indicates at Christ's imminent return, He will bring reward with Him and render to every man according to what he has done.

**Passages that emphasize the result of this judgment:**

- According to 1 Corinthians 3:9-15 each man's work will be revealed through fire. If it remains, he will receive reward; but if it is burned up in the fire, he will suffer loss, yet still be saved. Remember that this judgment does not determine salvation.

The nature of the reward offered: Several passages speak of reward in the terms of a crown.

- According to 1 Corinthians 9:25 those that run the race well will receive an imperishable crown.
- According to 1 Thessalonians 2:19 other believers serve as a crown of exultation. Some have suggested that this passages implies that bringing others to faith in Christ and building them up in the faith will result in reward.
- 2 Timothy 4:8 speaks of a crown of righteousness for those who love Christ's appearing.
- James 1:12 speaks of a crown of life for those who persevere.
- 1 Peter 5:4 emphasizes a crown of life for those who are good shepherds of God's flock.

Certainly these crowns could be symbolic of eternal life in general, but they could also be understood as a literal reward that we will lay at the feet of Jesus (cf. Revelation 4:1-11).

The nature of the loss experienced: The loss experienced by those whose labors are burned up does not concern the person's salvation. This is made clear in 1 Corinthians 3:15, "But he himself will be saved; yet so as by fire." The loss seems to be a loss of reward. The loss of reward will result in a sense of loss or shame in that time on earth could have been better spent.

*Every Christian should consider carefully the fact of this coming time of judgment. A wasted life will seem very foolish when one stands before Christ on that day.*

### 3. *THE SEVEN YEAR TRIBULATION*

After the church is removed from the earth at the Rapture, the world will experience a period of time commonly called the Tribulation. There could well be a short period of time between the Rapture and the actual beginning of the Tribulation during which some necessary alignments and developments take place.

Based on **Daniel 9:24-27**, the tribulation period begins when the man known as the Antichrist signs a treaty with the nation of Israel. The Antichrist will seem at first to be a protector of Israel, but will turn out to be the great persecutor of Israel.

There are two primary purposes for the Tribulation:

1-The first purpose of God is to save the nation of Israel (and many Gentiles as well) and bring them under the new covenant of salvation. To bring Israel to the point where they will respond in a positive way to God's gracious offer of salvation, God will employ many miracles. He will also allow intense persecution to come upon Israel, which will cause Israel and others to come to faith in Christ. It will be a time of unprecedented salvation, and it is likely that no other seven-year period in human history will rival the great numbers of people who are redeemed out of the Tribulation (Cf. Revelation 7:9-17).

2-The second purpose of the Tribulation is to judge wicked people and nations. The unrighteous have willfully and arrogantly refused to live in obedience to the Creator. And while God is slow to anger and full of mercy and grace, eventually unrepentant sinful people and the wicked angels must be dealt with (Exodus 34:6-7). As a result, the Tribulation will be an unprecedented time of trouble and judgment on this earth (Cf. Revelation 6-18; Matthew 24:4-28). In three series of judgments, close to 80 % of the world's population will perish, and life on this planet will be chaotic. The Lord Jesus noted that if God had not limited the length of the Tribulation no human being would make it through the time alive (Matthew 24:22).

The seven-year Tribulation is divided into two distinct parts of three and a half years each. It is during this seven-year period that the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments are poured out on the earth. The first 5 seal judgments are unleashed during the first 3 ½ years and the remaining judgments during the last 3 ½ years. [See attached chart and Adult Education Notes on the Book of Revelation at valleybible.net]

The Tribulation will also be a time of unique activity for Satan as well. Using the Antichrist, Satan will attempt to destroy God's people, thwart God's purposes, and cause all on the earth to worship him. His hatred for God will be focused on the people of God and will be seen in his aggressive attempt to put all of God's people to death. Satan will successfully deceive many on the earth through his use of amazing and powerful signs and wonders. Multitudes will follow him (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Matthew 24:21-24; Revelation 13:1-18). But all this will be to no avail. When the time is right the Lord Jesus will return to the earth and seize control over this planet once and for all.

#### **4. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST TO THE EARTH**

The terrible time of tribulation will come to an end when the Lord Jesus comes in power and glory from heaven to the earth. This coming will be a universal revelation as both the saved and unsaved witness this event. Many will respond with sorrow as they realize that their judgment is at hand. Others will rejoice because they understand that His coming will bring an end to the kingdoms of mankind and will inaugurate the millennial kingdom of Messiah. Five important events occur in connection with the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

1-The first event will be the judgment of the living Gentiles. Although literally billions of people perish during the Tribulation, millions are still alive at the end, and it is necessary for them to be judged to determine whether or not they can enter the Millennial Kingdom. The first group to be so evaluated is the Gentiles. In what is commonly called the “sheep and goats judgment” (Matthew 25:31-46), saved Gentiles (sheep) are allowed into Messiah’s kingdom (in their physical bodies), whereas the unsaved (the goats) are not allowed entrance, but are cast into hell.

2-The second event is the judgment of Israel (the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-11). This also is a judgment to determine whether or not Israelites may enter into Messiah’s kingdom. Saved Israelites (the wise) are allowed in, whereas unsaved Israelites (the foolish) are refused entrance into the Kingdom of Messiah.

3-The third event in connection with the Second Coming will be the resurrection and rewarding of Old Testament saints and the saints who perished in the Tribulation (Revelation 20:4-6; Daniel 12:2, 13; Revelation 6:9). It is at the Second Coming that these people are given their resurrected/glorified bodies and are rewarded according to the works that they have done.

4-The fourth event is the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3). When the Lord Jesus returns, He will have Satan cast into the Abyss, where he will be completely restricted. He will not be able to exercise any influence during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth. When the Scriptures speak of the binding of Satan, this includes the host of demons that do his bidding.

5-The fifth event will be the actual establishing of the Messianic Kingdom. Daniel 12 suggests that there will be a seventy-five day period between the Second Coming and the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom. It may be that during these weeks that the administration of the kingdom is established and the borders of the nations are defined.

#### **5. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST**

Once all the enemies of Christ are removed and all necessary resurrections and judgments take place, the wonderful period of the Millennium will begin. The great unconditional covenants given centuries earlier will now be fulfilled. Every promise made by God will be accomplished, and Israel in particular and Gentiles in general will enjoy the blessings of Christ’s rule.

The millennial kingdom will be characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy. All people everywhere will worship the Lord Jesus, who will be present in His glory. The curse that was placed on creation at the fall of mankind will be removed, causing the desert and all of the earth to bloom and become fertile. Because of this, mankind will experience an unprecedented time of prosperity that will reach to every individual. Apparently very long life spans will characterize the kingdom. This, coupled with the absence of disease, will cause the population of the earth to increase rapidly. Also, the removal of the curse will immediately affect the animal kingdom. No longer will lions eat lambs, but rather they will nap together in peace and harmony.

When the Messianic kingdom begins, only believers will inhabit the kingdom, and they will gladly worship the King. But even though all are believers at the beginning, the kingdom will be made up of people with two different types of bodies: resurrected bodies, and mortal bodies. Those with resurrected bodies receive them either at the Rapture (church age saints) or at the Second Coming (Old Testament and Tribulation saints). The other group is made up of those who made it alive through the Tribulation and as believers entered the Messianic kingdom. However, their bodies were not changed, and thus they will marry and reproduce.

As the kingdom period proceeds, the children born into the Millennium, like children in every other age, must come to the place where they personally respond to the Lord. In this environment of truth and righteousness most will probably become believers and follow Him, but others will not. Only a few will actually be outwardly rebellious and receive the Lord's rod of iron (Psalm 2:9; Isaiah 11:4); most will worship the Lord Jesus Christ. But the millennial kingdom will have more and more unbelievers as time goes on. It is these unbelievers that Satan, when he is released from the Abyss for a short time at the end of the Millennium, will convince to rebel against the rule of King Jesus (Revelation 20:7-10).

## ***6. FINAL JUDGMENTS OF THE END TIMES***

After the Millennial Kingdom is over and before the final eternal kingdom of God begins, three additional judgments will take place (Revelation 20:7-15; 1 Corinthians 6:3).

First is the final judgment of Satan and the fallen angels. They will be cast into the lake of fire, and there they will spend eternity.

Second, unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment. All unbelievers from every age will be resurrected at this time and forced to face their Creator God. Because of their sinful actions, their unbelief, and their refusal to receive His gift of eternal life, they will be cast forever into the same lake of fire as Satan (Revelation 20:12-13).

The third judgment will be that of the heavens and the earth. The present heavens and earth have been contaminated by sin and by the presence of wicked beings, and this necessitates their cleansing. The judgment of fire will completely destroy the old heavens and earth and prepare the way for the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:7-10).

One other event will take place at this time as well. Those who have not received resurrected bodies will likely receive them at this time. Remember some enter into the Millennial Kingdom

in their physical/mortal bodies. Some have suggested that some of those individuals will have died during this time and will need to be resurrected. While the Scriptures do not specifically address this issue, there will at least need to be a translating of those in mortal bodies into a resurrected/glorified body in preparation for the eternal state.

## 7. *THE ETERNAL STATE*

It was God's purpose from the very beginning to rule over and fellowship with people and with angels. His leadership was challenged, and His fellowship was marred by the entrance of sin and rebellion. But, with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross to pay for sin and satisfy the wrath of God, fellowship was once again a reality. And with the defeat of the usurper Satan and the collapse of all the kingdoms of mankind, the Lord Jesus is King of kings and the kingdom is now delivered over to God the Father.

In the eternal kingdom of God, there will be fullness of joy, full of unhindered fellowship, and meaningful living on a new earth (Revelation 21:1-22:5). This will forever be the experience of those who are the children of God.

## KEY END TIMES PERSONALITIES

We have already examined the conditions at the end of the age and key end times events. This week we will examine some of the key end times personalities. Our focus for this lesson will be on human individuals as we are more aware of God's, satan's and the angels' role in end times events.

### **1. The Antichrist**

#### The Names and Titles of the Antichrist

There exist a variety of names and titles applied to the Antichrist throughout both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. These include the names Antichrist, Man of Lawlessness, Son of Destruction, Little Horn, the Prince who is to come, and the Beast from the Sea. These names or titles reveal a great deal of information about the nature and character of this future individual.

***Antichrist:*** The most common name applied to this future end times individual is that of the Antichrist. Amazingly the term "antichrist" is found only five times in the Bible, and all five of these occurrences are in the first and second epistles of John. "Four of the five occurrences are in reference to the people of John's day who were opposed to Christ and His work, either denying His deity (1 John 2:22) or the fact that He had come in the flesh (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7). Only once does it refer to the person of the future."<sup>1</sup> This occurrence is in 1 John 2:18 where it states, "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming." No further information is provided other than this future individual is referred to as antichrist.

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<sup>1</sup> Leon J. Wood, *The Bible and Future Events* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 97.

“The word ‘Antichrist’ has a double significance. Its primary meaning is one who is *opposed* to Christ; but its secondary meaning is one who is *instead* of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> The usage of the term by John in his epistles reveals the first aspect of being in opposition to Christ. John explains that antichrist denies that Jesus is the Christ and even denies both the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22). He also emphasizes that failure to confess Jesus is the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4:3). Lastly even failure to acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh is another aspect of this opposition to Christ. The secondary meaning comes from the Greek term, *ANTICHRISTOS*. The original meaning of the preposition *anti* was “in the place of.” So the term antichrist carries a secondary meaning of “in the place of Christ.” Both aspects of the term antichrist will apply to the future individual Antichrist as he will both be opposed to Christ and attempt to stand in the place of Christ.

***Man of Lawlessness:*** This second name or title applied to the Antichrist is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Here this coming one is referred to as “the man of lawlessness.” Further in the context of 2 Thessalonians, verse 8 refers to him as “that lawless one.” The term for lawlessness is the Greek *ANOMIA*, which speaks of someone who transgresses the law. The title of lawlessness reveals the extreme wickedness of the Antichrist. “Man of sin intimates that he will be the living and active embodiment of every form and character of evil and signifies that he will be sin itself personified.”<sup>3</sup> He will truly be a wicked and sinful man. Christ was the sinless God-man, but Antichrist is the man of sin.

***Son of Destruction:*** A third title applied to the Antichrist is also found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The phrase “Son of destruction” is also found in John 17:12. In John 17:12 it is translated “son of perdition” and is referring to Judas Iscariot. This phrase speaks of the eternal destiny of the individual, that being eternal damnation. Just as that is the eternal destiny of Christ’s betrayer so it will be the outcome for the Antichrist. Taken together with the preceding phrase “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the Antichrist is seen as a wicked, vile and sinful man who is destined for eternal damnation.

***Little Horn:*** Another title or name applied to the Antichrist is “little horn.” The term horn in both old and New Testaments can be used in a figurative sense to symbolize power, strength or might. In the context of Daniel 7 the term is representative of kings or rulers (cf. Daniel 7:24). The description of Antichrist as a little horn as opposed to the other horns that are mentioned is because it is a picture of him prior to his rise to power and world dominance. So the picture offered here of Antichrist by the use of this title is one who will be a ruler with strength and power.

***The Prince Who is to Come:*** In Daniel 9:26 we have yet one more name or title applied to the Antichrist. Here he is mentioned as a prince who is to come. In fact he is called a future prince of the people who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. At the time of the writing of Daniel that destruction was yet future, but now is past history. It was the Roman peoples who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70. “If the text is to be taken literally at this point, this

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur W. Pink, *The Antichrist* (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1979), 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

future ruler will come out of the peoples and nations that made up the ancient Roman Empire.”<sup>4</sup> So this title reveals both the origin of Antichrist as coming from a future reorganized Rome and the fact that his coming will be in the future.

***The Beast from the Sea:*** This name or title of the Antichrist is found in Revelation 13:1. This is a symbolic picture as there is much figurative language used in this passage. It is best to understand this vision as descriptive of the person of the Antichrist as opposed to referring to Antichrist as a literal beast rising out of the ocean waters. The term *beast* here means a wild beast or monster and indicates his ferocious nature. “It pictures that final world empire which will find its embodiment in a satanically empowered individual who will present himself as a counterfeit Christ.”<sup>5</sup> There is some disagreement as to what is meant by the term, *sea*. This passage likely draws from the similar passage of Daniel 7. In Daniel 7:3, Daniel sees four beasts rising out of the great sea. The great sea as used in the Scriptures is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea. In another similar passage, Revelation 17:15, the sea is to be understood as peoples and multitudes and tongues. The best conclusion is that John is witnessing the rising of the beast, Antichrist, from among the peoples of the Mediterranean world. So this title further reveals the origin of Antichrist, being from the Mediterranean world, and the nature of the Antichrist as being extremely ferocious.

### The Origin of the Antichrist

The origin of the Antichrist can be explained from two different perspectives. The first is the physical perspective, which identifies the earthly origin of the Antichrist. The second perspective is the spiritual perspective, which identifies the spiritual origin or nature of the Antichrist.

***The Earthly Origin of the Antichrist:*** The earthly origin of the Antichrist is possibly found in three locations within the Scriptures. The first is in Daniel 7:7, where the fourth beast in Daniel’s vision is likely understood as a reference to the Roman Empire. It is from this fourth beast that the little horn, previously identified as a reference to the Antichrist, rises up. This coincides well with Daniel 9:26 where the Antichrist is mentioned as the prince of the people who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple occurred in AD 70 by Rome. Therefore, the earthly origin of the Antichrist must come from within the area that made up the Roman Empire.

Another possible mention of the Antichrist’s earthly origin comes from Revelation 13:1 as mentioned earlier. The sea is likely a figurative expression referring to the people of the Mediterranean area. This of course is the same territory controlled by the ancient Roman Empire. So the earthly origin of the Antichrist is from somewhere around the Mediterranean area, likely coming out of the peoples and nations that made up the ancient Roman Empire. A form of this empire will be revived in some future time and it is from this region that the Antichrist will come onto the world scene.

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 268.

<sup>5</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *Exegetical Digest of Revelation 8-14* (Sun Valley, CA: Robert L. Thomas, 1993), 273.



***The Spiritual Origin of the Antichrist:*** The Scriptures not only describe the earthly origin of Antichrist, but they also provide instruction regarding the spiritual origin or nature of this future individual. In Revelation 11:7 the Antichrist is described as a beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit. The picture here is likely of the demonic origin of this beast. This beast will be completely under Satan's control and will receive his power, throne, and authority from Satan (cf. Revelation 13:2). His coming is in accordance with Satan, as 2 Thessalonians 2:9 describes the power, signs and lying wonders of the Antichrist. Antichrist's earthly origin may be from a revived Roman Empire, but he is truly of his father, the devil and will be but a pawn in the hand of Satan.

### The Character of the Antichrist

There are many descriptions of the personality or character of the Antichrist in the Scriptures. They range from apparent intelligence and peacefulness to an unrighteous, deceitful, and arrogant persecutor. Overall the character of the Antichrist is primarily negative as the Scriptures present him as an extremely wicked blasphemer of God.

***Intelligent:*** The first quality is really the only positive quality. In Daniel 7:8 the Antichrist is described as a little horn with eyes like the eyes of a man. "Eyes are symbolic of insight, intelligence, and prudence. The significance here is that the Antichrist will be characterized by unusual mental ability."<sup>6</sup> He will be a very sharp and knowledgeable man. Although he will be quite intelligent, the phrase "eyes like a man" also emphasizes that he will not be a supernatural being, but simply a man.

***Apparently Peaceful:*** The key here is that he is not a peaceful man, but gives the appearance of being a peacemaker. This can be seen in Daniel 9:27, where he is seen making a covenant with the many. The "many" is a reference to Israel and thus some sort of covenant or peace treaty is made between the Antichrist and Israel. Possibly this covenant will ensure protection for Israel, the rebuilding of the temple and the reinstatement of temple sacrifices. What a great man of peace this ruler will appear to be in order to broker such a covenant. The true character of the Antichrist will shine through half way through that seven-year agreement as he will break the covenant, put an end to the sacrifices, and erect an abominable image of himself in the temple. So although for three and one-half years he gives the appearance of being a man of peace, he truly is not.

***Arrogant:*** A common characteristic applied to the Antichrist in the Scriptures is that of boastfulness or arrogance. This is first seen in Daniel 7:8, where he is described as having a mouth speaking great things. Antichrist will be quite boastful as Daniel 7:25 goes on to describe him as speaking pompous words against the Most High. This is further referenced in Daniel 11:36, where he is said to speak blasphemy against God and exalt himself above every god. Paul also references this characteristic in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, where he describes the Antichrist as exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The apostle John also adds to this by mentioning that the Antichrist was given a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies (Revelation 13:5). Revelation 13:6 reveals three ways in which the Antichrist will blaspheme God. "He will blaspheme God's name

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<sup>6</sup> Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 188.

by casting direct aspersion on His person. He will blaspheme His Tabernacle by speaking against His dwelling place. He will blaspheme those who dwell in heaven—the saints and the angelic host.”<sup>7</sup> The Scriptures paint a portrait of the arrogant and blaspheming nature of the Antichrist in almost every passage that he is mentioned.

***Deceitful:*** In addition to his arrogance, Antichrist will be quite a deceiver. This can first of all be seen in his making and breaking a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27). He will have appeared to be a friend and protector of Israel, but will truly have deceived them as he will turn on them half way through the agreement and break the covenant. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, Paul speaks of the Antichrist as coming with lying wonders. He will apparently be capable of doing great and mighty acts as if he was God, but they are called lying wonders because they are in accordance with the working of Satan.

Verse 10 goes on to directly state that the coming of the Antichrist is with all unrighteous deception. In this particular context Antichrist will be capable of deceiving the unsaved people of the earth and leading them straight into eternal damnation. 1 John 2:22 can also be applied to the Antichrist. John states that anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar. This would certainly apply to the Antichrist who is in opposition to Christ and sets himself up in the place of Christ. Antichrist will indeed be an untrustworthy and unrighteous deceiver of the people of the world.

***Belligerent:*** The Antichrist will also be very belligerent in his character. This can be seen first of all in Daniel 7, where the Antichrist as the little horn will rise up and pluck out by the roots three of the other horns. The horns here symbolizing kings (cf. Daniel 7:24) are moved out of the way, overcome or subdued by the little horn. Daniel 7:21 adds to this that this same horn was making war against the saints. Apparently the Antichrist’s belligerent nature is worked out not only through an eagerness to go to war, but also to persecute and oppress God’s saints. Daniel further mentions this persecution or wearing out of the saints again in verse 25.

The Apostle John also mentions this warlike nature of the Antichrist in making war with the saints (cf. Revelation 13:7). Not only will Antichrist be able to make war with the saints, but he will also be able to overcome them. “Acting as Satan’s tool, the beast is able to wage war against the saints throughout the entire globe and to overcome them. Many believers in Christ among both Jews and Gentiles will perish as martyrs during this awful time of trial.”<sup>8</sup> This warlike tendency of Antichrist can also be seen in Revelation 19:19, when at the second coming of Christ, the Antichrist and the kings of the earth will gather together to make war against Christ.

***Powerful:*** Antichrist will also be a very powerful man. This can be seen first of all in Daniel 7 with his rising up and removing three other rulers in a future Roman Empire (cf. Daniel 7:24). He will also evidently be powerful enough to make a covenant with Israel giving them peaceful protection while rebuilding the temple and reinstating temple sacrifices (Daniel 9:27). He will be powerful enough to exalt himself above all that is called God and make himself out to be God (cf. Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). He will be powerful enough to make war with and

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<sup>7</sup> David M. Levy, *Revelation Hearing the Last Word* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1999), 149.

<sup>8</sup> John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), 201.

persecute the saints (cf. Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7). He will also be powerful enough to gain authority over every tribe, tongue, and nation (cf. Revelation 13:7).

The greatest description of this power is given in the image of the beast of Revelation 13. In verse 2 he is described as being like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. The metaphor of a leopard as mentioned here brings to mind its swiftness and agility. This is foreshadowed in the third beast of Daniel 7, which was a reference to the Alexandrian Empire and their ability to swiftly move forward in battle. As it is applied to the Antichrist and his kingdom, he will likewise have the power and ability to move his army swiftly into battle and conquer his enemies (cf. Revelation 6:2).

“The bear is a metaphor for the ancient Medo-Persian Empire, depicting that kingdom’s ferocious strength, combined with its great stability (cf. Daniel 7:5).”<sup>9</sup> Likewise the Antichrist will have such power and strength in his future kingdom. The next descriptive phrase of the Antichrist and his kingdom is that he has a mouth like the mouth of a lion. “The phrase, *mouth of a lion* indicates a mouth of great capacity, one which has a large extent of opening; in particular, the formidable teeth, which the lion’s mouth exhibits.”<sup>10</sup> The Babylonian Empire was depicted as a lion, with great consuming power (cf. Daniel 7:4). Likewise the kingdom of Antichrist will be powerful and consuming. The power of the Antichrist is further stated in Revelation 13:2 as being from the dragon, who is none other than Satan. The Antichrist will be a very powerful ruler as he will be energized by Satan himself.

### The Activities of the Antichrist

There are a few key activities of the Antichrist that must be noted. These range from his beginnings as the leader of some western nation and the signing of a covenant with Israel, his rise to power as a dominant world leader, his persecution of the saints and his demand of the world’s worship.

***Antichrist Signs a Covenant with Israel:*** One of the earlier activities of the Antichrist on the world scene seems to be his signing of a covenant with Israel (cf. Daniel 9:27). At this point Antichrist will have already been placed in the position of leadership of some western nation. He as noted earlier must come from a nation in the area once controlled by the ancient Roman Empire. He will already be politically positioned and powerful enough to ensure the protection of Israel, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple and the reinstatement of temple sacrifices. This covenant as noted in Daniel 9:27, will begin the seventieth week (a seven-year period) allotted to Israel. This seven-year period is the same as the Tribulation period described in the book of Revelation. The Tribulation begins with the signing of this covenant between Antichrist and Israel.

***Antichrist Rises to World Dominance:*** During the first half of the tribulation the Antichrist will be rising in power to world dominance. He is depicted in Revelation 6:2 as being given bow and

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<sup>9</sup> *The MacArthur Study Bible*, ed. John MacArthur Jr., (Nashville, TN: Word Bibles, 1997), 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, Stewart & Co., 1847), 639.

a crown as he went out to conquer. This seems to be a reference to his ability to conquer the entire earth through a bloodless coup, since there is no mention of arrows. It is possibly through other treaties similar to the one signed with Israel that Antichrist will be able to accomplish world-wide dominance. Another reference to this achieving of world-wide dominance might be found in Daniel 7 as the Antichrist (the little horn) uproots three other rulers in this future ten-nation confederacy. It seems clear that by the mid-point of the Tribulation period, Antichrist has assumed world-wide dominance (cf. Revelation 13:7).

***Antichrist is Apparently Killed and Resurrected:*** This particular event is described in Revelation 13:3, where the Antichrist is described as one of the heads and is apparently killed. The terminology seems to be strong. *Slain, (esphagmenon)*, suggests a violent death. Further the term *fatal wound (plaga)* is suggestive of having had a deadly blow. In fact the whole first part of verse 3 could be literally rendered, “*And (I saw) one of his heads as it had been slain into death, and his plague of death has been healed.*” In verse 12 the phrase *plague of death* is repeated, only it is translated *fatal wound*. In verse 14 we are told that this plague is by the sword.

For all practical purposes it appears that the Antichrist is indeed given a death-blow and killed, but is healed and brought back to life. The only real difficulty in carrying it this far is the term *as (HOS)*. This term is often used as a comparative particle in which case it would suggest the appearance of death. However this term could just as easily be understood as a temporal particle and could be translated *after or when*. In this case it would indeed be suggestive of a literal death and some sort of a resurrection. In either case it seems apparent that the world understands the Antichrist to be dead and are amazed, when he has been healed. In fact this seems to lead directly into the worship given to the beast in verse 4. Whatever the case, it is apparent that Satan and the Antichrist are closely counterfeiting the death and resurrection of Christ.

***Antichrist Demands the World's Worship:*** After the Antichrist is apparently raised from the dead, the entire world will be in utter amazement. In fact Revelation 13:4 says that they worship the Antichrist and suggest that he is incomparable. It is this worship that the Antichrist will demand from all the inhabitants of the earth. Clearly amazed by his resurrection much of the unbelieving world will have no problem worshiping the Antichrist. At this point in the career of the Antichrist he will break the covenant that he had previously made with Israel and he will put an end to the temple sacrifices and offerings (cf. Daniel 9:27). In fact he will proclaim himself to be God and sit as God in the newly rebuilt Jerusalem temple.

Apparently many great yet false signs and wonders will be done by the Antichrist and his false prophet (2 Thessalonians 2:4, 9-10; Revelation 13:13-15), which will deceive the unbelieving world. This demand for worship will escalate to the point that the false prophet will encourage the people to set up an image of the Antichrist in the temple (Revelation 13:14). This false prophet will enable this image to both breath and speak (Revelation 13:15). The Scriptures would equate such idolatry with worship of Satan (Deuteronomy 32:16-17; Psalm 106:36-37). In fact since Antichrist is energized and empowered by Satan, this truly is a form of Satan worship. The penalty for refusing to participate in such worship will be that of death (cf. Revelation 13:15).

***Antichrist Persecutes the Saints:*** It seems that this will be a primary activity of the Antichrist as it is mentioned several times in the Scriptures. Antichrist is said to make war against the saints, and overpower them (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:7) and to persecute the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:25). It seems that this primarily occurs during the second half of the Tribulation period, as Daniel says that they will be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time, which is a reference to a three and one-half year period. Daniel also states that this persecution will take place until the coming of the Ancient of Days, which is likely a reference to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. This persecution of the saints can also be seen in the Antichrist rising up, making war with the two witnesses and killing them (cf. Revelation 11:7). Although the persecution may be primarily an occurrence of the second three and one-half years of the Tribulation, it is apparent that some persecution will take place during the first half as well according to the fifth seal judgment (Revelation 6:9-11) and Christ's Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:9).

***Antichrist Wages War Against the Lord Jesus:*** The final activity of the Antichrist will be a last ditch effort to maintain world dominance in the face of Christ's return to the earth. This is described in Revelation 19:19 as the glorified Christ appears and is returning to the earth. The Antichrist, the kings of the earth, and their armies will gather together to make war with Christ. It is at this point that the Antichrist and his false prophet are captured and the rest of the armies are killed. This final war of the Antichrist will be short-lived and he will be utterly defeated as he is cast into his final doom.

### The Judgment of the Antichrist

The final doom of the Antichrist is indeed recorded in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and Revelation 19:20. The Antichrist's control of the world will be broken upon Christ's return to the earth. The Lord shall return breaking the power of the Antichrist, demonstrating him to be a deceiver (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8), decimating his armies (Revelation 19:21), and casting the Antichrist along with his false prophet into the lake of fire forever (Revelation 19:20). So the judgment against the Antichrist is utter defeat and eternal damnation.

## **2. The False Prophet**

**The Appearance of the False Prophet:** Revelation 13:11 "*And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon.*"

***And I saw another beast:*** The Greek term for *another* (*allo*) means "another of the same kind." He will have a similar nature and character as the first individual mentioned in 13:1-10. The term *beast* here means a wild beast or monster and indicates his ferocious nature. He will be of a similar ferocious and hostile nature as the first beast and both will be hostile toward God and His people.

***Coming up out of the earth:*** There appears to be some contrast being made here in the origin of this second beast as opposed to the origin of the first. The picture of the first beast in 13:1-10 was that of coming up out of the sea. The sea as noted in that section likely denoted the Mediterranean Sea and identified the first beast as rising up out of the peoples of the

Mediterranean area. The emphasis was on the Gentile origin of the first beast. Some have wrongly concluded that since this second beast is said to come up out of the earth, that it is a reference to the land of Israel and denotes the Jewish origin of this second beast. The problem with this view is that the term for earth is not used in this way anywhere else in the book of Revelation. It is usually a more broad term speaking of the world in general. In addition it would be difficult to see a Jew going along with the first beast's plan to annihilate the Jewish people. Thus the best conclusion is that this second beast comes up from the people of the world with no further identification as to his origin.

***And he had two horns like a lamb:*** First of all in the Scriptures the term "horn" is often used figuratively to refer to strength, power or ruling authority. So the two horns of this beast refer to some sort of strength or ruling authority. The small horns of a lamb are relatively minor when compared to the 10 horned beast. Since the two horns are like those of a lamb, most commentators view this statement as depicting some sort of religious authority. This view is supported by the fact that this same individual is referred to as a false prophet elsewhere in Revelation (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10), that he leads the world to worship the first beast (13:12), and he commands the people to set up an image of the first beast in the temple (13:14-15). It is also noted that this statement represents the false prophet as being one who **appears** to be of a mild and gentle nature. Although he is truly of ferocious nature (*another beast*), he represents himself or appears before the world as one of a mild and gentle nature (*like a lamb*). He is truly a false prophet, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

***And he spoke as a dragon:*** The dragon is a reference back to the great red dragon of Revelation 12. Thus it is a reference to Satan. This second beast spoke as Satan. "Although docile in appearance, his speech will be subtle, seductive, and satanic, structured to lead people away from belief in Christ and into the cunning, corrupt worship of the Antichrist."<sup>11</sup> So this second beast is an individual who appears to be peaceful in nature, but is truly ferocious and deceitful in nature. He is truly motivated by Satan as he deceives the people of the world into worshipping Antichrist. He appears to be some sort of a religious leader, but is truly just a false prophet.

#### The Activity of the False Prophet: (Revelation 11:12-18).

In this section of verses the Greek text automatically provides our outline for us. Four times a specific word is repeated in an identical form. The Greek word (*POIEI*) usually translated "to do or make" is used to identify the specific work or activity of this false prophet. This is not so clearly revealed in the English text as it is translated "he exercises (vs. 12a); he makes (vs 12b); he performs (vs. 13); and he causes (vs 16). All of which are legitimate translations of this verb, but make it much more difficult to see the structure of the passage. So lets examine the activity of this false prophet.

***He Exercises Authority:*** Revelation 13:12 "*And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence.*" The first activity listed of this second beast, the false prophet is the exercising of authority. Notice that it is not his own authority that he exercises, but the authority of the first beast. What authority the false prophet has is given to him by the Antichrist. Notice also that

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<sup>11</sup> David M. Levy, *Revelation Hearing the Last Word*, (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry Inc., 1999), 154.

this authority is exercised in the presence of Antichrist. “The Greek phrase *enopion autou* translated “in his presence” implies that the first beast has general oversight of the second beast’s activities.”<sup>12</sup> However, the Antichrist places enough confidence in this false prophet to entrust him with his authority.

***He Causes the World to Worship the Antichrist:*** Revelation 13:12 “*And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.*” His second activity mentioned here is that he directs or causes the world to worship the first beast. Actually the better sense here is that this false prophet **makes** the world worship the first beast. The phrase *the earth and those who dwell in it* is a comprehensive way of speaking of the unbelieving people of the world. It does not, however, speak of believers or even of the Jewish people who have already fled into the wilderness. This activity takes place specifically at the mid-point of the tribulation period when the Antichrist has been healed of his fatal wound.

Once the Antichrist is restored to life, the false prophet makes the people of the world worship him. The repetition of the phrase *whose fatal wound was healed* (see vs. 3) emphasizes this as the dramatic action that enables the false prophet to motivate the world to worship the Antichrist. The phrase as mentioned when dealing with verse 3 seems to be clearly suggestive of a literal death and resurrection. Remember at the least it **appears** to be a death and resurrection to the people of the world. The false prophet will have no problem motivating the majority of the world to worship the Antichrist because they will be amazed by this great healing act. There will be some however that will not be so convinced and will be killed according to verse 15.

***He Performs Great Signs:*** Revelation 13:13-15 “*13 And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. 15 And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*”

The next activity of this false prophet is the capability to perform great signs. Signs in the Scripture are usually used to prove the authenticity of a particular message or individual. Here these great signs of this false prophet serve a similar purpose. It is an attempt to prove the authenticity of the message of the false prophet and the person of the Antichrist. These are likely real supernatural miracles that are performed by this individual in which God allows this activity to take place. This false prophet using the power of Satan is able to perform many great and convincing signs to the point of deceiving the elect if possible (Matthew 24:24). His great signs extend to include making fire come down out of heaven to the earth. This is a miracle that James and John desired to perform, but were denied (Luke 9:54). It is also similar to the miracle Elijah performed on more than one occasion (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10). The purpose of this false prophet’s signs is deception (*And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast*). The deception is that this false prophet will deceive men into worshipping a false god, the Antichrist. He does so by telling

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 174.

them to make an image of the beast. This obviously will be some sort of a statue of the Antichrist.

At this point in the text it once again reiterates the death and resurrection of the first beast. The continuous repetition of this fact throughout chapter 13 leads to the conclusion that this may have indeed literally happened as opposed to being a staged event for deception. While it is impossible to know for sure, it does seem quite convincing from the strength of the language used and the consistent repetition of the event that Antichrist is indeed killed and returned to life. Not only does this false prophet command the people to erect such an idolatrous image, but he performs an additional great sign of giving the image the ability to breath and speak. Such an ability of enabling an inanimate object to breath and speak would be quite convincing to many people that these two individuals are who they claim to be. Obviously all will not be convinced to worship the Antichrist for it is necessary for some to be killed because they do not worship him. Evidently the false prophet somehow enables this image to not only breath and speak, but also to cause those who do not worship the beast or his image to be killed. From this point on it will be very difficult for the tribulation saints. Their refusal to worship the first beast and his image will result in death and as we will see shortly their refusal to take the mark of this beast will result in the inability to buy or sell.

***He Causes the Placing of a Mark:*** Revelation 13:16-18 “16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, 17 and [he provides] that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, [either] the name of the beast or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.”

The final activity of this false prophet mentioned is the causing of all to be given a mark. “The regulation is issued that all classes of people who worship the beast are to receive a mark in their right hands or in their foreheads and that possession of this mark is necessary to buy or sell. All classes are included in three contrasting pairs: the small and the great, referring to status; the rich and the poor, alluding to possessions; and the free men and the slaves, referring to their state in society.”<sup>13</sup>

“The word *mark* (*CHARAGMA*) was used in the first century. It referred to the imprint from an imperial seal of the Roman Empire bearing the name and date of the emperor and used on official documents or coins. This mark is a visible brand or tattoo signifying ownership, loyalty, and protection—similar to that given to soldiers, slaves, and those who worshipped the emperor in the first century.”<sup>14</sup>

“This mark will allow people to engage in daily commerce, including the purchase of food and other necessities. Without the identifying mark, individuals will be cut off from the necessities of life.”<sup>15</sup> This mark will consist of either the name or number of the first beast, the Antichrist.

<sup>13</sup> John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 208-209.

<sup>14</sup> Levy, 158.

<sup>15</sup> The MacArthur Study Bible, foot note page 2010.



“Whatever his name is it will be inherent in a numbering system. It is not clear exactly what this name or numbering system will be or what its significance will be.”<sup>16</sup>

As John closes out this vision he offers further information for the understanding of this mark. John provides the calculation of the number of the beast as being 666. “This is the essential number of a man. The number 6 falls one short of God’s perfect number, 7, and thus represents human imperfection. Antichrist, the most powerful human the world will ever know, will still be just a man. The ultimate in human and demonic power is a 6, not perfect as God is. The 3-fold repetition of the number is intended to reiterate and underscore man’s identity. When Antichrist is revealed, there will be some way to identify him with this basic number of a man, or his name may have the numerical equivalent of 666. (In many languages including Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, letters have numerical equivalents.) ***Because this text reveals very little about the meaning of 666, it is unwise to speculate beyond what is said.***<sup>17</sup> The purpose of this mark is to drive the people of the world into the worship of and service of the Antichrist.

### **3. The 144,000**

The 144,000 are mentioned for us in Revelation 7:1-8. Here in this passage these 144,000 are described as being sealed. These who were to be sealed were called bond-servants of God and thus can be identified as redeemed individuals. They were believers in Christ.

The number of sealed individuals as 144,000 is best understood in a literal way and not symbolic of anything else. They are not representative of a larger number. It literally means 144,000 people will be sealed. This is further reinforced by the context of 12 listings of 12,000 individuals to be sealed.

The identities of the sealed individuals are those who are sons of Israel. These are Jewish believers who are sealed. This refers to physical descendants from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Israel means Israel here. It is not symbolic of the church or of all believers during this time. 12,000 from every tribe of Israel will be sealed. Although the Jewish records of who was part of what tribe were lost during the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, we must recognize that our Sovereign God knows who is part of what tribe and is capable of sealing those whom he has determined to seal.

There are questions raised in the listing of the 12 tribes here. It should be noted that there is no standard way of listing the twelve tribes. “There are at least nineteen different ways of listing them in the Old Testament, none of which agree with the list given here.”<sup>18</sup>

Dr. Robert Thomas notes:

“In the Old Testament lists, sometimes the order of birth is followed (Gen. 29:32-35:18). At other times, it is the order of Jacob’s blessing them (Gen. 49:3-27), the order of encampment

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 2011.

<sup>18</sup>

Ibid., p. 220.

(Num. 2:3-31), the order of the census before the invasion of Canaan (Num. 26:4-51), the order of blessing and cursing (Deut. 27:12-13), the order of Moses' blessing (Deut. 33:6-25), the order of "the princes" (Num. 1:5-15), the order of inheritance (Josh. 13:7-22:34), the order by the wives and concubines (1 Chronicles 2:1-8:40, and the order of the gates of the city (Ezekiel 48:31-34)).<sup>19</sup>

Although there are 12 tribes listed in verses 5-8, some substitutions have been made from previous lists. For example, Dan is eliminated and Levi is added to the list, while Ephraim is replaced by Joseph. Many reasons have been given for the substitutions. Most scholars believe that Dan and Ephraim were omitted because of their continual promotion of idolatry in Israel (1 Kings 12:28-30).<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that the Scriptures are silent as to the exact reason that Dan and Ephraim are replaced with Levi and Joseph here. The tribe of Dan was drawn into idolatry, while the tribe of Ephraim separated from Judah (Isaiah 7:17) and like the tribe of Dan fell into idolatry (Hosea 4:17). This of course is only speculation, but it is the best guess as to the substitutions made here.

Whatever the case, the apostle John seems to be quite clear on the identity of the 144,000 as a literal number of Jewish believers in Christ. These will likely function in the role of evangelists during the tribulation period.

#### **4. The Two Messengers**

**Their Ministry:** Revelation 11:3 "*And I will grant [authority] to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.*"

The Nature of Their Ministry:

**As Witnesses:** "The term witnesses from *MARTUS* is a legal term denoting the confirmation of a fact or event."<sup>21</sup> "In the Old Testament two witnesses were needed for competent legal testimony necessary to secure a conviction (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Num. 35:39; Heb. 10:28). Jesus also made the number 2 essential to confirm a point of discipline (Matthew 18:16), and for confirmation of truth (John 8:17). Paul also alluded to the need for at least two witnesses to validate a judgment (2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19)."<sup>22</sup> The term was used by Christ in Acts 1:8 speaking of believers testifying the truth about Christ. It is the same word from which we get the English word "martyr." The point is that these two messengers will be coming to confirm and testify of the truth about Jesus Christ. These two will come to testify under the authority of Christ Himself.

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary*, Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992, p. 479.

<sup>20</sup> Levy, David. *Revelation: Hearing the Last Word*, Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., 1999, pp. 99-100.

<sup>21</sup> New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. Colin Brown, vol. 3, p. 1038.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas, p. 166.

**As Prophets:** In the book of Revelation the term *prophesy* carries both the notion of foretelling as well as forthtelling. Not only have these two witnesses come to proclaim the truth about Jesus and to preach repentance, but they also have come to proclaim the coming wrath and judgment of God. “The two witnesses will proclaim to the world that the disasters occurring during the last half of the tribulation are the judgments of God. They will warn that God’s final outpouring of judgment and eternal hell will follow. At the same time they will preach the gospel, calling all people to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

#### The Length of Their Ministry:

**Twelve hundred and sixty days:** “This is exactly three and one-half years or forty-two months of thirty days each.”<sup>24</sup> The period of ministry for the two witnesses is the same as that for the trampling of the holy city (11:2).<sup>25</sup> This period of ministry is clearly the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation period. “From the fact that the two witnesses pour out divine judgments upon the earth and need divine protection lest they be killed, it implies that they are in the latter half of the seven years when awful persecution will afflict the people of God, as this protection would not be necessary in the first three and one-half years.”<sup>26</sup> It is also important to recognize that the chronology of Revelation necessitates that this 3 ½ years is the last half of the Tribulation period.

#### The Attitude of Their Ministry:

**Clothed in sackcloth:** John MacArthur in his Revelation Commentary has a good treatment on the significance of being clothed in sackcloth. “Sackcloth was rough, heavy, coarse cloth worn in ancient times as a symbol of mourning, distress, grief, and humility. Jacob put on sackcloth when he thought Joseph had been killed (Gen. 37:34). David ordered the people to wear sackcloth after the murder of Abner (2 Sam. 3:31) and wore it himself during the plague God sent in response to his sin of numbering the people (1 Chron. 21:16). King Jehoram wore sackcloth during the siege of Samaria (2 Kings 6:30), as did King Hezekiah when Jerusalem was attacked (2 Kings 19:1). Job (Job 16:15), Isaiah (Isaiah 20:2), and Daniel (Daniel 9:3) also wore sackcloth.

The two witnesses will put on sackcloth as an object lesson to express their great sorrow for the wretched and unbelieving world, racked by God’s judgments, overrun by demon hordes, and populated by wicked, sinful people who refuse to repent. They will also mourn because of the desecration of the temple, the oppression of Jerusalem, and the ascendancy of Antichrist.”<sup>27</sup>

**Their Identity:** *11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.*

- *Are these two witnesses literal individuals or symbolic of something else?*

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<sup>23</sup> MacArthur, p. 298.

<sup>24</sup> Walvoord, p. 178.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, p. 170.

<sup>26</sup> Walvoord, p. 178.

<sup>27</sup> MacArthur, p. 299.

First of all these two witnesses are specific persons. They do not represent Israel and the Church. They do not represent Israel and the Word of God. They are not symbolic references. They refer to two very literal individuals. This is understood by the terms used. They are referred to as “my witnesses” (v. 3). They have a specific assignment to prophesy for a specific period of time (1260 days). They are also to be considered real literal persons because of the description given. They have real literal bodies that are clothed in sackcloth, that are killed, that lie in the street, that are resurrected, and that ascend into heaven. The terminology here suggests that these are literal men and not a symbolic reference to some larger entity. There is also disagreement as to whether these two witnesses are from ages past or are unidentified men born at the end of the age.

- *If these are two figures from the past, then who are they?*

Most believe that the identity of these two witnesses are none other than Moses and Elijah. This is supported by the following reasons:

“**First**, the miracles they will perform (destroying their enemies with fire, withholding rain, turning water into blood, and striking the earth with plagues) are similar to the judgments inflicted in the Old Testament by Moses and Elijah for the purpose stimulating repentance.”<sup>28</sup>

“**Second**, both Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ at the Transfiguration, the preview of the Second Coming (Matthew 17:3).”<sup>29</sup>

“**Third**, both left the earth in unusual ways. Elijah never died, but was transported to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11-12), and God supernaturally buried Moses’ body in a secret location (Deut. 34:5-6; Jude 9).”<sup>30</sup> Other individuals of the past have been suggested such as Enoch or John the Baptist, however most agree that the most likely candidates are Moses and Elijah. It must be stated that it is impossible to be dogmatic on this issue since the Scriptures remain silent on their exact identity.

- *Why are they referred to as two olive trees or lampstands?*

This terminology is drawn off from Zechariah’s vision in Zechariah 4:1-14. “Zechariah had been granted a series of remarkable visions, which evidently had a twofold application, first to the current project of temple rebuilding and second to the end times. In Zechariah’s time (between the times of Ezra and Nehemiah), the rebuilding of the temple, though authorized in the days of Ezra, was languishing and Zechariah’s mission was to encourage Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest to proceed with the task. One of these visions was of a golden candlestick (or lampstand) with seven lamps, flanked by two olive trees yielding golden oil for the lamps. The olive trees were interpreted as...the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth (Zech. 4:14).”<sup>31</sup> “Just as these two witnesses, Joshua and Zerubbabel were raised up in Zechariah’s time to be “lampstands,” bearers of true light, empowered by olive

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<sup>28</sup> MacArthur, p. 300.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>31</sup> Morris, pp. 195-96.

oil representing the Holy Spirit, so the two witnesses of Revelation 11:14, perhaps Moses and Elijah, will likewise carry out their prophetic office through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

**Their Power:** *11:5 And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. 11:6 These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.*

Four distinct miraculous powers are mentioned here in the text. These two messengers are authenticated by these miracles as God has often authenticated His messengers in the Scriptures by means of miracles (2 Cor. 12:12).

**The Power to Protect Themselves:** The first miraculous power mentioned is used as a means of self defense. These two messengers will be hated by the people of the world. They will be hated because “they will fearlessly proclaim God’s judgment, wrath, vengeance, and the need for repentance.”<sup>33</sup> Many will desire to harm them and attempt to kill them, but will be unable to because of God’s divine protection over His two witnesses. These two witnesses will be equipped with the miraculous ability to flow forth fire out of their mouths. This is best understood as literal fire coming forth from their mouths. The result of this miracle of protection is that those who seek to harm or kill these witnesses will be literally devoured by the fire from the mouths of the witnesses. The phrase, “so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way” emphasizes that it is necessary for those who seek to harm God’s messengers to be killed. God is supernaturally protecting His witnesses from all harm and from His enemies. Those who will seek to kill the witnesses are clearly the enemies of God.

**The Power to Shut up the Sky:** Not only will these two witnesses be capable of miracles of protection, but they will also be able to inflict miracles of judgment upon the world. It is important to note that this miracle as some have suggested is **not** simply inflicted on Jerusalem or Israel alone. It seems best to understand this as miracle of judgment as affecting the entire globe. As these two messengers proclaim God’s wrath and judgment, they will be capable of closing up the heavens so that it will not rain. In fact it will not rain for the entire 3 ½ years of their ministry. “This is reminiscent of the judgment of God imposed on Israel when in answer to Elijah’s prayer it did not rain for three and one-half years.”<sup>34</sup> This will cause extreme suffering upon the earth. They have already experienced a world-wide famine during the first half of the Tribulation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> seal judgment. They have already experienced the poisoning of 1/3 of their water supply from the 3<sup>rd</sup> trumpet judgment. Now with a 3 ½ year world-wide drought, crops will wither away, animal and plant life will die and their will be severe thirst and starvation as the lack of rain will result in further famine on a widespread scale. This will give the people of the earth further reason to hate these two messengers and further motivation to attempt to harm or kill them.

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas, p. 171.

<sup>33</sup> MacArthur, p. 302.

<sup>34</sup> Walvoord, p. 180.

***The Power over the Waters:*** The two witnesses will also be capable of turning the waters into blood. There was a similar result during the 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet judgment, when 1/3 of the oceans were turned to blood. This is also similar to the power given to Moses in Exodus 7:17-19 just prior to the Exodus from Egypt. This will cause further suffering as the entire water supply will be turned to blood. This along with the 3 ½ year drought will cause extreme torment for the people on the earth and they will seek any means possible to destroy the two messengers.

***The Power to Strike the Earth:*** Not only will these two messengers be capable of protecting themselves with fire, and pronouncing judgment upon the earth through drought and turning the waters to blood, but they will also be able to strike the earth with every kind of plague. It is unclear exactly what kind of plagues could be brought upon the earth, but most believe they will be similar to the plagues brought against the land of Egypt (see chart). This is believed because of similar wording to a statement made in 1 Samuel 4:8 in reference to the Egyptian plagues. The Egyptian plagues also have many similarities to the judgments during the Tribulation. Whatever the case, these two messengers will have divine power to strike both land and sea. They will be capable of wreaking widespread havoc upon the earth. People will no doubt search desperately for a way to destroy them, but to no avail. They will be invulnerable and unstoppable for the duration of their ministry.

***Their Death:*** *11:7 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies [will lie] in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations [will] look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 And those who dwell on the earth [will] rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.*

***The completion of their ministry:*** The first part of verse 7 indicates that the following events occur after the 3 ½ year ministry of the two messengers. The phrase “*When they have finished,*” indicates that the whole period of their testimony will be completed before they are killed. “The most natural sense of *teleo* (finished) here is not in a sense of time, but rather, it should be understood as the fulfillment of a duty or the accomplishment of a task.”<sup>35</sup> The two messengers had completed their testimony. Their divinely appointed ministry of 1260 days had come to a close. “Sinful men will try desperately and unsuccessfully to get rid of the two witnesses throughout their ministry in a kind of kamikaze effort that results in their own incineration. God, however will protect them until they have finished their testimony, having achieved His purpose during the time He sovereignly determined for their ministry.”<sup>36</sup>

***The identity of the beast:*** At this point the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with the two messengers and kill them. **Who is the beast?** This is the first of 36 references to the beast in the book of Revelation. The identification of the beast usually falls into three different categories. One is that the beast represents the whole of an anti-Christian power in the world. So the beast is symbolic of an evil force in the world. Some who hold that Revelation

<sup>35</sup> Thomas, p. 174.

<sup>36</sup> MacArthur, p. 303.

represents past historical events would see this as the Roman Empire during New Testament times. Others identify the beast as Satan himself. The problem with this view is the further revelation about the beast given in chapter 13. The dragon in chapter 12 understood as Satan gives this beast his power, authority, and throne (Revelation 13:2). “The revelation about him in chapter 13 indicates that the beast is a world ruler who imitates the true Christ, rules over the people of the world, and demands their worship (Revelation 13:1-8).”<sup>37</sup> The beast is none other than the Antichrist. This beast comes up out of the abyss. The abyss as mentioned in 9:1-2 is the prison of certain demons. The phrase *comes up out of the abyss* likely “reflects the demonic character and origin of the Antichrist.”<sup>38</sup> “Though he is a man, the beast is energized by the demonic presence and power coming up from the abyss.”<sup>39</sup>

***The killing of the 2 messengers:*** The first action of this beast (Antichrist) is to make war with the 2 messengers. The making of war pictures a single combat in which he *overcomes* the 2 messengers. *Overcomes* signifies a literal physical victory in which the Antichrist has finally become victorious over these hated and despised witnesses. Antichrist will not only be victorious over the 2 messengers but will kill them. The world will likely be shocked that the two will have finally been put to death and they will likely breath a sigh of relief. The Antichrist will have conquered the two who have brought plagues upon the world and as a result they will rejoice. The bodies of these 2 messengers will be left to rot in the street. This action describes the extreme contempt that the people of the world have for these two. To expose one’s body in this way is the height of dishonor. Their bodies would be left there in the street for 3 ½ days as the people of the world rejoiced over their death. The city that they were ministering in, killed in, and left to rot in was mystically called Sodom and Egypt. The term “mystically” is better translated “spiritually.” The true identity of the city is described as the place *where their Lord was crucified*. This city is none other than that of Jerusalem. In this future time the great city of Jerusalem will have become a city of immorality like that of Sodom and a city of oppression and slavery like the nation of Egypt. This wicked city will have contempt and hatred toward God, His Word and His messengers.

***The reaction of the world:*** The people of the world described by the phrase *peoples and tribes and tongues and nations* will look at these dead bodies for 3 ½ days. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century this was a difficult phrase to understand, but with modern day media it is no longer a mysterious statement. Obviously the entire world will be able to view not only the murder of these 2 messengers but also extended coverage on their dead bodies laying in the street. The hatred of these two will be so great that they will not even allow their bodies to be properly placed in a tomb. They will be left to rot for all to see. Not only that, but the world will greatly rejoice over their death. It will be such a great celebration that they will give gifts to each other. People will be throwing parties to celebrate the end of their torment because their great world ruler will have saved them from these two messengers. Antichrist will likely be praised and honored for this deed of death. It will be a Christmas like celebration in honor of Antichrist.

***Their Return to Life:*** *11 And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them.*

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas, p. 177 quoting Mounce p. 225.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas, p. 177.

*12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. 13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.*

***They were raised to life:*** “The conjunction *kai* (and) introduces a new stage in the drama. The merriment of the world was cut short by the resurrection of the two witnesses.”<sup>40</sup> This resurrection to life will take place 3 ½ days after their death. This is obviously the same 3 ½ days that their bodies will be laying in the street. They will be killed, their dead bodies will lay in the street for 3 ½ days and the world will rejoice and celebrate their death. In the midst of their celebration and rejoicing something shocking happens. The breath of life from God came into them and they stood up.

The term *pneuma* (breath) literally means “spirit”. “The implication is to the resuscitation and restoration of human life to these two dead bodies so that they again become living persons.”<sup>41</sup> “Needless to say, *great fear fell upon those who were watching them*. Panic will seize the unregenerate world as their hated and reviled tormentors suddenly spring to life.”<sup>42</sup>

The phrase “great fear” emphasizes that these people will be utterly panic-stricken and terrified. “Since murder is the ultimate weapon of mankind, no means remains for them to silence the witnesses who have been raised from the dead.”<sup>43</sup>

***They went up into heaven:*** It is at this point that the people of the world fearing their return to life had obviously anticipated further prophecy and plagues being issued by these two messengers. However that is not the case as a loud voice from heaven called for them to “*Come up here.*” “This loud voice is probably the voice of Christ as it was in 4:1 when John was summoned to heaven to receive his prophetic revelations.”<sup>44</sup> The resurrected witnesses are summoned to heaven and their bodies are then taken up in the cloud to heaven as their enemies watched. There exist some similarities to the ascension of Christ in Acts 1:9. In both instances the resurrected individuals were received in a cloud up to heaven and both ascensions record that there are eyewitnesses. Unlike Christ’s ascension where there was gathered a small group of Apostles, these two witnesses will be taken up into heaven before the eyes of their enemies (the hostile watching world).

## CONCLUSION

Certainly much more could be said about the character and nature of the end times; the many end times events and the key end times personalities. It is clear that this will be a time of unprecedented evil and the outpouring of God’s great and devastating wrath upon the earth.

<sup>40</sup> Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*, NIC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 228.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, p. 183, quoting Abbott-Smith, p. 472.

<sup>42</sup> MacArthur, p. 304.

<sup>43</sup> Mounce, p. 228.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, J. B. *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1961), p. 174.