



# An Introduction To The Book of Revelation



by Arthur M. Ogden

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# A Word of Explanation

The very idea of studying the book of Revelation is enough to scare some people half to death! Many of us have attended congregations which simply skipped the book in their teaching program. Why have we so consistently boycotted this book of our New Testament? The reason why is because we have allowed the idea that we can't understand the book to scare us away from even *trying* to understand it. We need to have faith in the words of Revelation 1:3; "***Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.***" We encourage all to have faith in those words and to undertake a careful study of this neglected book.

To help in your study of the Apocalypse we are making available the entire introduction to my father's popular commentary on the book of Revelation (*The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets* by Arthur M. Ogden). It is our hope that by making this material available in this form more people will consider the arguments which he presents. We believe these arguments are powerful, logical and scripturally consistent. We believe if you will study this material with an open mind and an open Bible you will see that you *can* understand the book of Revelation. If this material causes you to desire to study the Apocalypse further, it will have accomplished its purpose.

We have formatted this material to generally match the layout of the book itself.

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## Other Useful Materials on Revelation

If you find this material of use we hope you will also download the file we call **Revelation Articles**. It contains a number of articles written by my father further explaining various aspects of the book of Revelation. Especially of note is a series of six articles on the dating of the Apocalypse and a two part study on the identification of Babylon the Great. **Revelation Articles** can be download from the download page of our website.

If you have any questions or comments about this material, feel free to write. We can be reached at the following addresses:

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# **THE AVENGING OF THE APOSTLES & PROPHETS**

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## DEDICATION

To Max and Della Ogden, my deceased parents, whose commitment to the Lord and love of His truth inspired all of their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren to follow their worthy example, and to Flo, my faithful wife of thirty years, whose enthusiasm for this work at times exceeded my own.

## FOREWORD

A mere mention of the Book of Revelation fills many persons with a dreadful fear that it is beyond the pale of modern man to understand. To others this apocalypse of Apostle John carries promise of a great blessing to him “that reads it, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein.” (Chapter 1, verse 3). This work is truly “unique” among New Testament writings. Charles R. Erdman said that “because of the intricacy of its literary structure, the splendor of its poetic imagery, the majestic scope of its inspired visions, the mystery of its cryptic symbols, and its dramatic presentation of eternal truths, this book is distinct in character from all other parts of the Bible.”

Ending the revelation of God’s mind to mankind this book deals with God’s judgments and men’s destinies. It contains poetry and song, praise and peace and abounds in visions and symbols. It deals with the present and the future from John’s time **S** even “the things which must shortly come to pass” (chapter 1, verse 1).

Revelation is not a book of human fantasy but of Divine prophecy. John did not merely imagine what he saw and recorded. Under heaven’s supervision he presents in this book the omnipotence and omnipresence; the grandeurs, goodness and glory; the justice, holiness and abiding love of the eternal God who, as a Father, pitieth his children.

This apocalypse is practical in its principles, permanent in its pronouncements, and eternal in its values. No other Bible book is more consoling to the suffering saint to be patient in his tribulation and steadfast in his hope.

Arthur Ogden, humble gospel preacher and author of **The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets**, is a believer of sterling character and ability. His thoughtful study will manifest itself to the careful reader. He makes an excellent case for the “early date” of “the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass” **S** a case which deserves serious attention and draws many practical lessons from these pages of prophecy. The author’s arrangement is clear, his exegesis enlightening, his expressions bold. This is a profitable study for the serious Bible student.

James R. Cope  
Temple Terrace, Florida

## PREFACE

The book of Revelation is probably the most neglected book of the Bible. Gospel preachers fail to preach from it and Christians neglect studying it. A general state of confusion, doubt and indifference over its meaning reigns. Normal procedure is to study Matthew through Jude then, skipping Revelation, return to Matthew to begin anew. I feel that much of the misunderstanding surrounding the Apocalypse could be avoided if Christians spent more time learning its message.

### Why Another Book?

In December of 1976, the Southside church of Christ, Somerset, Kentucky, under the oversight of her elders, decided to end their boycott of the book of Revelation and gave the author, who labored with that church for more than fifteen years (1969-1984), four months to prepare for the study. Though involved in previous studies of the Apocalypse, I was never satisfied with the results. This time I dedicated myself to the task before me with determination to find the answers to the book if humanly possible. Countless hours were spent in search of the truth but, when time came to begin our study, I was no nearer understanding its marvelous message than before. The study began on time with my spending several sessions on introductory material begging for time. Months later, during which I figuratively ate, drank and slept the book of Revelation, the argumentation presented in this work which establishes the substance and meaning of the Revelation surfaced and became the foundation of the position taken in this book, and the only reason this book was written. I believe you will find this work most rewarding.

### What You May Expect

This book contains two parts: Introduction and Commentary. The Introduction is divided into three sections: **Section I** contains the normal introductory remarks plus scriptural argumentation designed to establish the identity of the events “shortly to come to pass” (1:1). I believe this argumentation to be scripturally sound. **Section II** shows that the identified occurrences were foretold through fifteen hundred years of Old Testament history. With the enormous evidence calling for their fulfillment, it should not be considered strange that one entire book of the New Testament was written to show their completion. **Section III** establishes the historical background in which these affairs were realized.

The Commentary demonstrates that the language of the Apocalypse supports these claims. Like a large picture puzzle, each piece falls into place once we are on tract. You will not be disappointed in the message you will see unfold.

The language of the Commentary is penned with the average person in mind. Most anyone can read and understand this presentation. It is not an exhaustive study of the Revelation as is characteristic of many commentaries. This work rather gets to the problem of explaining each text in the light of the events identified. I have not seen the need to make this work confusing by being more thorough than necessary. For this reason many things which might be of interest are not discussed for fear of being unsuccessful in our purpose to unravel the mysteries of the Apocalypse. I have discussed nothing that would detract from that purpose. For this reason also the various positions advocated by different commentators are seldom mentioned.

The King James Version (KJV) serves as the text for this study. Reference is made to other translations when helpful. The following initials will identify their sources:

(ASV)	American Standard Version
(RSV)	Revised Standard Version
(NEB)	New English Bible
(NIV)	New International Version

Quotations from other sources are few and used primarily to establish the historical background to the Revelation. Quotations are not used in this work to establish the position affirmed. This affirmation must stand or fall upon the validity of the scriptural argumentation presented herein.

To my knowledge, for the most part, the arguments advanced in this presentation are not found in any other printed work. This does not mean that the general position proposed in this book has not been argued before. It has, but it was advocated previously without the sound, scriptural, conclusive argumentation presented herein and without unity in presentation. This material is so different it will require the total cleansing of the mind of all misconceptions of the Apocalypse in order to accept it. This is the unique feature of the book. It undertakes the task of interpreting the Revelation in the light of the meaning it was originally intended to have. Enlightenment will be your reward.

## How To Profit From This Study

The book of Revelation is unlike other Bible books and this commentary is unlike other commentaries on the Revelation. In order to profit most from this study, you must start at the beginning and take the book as it comes. **Understanding the background to the Apocalypse is essential.** The Jews of John's day understood this background, but you and I who live nearly two thousand years this side of those events must learn this foundation material before we can absorb John's message. After you have studied the Introduction proceed into the Commentary. **Avoid** the urge to turn to the Commentary until you have completed the Introduction. Reading to see what the author says about certain texts in the Revelation before reading the background material is like trying to solve college algebra in grade school. **Restrain** your desire to look ahead and patiently wait until the proper time. This will permit the book to unfold as intended.

As you read the book you may have a tendency to disagree with conclusions reached by the author. Serious questions could arise. Make a mental note of them as you continue to read. It will be of interest to observe how many of them disappear as you get the full picture. Your questions will soon be answered and your points of difference will vanish.

### In Conclusion

The author prays that each person who reads this book and works to understand the message of the Apocalypse finds the same spiritual enlightenment and understanding as he.

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (1:3).

Amen.

Arthur M. Ogden

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No one knows the amount of work involved in such a production as this unless he has put his hands to the task. At first it is simply the work of one man. Then, as the work grows toward fruition, others become involved without whom such a work could not be brought before the public. This work is no exception. To the following we humbly and gratefully acknowledge our appreciation for their assistance: C.G. (Colly) Caldwell, III and James R. Cope, Tampa, Florida; J.F. Dancer, Jr., Russellville, Alabama; Norman Fultz, Raymore, Missouri; Almeta Ogden, Louisville, Kentucky; Mickey Ray, Somerset, Kentucky; Earl E. Robertson, Tompkinsville, Kentucky; Boyd Sellers, Brownsburg, Indiana; Clayton Shannon, Louisville, Kentucky; Keith Sharp, Mena, Arkansas; and Dudley Spears Bowling Green, Kentucky. Of these, a special word of thanks is expressed to Boyd Sellers and James R. Cope for assistance in working and organizing the material; to Dudley Ross Spears for editing the manuscript; to James R. Cope for writing the Foreword, and Earl E. Robertson for assistance in publishing the book. In addition, we acknowledge our appreciation to Brenda Pruitt, Madison, Tennessee for the splendid artistry as demonstrated by the illustrations appearing in this book.

I also express appreciation to the elders and members of the Southside Church of Christ for their patience while this work was being prepared. My thanks also to my faithful wife, Flo, and our five lovely children, Vickie, Gina, Alex, Lori, and Nancy whose patience and understanding, during the time that this work was being done, was exceptional. Last, but certainly not least, I thank God, the Father, my Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit whose united efforts revealed this marvelous book, the Book of Revelation, to us. "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev.1:6)

Arthur M. Ogden

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## SECTION 1

## INTRODUCTION

The very mention of **The Book of Revelation** spells alarm, mystery, confusion, bewilderment, terror, fear, and even despair to many. To others it means joy, peace, comfort, assurance, consolation and hope. In comparison to other Bible books, here is the book that touches all the bases. It is the most confusing book of the Bible to study, the most difficult book to understand, the most misunderstood and misapplied of all, the most speculated upon and probably the most talked about. Yet, it is of all Bible books the most beautiful in thought, challenging in nature, comprehensive in scope, prophetic in purpose, as well as comforting, reassuring and rewarding in design.

The book of Revelation is the greatest piece of literature ever penned. It is a masterpiece presentation. It challenges our intellect or power to reason, judge, comprehend and understand. It challenges our imagination or ability to formulate images and ideas that are not specifically suggested. It challenges our observation or ability to detect that which is suggested and identified. It challenges our overall knowledge of the Bible and our will to learn because so much study must go into learning, even generally, what is revealed in this book. It tries our patience or ability to keep on studying when we have just learned that we were wrong about previous conclusions, and it challenges our endurance or ability to see it through to the ultimate end. It is indeed a masterpiece in literature. It brings together Old Testament prophecies, both of victory and desolation, and shows their impending fulfillment as things *shortly to come to pass* (1:1). It breathes from the very throne of God a message of faithfulness on God's part to avenge Himself and His people of their enemies, and to give comfort and consolation unto those who are oppressed by those enemies.

### What is the Book of Revelation?

The book of Revelation is often called "The Apocalypse." This is derived from *apokalupsis* the first word of the book in the Greek text in which it was written. *apokalupsis* is translated in our English versions as

"The Revelation." The word means "an uncovering, or unveiling."<sup>1</sup> It is used about a dozen times in the New Testament, and related words are used another 30 times. We refer to all the Bible as God's revelation and indeed it is, but there is one essential difference between the book of Revelation and the other books of the Bible. It was revealed by Jesus Christ to John through His angel (1:1).

The Revelation is an *uncovering*, or *unveiling* of impending events: *things which must shortly come to pass* (1:1) and *things which shall be hereafter* (1:19). This does not necessarily mean that all the events revealed came to pass immediately. Some of the things "uncovered" have not come to pass even to this day, but most of them did come to pass shortly after they were revealed.

The book of Revelation is a book of warning. It warns five of the seven churches of Asia *to repent, or else*, and it warns those who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image of coming wrath (14:9-11). It is, in fact, a warning to all the wicked of the earth (21:8).

The book of Revelation is also a book of comfort. What comfort indeed is pictured by the rejoicing of victorious saints before God's throne as they keep His commandments (22:14), overcome (21:7), and serve Him day and night in His temple (7:14-17). What a joy it is to be numbered among those saints! Surely, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom.8:18).

### The Unique Features Of The Book

The book of Revelation has no equal in New Testament literature. Of the 27 New Testament books, four are about the life of Christ, one is about the beginning and spread of Christianity, 21 teach Christians how to live, and one is a prophecy of impending events. All of them are inspired of God (2 Tim.3:16-17). Except for the book of Revelation, all were revealed unto the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit (Eph.3:3-5). The Revelation was *signified* unto John by *the angel of Jesus Christ* (1:1).

Though the book of Revelation appears to be the last book of the

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<sup>1</sup> Thayer, Joseph Henry, *A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament*, (4th ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1955), p. 62  
Vine, W.E., *Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words*, (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), Vol. 3, p. 292



New Testament to be penned, it does not teach anything new. Its teaching can be found elsewhere in the scriptures. Jesus promised His disciples prior to His death that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide them into **all truth** (Jn.14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:13). The Spirit was sent on Pentecost, in 30 A.D. (Acts 2:1-4,33) and had fully completed this work years before the Revelation was revealed (Acts 20:27; 1 Cor.2:10-16; 2 Pet.1:3). Jesus indicated as much in His statement to each of the seven churches when He said, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). The Spirit's message was contained in the spiritually endowed men and the New Testament books, all of which apparently were written prior to the book of Revelation. Upon this premise, it might be concluded that one can be saved without knowing the message of the Revelation. However, its message is extremely profitable to the struggling Christian as he seeks comfort, consolation, reassurance and hope.

The Revelation is the last book of the Bible. It was placed there by man, but no place could be more fitting because the Revelation recognizes the teaching of the other books of the New Testament as the Spirit revealed word of God, the source of true doctrine and practice, all a reality at the time the Apocalypse was written. As a book of prophecy, the Revelation foretells events which were to transpire in the post-revelation period. The historical fulfillment of those prophecies give divine approval and sanction to all the New Testament books. We are called upon to listen as the book of Revelation and the Bible closes with a message directly from the throne of God. First, there is an invitation from heaven and the church to those who are lost to “come” and be partakers of the blessings promised (22:17). Second, a warning is given to those who would “add unto” or “take away from the words of the book of this prophecy” (22:18-19). With this warning, we must be especially careful that the interpretation placed upon this book does not constitute either an addition or a subtraction. Finally, the book closes with the promise of Jesus Christ, “Surely I come quickly” (22:20). The place afforded the book of Revelation in our Bibles is the appropriate one.

While the Apocalypse reveals the **crowning** of those who **overcome**, it is itself **the crown** of all revelation. It brings it all together in a most beautiful picture of divine justice, a picture of the redemptive forces at work in a cruel and wicked world that must reap the consequences of its evil rejection of God's plan and its wicked persecution of those who believe and obey it. From Genesis through Jude applications are made in

the book of Revelation. Though none are quoted, an estimated 300 to 400 references to the Old Testament scriptures can be found in the book. Why did John make such an abundant use of the Old Testament scriptures? Surely, the answer is found in the fact that the Apocalypse is to be considered as the entwining fiber that brings together Old and New Testament prophecies to show their ultimate and complete fulfillment, thus magnifying the divine mind from whence they came. The fulfillment of the prophecies foretold in the Revelation serves to establish its own authenticity, as well as the rest of the Bible. By bringing the Old and New Testament prophecies together in this one book in which He declared their immediate fulfillment, God placed Himself in the position of affixing His divine stamp of approval upon His inspired revelation to man when the prophecies were historically fulfilled. Indeed, the Apocalypse is the **crown** of all revelation.

### The Language Of The Book

The language used by John in this book is unlike any other used in the New Testament. The message was *signified* unto John (1:1), indicating the abundant use of signs and symbols in its presentation. Words and phrases are often used to signify, symbolize and reveal what is otherwise hidden truth. This identifies the book more specifically in nature with the prophetic books of the Old Testament. “This book speaks not the language of Paul, but the Old Testament prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.”<sup>2</sup> Their writings portray God's dealing with the nations, particularly with Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem. It should be noted that the Revelation compares in language to the writings of these Old Testament prophets. The book is further identified in nature with the prophetic books of the Old Testament when the angel says to John, “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (19:10). After all, the book shows God's vengeance upon those who killed the prophets (16:6; 18:24).

“The Book of Revelation is the most thoroughly Jewish in its language and imagery of any New Testament book.”<sup>3</sup> The signs, symbols, types and language are all Jewish. The use of the beasts, harps, vials, horses, winds, angels, trumpets, candlesticks, censers, incense, pit, lamb, altar, temple, and twelve tribes are Jewish. The **song of Moses** could only

<sup>2</sup> Jenkins, Ferrell, *The Old Testament In The Book of Revelation*, (Cogdill Foundation Publications, 1972), p. 22

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22

have meaning to Israelites. The book is completely saturated with Jewish thought, expression and symbology.

Understanding the language and message of the Apocalypse was not as difficult for Christians of the first century as it is for us today. This is true first because the early Christians had the gifts of the Holy Spirit to assist them in their understanding (1 Cor.12:4-11; 14:26). As Daniel the prophet was endowed with such understanding (cf. Dan. 1:17; 2:19-22,27-29; 4:18; 5:11,14), even so the Christians of John's day were also endowed (1 Cor.2:10-16). God revealed unto them the meaning of this book. In the second place the people of that day would have understood the message more readily because they lived in the day and age when Jewish thought was still current, and their history was familiar to them. So, application of the language to its historical setting would have been more easily perceived. In contrast, we have only the various signs and symbols that are identified in the book. Yet, by using them as a starting place and by careful study of similar language found in the Old Testament, we should be able to uncover the basic message to the saints addressed and the lingering message for us today.

### Methods Of Interpretation

Through the years, there have been many approaches to the book of Revelation by students attempting to understand its message. Nearly everyone has a new twist. This is because everyone studies the book from the standpoint of his own knowledge and understanding of the Bible. If we have a misunderstanding of the overall truth of the Bible, we will surely have an erroneous concept of the book of Revelation. It is absolutely essential that we know and understand the purpose of God, the fall of man, the scheme of redemption, God's dealings with the nations, and prophetic promises that were to be fulfilled, before we can correctly diagnose the message of the book.

There are five basic approaches to the interpretation of the book:

**The Futurist View:** This method of interpretation pictures the book as yet unfulfilled. The millennialist and dispensationalist groups hold to this view. They place literal interpretations upon the signs and symbols of the book, projecting them into the future while they look for Jesus to return to the earth, set up an earthly kingdom, and reign for 1,000 years from the city of Jerusalem. This interpretation would have had no meaning whatsoever to the people of John's day. In reality, it is a contradiction to the stated purpose of the book which was to reveal

“things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1). Yet in our day it is the most popular view of the book.

**The Preterist View.** The book is viewed by the preterist as written for the people of John's day. The events “shortly to come to pass” are described as happening in the immediate future of the people then living, and little is left to be fulfilled. Accordingly, to the preterist, the book has little, if any, meaning for the Christian of today.

**The Early Historical View.** The book is pictured as written to the people of that day and fulfilled for the most part in the events of the first two centuries. This view seeks to derive a message from those events that are applicable for all times.

**The Continuous Historical View.** This approach presents the book as a forecast of the history of the church with the rise of the papacy, Mohammedanism, the reformation, etc. Modern world leaders such as Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin have been imagined as foreseen by John in the Apocalypse. Needless to say, such would have been meaningless to the people addressed.

**The Spiritual View.** This position says that the things revealed were not actual events, but were symbolic of spiritual and temporal forces at work in the world in which, ultimately, the spiritual are victorious. Naturally, this is a pot without a handle. With this view, meanings and applications of the book are always elusive and amount to nothing. This view of the book opens the door to every interpretation imaginable.

The position taken in this work may be said to be both **historical** and **preterist**; historical because we believe the events portrayed as “things which must shortly come to pass” actually occurred and can be read about in history, and preterist in that those events were fulfilled unto the people of John's day. To look for the fulfillment of the things which were “shortly to come to pass” hundreds or even thousands of years into the future is to miss the point of the book entirely. The events that were foretold can be found in the history of that day – in the first century. There is little in the book that remains to be fulfilled. However, the message that brought joy, comfort, and hope to Christians **then** is still as fresh and meaningful to us **today**, and **every Christian needs that message.**

### The Author Of The Book

The author's name is John (1:1,4,9; 21:2; 22:8). He is a servant of Jesus Christ (1:1), “a brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the

kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ” (1:9), who “was in the isle that is called, Patmos, for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (1:9), and who “saw these things and heard them” (22:8). He does not identify himself further, and we might thus conclude that he feels that his name alone is sufficient to tell his readers which John he is. Most of the early church fathers who wrote concerning the book attribute it to the apostle John. Tradition informs us that the apostle John spent his last years on the peninsula of Asia Minor; that he established the church at Laodicea and some others in that region; and that he was banished to Patmos by the Roman Emperor (either Nero, 54-68 A.D., or Domitian, 81-96 A.D.). Some time later he was released and permitted to leave the Isle, spending his remaining days at Ephesus. Tradition, however, is unreliable and should not be trusted as factual evidence.

It is impossible for us to present irrefutable evidence that the apostle John wrote the book. Evidence from within the book would indicate that it was written by the same author as that of the **Gospel and Epistles** which bear John's name. Words and phrases appear in all of these which seem to be characteristic of just one man whose name is John. The approach of the author of Revelation seems to be the same as that used by the author of both the Gospel and the Epistles of John. In all, there is a conflict between Christ and Satan, good and evil. But, since the **apostle John** is not identified in any of these works as author, we cannot be absolutely sure. The nature of the book does appear, however, to demand the essence of a man who compares in abilities to a fully inspired Peter or Paul, and no other John can measure up to that. In fact, he must be able to stand beside an Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or Zechariah, for the “Apocalypse” encompasses the fullness of these prophets and more. No John, other than the apostle, shines so brightly. With but little question, the apostle John is its author.

### The Date Of The Book

Establishing the date of the New Testament books contributes to our overall understanding of their message. By knowing where the author was and the time of his writing, we can imagine the setting with all the attendant surroundings and comprehend more fully the message of each book. We can cast ourselves into the history of the time and feel the very mood of the age. Through the mind's eye we can project ourselves into the spirit of the era and be partaker of the very same learning experience. In most cases, by a consideration of internal evidence, we can determine

within reasonable latitude the time and place of a book's composition. Even external evidence can contribute to our conclusions. This explains why tedious study is always given by Bible students to determine the date of each book.

The book of Revelation is unique in that the date of its composition affects the interpretation placed upon its message. For those who see the fulfillment of the “things which must shortly come to pass” in the desolation of Israel and the destruction of the Jewish metropolis, Jerusalem, a date preceding A.D. 70 is absolutely essential (cf. Chart page 93). A later date is desired for those who feel that the date must correspond to the time when the Roman Empire exercised absolute authority and power over its citizens, demanding them to worship the empire and its emperors under the threat of the death penalty. Obviously, if the early date can be established, it would be unreasonable to pass over the monumental events of A.D. 70, when the nation of Israel was brought to desolation and Jerusalem was destroyed, to find fulfillment in events occurring a third of a century or more later. Contrariwise, if the late date is accepted, it would be impractical and meaningless to interpret the book in the light of the fall of Israel. Evidence supporting the correct date of the Revelation's composition would be invaluable.

In our search for the proper date, we must consider both the internal and external evidence. By internal, we mean the evidence contained within the book itself. By external, we mean evidence found outside the book which contributes to our understanding of the matter and which does not contradict apparent facts of scripture. External evidence must be considered only as circumstantial and not as conclusive proof. In our discussion of the date in this study, we shall weigh the pros and cons of both the early and late dates, considering the late date first.

### Evidence Supporting The Late Date, 95-96 A.D.

**The Internal Evidence.** It is apparent that the author of the Apocalypse deals extensively with emperor worship, and it is argued that emperor worship did not become a widespread practice until the days of Domitian (81-96 A.D.). It was then that the death penalty was issued to those who refused to bow. This being true, the book must deal with a period of time much later than 70 A.D. It is further argued that there was no empire-wide persecution by the Romans until late in the reign of Domitian. That being so, since the book is perceived as dealing with world-wide persecution, it could not have had application to the earlier

period. It is also maintained that at least some of the seven churches were too young to have developed the conditions described in chapters two and three before 70 A.D. Smyrna, for example, is said to have started no earlier than 64 A.D., and was therefore too young. (This conclusion is based on a statement by Polycarp [69-156 A.D.], who was a bishop in the church at Smyrna in later years).

There are other arguments based on internal evidence, but these appear to be the strongest of those presented by the various scholars who favor the late date.

**The External Evidence.** The strongest arguments for the late date are provided by external evidences. Irenaeus (130-200 A.D.), a pupil of Polycarp and later bishop of Lyons, in Gaul, made a statement (preserved for us by Eusebius, 264-340 A.D., known as “Father of Church History”) in which he reveals the contents of a discussion he had with Polycarp about the beast and the number of his name. In the statement, Irenaeus indicated that the book of Revelation was written late. He said, “If it were necessary to have his name distinctly announced at the present time it would doubtless have been announced by him who saw the Apocalypse; for it was not a great while ago that (it or he) was seen, but almost in our own generation, toward the end of Domitian's reign.”<sup>4</sup> It is concluded upon the basis of this statement that John saw the Apocalypse in 95 or 96 A.D. There is also a tradition that John was banished to the isle of Patmos during the reign of Domitian and upon being released spent the rest of his closing years at Ephesus.<sup>5</sup>

In concluding the case for the late date, W. Hendriksen writes, “When, in connection with these strong and definite evidences, we remember that the Apocalypse reflects an age in which Ephesus has already lost its first love; Sardis is already 'dead'; Laodicea – which was destroyed by an earthquake during Nero's reign – has been rebuilt and is boasting of its spiritual wealth, 3:17; John has been 'banished' – a very common form of persecution during Domitian's reign –; the church has already endured persecutions in the past, 20:4; and the Roman Empire, as such, has become the great antagonist of the church, 17:9; when we

<sup>4</sup> Wallace, Foy E. Jr., *The Book Of Revelation*, (The Foy E. Wallace Jr. Publications, 1966), p. 25 (This statement is lifted from the above sources as quoted by Wallace. It also appears in similar form in other sources.)

<sup>5</sup> Hendricksen, W., *More Than Conquerors*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 19  
Hailey, Homer, *Revelation, An Introduction And Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p.

remember all these facts, we are forced to the conclusion that the late date (95 or 96 A. D.) is correct.”<sup>6</sup> This summation appears to be the gist of the arguments made for the late date. If our decision for the date of the book were based upon the number of scholars supporting a given date, the case for the date of the book would be settled quickly. The weight of scholarship leans heavily in favor of the late date.

### Answering The Arguments For The Late Date

**Empire and Emperor Worship.** The argument based on John's references to empire and emperor worship ignores historical fact and apocalyptic disclosures. As early as 195 B.C., there existed in Smyrna a temple dedicated to Dea Roma which personified Rome as a goddess. This was before the days of the empire, but it stands to reason that Rome's most loyal province would continue its allegiance. In 29 B.C. permission was granted to the people of Pergamos to build a temple to the worship of Augustus, the second emperor of Rome, and in 26 B.C. the same privilege was granted to the city of Smyrna. In 25 A.D., Smyrna won the right to build a temple to the worship of Tiberius, the third emperor of Rome. Caligula, also known as Caius, the fourth emperor of Rome, after declaring himself a living god, sent an army into Judea in 40 A.D. with orders to erect his image in the temple at Jerusalem and to demand the Jews bow before it.<sup>7</sup> He was murdered before it was accomplished. Even during the reign of the most decent of the early emperors, Claudius (41-54 A.D.), a temple was erected in Britian to his honor. How many of these temples existed throughout the empire is not known, but it is apparent that the worship of the empire and its emperors was not confined to the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.). The fact is that all the emperors, beginning with Julius, either declared themselves gods or were made gods by the people. By so doing, they were able to bring the masses into submission to Rome, and all the world submitted except Jews and Christians. The Jews that remained after the destruction of Jerusalem either submitted, were sold as slaves, or were killed. John's statement in Revelation 13:8, “and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life,” was prophetic and future. The Jews would not submit to the worship of Rome or her emperors because their service to God was first and foremost. The

<sup>6</sup> Hendricksen, p. 20

<sup>7</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 18, Chapter 8, Sections 1-9; 19, 1 and 2

persistent demand of the Romans upon the Jews to submit to the state threatened the liberty of the Jews to worship God in their own way and became the reason for the war that resulted in the desolation of the Jewish nation and their city, Jerusalem. Once this was accomplished, the Jews remaining either submitted to Rome willingly or were sold as slaves. John's prophetic utterance was fulfilled.

**Empire-Wide Persecution.** Again, the argument for the late date based upon this premise ignores historical fact and prophetic disclosures. The Jews, who were the first and primary persecutors of the church before Jerusalem was destroyed, were scattered throughout the empire, and everywhere Christianity went Jews were present to persecute it. We can follow it through the book of Acts. In addition to this persecution, Christians suffered extensively as a spin-off from the Roman persecution of the Jews in the period of tribulation which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem as foretold by Jesus (Matt.24; Mk.13; Lk.21:5-36). The people throughout the world turned upon the Jews in an attempt either to bring them into submission to Rome or to annihilate them. Since many Christians were Jews, this persecution affected them and many died as a result, and, since other Christians were associated with those Jewish brethren as fellow-Christians, it follows that many Gentile Christians suffered grossly, perhaps even death, from the ordeal. It is in this period of tribulation that the Christians at first are pictured in the Revelation.

Roman persecution against Christianity is also portrayed in the Apocalypse. Emperor Nero, who blamed Christians for the burning of Rome, began the first Roman persecution of Christianity. It began late in 64 A.D. and continued through the remainder of his reign (June, 68 A.D.). This persecution appears to have been confined to Rome. John viewed this persecution as being in full swing when writing the Apocalypse, indicating that it would continue 42 months (Rev.13:5-7). The Domitian and later persecutions are also seen by John in the Revelation, but as future events: "These **shall** make war with the lamb" (Rev.17:14). Though presented in the Apocalypse, these Roman persecutions are not to be confused with the Jewish persecution of Christianity which should occupy the spotlight in the narrative. The Jews persecuted Christianity throughout the empire and the world. To overlook this obvious and bold fact is to ignore the inspired historical record given by Luke in the book of Acts. \*

**The Age Of The Churches.** It is said by some that Smyrna, beginning in 64 A.D., could not have been old enough to have attained to the

state of perfection by the early date. Perhaps a better and more accurate statement would be that Smyrna was not **old** enough to have **lost** its perfection. Experience teaches the latter. It is further stated that Ephesus would not have been old enough to have "lost her first love," but a careful study of 1 and 2 Timothy indicates the Ephesians were experiencing deep troubles as early as 64 A.D. (1 Tim.1:3-6,19-20; cf.2 Tim.2:17). It is also argued that Laodicea, which was destroyed by an earthquake in 60 A.D. along with Colosse, could not have been rebuilt before 70 A.D., yet it is historical fact that Paul wrote both the Colossians and Laodiceans in 63 A.D. (Col.4:16) and indicated the continued existence of the churches at that time. Surely, the Holy Spirit knew that these cities had been destroyed! It was the **city** of Laodicea that was destroyed; **not the church.**

**The Statement By Irenaeus.** Scholars have long recognized that it is not possible to determine whether Irenaeus meant to say **John** was seen by Polycarp, or that **the Apocalypse** was seen toward the end of Domitian's reign. Such ambiguity destroys this argument as evidence.

Eusebius (264-340 A.D.), a church historian, gives the earliest record of this statement extant. A question concerning the reliability of the statement as well as its force as evidence must be raised. For instance, Eusebius doubted the apostle John's authorship of the Revelation. Rather, he introduced an alternative view suggesting that the John of the Apocalypse was a "presbyter John" cited by Papias as living at Ephesus.<sup>8</sup> If the statement was not strong enough to convince Eusebius that the apostle John saw the Apocalypse, what makes one think today that it is strong enough to convince one that the apostle John saw it during the reign of Domitian? The argument is weak to say the least.

**The Tradition Of Banishment.** The tradition that John was banished to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of Domitian is answered by Robert Young in his "Commentary on Revelation" published prior to 1885. "It was written in Patmos about A.D. 68, whither John had been banished by Domitius Nero, as stated in the title of the Syriac Version of the book; and with this concurs the express statement of Irenaeus in A.D. 175, who says it happened in the reign of Domitianou – i.e., Domitius (Nero). Sulpicius, Orosius, etc., stupidly mistaking Domitianou for Domitianikos

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<sup>8</sup> Nicoll, W. Robertson, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Rep. 1974), Vol. 4, "The Revelation of St. John The Divine" by Moffatt, James, D.D., p. 325  
The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, *Revelation of John*, Vol. IV, p. 2582

supposed Irenaeus to refer to Domitian, A.D. 95, and most succeeding writers have fallen into the same blunder. The internal testimony is wholly in favor of the early date.”<sup>9</sup>

In concluding our remarks concerning the late date, it should be pointed out that the evidence given by those who support it is weak, inconclusive, and basically external. It is regrettable that the majority of students have accepted the late date without fully dealing with the matters reflected herein, but have interpreted the book of Revelation solely in the light of the late date. If their conclusion is erroneous, it necessarily follows that conclusions reached upon the basis of it are also invalid. We now consider the evidence for the early date

### Evidence Supporting The Early Date, 64-68 A.D.

**The Internal Evidence.** John identifies a specific time period in Revelation 17:9-11. Seven kings are mentioned; “five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come.” These kings are in association with the seven headed scarlet beast which identifies the Roman Empire. The kings should be identified as the **kings** of the empire. Josephus, the noted Jewish historian who was contemporary with the apostle John, numbers the Roman emperors so that there can be no mistake about it. He identifies Augustus and Tiberius as the second and third emperors of Rome,<sup>10</sup> and Caius (Caligula) as the fourth.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, Julius, who was the first Caesar and who began the transformation of the Roman republic into the empire, was considered by the world of John's day as the first emperor of Rome (cf. Chart page 93). Claudius, then, was the fifth and Nero the sixth. “Five are fallen, and one is” identifies the first five Roman emperors as dead, and the sixth, Nero, as still reigning. Upon the death of Nero, three men ascended the throne within a few short months, but none of them ever ruled the empire. Vespasian, who had been directed to Judea to bring the Jews into submission, was then made the seventh ruling emperor. Vespasian's son, Titus, then, upon his father's request, completed the work of bringing the Jews to their knees. Upon the death of Vespasian, Titus became the eighth emperor of Rome. This argument perfectly harmonizes with the historical facts related by Josephus and identifies Nero as the ruling emperor at the time John wrote the

Apocalypse.

According to many prominent authorities, the number of the beast (13:18) identifies **Nero Caesar**. This name is recognized by Bible scholars as fitting the demands of the passage more than any other. The numerical value of the letters in his name totals the identifying number.<sup>12</sup> The number is 666, and Neron Caesar (his name correctly spelled) computes to the magic number. If the **n** is dropped, as it most often is, the number computes to only 616, the precise number, according to Irenaeus (175 A.D.), appearing in many early manuscripts of the Apocalypse. Many names could be figured to match the magic number of 666, possibly your own, but none could fit the picture John painted more perfectly than Nero, for he was the first Roman emperor to “make war with the saints” (13:7). It was he also who ordered Vespasian, his own hand picked general, to subdue the Jews and bring them into submission. It was this act on Nero's part that set in motion the fulfillment of the prophecies of Israel's desolation and Jerusalem's destruction, and the accomplishing of God's purposes toward them (cf. Acts 13:40-41; Lk.21:22).

It is apparent from the book of Revelation that the nation of Israel with its religion, temple, and city are still in existence at the time the Revelation is written. These all play an important role in the book. Symbolically, the temple in the holy city is measured (11:1); Moses and the Prophets are still testifying (11:3-7); and the city, Jerusalem, “where also our Lord was crucified” (11:8), is still standing. The many uses of the articles of the temple in Jerusalem as symbols indicate the continued existence of the nation of Israel. It is highly unlikely that 25 years after these things ceased to exist John used them to deal with *things that must shortly come to pass*. It would render the book useless and meaningless. On the other hand, John's use of these things is designed to show the desolation of these Judaistic monuments and dates the writing of the book prior to 70 A.D.

The general characterization of the conditions of the time as presented in chapters two and three are the same as those pictured by Paul in first and second Timothy, by Peter in first and second Peter, and by Jude and John in their epistles. All of these describe conditions when

<sup>9</sup> Wallace, p. 23-24

<sup>10</sup> Jos. Ant., 18, 2, 2; 16, 6, 2

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 18, 6, 10

<sup>12</sup> I.S.B.E., Gematria, Vol. IV, p. 2162

Wallace, pp. 34; 300-310

Nicolol, Vol. V, p. 434

Christians were suffering from persecutions, trials, and from false teachers who thrived on turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. This was to be characteristic of the times preceding the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt.24:9-13,23-26).

In the Revelation John is promised that he will prophesy again before many people, nations, tongues and kings (10:11). Even in his epistles, which scholars assign to the same time period, John was anticipating such travels (cf. 2 Jn.12; 3 Jn.14). Would this have been possible at the advanced age John would have been if the late date (95 or 96 A.D.) be accepted? It would have been highly improbable. “Moreover it is stated by Jerome that in the year A.D. 96 the apostle was so aged and weak and infirm that ‘he was with difficulty carried to the church, and could speak only a few words to the people.’”<sup>13</sup>

**The External Evidence.** The Syriac Version of the New Testament, which is the oldest direct version of the New Testament, dating all the way back to the second century, places the Revelation in the period of Nero, 68 A.D.<sup>14</sup> While this evidence does not prove that John wrote the book in 68 A.D., it does indicate that early church fathers accepted an early date for the composition of the book.

Other evidences could be given to support the early date of the book, but these are sufficient. These evidences are strong and fit perfectly into the pattern of the book. While the weight of modern scholarship has leaned heavily in favor of the late date, the evidence leans heavily in favor of the early date. In view of this, it is somewhat surprising that greater emphasis has not been given to interpreting the book in the light of the early date. In the section to follow, the early date will be firmly established.

### The Purpose Of The Book

The purpose of the Revelation is stated in the first verse of the book: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass ...” (1:1). While the book may serve many other purposes, its one **stated** purpose is “to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.” This purpose is kept before the student being restated three times: (1) At the close of the vision of Christ among the lampstands when Jesus speaks to John,

“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter” (1:19). (2) Lest we forget the previously stated purpose of this book, John begins the “heavenly apocalypse” (chapters 4-11) by reminding us of its purpose. John says, “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter” (4:1). Then, (3) when the visions are complete and all things have been revealed, the angel of the Lord says unto John, “These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done” (22:6). The purpose is stated, reaffirmed and accomplished. The purpose of the Revelation, then, is to declare **things which must shortly come to pass.**

What are those things which were to come to pass? We are not told verbatim, yet if the book is to have meaning, somewhere, somehow, those events must be identified. This is why a knowledge of the date of the book's composition is necessary. Some things are apparent: (1) Since these things were **shortly** to come to pass, we need not look for these primary events in a later age. (2) In as much as the purpose of the book is **to show** these things unto His servants, some clues identifying these events **must** be contained in the book, else, it is a useless piece of literature. (Should we not expect to find clues identifying **the things that were shortly to come to pass, the proper date of the book, and the application of the book?**) (3) Any clues discovered within the book that contribute to the understanding of the **things** revealed must be carefully weighed in the light of all other scriptural teaching and interpreted only in harmony with all other passages of scripture dealing with said subject matter. Any interpretation placed upon such clues that is not in complete harmony with all other facts of scripture is in error. This touches the subject of our study in a very critical way. If the book of Revelation has a right to a place in the Bible, it must earn and maintain that right by perfect harmony with every other passage of scripture. If the Revelation cannot be so harmonized in every point of its message, it loses its right to a place in our canon. The interpretation we place upon the book critically affects its credibility and integrity.

### Clues That Establish The Specific Events

Believing that the book of Revelation does have a place in the Bible and that clues identifying its specific purpose do exist, we present the

<sup>13</sup> Wallace, p. 25

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28

following arguments which will establish the events revealed, the date of its composition, and the correct method of interpretation for the book. Consider these arguments carefully.

### Argument No. 1.

A comparison of Revelation 10:7 with Luke 21:22 shows them to be dealing with the same things. Note the comparison:

**“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets” (Rev.10:7).**

**“For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Lk.21:22).**

A likeness is seen immediately: (1) **“The mystery of God . . . declared to his servants the prophets”** (Rev.10:7) is included in the meaning of **“all things which are written”** (Lk.21:22). When Jesus spoke the words recorded in Luke 21, the only things written were those contained in the Law and the Prophets. So, the subject matter is identical. (2) The thing accomplished with them is also the same; **“finished”** (10:7), and **“fulfilled”** (Lk.21:22).

The context of each passage also shows them to be synonymous. In the context of 10:7 (chapters 10 and 11), note the points of interest: (1) An angel from the throne of God, with one foot upon the sea and the other upon the land, has in his right hand a little book opened and appears to be holding universal power in some way (10:1-5). (2) He swears by heaven “that there should be time no longer” (Lit. **delay no longer**, 10:6) and, (3) when the seventh angel sounds (this is the last of the trumpeting angels, and when he sounds the apocalypse is over), “the mystery of God should be finished,” i.e., accomplished, completed, fulfilled (10:7). (4) John is then instructed to measure the temple (11:1), (5) but the court outside the temple he is not to measure, for it and the holy city were given to the Gentiles to tread under foot (11:2). (6) The city of Jerusalem is the city under consideration in the context, because it was the place “where also our Lord was crucified” (11:8), and (7) the prophets who testified through this period were indeed fulfilled (11:3-12; 10:7).

Now, let us compare this to the context of Luke 21:22. These words were spoken by our Lord when He left the city of Jerusalem on Tuesday of His passion. He stopped outside the city at the Mount of Olives from whence He could look down upon the temple and all the city and closely

observe it. Here, He foretold its utter destruction in the discourse delivered to His disciples (cf. Matt.24; Mk.13; Lk.21:5-36). He said, “seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mk.13:2). He then proceeded to give them signs that would reveal to them the time when these things were to be fulfilled. In these signs we can see identity in the points of comparison: (1) The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in all the world before Jerusalem was destroyed (Matt.24:14; Mk.13:10; cf. Lk.21:13). Revelation 10:1-5 pictures this as having been accomplished through the power of the little book in the angel's hand. (2) “Then shall the end come” (Matt.24:14; cf. Mk.13:7; Lk.21:13). This carries a close resemblance to “there should be time no longer” (Rev.10:6), which is used to introduce the **end** (10:7). (3) All things which were written were to be fulfilled (Lk.21:22) as in Revelation 10:7. (4) Jesus surveyed the temple when He said, “seest thou these great buildings?” (Mk.13:2), and then foretold the destruction (Lk.21:5-6; Matt.24:1-2). This compares to John's measuring the temple (Rev.11:1), and then showing its destruction (11:13). (5) Jerusalem was to “be trodden down of the Gentiles” (Lk.21:24), exactly as the Holy City in the Apocalypse (Rev.11:2). (6) Jerusalem is the city to be destroyed (Lk.21:20,24); the same as in Revelation 11:8, and (7) all the things written in the prophets were to be fulfilled in that generation (Lk.21:22,32), precisely as pictured in Revelation 10:7.

Those familiar with the scriptures and Jewish history know that Luke 21:22 was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Roman Armies under the leadership of Titus marched on Jerusalem, surrounded it and, after several months of siege, destroyed it completely, not even leaving one stone upon another. In describing it beforehand, Jesus said, “These be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Lk.21:22). Since **all things** written were to be fulfilled either in or before the destruction of Jerusalem, **the mystery of God** declared unto His servants the prophets (Rev.10:7) of necessity had to be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. There are no other alternatives. The prophecies of Israel's desolation and Jerusalem's destruction could not be fulfilled until the destruction was complete, but Jesus said that when it was complete, “all things which are written” will be fulfilled. Nothing was left to be fulfilled once Jerusalem was destroyed. **The mystery of God** was indeed finished then. **The events, therefore, that were shortly to come to pass in the book of Revelation concerned the desolation of Israel**



### and the destruction of Jerusalem.

#### Argument No. 2:

A comparison of the avenging of the apostles and prophets as pictured in the book of Revelation with that promised by Jesus during His personal ministry reveals a conclusive argument. We shall consider the vengeance pictured in the Revelation first, with proper deductions, before considering the teaching of Jesus.

**The Vengeance of Revelation.** In the Apocalypse of chapters 4-11, martyred souls cry for vengeance – “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (6:9-10). These were the souls of dead servants of God slain for their service and fidelity to Him. They had been resting for a while (6:11), indicating that they had been dead for some time. To them were given white robes made possible through the blood of the Lamb (6:11; 7:14). Since these were dead before they were given white robes, the picture then indicates that these servants were Old Testament saints who had been martyred for their testimony and then perfected by the death of Christ (cf. Heb. 9:15; 12:23). These anticipated and expected their deaths to be avenged.

At the close of this Apocalypse (4-11) vengeance had been given. “We give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth” (11:17-18). The vengeance that had been anticipated, expected, and cried for is seen as having been given. It is also significant to note that God’s “servants the prophets” were avenged.

In the Apocalypse of chapters 12-20 vengeance is viewed as being poured out. Immediately after the third angel pours his bowl of wrath upon the waters, the angel of waters says, “Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy” (16:5-6). Of Babylon the Great, John said, “And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and

with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration” (17:6). As the angel continues in showing unto John the mystery of this city called Babylon the Great, he shows her destruction and the lamentation over her and says, “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her” (18:20).

The reason given for the destruction of Babylon the Great was that “in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth” (18:24). Apparently, God held Babylon the Great responsible for the deaths of the apostles, prophets, saints, and, in fact, **all that were slain upon the earth.**

The conclusion based upon these facts is (1) that a city called **Babylon the Great** is destroyed as vengeance from God; (2) that she is destroyed because in her is found the blood of prophets, saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth; and (3) when it was accomplished, it was to be considered as God’s avenging the blood of His holy apostles and prophets.

**The Vengeance Promised by Jesus.** After receiving threats from the Pharisees! “Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee,” Jesus responded, “Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem” (Lk. 13:31-33). Jesus did not mean to imply that a prophet could not be slain by any others, or in any other place, for some did die elsewhere, but that He would die there so that Jerusalem might be held responsible for the death of all the prophets. He continued, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee ... Behold, your house is left unto you desolate ...” (Lk. 13:34-35). Desolation was promised Jerusalem for killing the prophets.

Again, after Jesus had delivered a scathing denunciation of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, a lawyer spoke up, saying, “Thus saying thou reproachest us also.” Jesus replied, “Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall stay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;

from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation” (Lk.11:45-51). This passage says it all. “I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: ... that the blood of all the prophets, may be required of this generation.”

In a similar denunciation of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees delivered in Jerusalem, apparently around the temple on Tuesday of His passion, Jesus said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt.23:29-39). The message is the same. God would require of Israel, and in particular Jerusalem, vengeance for **all the righteous blood shed upon the earth**, and it would be required in that generation.

The conclusion based upon these statements by Jesus is: (1) Jerusalem, including the temple, was to be destroyed as vengeance from God. (2) She would be destroyed because in her was to be found the blood of **all the prophets**, in fact, **all the righteous blood shed upon the earth**. (3) It would be required of the generation then living as vengeance from God. Compared to the conclusion reached from the study of the vengeance pictured in the Apocalypse, the only difference is **the name of the city**. The other essentials are all identical. This forces us to the conclusion that “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots,” upon whom

God avenged the blood of all that were slain upon the earth, is Jerusalem and cannot possibly be any other. To seek to make **Babylon the Great** literal Babylon, Rome, the Apostate Church, Moscow, Peking, or any other city, is to force a contradiction in scripture. If all the righteous blood shed upon the earth was to be required of Israel and Jerusalem, there could be none left to be required of any other. The conclusion is clear, sound, and irresistible. There are no alternatives without contradiction. **The events that were shortly to come to pass are again identified and the purpose of the book established.** The Revelation is designed to show the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. \*\*\*

### Argument No. 3:

A comparison of Revelation 7:14 with Matthew 24:21 reveals periods of tribulation that are identical. Note the comparison:

“These are they who have come out of the great tribulation” (Rev.7:14, NIV. The KJV omits the definite article **the** which is found in the oldest manuscripts).

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt.24:21).

One is observed as “the great tribulation” (Rev.7:14), and the other as “great tribulation” such as never had been or ever would be. If the tribulation period that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem was to be the greatest that ever was or ever would be, “the great tribulation” of Revelation 7:14 **must** of necessity be the same period of tribulation or it is not “the great tribulation” (cf.Dan.12:1). To assign “the great tribulation” to another period of time is to again force a contradiction in scripture. Since there can be no question about the application of the “great tribulation” of Matthew 24:21 because it was to be fulfilled during the generation living when Jesus spoke the words (Matt.24:34), “the great tribulation” of the Apocalypse **must** be the tribulation period that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. Again, there are no alternatives. The events that were shortly to come to pass center around the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now that we have established that “the things which must shortly come to pass” are identified with the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem, we have also established that the book was

written sometime prior to 70 A.D. If we should desire to be specific, we would suggest 65-66 A.D. as the time of its writing.<sup>15</sup> We have also established the correct method of interpretation to be used in understanding its application. It is preterist and early historical: preterist because it must be interpreted with the people of John's day in view, and historical in that the events foretold can be seen as fulfilled in the history of the times following. Finally, we have lifted this marvelous book from the realm of speculation. It is no longer needful to speculate as to the application of the signs and symbols. They are applied to reveal the purpose of the book to show **things which must shortly come to pass** with reference to Israel and Jerusalem. It is the triumph of faith and patience to be able to look at the book with confidence that we **can understand** its message. **Understanding** is indeed the reward of this glorious work (1:3).

### The Theme Of The Book

With the purpose of the book now deeply settled in our minds, the theme of the book should not be difficult for us to comprehend. Many themes have been assigned to the book: **The Victory of Christ and the Church over Satan and his Helpers; The Victory of the Saints over all Foes; Victory in Jesus; The Heavens Still Reign.** Many others could be suggested, and have been, but these are not the themes of the book, even though all of these things can be seen coming to a reality in the Revelation. The theme of the book is actually reflected in its purpose **to show things which must shortly come to pass.** These things are seen in the **finishing** of the mystery of God (10:7) and the avenging of the apostles and prophets (18:20). Vengeance was called for by the martyred saints from under the altar (6:9-10), and vengeance was given (11:17-18). Of Babylon's destruction it was said, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (18:20). In the victory celebration taking place in heaven over her destruction, the theme is reflected again: "Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand" (19:1-2). The vengeance anticipated, expected, and given leads us to the

true theme of the book: **The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets** (cf.18:20).

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<sup>15</sup> See *The Development Of The New Testament* by this author for further discussion of this point

## SECTION 2

## THE MYSTERY OF GOD

A study of the contents of the book of Revelation will not be in order until the ground work is completely laid and we understand fully **the mystery of God** **S** the mystery to be **finished** when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet (10:7). To accomplish this, we must comprehend the meaning of **the mystery of God** and the word **finished**.

The word **mystery (mustērion)** means “a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding; a hidden purpose or counsel; secret will.”<sup>16</sup> A mystery is that which is hidden from our knowledge, a secret not revealed or made known. This is the case with the **mystery of God**. Paul said that before it was revealed, it was “hidden wisdom ... which none of the princes of this world knew” (1 Cor.2:7-8). It was “kept secret” (Rom.16:25), “hid in God” (Eph.3:9), “from ages and from generations” (Col.1:26), and “not made known unto the sons of men” (Eph.3:5). It is not a mystery any longer, however, for “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit” (1 Cor.2:10), making them “manifest” and “known” unto us by his Spirit (Rom.16:26; Col.1:26), or by the “revelation” of the Spirit (Eph.3:3,5), so that “all men” can now “see what is the fellowship of the mystery” (Eph.3:9), and be able to read and understand it (Eph.3:4). Vine says, “In the New Testament it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the English word), but that which being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed.”<sup>17</sup> The word **mystery** in the New Testament, then, comes to mean that which was secret but is now revealed unto us by the Spirit. All of the mystery **S** the total purpose of God toward mankind **S** has been revealed. Nothing has been kept hid. We now have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor.2:16). **The mystery of God** declared to God's servants the prophets has been made known (Rev.10:7) and is revealed in the New Testament.

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<sup>16</sup> Thayer, *MUST•RION*, p. 420

<sup>17</sup> Vine, Vol. II, p. 97

The word **finished (teleō)** means “1. to bring to a close, to finish, to end; 2. to perform, execute, complete, fulfil, (so that the thing done corresponds to what has been said, the order, command, etc.), i.e. a. with special reference to the subject-matter, to carry out the contents of a command ... b. with reference also to the form, to do just as commanded, and generally involving a notion of time, to perform the last act which completes a process, to accomplish, fulfil: ... Rev.10:7.”<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the mystery of God declared to the prophets was to be fully performed, accomplished, executed, or fulfilled when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet. Reference is not to the **revealing** of this mystery but to the **accomplishing** of it. As suggested, the mystery included the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. Both, “the mystery of God” (10:7) and “all things which are written” (Lk.21:22) were to be fulfilled and accomplished in that destruction. Now, let us turn our attention to the Old Testament scriptures in search of **the things written** wherein the **mystery of God** concerning it is found.

## The Formation Of The Nation Of Israel

From the very dawn of time, God has been bound by His own purpose and will (Eph.1:9,11). When man fell in the Garden of Eden, God began at once to reflect His purpose for the redemption of fallen man. Spiritually dead, man was driven from the garden of God, from the tree of life (Gen.3:22-24), and from all the blessings afforded there. God pronounced a curse upon Satan (Gen.3:15) in which He contemplated a plan to bruise Satan through the seed of woman. From Genesis through Revelation the Bible deals with the overthrow of Satan and the rise of fallen man from the pits of sin in which he was captivated (cf.Rev.12:1-11). Throughout the Old Testament scriptures, we see God at work unfolding His plan and accomplishing His purposes to make it possible for fallen man to gain a victory over sin and Satan, a victory we now have through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom.7:24-25; 8:1-2).

God's plan during the history of the Old Testament did not appear to them for what it really was. Paul said of them, that “their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

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<sup>18</sup> Thayer, *TELEÆ*, p. 619

Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” (2 Cor.3:14-16). God's plan was a mystery. They could see, as through a veil, that something was in the working, but they could not tell what it was. Look at God's promise to Abraham. He promised him that, if he would leave his country and his father's house and go into a land that He would show him, He would make of him “a great nation” and that through him “all families of the earth” would be blessed (Gen.12:1-3). Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah, and the promises made to Abraham were passed to him (Gen.28:13-14). Isaac's son Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gen.32:28), begat twelve sons. They became known as the “children of Israel” and their distinctive families as “the twelve tribes of Israel.” They left the land of Canaan during the trying time of a great famine and journeyed into Egypt by the providence of God where they were nourished in the land of Goshen. They were only 70 in number when they went into Egypt, but God blessed and multiplied them until they became the great nation the Lord had promised their father Abraham. Before Jacob died, he called his sons before him and blessed them. To Judah he said, “the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and **unto him shall the gathering of the people be**” (Gen.49:10). It is veiled, yet God's purpose is seen at work. Jacob died, then Joseph, and the time came when the children of Israel were looked upon as strangers in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh enslaved them in sore bondage. Two hundred and fifteen years they served the Egyptians until God saw their tears, heard their pleas, and sent Moses to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt. Under the leadership of Moses and the mighty hand of God, they crossed the Red Sea into the wilderness where they could at last sing **the song of Moses**, their song of deliverance.

Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness to Mt. Sinai. God had made them a great nation, but now He would prepare them for national importance for centuries yet to come. As he prepared to give them the law, He said unto them, “if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Ex.19:5-6). God gave them the law with all its commandments and ordinances to guide them as a nation throughout their generations. It was through this nation that God would fulfill His promise to Abraham to bless “all families of the earth.” Paul tells us that the law was given to bring Israel to Christ that the promise to Abraham

“to bless all nations” might be fulfilled through Him (Gal.3:16-19). These were God's intents and purposes in developing the nation of Israel. His purpose is reflected in the words of Moses: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deut.18:15; cf. vv.16-19).

### The Blessing And Curses Of Israel

The children of Israel were promised abundant glory **conditioned** upon their continued obedience to God. Hear Moses as he warns:

“Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deut.4:1-2).

“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy son's sons” (Deut.4:5-9).

“Take heed unto yourselves lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to

provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that **ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land** whereunto ye go over Jordon to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but **shall utterly be destroyed**. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you” (Deut.4:23-27; cf.Lev.26:3-46).

God further threatened to destroy Israel from off the face of the earth if they refused His commandments and served other gods. He said:

“Ye shall not go after other gods, and the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and **destroy thee from off the face of the earth**” (Deut.6:14-15).

“It shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that **ye shall surely perish**. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, **so shall ye perish**; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God” (Deut.8:19-20).

There can be no question about it. In order for Israel to enjoy all the blessings promised of God, they would have to continue to obey Him.

As Moses came to the close of the great discourse delivered in the valley of Jordan, on the east side over against Bethpeor (Deut.4:46), he again reminded them of the blessings and curses promised them. He elaborated upon the blessings first, saying,

“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God” (Deut.28:1-2).

Moses then enumerated the abundance of blessings that would be theirs if they obeyed Him (Deut.28:3-14).

Next came the curses **S** the reward for disobedience **S** in which we see the history of the nation of Israel for the next 1500 years flashed before them, for they were a disobedient and rebellious people. Moses continued:

“But it shall come to pass if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:... The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, **until thou be destroyed** and **until thou perish quickly**; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, **until he have consumed thee from off the land**, whither thou goest to possess it. The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and **they shall pursue thee until thou perish**. And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of the land powder and dust: **from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed**. The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and **shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth**. And thy carcass shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beast of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof: Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand. The fruit of thy

land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed alway: So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. The Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head. The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee. Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it. Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather grapes; for the worms shall eat them. Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit. Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for **they shall go into captivity**. All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume. The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, **till thou be destroyed**; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: and **they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed forever**. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, **until he have destroyed thee. The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far**, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, **until thou be destroyed**: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the

increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, **until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee**: So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: **So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates**. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: **for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates. If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD**: Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, **until thou be destroyed**. And ye shall be left few in number whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God. And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; **so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought**; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And **the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the**

**one end of the earth even unto the other;** and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you” (Deut.28:15,20-68).

Surely, no one can look at the history of the nation of Israel through the years without knowing that God fully rewarded them according to His word.

God had Moses to instruct Israel further lest they forget or misinterpret these curses when they came upon them.

“Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him, but then **the anger of the Lord** and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and **all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.** And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law: So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it: And that the

whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath; Even all the nations shall say, **Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger?** Then men shall say, **Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers,** which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt: For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them: **And the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book:** And the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut.29:18-29).

Moses continued:

“And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and **thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee,** and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That **then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.** If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers” (Deut.30:1-5).

Upon this promise of the return from the captivities, Moses continued with promises of blessings to those who returned (cf.30:6-14). Certainly, to those who are familiar with the history of the nation of Israel, God fulfilled His threats exactly as promised.



Just before Moses was ordered to Mt. Nebo to be gathered unto his people in death, God called him for one final warning to His people. While the reading of these accounts are laborious, it is essential to our understanding of “the mystery of God” concerning Israel and Jerusalem. In Deuteronomy 32:1-43, Moses gave us a picture of the complete and final end of Israel:

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak: and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. **He is the Rock, his work is perfect: For all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.** They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: **they are a perverse and crooked generation.** Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee, and established thee?

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth aboard her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys and wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

“But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; **then he forsook God which made him,** and lightly esteemed the Rock

of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, **I will see what their end shall be:** for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and **I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.** For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young men and the virgins, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this. For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. **O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!** How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up? For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For **their vine is the vine of Sodom,** and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are of gall, their clusters are bitter: Their wine is the poison of dragons, and cruel venom of asps. **Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the lord**

shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver, and say, I live for ever. **If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgement; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.**"

The foregoing is one of the most amazing passages in all of God's word. It flashes before us the story of Israel for 1500 years from their deliverance out of Egypt until the nation's destruction. God foresaw and foretold Israel's plagues of pestilence, consumption, fevers, inflammation, extreme burning, blasting, mildew, swords of oppression, hunger, famine, diseases, captivities, sieges, etc., as the consequences of rebellion against Him. The Old Testament shows it all graphically portrayed in fulfillment. God saw these things happening "until thou be destroyed." He saw the "end," even the "latter end," some 15 centuries earlier and foretold how and why it would happen! Especially worthy of note is the reason given for this destruction: "for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries." Is not this also the theme of the book of Revelation? John's book tells about "the avenging of the Apostles and Prophets!" Moses' prophecies anticipated the Apocalypse revealed by John on Patmos. The purpose of the Apocalypse was to show the complete fulfillment of these things that were centuries before foretold (cf. Rev.10:7; 11:3-12; Lk.21:22).

## Jerusalem, The Holy City Early History

One cannot read the scriptures without being impressed with the fact that Jerusalem is often called "the holy city" (Dan.9:24; Matt.4:5; 27:53; Rev.11:2). The rich religious traditions of this city, from the very earliest periods of its history, had earned for it this designation. It was from here that Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the most high God, came to meet and bless Abraham as he returned from the slaughter of the kings (Gen.14:18-19)<sup>19</sup>. About 450 years later, the city was identified as "Jebus" and "Jebusi" because it was inhabited by the Jebusites (Josh.18:28; Judg.19:10-11; 1 Chron.11:4-5). When the Israelites invaded and then divided the land of Canaan by inheritance, the city was divided into two parts: the northern half going to the tribe of Benjamin and the southern portion going to Judah. Judah drove out the inhabitants of their section (Judg.1:8) but Benjamin did not (Judg.1:21). When David became king over all of Israel, he drove the Jebusites from Jerusalem and made it the capital of the nation (2 Sam.5:5-10). David reigned 33 years in Jerusalem. From the time Israel conquered Canaan this stronghold was called Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup> The completion of Solomon's temple exalted Jerusalem to both political and religious importance since the city then served as the capital of Israel and the center of worship. This earned for it the title: **the Holy City**.

### God Chose Jerusalem

To understand the exalted position that Jerusalem came to hold, we should comprehend the background of the developments that made it great. When Israel set foot in the wilderness and reflected upon their deliverance from Egypt, the people sang the **Song of Moses**, a song of deliverance from the land of bondage. They said, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established" (Ex.15:17). They were thinking, no doubt, of the promised land as the place of God's sanctuary but, since God later gave Moses the instructions for the building of the **tabernacle**

<sup>19</sup> Some authorities believe Melchizedek's Salem should be identified with another location, even though David called Jerusalem, Salem in Psalm 76:2

<sup>20</sup> Some external evidence indicates that Jerusalem was being called "Jerusalem" as early as 1450 B.C. (Cf. I.S.B.E., Vol. III, p. 1596)

(Ex.25:8-9) in which He would dwell among them, it is apparent that their verse was prophetic in nature. It was before the door of this tabernacle that Israelites were to bring their offerings and sacrifices to offer them to God on the altar that God commanded (Ex.20:24-26). As long as Israel wandered in the wilderness, the tabernacle was in their midst and God dwelt among them. Moses said, however, “**When ye go over Jordan**, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety: **then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you**; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord ... Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: **but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes**, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee” (Deut.12:10-11,13-14). To the place in the promised land where God would choose to place His name Israelites were to bring their tithes (Deut.14:22-27), observe the Passover (Deut.16:1-2,5-6), the feast of weeks called Pentecost (Deut.16:9-11), and the feast of tabernacles (Deut.16:13-16). The first place God chose to set His name in the Land was Shiloh (Jer.7:12). Later the temple replaced the tabernacle, and Jerusalem became the permanent place which the Lord chose (2 Chron.6:6).

The children of Israel ended their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness when they crossed the Jordan River into the land of Canaan, the land of their inheritance. They encamped first at Gilgal where they set up the tabernacle. The tabernacle stayed in Gilgal until the land was mostly conquered (Josh.5:10-11). It was then moved to Shiloh (Josh.18:1; cf. Jer.7:12) where it remained until the days of Samuel, a period of more than 350 years. During the days of Samuel the ark of the covenant was stolen by the Philistines. The presence of the ark among the Philistines caused so much consternation that it was quickly returned to the Israelites but not to its rightful place in the tabernacle. The men of Kirjathjearim took the ark and placed it in the house of Abinadab in Gibeah (1 Sam.7:1) where it remained until David moved it to Jerusalem (2 Sam.6). The ark was missing from the service of the tabernacle for approximately 100 years. While it was missing from its proper place, the tabernacle was moved from Shiloh back to Gilgal (1 Sam.11:15; 15:21); then to Nob (1

Sam.21-22). During the days of King David the tabernacle was found in Gibeon (1 Chron.16:39-40; 21:29). While the tabernacle was at Gibeon and the ark at Jerusalem, David proposed to build a house for God (2 Sam.7:1-2) but was rejected as the builder because he was a man of war (1 Chron.22:8). Solomon was then instructed to build a house for God's name, and he built it according to the pattern shown unto him (1 Chron.28:11-19).

### Solomon's Temple

Seven years were involved in building Solomon's temple. It was one of the most glorious wonders of the ancient world. When it was completed Solomon called all Israel together to dedicate it and said,

“The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever ... And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying, **Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build an house in, that my name might be there: neither chose I any man to be ruler over my people Israel: But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there;** and have chosen David to be over my people Israel ... And he stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands ... And said, O Lord God of Israel, ... Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee: That thine eyes may be opened upon this house day and night, **upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayers which thy servant prayeth toward this place.** Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, **which they shall make toward this place:** hear thou from thy dwelling place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive ... When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; **yet if they pray toward this place,** and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them: Then hear

thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon the land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance ... If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, **and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name:** then hear thou from heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; Yet if they bethink themselves in the land of their captivity, saying, we have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, **and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name:** Then hear thou from heaven, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee ..." (2 Chron.6:1-2,4-6,12,14,19-21,26-27,34-39).

(It would be further helpful if the student would read the complete context of Solomon's dedication of the temple, but the quoting of these excerpts helps us to understand the prominent position to which Jerusalem was elevated by the presence of the temple within the city, cf.1 Kings 8).

Moses directed that all temple service would be performed in the city where God would choose to place His name. Solomon enjoined it and further instructed that all prayers be directed toward the holy city and the temple, even from foreign lands. Jerusalem was to become the most prominent city in the life of every Israelite. It was **The Holy City**, the center of life and service to God during the Old Testament era, a period of almost 1,000 years B.C.

After Solomon completed the dedication of the temple and all Israel had returned to their homes, the Lord appeared unto Solomon and said,

"I have heard thy prayer, **and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.** If I shut up heaven that there

be no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. **For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.** And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; Then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel. **But if you turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight,** and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations, And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the Lord done this unto this land, and unto this house? And it shall be answered, **Because they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them"** (2 Chron.7:12-22).

God fulfilled His promise and chose a place for His name. He wanted it clearly understood, however, that the blessings and curses which Moses had pronounced in the valley of Jordan shortly before his death were still in force and that God intended for them to listen.

### Jerusalem's Greatness

David, who had first purposed to build the house for God, had envisioned that the temple would elevate Jerusalem to fame and glory throughout the world. He said, "Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding

magnificent of fame and glory throughout all countries” (1 Chron.22:5). Jerusalem, which God called “the gate of my people” (Mic.1:9), became all that David dreamed. The Psalmist said, “Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee” (Psa.68:29). The queen of Sheba came to see if it were true and testified, “The half was not told me” (1 Kings 10:7). Solomon “Made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as sycomore trees that are in the vale, for abundance” (1 Kings 10:27). So great was Jerusalem that they sang of her beauty and glory:

“Great is the Lord, **and greatly to be praised in the city of our God**, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, **the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion**, on the sides of the north, **the city of the great King**. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. **As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever**. Selah. We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulworks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death” (Psa.48).

Oh, how Jerusalem beamed in the hearts of Israel! A little later, when the people were oppressed and the city afflicted, the Psalmist reflected confidence that God would again lift her up. He said,

“My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass. But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord,

**and all the kings of the earth thy glory**. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory” (Psa.102:11-16).

### Jerusalem’s First Destruction

During the reign of Solomon, Jerusalem, because of the temple, reached great heights of glory. Then came the dividing of the kingdom. The ten northern tribes seceded from the union and formed their own kingdom, henceforth known as the Kingdom of Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria. The southern tribes remained loyal to Solomon’s posterity under Rehoboam and were henceforth known as Judah. Jeroboam, first king of the northern kingdom, reasoned, “If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of the people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah” (1 Kings 12:27). So he made two golden calves, placing one in Dan and the other in Bethel, and said unto the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (1 Kings 12:28). Jeroboam’s action helped take away the drawing power of the house of God and Jerusalem and caused a decline in the prominence of the city though it continued as the capital of Judah. His action also plunged Israel into idolatry, a plight from which the nation never recovered through 19 kings and 215 years. In 721 B.C., the armies of the great Assyrian Empire marched into Samaria, destroying her cities, conquering her people and herding them off to Assyria in fulfillment of God’s threat of curses, the reward for rebellion and idolatry. Judah and Jerusalem, while maintaining their loyalty to the Lord and to His temple, slowly drifted into idolatry also. After 20 kings and approximately 350 years, this southern kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians, the reward for their rebellion and idolatry. In 586 B.C., Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the people carried captive to Babylon in fulfillment of the curses promised 900 years earlier.

During the period of the divided kingdom, God sent His prophets in an effort to call the people to repentance lest His promised curses come upon them. Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah were sent to warn and call the people back to God. God gave them choice. They could either repent and return to God, or suffer the consequences of their rebellion and idolatry. Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem were all pictured as committing gross whoredoms. Ezekiel presented them all in whoredom by an allegory of two women answering in

comparison to **Samaria** and **Jerusalem** (Ezek.23). Time and again they were accused of whoredom by the prophets until they were consumed and carried captive to foreign lands with their cities and land ravished, destroyed and lying desolate. The curses revealed to Moses and the children of Israel before they crossed the Jordan to possess Canaan are fully reflected in their fulfillments.

### Restoration

In 536 B.C., Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians and conqueror of the Babylonians, granted the captives of Israel permission to return to their home land to rebuild the temple (2 Chron.36:22-23; Ezra1:1-4). More than 42,000 banded together under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the prince, and Jeshua, the priest, and came to Jerusalem to undertake the work. During trying times and under difficult circumstances they worked diligently for 20 years until the temple was completed in 516 B.C. It was rebuilt but not to its former glory. Jerusalem remained a heap of ruins. It was not until the days of Nehemiah, some 60 years later, that any determined effort was put forth to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and fortify it as in the days of its former glory (cf. Nehemiah). By and by, however, under Herod the Great, Jerusalem regained its beauty and position in the world. Herod tore down and rebuilt the city, replacing its structures with the most elaborate designs the architecture of his day could provide. He built his palaces in Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple to a degree of beauty and glory that would have rivaled that of Solomon. Jerusalem not only reclaimed the greatness that had once been hers but, far exceeding that, she also reached out to exercise world power and influence. Josephus said that “our city Jerusalem had arrived at a higher degree of felicity than any other city under the Roman government.”<sup>21</sup>

### Change In Israel

At this point we should understand a change that had taken place in Israel since the captivity. During their former glory the Israelites, for the most part, had remained within the territorial boundaries of the promised land. With the return of the captives from Babylon and the freeing of those who remained in Babylon, however, this situation changed. As God had predicted, Jews had been scattered throughout the nations. Josephus

says, “Now these Jews are already gotten into all cities; and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by them.”<sup>22</sup> Due to the large numbers transported there in the captivities who desired to remain there as free persons, Babylon became a great center of the Jews.<sup>23</sup> Along with other cities of Egypt, Alexandria had also received large numbers of Jews fleeing from Babylonian oppressions. This city also became a great center of Jewish influence.<sup>24</sup> Jews, then, were scattered throughout the world with largest concentrations in Babylon, Egypt and Judea. Regardless of where they lived, the Jews dedicated themselves to God and to their worship of Him. Since the temple was located in Jerusalem, their first allegiance was there. This sequence of developments accomplished for Jerusalem great wealth, power and prominence, and simultaneously made it the most loved, feared and hated city in the world!

### Jerusalem’s Wealth, Power, and Authority

Jerusalem's wealth, until the city's destruction in 70 A.D., apparently exceeded that of the Romans. Titus, the Roman general who carried out the destruction of Jerusalem, in a speech delivered to the inhabitants of the city while being besieged, said that the Romans “have preserved the laws of your forefathers to you, and have withal permitted you to live, either by yourselves, or among others, as it should please you; and, what is our chief favor of all, we have given you leave to gather up that tribute which is paid to God, with such gifts that are dedicated to him; nor have we called those that carried those donations to account, nor prohibited them; till at length you became richer than we ourselves.”<sup>25</sup> Jerusalem was rich because of the presence of the temple of God. Josephus says, “And let no one wonder that there was so much wealth in our temple, since all the Jews throughout the habitable earth, and those that worshipped God, nay even those of Asia and Europe, sent their contributions to it, and this from very ancient times.”<sup>26</sup> The dedication of the millions of devout Jews throughout the world, seeing that their tithes found their way to Jerusalem, made this city the richest and most lavish city for its size in the world. Of this city, Charles Merivale writes, “The

<sup>22</sup> Jos., *Ant.*, 14, 7, 2

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 2, 2; 15, 3, 1

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 7, 2

<sup>25</sup> Jos., *Wars* 6, 6, 2

<sup>26</sup> Jos., *Ant.*, 14, 7, 2

<sup>21</sup> Jos., *Wars*, Preface, 4

palace of the kings of Judea I have already described as not less superior in magnificence to the abodes of Augustus and Tiberius. The whole city, upon which many despots have lavished their wealth, as far surpassed Rome, at least before Nero's restorations, in grandeur, as it fell short of it in size and population."<sup>27</sup>

Jerusalem's power and authority were as bountiful as was its wealth. While the days of authority as the capital of a kingdom were past, the authority that resided in the Law of Moses and its High Priest lingered. **The High Priest was the single most powerful figure in Israel during the days of Jesus.** He had authority not only in Jerusalem and Palestine but over the Jews everywhere. It was from the High Priest that Saul received authority to go to the synagogues in Damascus, a foreign city, to bind Christians and bring them to Jerusalem for trial (Acts 9:1-2; cf.22:4-5; 26:10-11). This authority residing in the High Priest was recognized, permitted, and upheld by the Roman government. Decrees permitting the continued exercise of these Jewish rights were published by the Roman authorities throughout the empire demanding their recognition and respect under the penalty of the law.<sup>28</sup> With the authority and power of the High Priest and Jerusalem firmly established, Jerusalem ruled the Jews throughout the world. This they did through an elaborate network of courts. There was the Sanhedrin composed of 71 members over which the High Priest served as head judge exercising complete authority. "The Sanhedrin held religious authority not only over Judea, but over the entire Jewry of the then-known world."<sup>29</sup> It was the Supreme Court of the Jewish State. There were other courts in addition to this 71 member council. "A Sanhedrin composed of 23 members tried cases involving offenses such as homicide, incest, and profanation of the Sabbath publicly for which punishment incurring death was meted out. There was one such Sanhedrin in every important city of Judea."<sup>30</sup> I Such courts may have existed in cities outside Judea, for the Jews dragged Paul before Gallio, the deputy of Achaia, but Gallio refused to hear the case, saying, "If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters" (Acts 18:15). He thus recognized the right of Jews to judge matters pertaining to their law even

<sup>27</sup> Merivale, Charles, *History of the Romans*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1865), Vol. VI, p. 454

<sup>28</sup> Jos., *Ant.*, 14, 10, 1-26; cf. 16:2,3

<sup>29</sup> Reprinted from WHO CRUCIFIED JESUS? Solomon Zeitlin. Copyright © 1964 by Bloch Publishing Company, p. 70. Used by permission of the publisher

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* P. 71

in cities outside Judea. So the authority of Jerusalem as a city was universal. It extended to every city on earth which lodged a Jew!

### A Prominent City

Jerusalem was also a prominent city. It was the capital of the Jewish State and, therefore, the most important city in the world to the Jew. It was the city of God, the site of the temple of God; hence its title "the Holy City." Toward Jerusalem every Jew in the world prayed. To Jerusalem every Jewish male was to come and present himself to God three times a year. To Jerusalem the Jews were to come to offer sacrifices, make offerings, and observe feasts. This explains the presence of "devout men, out of every nation under heaven" in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. Fifteen nationalities of Jews had come to the city to worship God from all parts of the Roman Empire. This constant influx of tourist into Jerusalem made it a world renowned city. Since Jerusalem held such exalted esteem in the eyes of the Jews of the world, it was natural that the peoples among whom the Jews dwelled were well aware of Jerusalem's beauty, importance and fame. Possibly Jerusalem was more widely known than any other city in the world. Only Rome gave serious competition. Such recognition made Jerusalem the most loved city on earth to the Jews!

### Feared and Hated

Notwithstanding her prominence, Jerusalem was one of the most feared and hated cities of the world (cf. 1 Thess.2:15). She was feared by the Romans because her people were not contained within the boundaries of a small country. They were scattered throughout the world and the thought of an uprising **by** the Jews or **against** the Jews would have thrown the empire into instant conflict. Jerusalem was feared also because the political maneuvering of her leaders kept a constant threat of an **explosion** before the world.<sup>31</sup> This was the type politics that gained for the city and her loyal children the envy of every nation under heaven. The Jews literally had favors extended to them that were denied every other nation. This led to their being hated by the rest of the world. Josephus graphically portrays this hatred for the Jews. They were permitted by the Romans to worship their different God in their different way, observing

<sup>31</sup> Jos., *Ant.*, 16, 2, 3; *Wars*, 2, 10, 3

their different ways and days. Their treatment was different simply because they were Jews and therefore demanded to worship God as He directed. They either received these favors or gladly died for their convictions. This special treatment, afforded no other nation under heaven, caused the Jews and their **holy city**, Jerusalem, to be hated by the whole world.

### Conclusion

Jerusalem, then, as the city of God sustained a relationship to the nation of Israel and the world that had never been held by any other city. Its posture in relationship to Israel and the Jews was such that, in reality, one could not exist without the other. The nation supported and sustained Jerusalem which in turn was the fountainhead from which all the blessings flowed. It was axiomatic that as long as Jerusalem stood, Israel as a nation stood. If, however, Jerusalem was subdued, the will of the people of Israel was also subdued. God had warned that if Israel rebelled against Him and served other gods He would bring curses upon His people until they were utterly destroyed. God brought curses upon them many times and some were unusually severe as with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. When they returned to God in heart and spirit, however, He restored them to their land and their city. A second time they rebelled against God and, as He warned, God utterly destroyed Jerusalem and the temple which were never to be built again. By so doing, God utterly destroyed the **nation** of Israel never to exist again as God created it. Josephus says, “yet hath not its great antiquity, nor its vast riches, nor the diffusion of its nation over all the habitable earth, nor the greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed.”<sup>32</sup> This is the city, **Babylon the Great**, which exercised dominion over the kings of the earth as she was carried by the Roman Empire and seen by John destroyed in the Apocalypse (Rev.17). She was the faithful city that turned harlot (Isa.1:21) and suffered the consequences of utter destruction that God had promised for His servants (Deut.28-32).

### The Testimony Of The Prophets

With the foundation laid, we come next to observe “the mystery of

God” as declared unto God’s servants, the prophets. Having received the law with its promised blessings and curses, the Israelites crossed the Jordan River in conquest of the land of promise. They inhabited the land and grew into a powerful and influential nation. After many years they desired a king that they might be like the nations around them. God granted them their wish and broadened their borders to include the fulness of all that had been promised to Abraham (Gen.15:18; 2 Chron.9:26). Jerusalem was established as the city of God and became the center of both political and spiritual activities. But the nation of Israel was a stiffnecked and stubborn people. Full of rebellion, their hearts and minds quickly wandered from the worship and service of God to the worship of the gods of the land. It was inevitable that the fulness of the curses that God promised Israel would eventually be the cup from which they would drink.

During the years following the dividing of the Kingdom, God sent the prophets. Beginning with Elijah and Elisha (non-literary prophets), He warned the people of Israel of their plight unless they repented. One after another they came **S** Joel (830 B.C.), Amos (760 B.C.), Hosea (750 B.C.), Micah (740 B.C.), Isaiah (740-690 B.C.), Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk (610 B.C.), and Jeremiah (626-583 B.C.), “The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending: because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chron.36:15-16; cf.2 Chron.24:18-22; Neh.9:26-32; Jer.2:30,34; 7:25-26; 25:4; 26:4-6; 29:15-19; 35:15; 44:4-10; Lam.4:13; Zech.7:3-14; Matt.5:12). The children of Israel forsook the Lord, so, He sent them the prophets to remind them that the curses He had promised in the valley of Jordan through Moses were at hand. Israel rejected the prophets and misused them until many of the promised curses came to pass, but **not** unto the **latter end** when the **utter destruction** God promised through Moses was to come. Of the punishment assessed Israel and Jerusalem for their rebellion and idolatry through the power of the Babylonian Empire, the Lord said, “The whole land shall be desolate; yet **I will not make a full end**. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it” (Jer.4:27-28).

Again He said, “How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have

<sup>32</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 6, 10, 1



forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; **but make not a full end**: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord ... Lo I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say ... Nevertheless in those days, saith the Lord, **I will not make a full end with you**" (Jer.5:7-11,15,18).

It is apparent that the punishments inflicted upon Israel by God through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities were not to be understood as "the utter destruction" God had promised in the plains of Jordan. The full end would come later, i.e., in 70 A.D.

The books written by the prophets are filled with prophecies of the **end** of Israel and Jerusalem. It is not within the scope of this work to discuss all of these texts fully. A few special passages, however, have been selected for discussion that the student may know that the **end** of Israel and Jerusalem were a necessary part of **the mystery of God**.

### Isaiah

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was sent to prophesy unto Judah and Jerusalem between the years 740 and 690 BC. They had rebelled against God and forsaken Him (Isa.1:2). They had drifted so far from God that Isaiah was moved to say, "Except the Lord of host had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (1:9). But God spared Israel as He called upon them to repent or perish.

Isaiah's message is the most highly Messianic of all the prophets. Mingled with the promises of doom, despair, destruction, and the ultimate end of the nation are the promises of the coming Messiah. There are hundreds of prophecies in Isaiah which found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Lk.24:44). However, Isaiah's prophecy does not end with the advent of the Messiah but proceeds to declare the **utter end** of the nation of Israel.

### Isaiah 64-65

In studying this noted prophecy careful readers will be impressed with the development of sequences that would result in the Gentiles being made partakers of God's blessings, Israel and Jerusalem being destroyed as vengeance from God, and the creation of new heavens and a new earth with the emerging of a new and different Jerusalem.

The prophecy begins with an affirmation that these things foretold are a mystery. "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (64:4). In discussing the **mystery** which was ordained of God before the world began, the apostle Paul quotes this passage in order to identify it with those to whom "the mystery of God" is revealed (1 Cor.2:9). There can be no doubt about the prophetic nature of Isaiah 64-65. After declaring that these things were a mystery, he then pictures the nation (Zion and Jerusalem) lying desolate (64:9-11) and asks of God: "Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?" (64:12). The Lord's answer follows in the next chapter. "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name" (65:1). God's answer is simple. The Gentiles were to be called and they would answer. He then reasons as to why He would call the Gentiles. "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walked in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts: A people that provoked me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick," etc. (65:2-5). Continuing to show His displeasure, He reminded them of His threatened vengeance. "Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills; therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom" (65:6-7). It had been written about 700 years earlier in Deuteronomy 32:34-43 that God said He would recompense and avenge the iniquities of all the nation of Israel together at the same time into their bosom. This is the message of the Revelation (Rev.18:20,24)!

The time for the avenging of God's servants, however, was seen as yet future. He said, "as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one

saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servant's sake, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains; and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there" (65:8-9). The avenging of God's servants would not take place until He had brought forth the holy seed out of Jacob through Judah and His elect had inherited His promised blessings. God then sees the promised end: "But ye are they that forsake the Lord that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear: but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth: because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes" (65:11-16). A more vivid picture of the slaughter, hunger, thirst, shame and vexation of the nation of Israel at Jerusalem in 70 A.D. could not be printed. Nearly 800 years before it happened, God foretold it through Isaiah the prophet.

The closing scenes of this prophecy picture "new heavens and a new earth" followed by a new and different Jerusalem (65:17-25). The destruction of the nation of Israel with their city of Jerusalem had just been pictured and there was promise of new and greater things to come in a new order. The prophecy is Messianic and finds its fulfillment in the church of Christ. It is interesting to note the similarity of the development of events in this prophecy with that of the Apocalypse of John. John first saw the destruction of a city called "Babylon the Great" and, then, his vision closed with "a new heaven and a new earth" which was followed by the "new Jerusalem" (Rev.21:1-2). Truly, the prophecy of Isaiah 64-65 is a foreshadow, if not a forecast, of the Apocalypse!

## Daniel

Daniel, whose prophecies vibrate with mystery and intrigue, likewise foresaw the **end** of the nation of Israel whom he called the **holy people**. Daniel was among the first to be carried prisoner to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made his first sweep into Judah in 605 B.C. and subdued the people. Being one of the **princes of Judah**, he was taken by Nebuchadnezzar and groomed for service in his kingdom (cf. Dan.1:4-6). From the beginning of his captivity in Babylon until the end of the 70 years of captivity (536 B.C.),<sup>33</sup> Daniel prophesied. His prophecies of the nation's final destruction came at a time when Judah was prisoner to Babylon and Jerusalem lay waste from the power of the Babylonian armies. Daniel focused attention upon kingdoms, nations, powers, and kings which were yet to rule the world until the coming of the Messiah and the final desolation of the holy people. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan.2) realistically described the **future history** of the world for the next 600 years. Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon were seen as the first of four great world empires followed by the Medo-Persian Empire (539 B.C.), the Grecian, or Alexanderian, Empire (331 B.C.), and finally the Roman Empire beginning about 31 B.C. Daniel said, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan.2:44). More than six centuries later, this prophecy became a reality when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God to begin His reign over a kingdom that has been in existence since that time (Jn.18:36; Acts 2:29-36; Col.1:13; Heb.12:28; Rev.5:1-10; 11:15; 22:5).

It should be apparent from the prophecy just cited that Daniel's prophecies fit into **timetables** which pinpoint their expected fulfillment. This is true also of his prophecies of the **end** of the Jewish state. Mysterious clues are given that identify the time of their fulfillment. It is interesting to note that, when Daniel's prophecies are understood within the context of their intended meaning, the timetables given by Daniel work out perfectly. On the other hand, when the prophecies are interpreted in the light of speculation and the future, these timetables are shambles and must be rewritten to pacify the speculator. Since "all things

<sup>33</sup> The Babylonian Captivity lasted 70 years (cf. Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10; Dan. 9:2; 2 Chron. 36:20-21)

written” (Lk.21:22) were to be fulfilled in or before the year 70 A.D., the events foretold by Daniel **cannot be projected beyond that date!** All of Daniel's timetables **must** end in 70 A.D. Let us examine some of Daniel's prophecies of the **end** of the nation of Israel. \*\*

### Daniel 8

Near the end of the reign of Belshazzar, Babylon's last king, Daniel saw a vision of a ram with two horns pushing westward, northward and southward, and he became great (8:34). While pondering upon the vision Daniel saw an he goat coming from the west with a notable horn between his eyes. The goat came in the fulness of his fury and clashed head-on with the ram, smote him, took away his power and domain, and ruled in his stead. While there is more to the vision, the explanation given by the angel Gabriel to make Daniel understand the vision should also give us understanding of the intended message. He said to Daniel, “Understand, O son of man: **for at the time of the end shall be the vision ... Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation; for at the time appointed the end shall be.** The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia; and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. **And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full,** a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and **he shall destroy wonderfully,** and shall prosper, and practice, **and shall destroy the mighty and holy people.** And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: **he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes;** but he shall be broken without hand. And the vision of the evening and morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days” (Dan.8:17,19-26).

Six hundred years before these things came to reality in fulfillment God showed them to Daniel. To those who know the history of the development of the world from the time of the Babylonians, the understanding of the vision is simple. The Medes and the Persians overthrew the Babylonians and ruled the world in their stead from 539-332 B.C. In 331 B.C., under Alexander the Great, the Grecians conquered the Medes and Persians and ruled the world. Alexander died

in 323 B.C. His empire fell to his four generals who divided the kingdom into four sections and ruled as kings over them. Civilization remained in this divided state until the rise of the Roman Empire under Julius Caesar. The Romans conquered the world and ruled it with a rod of iron. This is the **king of fierce countenance** who was to magnify himself in his heart, and **destroy the mighty and holy people.** These things were all fulfilled in A.D. 70 as God had said.

### Daniel 9

In the first year of Darius, king of the Medes (539 B.C.), Daniel prayed unto God confessing his sins and the sins of the people of Israel. He prayed, “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: **Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets,** which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee ... Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem, As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us ... We have sinned, we have done wickedly.

“O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain ... and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O My God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, harken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” (Dan.9:5-7,10-13,15,16-19).

The Lord heard the prayer of Daniel and while he was still praying sent Gabriel to give Daniel skill and understanding. Gabriel proceeded by giving the timetable for Israel's continued existence unto the final end.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, for the overspreading of abominations **he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate**” (Dan.9:24-27).

The message of Gabriel was clear and simple. God had determined that the nation of Israel and Jerusalem, their city, would continue until He had brought to pass the things before appointed. Seventy weeks are allotted for the restoration and building of Jerusalem; the coming of the Messiah, the Prince; the finishing of the transgression; the making of an end of sins; making reconciliation for iniquity; the bringing in of everlasting righteousness; the sealing up of the vision and prophecy; and the anointing of the most Holy. After 69 weeks, or during the 70th week, the Messiah would be cut off or killed. Obvious reference is to the death of Christ and all that was accomplished by His death. The Messiah would confirm the covenant with many for one week, obviously the 70th week, and in the **midst** of the week would cause the sacrifices to cease until the end results of the abominations of the nation were brought to their completion in the utter desolation and destruction determined. The prophecy is a forecast of the complete rebuilding of Jerusalem and the fulfillment of all the prophetic promises of the coming Messiah, even unto the end of the nation.

Understanding Gabriel's timetable will be greatly aided by observing a portion of the subject matter in the prophecy. He said 69 weeks would have been completely accomplished when the Messiah would make His

appearance. The 70th week then begins with the personal ministry of Christ. For three and one half years Jesus preached “but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt.15:24). After His death and the subsequent beginning of the preaching of the New Covenant on Pentecost in 30 A.D. (Acts 2), the preaching of His **covenant** was still only to the nation of Israel. Then, after two or three years, the gospel was taken to the Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts 8, 10). This helps to establish the **weeks** of Daniel's prophecy as **weeks of years** with each week standing for **seven** years. It was in the **midst** of this 70th week (of years) that Messiah was “cut off” (offered as sacrifice) in which the transgressions of the nation of Israel came to the full, an end of sins was made, and all else that Gabriel foretold was fulfilled (v.24), with the Holy One being anointed King (Acts 2:29-36). With Gabriel's explanation we can pinpoint the meaning of the timetable he gives. The seventy weeks computes to 490 years. Since the Messiah was **cut off** in the **midst** of the 70th week, i.e., in 30 A.D., the end of the week would have been in 32 or 33 A.D. By moving backward in history 490 years from this date (33 A.D.) we come to the year 457 B.C., the exact year that Ezra left Babylon with permission from Artaxerxes I (Longimanus, 464-424 B.C.) to return to Jerusalem to **restore** the service of God in the temple and make repairs to the house of God (Ezra 7).<sup>34</sup> Thirteen years later Nehemiah left Babylon with orders from the same king to **rebuild the city** and its walls (Neh.1-2). Ezra and Nehemiah then worked together to accomplish the **rebuilding** of the city and the **restoration** of the worship of God at Jerusalem. The prophecy of Gabriel dictated that the time was to be computed “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem” (Dan.9:25). When the 70 weeks are counted from 457 B.C., our timetable ends in 33 A.D. This explanation is reasonable, logical, and scriptural (cf. Ezek.4:6).<sup>35</sup>

Three things within this prophecy need special attention: (1) “The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (9:26). There can be no doubt but that the prophecy is foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Since the city and the temple both lay in ruins at the time of the prophecy, the fulfillment of these things of necessity pointed to a future time. The temple and the city were rebuilt and were not destroyed again until the final destruction in A.D. 70.

<sup>34</sup> Jos., *Ant.*, 11, 5, 2

<sup>35</sup> Halley, Henry H., *Bible Handbook*, (Chicago: Henry H. Halley, 21st ed., 1957), cit. p. 312

Whether Gabriel actually said “the people of the prince” or “the prince of the people” (identifying the Messiah) may be crucial to our understanding the prophecy. It is apparent from the prophecies of Jesus that He identified Himself as the one who would destroy the city and the temple (Lk.13:35; 21:25-32; Acts 6:14; Rev.11:1-2). While this was accomplished through the instrumentality of the Roman armies, it was God and His anointed Prince who carried it out (cf.Rev.11:15). (2) “In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (9:27). Here the personal reference is not to the Roman prince but to the Messiah, and the time reference is not to the period of the destruction but to the 70th week. Reference to cessation of the sacrifices and oblations is not to their offering but to the ceasing of their acceptability. With the offering of Jesus Christ in April of 30 A.D. as the sacrifice for the sins of the world (Jn.1:29; Heb.10:12,14), the acceptability of animal sacrifices for service and for sin ceased (Heb.10:2). The author of Hebrews said that they had “ceased to be offered”; i.e., from God's viewpoint. In reality, they continued to be offered though not accepted by God. (3) “And for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate” (9:27). Desolate means “destitute, or deprived, of inhabitants” (Webster). So, the desolation referred to here is the absence of God from the city and especially from the temple. When Jesus died on the cross offering the final sacrifice that **made an end of sins**, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom (Matt.27:51) as a sign that God no longer dwelt there. Their house was left to them desolate (Matt.23:38), “even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (9:27). As also previously stated, “and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined” (9:26). The determined desolations and **end** of this nation had been announced in the plains of Jodan by Moses nearly 1,000 years earlier. Now, they are reiterated to Daniel by Gabriel. The determined **end** came in 70 A.D., some 37 years after the 70th week in which God fully accomplished all that Gabriel revealed would come to pass within that period. The destruction and **end** were to come after the events of the 70th week.

God's word is perfect and carries its own seals of approval and accuracy. Gabriel said that the 70 weeks were determined “to seal up the vision and prophecy” (9:24), i.e., by the end of the 70th week Daniel's vision and prophecy (all prophecy) would be sealed **S not completed but sealed**. The coming of the Messiah, His death, the making of an end of

sins, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, etc., established the truthfulness of all the prophecies as well as the fact that they were in the process of being fulfilled (cf.Acts 3:18,20-21; 13:26-29,40-41). All of this was apparent by the time the gospel was first preached to the Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts 15:13-17). All of these things sealed both the vision of Daniel and all prophecy as accurate, but the final desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem put the final seal upon the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy (Lk.21:22; Rev.10:7). If Jerusalem was destroyed, the Messiah had come and all prophecy of scripture was fulfilled. **Jerusalem was destroyed!** It follows, therefore, that all the prophecies concerning Israel and Jerusalem have been fulfilled since 70 A.D.!

### Daniel 10-11-12

Since the background has been set by the discussion of the prophecies of chapters eight and nine, the message of chapters 10-12 should be easy to understand. The student is requested to read these chapters for the completeness of the prophecy, since only portions of them will be discussed here.

It was during the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, and Darius, king of the Medes, that Daniel saw the things revealed in these chapters. The year was 538 B.C. Daniel was in a trance when a messenger from God appeared unto him saying, “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days ... I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth” (10:14,21). The messenger continued as he gave Daniel a preview of the history of the world unto the **end** of the nation of Israel. Conflicts between Syria and Egypt over a period of 150 years are prophetically portrayed in unbelievable detail. The growing involvement of Rome in the world politics of the era is clearly seen (cf. vv.18,30). As the earlier chapters in Daniel show, it was by the power of Rome that God's appointed end for Israel would come. Her prophetic appearance in the midst of this chapter is designed to show the development of God's instruments of wrath by which Israel's punishment would come. Verses 36-45 appear to confirm this conclusion as they graphically picture the character of the Roman kings who ruled in their time. Of them Daniel says, “And the king shall do according to his will: and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the

indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done” (11:36). This description given prophetically 500 years ahead of time pictures the Roman emperors who magnified themselves as gods (Rev.13:4-6). Daniel further says, “In his estate shall he honour the God of forces” (11:38), i.e., by his carrying out the indignation against God’s former people, Caesar would honour God even without intending to do so (cf.Rev.17:17).

As we come to the 12th chapter, a closer look is seen as the messenger focuses on the very end. “There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to the same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (12:1). Prophetically, we are introduced to the tribulation described also by Jesus in the discourse delivered from the Mount of Olives two days before his death **S** the tribulation from which the disciples would be delivered (Matt.24; Mk.13; Lk.21). “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (12:4). Daniel’s curious mind then asked, “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (12:6). The answer comes, “It shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (12:7). Well enough. But Daniel did not really understand. He said, “O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” (12:8). The Lord replied, “Go thy way, Daniel: For the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days” (12:8-11). **In these few verses are contained the message of the Book of Revelation!** Let us understand it and reverently bow in awe before our God who revealed its message to us.

### Zechariah

Zechariah, who prophesied while the temple at Jerusalem was being rebuilt (520 B.C.), begins his prophecy with a warning unto the nation of Israel. The word of the Lord came unto him saying, “The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto

whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord, Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words, and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us” (Zech.1:2-6).

After issuing this warning, Zechariah proceeded to tell them that God “shall choose Jerusalem again” (2:12). He continued to show them prophecy after prophecy of the coming Messiah and all the blessings related to it.

### Zechariah 12-14

In chapters 12 and 13 Zechariah began to show the blessedness of the new and different Jerusalem the Lord would create. He contrasted this Jerusalem with the existing one. In it there would “be great mourning” (12:11) and the city rifled and destroyed (14:2). It is often difficult to observe his transition from the new, different Jerusalem, to the old Jerusalem. For this reason, the prophecy must be carefully studied. It is clear, however, in the beginning of chapter 14 that he is discussing the old Jerusalem. “Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off (lit., shall not be taken away) from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (14:1-3). The prophecy continues showing that a way of escape would be provided for the servants of God. Jerusalem, which at the time of this prophecy was still in ruins, was to be rebuilt and destroyed again. Half of the inhabitants would go into captivity and the rest would die there. This is precisely what happened to Jerusalem in 70 A. D.

As we come to the close of this section of our study, it is fair to say that **the mystery of God** declared to His servants the prophets included the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. In fact, these and other prophecies scattered throughout the Old Testament scriptures tell us clearly that **the mystery of God** was not finished until they were all fulfilled. Many others could be examined but these are sufficient to

show that the events that happened to Jerusalem in 70 A.D. were of such importance in the scheme of things to merit special attention. This is why we believe that one entire book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, was written to show the completion of it all. When Daniel saw his visions, he was told to “shut up the vision; for it shall be for many days” (Dan.8:26) and, again, to “shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end” (Dan.12:4). When John saw his visions, however, he was told to “seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand” (Rev.22:10). The **end** had come! And John had just been privileged to see it beforehand and reveal it unto God's servants then living. In the section to come, let us examine briefly the teaching of the New Testament relative to this notable event.

### The Teaching Of Jesus

The writing of the books of the New Testament did not begin until after 50 A.D., 20 years after the New Covenant came into effect. The history of the life of Christ and the history of the beginning and spread of Christianity are all contained in the books written by the inspiration of God (2 Tim.3:16-17). The doctrine of the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem found its way into these books and is so woven into the fiber of their teaching that there can be no mistake about this doctrine's origin, purpose, or final execution. One must needs be blind not to observe it. Jesus dealt with it often, particularly during the last nine months of his personal ministry. We now observe some passages where he specifically dealt with this matter.

#### Luke 11:45-52

This text is quoted and discussed on page 21. The student is requested to read it again. These words spoken by the Lord not long after His transfiguration in the regions of Ceasarea Philippi were to show that the transgressions of the nation were coming to the “full” and that God would send them “prophets and apostles”, some of whom they would persecute and slay, “that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world” might be required of that generation. He was specific about it. “It shall be required of this generation” (11:51)! The word **generation** means “the whole multitude of men living at the same time, ... a period ordinarily occupied by each successive generation,

say, of thirty or forty years.”<sup>36</sup> Jesus was saying that within the next 30 to 40 years God was going to require of the nation of Israel vengeance for **the blood of the prophets**. It came 40 years later **S** 70 A. D.

#### Luke 13:1-9

In this text Jesus discussed two incidents that happened ill Jerusalem. (1) Pilate had slain some Galileans and mingled their blood with their sacrifices, and (2) eighteen persons had been killed by the fall of the tower of Siloam. Jesus said, “Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” While Jesus' words may be applied to perishing in hell, it is apparent that He is talking about what would happen in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. He illustrated His point by a parable. “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” Read and understand.

#### Matthew 22:1-10

As time drew near for the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus, He related a parable to illustrate the consequences of it all to the nation of Israel. He spoke of a certain king who invited many to a marriage feast for his son, but they refused, making light of it, mistreating, and even killing some of his servants. Jesus said, “But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.” He then invited other guests to come. The meaning of the parable is easy to comprehend. God was the king, Christ His son, and Israel the invited guests. But Israel refusing to come mistreated the prophets and servants of God. The end result was the destruction of their city, Jerusalem, as vengeance from God.

#### Luke 19:41-44

As Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Sunday of his

<sup>36</sup> Vine, Vol. I, p. 42

last week, “he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” Read and understand.

### **Matthew 23:29-39; Luke 13:28-35**

These texts are quoted and discussed on pages 20 and 21. Their message is clear and can be summed up in these words: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” Another parable spoken by Jesus within the same time frame and dealing with the same matter is found in Luke 20:9-18. The reader is requested to read this text also.

### **Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-36**

Matthew, Mark and Luke give accounts of the discourse of Jesus as He left Jerusalem on His final day before His trial and crucifixion. In this discussion with His disciples He foretold the **end** of the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem and gave signs to precede the completion of these events. The reader is encouraged to read each of these chapters carefully and to consider the observations made herein concerning that discourse. Only portions will be quoted as we follow Matthew's account.

As Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple for the last time and observing the costly buildings pertaining to it, Jesus said, “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you. There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (24:2). Arriving at the Mount of Olives, “the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (24:3). From the questions recorded by Matthew some have surmised that the disciples understood Jesus to have been talking about what would happen at the end of the world when all things are to be burned up (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-12) and have, therefore, interpreted this discourse in view of **the final coming of Christ and the destruction of the heavens and the earth. This assumption is unwarranted,**

**unmerited, inaccurate, untenable, and filled with scriptural problems!** The questions as related by Mark and Luke clear up the matter: “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?” (Mk. 13:4), or “come to pass?” (Lk. 21:7). All the questions, in reality, refer to the same event and the answer given pertains only to one event, i.e., “when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?” The questions concerning “thy coming” and “the end of the world” likewise had reference to the same event. Jesus had taught them these things before (Matt. 24:25). They understood that a **coming** of the Son of man was involved in the wrath that Jesus described. Only a few days before Jesus had said, “The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.” Again, “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man” (Lk. 17:22,26). By these statements Jesus indicated that there would be **more than one day** of the Son of man. In the same context He says, “So shall also the Son of man be in his day.” Again, “Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (Lk. 17:24,30). In other words, Jesus had taught His disciples that there would be **days** (plural) when the Son of man would be revealed. He gave characteristics of how people would be conducting themselves in those days and some things that would happen in them. Earlier Jesus foretold that there would be some early **comings** of the Son of man. He had said to His disciples that some of them would “not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. 16:28; cf. Mk. 9:1). He came in His kingdom as evidenced on Pentecost (Acts 2:29-36). There are no indications that anyone saw Him personally with the human eye, yet they did see evidence of His presence in the power of His comforter, the Holy Spirit. Peter called attention to His manifestation in the miracles, wonders and signs performed on that day (2:33). This was **one** of the “days of the Son of man!” Again, He had said to His disciples, “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come” (Matt. 10:23). What did He mean? Certainly He could not have had reference to His first coming, and it is unreasonable to think He had reference to His second personal coming. Either He had reference to His **coming** on Pentecost or in the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 24:30). When Jesus stood before the wicked council which falsely accused and finally condemned Him to death, He said, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64). Can there be any question about



the **coming** here described? It is the **coming** of Matthew 24:30 when the city was to be destroyed without one stone being left upon another and was to occur in that “generation” (24:34). Jesus did not mean that they would visually see the Son of man in this **coming** any more than they saw Him on Pentecost but that they would see His presence manifested in the fulfillment of His predictions of the utter destruction of the city. So, when the disciples asked, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”, they were not asking about the **coming at the end of time** but about His coming in the destruction of Jerusalem which would be at the **end of the world** (Lit. “end of the age,” meaning the end of the Jewish age or dispensation). Any attempt to apply all or even part of this discourse to the “coming” of Christ at the end of time is to involve oneself in a multitude of contradictions.

The disciples had asked Jesus for signs pertaining to the fulfillment of **these things**, and He proceeded to give them. He presented a number of general signs **S** identifiable events which would affect the world before **these things** were fulfilled. There would be the rise of false Christs and prophets (24:4,5,11,23-24), wars and rumors of wars (24:6-7), famines, pestilence and earthquakes in divers places (24:7) and, Luke adds, “fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven” (Lk.21:11).<sup>37</sup> “But the end is not yet” (24:6). It is only “the beginning of sorrows” (24:8). Jesus then informed His disciples of signs that would affect Christians. The disciples would be afflicted, killed and hated of all nations for His name's sake (24:9); many would be offended and would betray and hate one another (24:10); iniquity would abound; the love of many would grow cold (24:12); “the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world; ... and then shall the end come” (24:14; cf.Col.1:23). Each and every one of these signs was fulfilled in glowing detail before Jerusalem was destroyed and can be documented as fulfilled either by the scriptures or by Josephus, the historian!

Jesus then gave His disciples a specific sign to look for and upon observing it, they were immediately to flee the region. Notice: “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains,” etc. (24:15). (For discussion on the prophecy of Daniel concerning the “abomination of

desolation,” see pages 54-61). Luke explains the meaning of the passage by relating other words of the Lord so that the Gentile world might understand this sign. He said, “When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains,” etc. (Lk.21:20). The “abomination of desolation,” mentioned by Daniel, was the Roman army marshalled to destroy the city and make it desolate. It stood in “the place where it ought not” (Mk.13:14), or “the holy place” (Matt.24:15), i.e., in and around the Holy City. This occurred for the first time after Jesus spoke these words in the fall of 66 A.D. when Cestius Gallus, president of the province of Syria, marched on Jerusalem, surrounded the city and would have taken it had he not, for some unknown reason, withdrawn from the city.<sup>38</sup> His withdrawal at that time afforded the Christians within the city and the surrounding area of Judea the opportunity to obey the Lord's command to “flee to the mountains.”

Jesus described the events leading up to this point as “the beginning of sorrows,” but the events to follow this **beginning** are described as “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor even shall be.” (24:21). He further adds, “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened” (24:22).<sup>39</sup> In these most descriptive terms Jesus portrayed the suffering the Jews had to absorb as **wrath** from God (Lk.21:23). Josephus shows how that the suffering of the Jews throughout the world was such that it fully met the Lord's description. He said, “It appears to me that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they be compared to these of the Jews, are not so considerable as they were.”<sup>40</sup>

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (24:29-30). In these words modern speculators see the end of time, but they disregard this one thing: the language used here by Jesus is symbolic descriptive of doom and destruction as often used by the Old Testament prophets! The

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 19, 7

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 18, 1-11

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface, 4

<sup>37</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 6, 5, 2-3

sun being darkened is symbolic of God's light "going out" on (in) a nation (cf. Isa. 13:10; 24:21-23; Jer. 15:9; Ezek. 32:4-8; Joel 2:1-11; 3:14-15; Amos 8:9; Rev. 6:12-13), and the moon refusing to give her light is symbolic of the same thing (*Ibid.*). The stars of heaven falling is symbolic of dignitaries of nations falling or being brought to an end (cf. Dan. 8:10), and the powers of the heavens being shaken is symbolic of the great shaking up of governments. Such was the case in both the Roman empire and the Jewish state. The idea of the passage is that the Son of man was coming to carry out God's judgment upon the nation of Israel (cf. Jn. 5:22,27) with the result that God no longer would permit His light to shine upon her. The end was near, even at the doors. Jesus said, "When ye shall see these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (24:33-34). There was to be no mistake about it. It would happen during the lifetime of some of those that heard Him deliver this discourse. To emphasize the certainty of His message, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (24:35-36). He then called upon the disciples to be watchful "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (24:42), i.e., "come" in this horrible destruction of the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. He reasoned with them to be faithful and watchful, not only for this coming disaster, but also with the final judgment in view (25:1-46). It is often contended that Matthew 24:1-35 applies only to the destruction of Jerusalem but that the rest of the discourse must be applied to the second coming of Christ. A study of Luke 17:22-37 will reveal that the principles contained in Matthew 24:36-51 apply to any day of the Lord and, therefore, did have application to the destruction of Jerusalem. While the principles of these verses had primary application to the destruction of Jerusalem, they may also be applied to the end of time; the final **day of the Lord** (2 Pet. 3:10-12).

This discourse, delivered by Jesus to His disciples from the Mount of Olives, completely foretold in detail the end of the nation of Israel and the destruction of their city, Jerusalem. Forty years later, in 70 A.D., it was carried out to the full. More than any other monument, that historical event stands as a witness to the accuracy of the testimony contained in God's word. **This is the message of the Book of Revelation as reflected in chapter five by the completely sealed (seven) book in the right hand of God!** Those seals stand for the signet of God's full and final approval

upon the **word of God** given through Jesus Christ. To interpret it in the light of anything else is to miss the glorious message of this marvelous book.

### Luke 23:28-31

Two days after Jesus foretold Jerusalem's destruction in detail, He made His way to Calvary. A great company, including women who bewailed and lamented Him, followed. He turned and said unto them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry." Jesus said that those women and their children would have something to weep about in their generation. And weep they did in 70 A.D. when the city was destroyed!

No less than a dozen occasions can be cited when Jesus discussed this notable event during His personal ministry. It was the source of many warnings and calls to repentance. The nation was doomed to destruction. Jesus died in the city to seal its **end** which followed in due time and marked the end of God's use of the nation of Israel in the scheme of things. Israel could no longer claim to be God's people and Jerusalem could no longer boast of itself **as the Holy City**. The church of Christ can now claim to be God's people as they inhabit the new and heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 21:1-22:15) which God promised from of old (Isa. 65:7-25). **This is the message of the Book of Revelation!**

### The Apostolic Doctrine

New Testament teaching on this monumental matter **S** the destruction of Jerusalem **S** did not cease with the death of Christ. The disciples and the apostles of Christ continued to hold these things before the people of Israel. Following his healing of the lame man (Acts 3:1-10), Peter declared how God had fulfilled the prophecies of the things Christ was to suffer (Acts 3:18). He then said unto them, "Repent ... and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21). Did Peter

mean that Jesus' **coming** would be in the destruction of Jerusalem, as our Lord had foretold (Matt.24:29-30), or would it be at the end of time? Whichever, one thing is clear: Jesus would stay in heaven until the **restitution of all things** which God had spoken by the prophets! **Restitution** carries with it not only the idea of **restoring** but even the **consummation** or the completion of an agreement.<sup>41</sup> So, the **restitution of all things** actually involved the fulfilling of God's promise to carry out His agreement with Israel unto the consummation of it (cf. Dan.9:27; Isa.10:22-23). **This happened in 70 A.D. when all things written were fulfilled** (Lk.21:22; Rev.10:7)!

A short time later when members of the Jewish synagogue challenged Stephen and “were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake, ... they suborned men” (Acts 6:10-11) to testify that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and God. As they brought him before the council, they set up false witnesses who said, “This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Acts 6:13-14). It is apparent from the charge that they did not misunderstand the message because the message of Stephen was the same as that spoken by the Lord during His personal ministry. They failed to understand that Stephen's words were not blasphemy but truth. Granted permission to speak to the council, he rehearsed the history of Israel from Abraham to Solomon showing how their fathers had rebelled against God, even giving themselves over to idolatry. Stephen, upbraiding them sharply, concluded by saying, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One: of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it” (Acts 7:51-53). Since hearing Stephen's message previously and using it as a basis for charging him with blasphemy, it is obvious why they so accused him. His sermon was the message of Israel's **utter destruction** found in Deuteronomy 28-32! Israel's doom was at hand but the national leaders refused to recognize it. Their hearts had become stones!

Approximately 20 years later the apostle Paul appealed to the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia to accept Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah and warned them of the consequences of rejecting “im: “Beware lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you” (Acts 13:40-41). Paul indicated that there was a “wrath” in the prophecies yet to be fulfilled. He quoted from Habakkuk 1:5 where God promised punishment to Israel through the Babylonians and implied an identical thing to come on the Jews of his day. It came in 70 A.D. with the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. Doubtless it was this kind of teaching that caused the Jews of Asia to accuse him, saying, “This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place” (Acts 21:28).

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul discussed God's true Israel (cf. Rom.9). He says, “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (9:6-7). Though they were the seed of Abraham physically, the Jews were not necessarily the seed of the promise. God's **spiritual** Israel are the seeds of promise (cf. Rom.2:28-29; 9:8). Paul then raised the question, “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles ... Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth” (Rom.9:19-24,27-28; cf. Isa.10:20-23). There can be no mistake about it. Though Israel had long been fitted for destruction because of rebellion against God and idolatry, God had been patient that the remnant might be saved. However, the time of the end was now near and Paul was preaching that it was on its way. About five years earlier he had written to the Thessalonians:

<sup>41</sup> Vine, Vol. III, p. 289

“For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thess.2:14-16). Paul pictured the wrath God had promised as having already begun. The Holy Spirit interpreted the troubles the Jews were having in Rome during the reign of Claudius Caesar as the beginning of this “wrath” being poured out (cf. Acts 18:2). First Thessalonians, thought to be the first of Paul’s epistles, was written about the time Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome. Hence, it is easy to interpret this action as an outpouring of God’s wrath.

In Hebrews 10:30 the writer warned of the consequences of the Jewish rejection of Jesus Christ as their sacrifice for sin and as their High Priest. He said, “For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people.” He quoted from Deuteronomy 32:35,36, the context of which foretold the **end**, even the **latter end**, of the nation of Israel. He then said, “Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb.10:37). This is the closing message of the Book of Revelation: “Behold, I come quickly” (22:7,20)! Later in the epistle to the Hebrews, the writer said, “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” (12:25-27). The writer had just shown that the Jewish Christians no longer served under the Law of Moses (12:18-21). “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, ... And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant” (12:22-24). Quoting from Haggai 2:5-9 (cf. 12:26), the writer then foretold the great shake up that would come in 70 A.D. When Haggai spoke the words quoted by the Hebrew writer he was encouraging the Jews to finish the work of rebuilding the temple destroyed by the Babylonians some 65 years earlier. God had promised them that the temple would be rebuilt and be filled

with glory but, He said, “Yet once, in a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth.” The Hebrew author says that “yet once more” **signified** “the removing of those things that are shaken!” They had been shaken in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and the city of Jerusalem. But God said that in the last shaking they would be **removed**. And removed they were, never to be built again, in 70 A. D., when the temple and the city were destroyed by the Roman armies!

Our hearts throb within us when we consider the magnitude of the message of all these passages! The events which they foretold had a twofold design: to show God’s wrath and to make known His power (Rom.9:22). This is also the message of the Book of Revelation: to show God’s wrath (Rev.6:17; 16:1-21) and to make known His power (Rev.11:15-18). The wrath of God poured out upon the nation of Israel was planned, promised and executed by the Throne of God. **There has never been a day of wrath before or since which compares in magnitude to it!** Let the readers carefully weigh these facts before considering the contents of the Book of Revelation for the book portrays the most monumental **day of wrath** ever executed upon mankind. Read and understand.

## SECTION 3

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We now turn our attention away from the scriptural predictions of the fall of Israel to the historical setting in which these things were fulfilled. Our understanding of “the mystery of God” and its accomplishment would not be complete without comprehending the development of the **instruments of wrath** through which they were carried out. In this connection we should understand the development of the Roman Empire, for, according to prophecy, this earthly government was to be God’s implement of destruction upon the nation of Israel.

## The Rise Of Rome

As often stated, “Rome was not built in a day.” While the antiquity of the city of Rome does not parallel that of ancient Babylon, Nineveh, or even Jerusalem, it was to become the seat of an **empire** rich in historical fortunes and destined for power and glory. Rome was founded in 753 B.C., only 32 years before the Kingdom of Israel was invaded by Assyria and carried away into the Assyrian captivity. Named for its founder and first king, Romulus, Rome planted the seed of democracy in its foundation process. From the start a Senate was formed from among the nobles of the people and continued in concept throughout its existence as a nation. Its early government was monarchical and for 250 years was ruled by kings appointed for life by the Senate. This system of government continued through seven kings until a rebellion of citizens in 509 B.C. cast out the kings and formed the Roman Republic which governed this city-state for the next 478 years.

## The Roman Republic

As a **republic** the Senate was the principal governing body in the rule of Rome. The Senate appointed consuls who served as chiefs of state. Though each term was brief, the office-holder was a virtual dictator while serving. The citizens of Rome had become so intolerant of kings that the mention of their names spelled fear and anger; hence, the Romans permitted their consuls to rule only six months at a time lest they usurp authority and rule as kings. This pattern obtained until the **republic** became the **empire** in 31 B.C.

During the period of the republic, Rome began to flex its muscle and expand its territory and influence. The history of Rome’s expansion may be divided into three periods. (1) From 509 to 264 B.C. Rome expanded its power to control the whole of Italy. (2) From 264 to 133 B.C., the period of the Punic Wars and the conquest of foreign lands, Rome conquered Sicily, Carthage, Greece, Macedonia and Asia Minor. (3) From 133-31 B.C. Rome continued to expand amidst problems. Demands for social and political reforms led to much internal strife and conflict within the upper echelons of government which finally resulted in the downfall of the republic and the rise of the empire. It was during this period that Spain, Gaul, Briton, Syria, Judea and the Teutons were all brought under the wings of the Roman power, though Judea was not at this time elevated to the realm of a Roman “province.”

## The Roman Empire

The transfer of power from the republic to the empire took about 30 years. The process which began about 61 B.C., in the troublesome times of the republic, culminated in 31 B.C. In the early days of the transformation “the imperial mind of Julius Caesar seized the crumbling constitution, arrested its fall, and, by instituting a strong central government under an absolute monarch, preserved for half a thousand years the vast domain which it had taken the republic half a thousand years to win.”<sup>42</sup> He had fought, struggled, and worked his way to the top. Finally, with his defeat of Pompey in 48 B.C., “the Romans heaped their honors upon him **S** the consulship for five years, the tribunate for life, the dictatorship for one year.”<sup>43</sup> In reality, they gave him everything that accompanied imperial power except the title of emperor. He immediately began solidifying his power and control. He swept through Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor, bringing all into submission to Rome. It was these victories that led to his famous words, “I came, I saw, I conquered.” After subduing all of Africa and Spain he returned to Rome with the empire firmly in his hand. “The republic survived in form alone. Caesar was really king or emperor of Rome. The Senate **S** what was left of it after the Civil war **S** and the public assemblies existed only to give formal assent to his decrees. He wore the purple robe of royalty, but the old prejudice against kings denied him the title and crown. Yet he was made

<sup>42</sup> Joy, James Richard, *Rome And The Making Of Modern Europe*, (New York: Flood And Vincent, 1893), p. 100

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140

dictator for ten years, and then became censor and high priest for life .... All responsible authority centered in himself as monarch of the Roman Empire .... From the chief executive power in the State, the Senate was degraded to the place of an advisory council.”<sup>44</sup> “Between 46 and the Ides of March 44 no emperor before Diocletian was more imperial. He was recognized officially as ‘demigod’; temples were dedicated to his ‘clemency.’”<sup>45</sup>

Caesar’s ascension to power, however, was not without opposition. “The trappings of the dictatorship aroused the Roman prejudice against kings. Caesar’s purple robe and golden chair, his concentrated power, and his selection of his own successor, were sufficient evidence of the regal nature of his position; still he put away the offered crown.”<sup>46</sup> The smoldering fires of anger among the degraded senators erupted into full flame when, on March 15, 44 B.C., 60 members of the Senate attacked him on the Senate floor. With daggers in hand they inflicted 23 wounds which insured his death. With cries of “Liberty is restored” they celebrated what they thought was the end of Imperialism, but “*his deadly wound was healed*” (cf. Rev. 13:3) and the empire survived. After 13 years of uncertainty, disorder and strife “a general and a statesman crushed the whole frail fabric of the republic and made himself monarch of the Roman world. He fell a victim to the sentimental attachment which a few still cherished for the old Commonwealth, but the republic never got upon its feet again; after a dozen years of divided sovereignty the Caesarian power was reunited in the person of Caesar Octavianus, the nephew of Julius, and the very person whom the great founder of the empire had chosen to succeed him.”<sup>47</sup>

### **Augustus Caesar, 31 B.C. – 14 A.D.**

Augustus extended the borders of the empire, especially in the northern sectors, and safely secured the empire on all frontiers. At home, he organized the administration of the affairs of state to the extent that the material needs of Rome, all Italy and the provinces were met. Peace and order reigned supreme as industrial and commercial growth within the empire brought prosperity and happiness to its citizens. It was during the

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142

<sup>45</sup> I.S.B.E., *Roman Empire*, Vol. IV, p. 2598

<sup>46</sup> Joy, p. 145

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154

reign of Augustus that Christ was born.

### **Tiberius Caesar, 14-37 A.D.**

Upon the death of Augustus, his stepson, Tiberius, whom he had appointed heir apparent, became emperor. Though Tiberius was an able and conscientious ruler, his stern handling of a conspiracy earned for him the label of **tyrant** by those living in Rome. He was an understanding and compassionate man in many ways. Particularly in times of disaster these qualities gained for him respect throughout the provinces. It was during his reign that Jesus was crucified.

### **Caius Caesar, 37-41 A.D.**

Caligula, grandnephew of Tiberius, aspired to the throne and was nothing short of a madman. He ruled Rome through four years of insanity, filling it with terror, horror, and atrocities of every sort. It was this Caesar who first ran headlong into confrontation with the Jews by proclaiming himself a god and ordering his statue erected in the temple in Jerusalem. This confrontation alone would have caused all out war between the Jews and Romans had he not been murdered by his guard.

### **Claudius Caesar, 41-54 A.D.**

Upon the death of Caligula, hopes of restoring the republic were once again being entertained but the praetorian hastily seized upon Claudius, the uncle of Caligula, and made him emperor. Claudius was a timid, awkward stammerer and self-trained scholar, though considered a fool by his early peers. Surprisingly, however, he grasped the reins of government firmly and proved to be one of the most noble and beloved of the emperors. During the latter part of his reign trouble broke out with Jews living in Rome and resulted in their being expelled from the city (cf. Acts 18:2).

### **Nero Caesar, 54-68 A.D.**

Nero, stepson of Claudius, assumed the rule of Rome at age 16. During the early years of his reign, he was surrounded by wise and prudent men who assisted in holding the affairs of government intact. In the latter third of his reign, Nero withdrew from the influence of his good advisers, slipped into a state of corruption unparalleled in Roman history and became a monster in behavior. He was accused of setting fire to the city of Rome in the summer of 64 A.D. to clear the way for more

beautiful and glamorous buildings. It is said that “Nero fiddled while Rome burned.” Blaming Christians within Rome for the **fire**, he instigated the first Roman persecution against Christians. This onslaught became one of the most cruel in all history. While there is little historical evidence that this Roman persecution against Christians extended beyond the city, it should be remembered that Paul and other noted Christians were martyred there during this period. Seeing the empire in the east beginning to crumble because of unrest among the Jews, Nero sent Vespasian, his trusted general, into Syria in the early part of 67 A.D. with orders to conquer the Jews and bring them into submission. Facing a death sentence handed down by the Senate and amid reports of revolt throughout the provinces, Nero ended his own life on June 9, 68 A.D.

### **Vespasian, 69-79 A.D.**

Upon the death of Nero the imperial throne fell into a state of confusion. The legions in Spain proclaimed Galba emperor. Before he had time to establish his rule, however, he was thrust from the throne by Otho, who was supported by the Praetorians. Then Vitellius, head of the Army of the Rhine, quickly disposed of Otho. Then, after a very brief stay in the palace in Rome, Vitellius was dragged from his position of power and slain. Next came Vespasian. At the insistence of his soldiers who were with him in the war against the Jews, Vespasian left the war and went toward Rome to claim the throne for himself. Upon hearing the news of the fall of Vitellius, the people of Alexandria, Egypt, lined the streets and acclaimed Vespasian emperor. He began immediately to restore order in all areas where revolt had broken out. It was at this time that he dispatched Titus, his son, to Judea with orders to subdue the Jews, destroy Jerusalem and finish the war. This he did in 70 A.D.

### **Titus, 79-81 A.D.**

Titus, son of Vespasian, had been associated with his father in the government since the day he took office. His kindness and indulgence toward the peoples of the empire had gained for him popularity and respect. He was one of the most popular of the emperors.

### **Domitian, 81-96 A.D.**

Domitian, brother of Titus, entered the imperial domain upon the death of his brother. He was a stern taskmaster. He began his reign with what promised to be a mild and equable display of power, but the drain

of the wars that plagued his reign soon changed his temper. None of his predecessors were his equal in their barbarian treatment of their fellowman. Many believe he instigated the second Roman persecution against Christians in 95 and 96 A.D. \*

### **The Jews Under The Romans**

In 536 B.C., under Cyrus king of Persia, the Jews were permitted to return from the Babylonian captivity to their homeland to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem and resettle Judea. More than 42,000 Israelites returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a descendant of David and rightful heir to the throne, and Jeshua, a priest and rightful heir to the office of High priest. These two men shared the leadership of the newly formed Judean community until the temple was completed (Zech.4). Apparently the government of Judea then returned to the earlier theocracy with the High Priest as the sovereign ruler under the Law of Moses. The affairs of state were controlled by the ruling Medes and Persians through governors sent to protect their interests in Judea. The Judean state continued under this arrangement until Alexander the Great conquered the world bringing the Jews under his domain about 330 B.C.

After the death of Alexander, the Grecian Empire was divided among his four generals. Egypt was ruled by Ptolemy and Syria by Seleucus. In an effort to strengthen his position in Egypt, Ptolemy conquered Judea but, due to a treaty dispute with Seleucus of Syria, he permitted Judea to become a buffer state. Then followed more than a century of warring between Egypt and Syria over possession of Judea with most of the battles on Judean soil. Throughout this period Jerusalem remained only an obscure town with its temple of God. When the Hellenistic period came, however, great cultural changes took place in Judea, and Jerusalem began to grow and develop into a prominent metropolis again. In 171 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, entered and conquered Jerusalem, profaned the temple, dedicated it to his god, Zeus Olympus, and forbade the Jews to observe the Law of Moses under penalty of death. Having endured the cruelties of this barbarian king for 30 years, the Jews revolted against the Syrians and, under the leadership of the Maccabeus brothers, established an independent Jewish State in 142 B.C. This Jewish State continued no longer as a theocracy but as a commonwealth.

### Alliances of Friendship

On the western horizon the Romans were rising to power. Great conquests had already been made by the Romans in Italy, Sicily, Carthage, Greece, Macedonia and Asia Minor. Seeking to avoid the inevitable, shortly after the establishment of the independent state, Judean Jews formed friendship alliances with Rome.<sup>48</sup>

### The Rule of Herod

During the period of the Commonwealth the **synagogue** was developed to involve the Jews throughout the world in their religion. The system worked well. Soon after its inauguration, however, the Jews chose Simon Hasmonean as High Priest and governor. He usurped the authority granted him and set up a monarchy. His successor sons were tyrannical kings who oppressed the Jews while expanding the borders of Judea by foreign conquests. After the reigns of five kings and a queen, named Alexandra, civil strife erupted between the two sons of that queen and ended only after the Romans had entered the picture. Antipater, called the Idumean, seeing an opportunity to exploit the conflict between the two feuding brothers, schemed to gain supreme power in Judea. At that time Pompey, the successful conquering general of the Roman Armies in the East, was at Damascus, Syria. Antipater arranged a meeting between the two feuding brothers and Pompey. This resulted in war between some of the Jews and the Roman forces. Pompey moved on Jerusalem. After a struggle of three months, Pompey conquered the city, made Hycanus High Priest and governor, and thus brought Judea under the power of Rome. Civil War continued between the two brothers until Julius Caesar defeated Pompey. Now supreme in the empire, Julius Caesar reorganized the Roman government. He made Antipater procurator and, in turn, appointed Antipater's sons Phasael and Herod governors of Jerusalem and Galilee, respectively.

During the next ten years Herod's desire to please the Romans exalted him to a position of trust with them. In 37 B.C. the Roman Senate, acting upon the recommendation of Anthony, proclaimed Herod king of Judea. With the help of the Roman Army, Herod captured Jerusalem and began his reign as king. He was later confirmed as king for life by the decree of Augustus Caesar. Herod died in 3 B.C. During his reign Jesus

was born. It was he who desired to put the baby Jesus to death.

Herod was the most wicked king ever to rule the nation of Israel. There was no end to his murderous tyrants against his own family and his enemies. The land was filled with the blood he shed. Nevertheless "Herod the Great", progenitor of the other Herods, was perhaps the most generous Roman ruler the Jews ever had. He declared himself their protector and patron, and built both Jerusalem and the temple to their highest degree of magnificence and beauty since the Babylonian destruction of 586 B.C. If it were possible for one to be the most loved and most hated at the same time, surely Herod would have qualified! It was during his kingship that the seeds of discord that would erupt into open conflict in the seventh decade A.D. were sown. "The younger generation seethed with revolt against enslavement by Rome and its vassal, Herod. The winds of revolt were rising steadily, and heavy clouds darkened the horizons of Jewish-Roman relationships. The storm shifted from Judea to Galilee; and out of Galilee came Judas of Galilee and Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>49</sup>

Upon the death of Herod, Augustus granted the governorship of Judea to Archelaus, Herod's son, but the rest of Herod's domain was divided among Herod's other children. The reign of Archelaus was brief. The influential men of Judea and Samaria, intolerant of his barbarous and tyrannical usage of them, accused him before Caesar. Their pleas resulted in his banishment to Gaul after only ten years reign.

### Judea, A Roman Province

Reversing an earlier judgment, Augustus made Judea a Roman province to be ruled by a procurator with full judicial powers. The procurators resided in Cesarea where the Roman Army was also stationed. Only a cohort remained in Jerusalem. Augustus appointed Coponius as the first procurator (6-9 A.D.), followed by Marcus Ambibulus (9-12 A.D.), Annius Rufus (12-15 A.D.), Gratus (15-26 A.D.), Pilate (26-36 A.D.), Marcellus (36-37 A.D.), and Marullus (37-41 A.D.). (cf. chart page 93.) When Claudius came to the throne of Rome in 41 A.D., he approached ruling of the Jews differently and appointed his good friend Agrippa I to be king over Judea. He evidently thought that a king of the Jewish faith would resolve the disturbances among the Jews, but after

<sup>48</sup> Jos., *ant.*, 12, 10, 6; 13, 5, 8; 13, 7, 3; 13, 11 2

<sup>49</sup> Zeitlin, p. 49



Agrippa's sudden death, three years later, Claudius returned Judea's rule to a procurator. Fadus ruled as procurator for two years (44-46 A.D.). Then came Cumaiius (48-52 A.D.), Felix (52-60 A.D.), Festus (60-62 A.D.?), Albinus (63-64 A.D.?), and Florus (64-66 A.D.?). When Judea became a Roman province, the Jews were ruled with a rod of iron. Former oppressions were as nothing compared to that of Rome. The procurators ruling with iron thumbs provoked constant conflict with the Jews. The simmering fires of resentment, first kindled when Herod the Great was king, gradually were fanned and ultimately burst into open flame. Open revolt resulted in all out war between the Jews and Romans in the decade between 60 and 70 A.D.

### Prelude To War

The desolation of the nation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. were the culmination of predetermined events. The inevitable end to which the nation came was demanded by two basic factors: the justice of God which demands that rebellion and idolatry be punished, and the unique nature of the sovereign power of the Roman Empire which demanded that the state be served preeminently. Nothing could have prevented it. Once the course Israel would travel was set, these two forces worked together to bring about the end of the Jewish State.

The conflict which eventually came was not unexpected or without warning. The Jews, afflicted many times previously, knew that oppression by foreign powers meant the loss of religious freedom and that their unique position as God's people would not permit them willingly to submit to such slavery. Their **Law and the prophets** were ever before them. They knew what the ultimate end was to be. As already suggested, this is why they sought friendly alliances with Rome approximately 75 years before Rome conquered them. They sought to protect their religious heritage from the domination of that foreign power. Once they could no longer enjoy their civil freedom, however, they immediately plead for their religious freedom. And they won! Appealing to Julius Caesar and the Roman Senate for licence to exercise their religious freedom, the Jews won the right to continue their worship without interference from the Roman powers. Josephus cites a number of decrees issued by Caesar, the Senate and other authorities, guaranteeing the rights of the Jews to

worship God according to their Law.<sup>50</sup> This is especially interesting in view of the fact that the empire permitted the continuance of religious freedom only if it served the interests of the Roman State. In the case of Judaism, religion ran head on into conflict with the Roman State.

Early in the rule of Rome, it was apparent there would be confrontations with the ruling powers over religious rights. Herod provoked the Jews first by introducing inscriptions and trophies into Jerusalem which the Jews considered images.<sup>51</sup> The Jews caused many disturbances because of them. Time and again Herod and his successors incited the Jews to rebellion but always withdrew their projects in time to avert all out war. In this sense the Jews and Jerusalem exercised dominion over the kings of the earth (cf. Rev. 17:18).

Rome sought to exercise supreme civil authority over the whole world, including the Jews, but the Jewish Religion exercising absolute authority over the Jews of the world demanded primary allegiance to Jerusalem, the center of Jewish worship. A conflict of gigantic proportions developed. Of this, Solomon Zeitlin said, "There was a deeper basis for the growing antagonism between Jew and Roman, an antagonism rooted in different and conflicting ideologies. It was a conflict between Rome and Jerusalem, between the Jewish conception of the state and the Roman conception of the state. To the Jew, the state was subordinate to religion. Religion to the Jew was the supreme arbiter in the life of man. To Imperial Rome, religion was secondary to the state; the state was supreme. Therefore, an irrepressible conflict was in the making between the governors and the governed. The Jews considered the Romans not only as destroyers of their political independence but also as oppressors of their religion. The Romans, for their part, were deeply agitated by the stubborn resistance of the Jews politically as well as by their religious teaching about a universal God supreme over the state."<sup>52</sup> The conflict was a natural one growing out of Jewish respect for the first commandment: "I am the Lord thy God, ... Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,

<sup>50</sup> Jos., *Ant.*, 14, 10, 1-26

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 8, 1

<sup>52</sup> Zeitlin, p. 54

visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Ex.20:2-6).

When Emperor-Worship was required and Jehovah-Worship forbidden, fuel was added which made for an inescapable explosion. Upon his death, the Senate declared Augustus a god and divine honors began to be paid to him. “Temples were erected in his honor, and he was worshipped as a god ... The practice was adopted for the successors of Augustus, and this worship of dead emperors soon became the most general and widespread religious rite in the Roman world, as well as a mighty bond of union.”<sup>53</sup> It appears that all the nations subject to the Romans placed the images of Caesar in their cities and temples among the rest of the gods.<sup>54</sup> Only the Jews refused to acknowledge his deity, even though they did offer two sacrifices daily in the temple to his honor. Caius (37-41 A.D.), also known as Caligula, declared himself a god and ordered his subjects to worship him. He demanded that his statue be erected in the temple at Jerusalem, the only temple in the empire where Caesar’s image had been refused. This order was met with stiff resistance from the Jews who met his envoy in multitude in the plain by Ptolemaic. They pleaded with him not to erect the image, but the envoy responded, “Am not I also bound to keep the law of my lord? For if I transgress it, and spare you, it is but just that I perish; while he that sent me, and not I, will commence a war against you; for I am under command as well as you.” Josephus continues, “Hereupon the whole multitude cried out that they were ready to suffer for their law. Petronius then quieted them, and said to them, ‘Will you then make war against Caesar?’ The Jews said, ‘We offer sacrifices twice every day for Caesar, and for the Roman people:’ but that if he would place the images among them, he must first sacrifice the whole Jewish nation; and that they were ready to expose themselves, together with their children and wives, to be slain.”<sup>55</sup> Fifty days the Jews confronted Caesar’s envoy, Petronius, until he backed down to wait for further word from Caesar. In the meantime, Caius was murdered and the matter laid to rest.

The Jews had lived in constant fear that their nation and their city

would be destroyed. They had tolerated many abuses from their rulers (cf. Lk.13:1), but they could never tolerate the defaming of their religious heritage. When Pilate became the procurator of Judea in 26 A.D., he decided to remove the Roman Army from Cesarea to Jerusalem for the winter, hoping to abolish the Jewish laws. “So he introduced Caesar’s effigies, which were upon the ensigns, and brought them into the city.”<sup>56</sup> But the Jews met him face to face and demanded that the ensigns be removed, even at the cost of their own necks. Seeing their determination to defend their laws with their lives, Pilate ordered them removed back to Cesarea. It was such pressures as these that earned for Jerusalem the respect of the Roman rulers. The Jews did not purposely antagonize the Romans, but they did not tolerate interference with their religion! This is why the coming of Christ caught the Jews in a dilemma. If they accepted Him as the promised **King**, they would have found themselves in conflict with the ideologies of the Romans. If they had believed on Him as the promised **Savior**, they would have found themselves in conflict with their own ideologies **S** their own concepts of the teaching of the Law and the prophets. Their thinking is reflected by the council called to consider the question of what to do with Jesus. They said, “What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away our place and the nation” (Jn.11:47-48). The High Priest, Caiaphas, who was also aligned with the Romans, said, “*Ye know nothing at all. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not*” (Jn.11:49-50). Thus the death of Christ became both a political necessity and a religious expedient to the Jewish leaders.

During the reigns of Claudius and Nero the procurators became more and more intolerant. The death of Caius and the appointment of Agrippa I by Claudius had momentarily forestalled the inevitable confrontation between the Jews and Romans, but the sudden death of Agrippa in 44 A.D. had returned the government of the province to the procurators, thereby reviving the remaining fires of revolt. “The appointment of Fadus kindled anew the flaming passions of the people against the Romans.”<sup>57</sup> Skirmishes between the Jews and Romans began to break out on many fronts. There were **wars and rumors of wars**. Even though procurators were changed, hostilities were not resolved. Each succeeding ruler was

<sup>53</sup> West, Willis Mason, *The Ancient World*, (Boston and Chicago: Allyn and Bacon, 1904), Sec. 476, p. 403

<sup>54</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 2, 10, 3; *Apion*, 2, 6

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 10, 4

<sup>56</sup> Jos., *Ant.*, 18, 3, 1

<sup>57</sup> Zeitlin, p. 56

worse than his predecessor and the fires of rebellion and revolt grew hotter and hotter. Many **false Christs** came among the Jews. Theudas, the sons of Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:37), and an Egyptian (Acts 21:38) were such. All promised deliverance by the power of God, but they were repressed and the Jews were left still oppressed as slaves of Rome. From 61 to 66 A.D. Judea was ruled by Festus, Albinus, and Florus. Each continued the wicked policies of Pilate and Felix as they plundered and punished every Jew in whom was found any spirit to seek liberation from the Romans. The last and worst of them was Florus whose apparent aim as procurator was to prod the Jews into a war with Rome.<sup>58</sup> Conditions degenerated until war broke out in 66 A.D.

### The Roman-Jewish War

During the years preceding the war several companies of renegade Jews took it upon themselves to oppose the Romans and the Jews in favor of submission to Rome. Festus corrected many of these disturbances by destroying these small bands of rebels, but when Albinus became procurator, he plundered, raped and robbed the people until many other such seditions were again at work. Josephus tells us that he tolerated their tyranny, permitting them to plunder and rob the people of Jerusalem.<sup>59</sup> Florus, who succeeded Albinus, was the worst of all. He openly robbed the people, and permitted and encouraged others to do the same by agreeing with them to share the proceeds of the robberies.<sup>60</sup> In April of 65 A.D., during the Passover, the Jews complained of the cruel oppressions of Florus before Cestius Gallus, president of Syria. Florus laughed at their words and tricked Gallus into continued trust in him, hoping to induce the Jews to rebel.<sup>61</sup> A short time later Florus returned to Jerusalem with soldiers and without provocation sent them into the market-place to plunder and rob the people, and to slay everyone they met. Three thousand, six hundred died in the melee of whom a large number were Jews of the Equestrian order.<sup>62</sup>

It was during this time that Bernice, the sister of Agrippa II, king of Calchis, came to Jerusalem to worship and saw all of these atrocities. She begged Florus to abandon this maliciousness, but he refused. Continually

<sup>58</sup> Jos., *Ant.*, 20, 11, 1; *Wars*, 2, 14, 2

<sup>59</sup> Jos., *Wars*, 2, 14, 1

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 14, 2

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 14, 3

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 14, 9

he sought ways to provoke confrontations.<sup>63</sup> Soon, thereafter, Agrippa came to Jerusalem and also observed the sad state of affairs with the Jews. He knew that unless there was a rapid change in their thinking they were set for war. He addressed them, seeking to cool their tempers and discourage their intention for war with Rome.<sup>64</sup> He succeeded briefly but, when he sought to encourage the Jews to obey Florus, they were again incensed **S** this time at Agrippa **S** and cast him out of the city, some even stoning him.<sup>65</sup>

The dye was cast. War was inevitable. The Jews would not submit to Florus. Together a few of them assaulted and captured Masada, slaying the Romans therein. The governor of the temple stopped the daily sacrifices offered for Caesar and the Roman people. Thus the course of open conflict with Rome was set. The chief men among the Jews tried to stop it by persuasion but the seditious among them would not listen and continued to make preparations for war.<sup>66</sup> At this point the men of power sought to avoid the conflict by selling out to Florus and Agrippa. Florus ignored their offers while Agrippa, seeking to avoid the destruction of the nation and their city, accepted. The result was civil war in Jerusalem. After many days of fighting the seditious Jews prevailed, gaining control of the affairs of the Jews in Judea and Jerusalem.<sup>67</sup>

Josephus tells us that the affairs of the Jews in every place were in a state of disaster. The inhabitants of the cities of the empire took up arms against the Jews and slew many thousands of them without mercy.<sup>68</sup> **The great tribulation which Jesus foretold came to pass!** Cestius Gallus moved on Jerusalem, besieged and would have taken it, "But," Josephus says, "it was, I suppose, owing to the aversion God had already at the city and the sanctuary, that he was hindered from putting an end to the war that very day."<sup>69</sup> Gallus withdrew from the city for no apparent reason when it could have been his for the taking.<sup>70</sup> The seditious among the Jews took courage, attacked the retreating Romans, destroying a considerable number. In fact, their assault upon the Romans was so intense, they were able to capture most of their heavy war machines for

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 15, 1-6

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 16, 4

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 17, 1

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 17, 3-4

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 17, 5-6

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 18, 1-11

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 19, 6

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 19, 7

future use against them.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps Josephus was right. This aversion was of God. Jesus had said, “When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Lk.21:20-21). **This was it!** God had provided the proper time for His people, the Christians, to escape from Jerusalem and Judea. The point in time was when both the Romans and the seditious Jews had fled the area. Both groups would have prevented the Christians from leaving Jerusalem, but the occasion provided for them the very moment to escape the doomed city.

The defeat of Cestius Gallus came in early October of 66 A.D., and it was only a matter of days until the news had reached Nero, then in Greece. Understanding the magnitude of the problem existing in Judea, Nero directed Vespasian, his most able general, to take command of the operation against the Jews. Vespasian accepted the challenge, moved into Syria, and with the assistance of his son, Titus, mobilized an army of more than 60,000 men for the war.<sup>72</sup>

In the meantime the Jews were arming themselves for war. Immediately after the defeat of Gallus, the seditious among the Jews cleansed their ranks of all persons sympathetic toward the Romans. “But the nation was still divided into two factions, that of the Zealots, the assertors of national independence, resolved to regain their freedom or perish, and the Herodians, who, still hoping to retain their place among the nations, were willing to accept a compromise, and acknowledge, as the price of existence, the supremacy of a foreign government. Of the one party the most prominent chiefs were Simon Bargiora, Eleazar, and John of Giscala, all of whom became notorious in the events which followed; while on the other, more respectable for rank and station, the leader was the high-priest Annanus or Annas.”<sup>73</sup> For the moment, the Herodians gained the upper hand in governing the affairs of state and through the Sanhedrin, which was converted into a war council, divided Palestine defensively into seven military districts.<sup>74</sup> The first line of defense was to be Galilee, and Josephus, author of the history bearing his name, was selected to mobilize an army in Galilee. He gathered and trained for combat an army of more than 100,000 from which he chose his fighting

army of more than 60,000. He strengthened the cities of Galilee with their walls and fortified them for the war. The whole nation looked to Josephus and his army in Galilee for defense against the Romans. If Galilee stood, Jerusalem would stand; if Galilee fell, the hope of the nation would fall with it.

The conflict began in the spring of 67 A.D. and by the fall of the same year all of Galilee had been subdued. Except for Josephus, the General, the Jewish army had been completely destroyed. Josephus surrendered to the Romans and later became an informant to them. The remaining Jews yet strong enough to resist the Romans fled to Jerusalem in force. There they awaited the final battle of the war the battle for Jerusalem.

At this point, the state of affairs with the Jews was bad everywhere. Josephus says, “There were besides disorders and civil wars in every city; and all those that were at quiet from the Romans turned their hands one against another. There was also a bitter contest between those that were fond of war, and those that were desirous for peace. At the first this quarrelsome temper caught hold of private families, who could not agree among themselves; after which those people that were the dearest to one another brake through all restraints with regard to each other, and every one associated with those of his own opinion, and began already to stand in opposition one to another; so that seditions arose every where, while those that were for innovations, and were desirous of war, by their youth and boldness, were too hard for the aged and prudent men. And, in the first place, all the people of every place betook themselves to rapine; after which they got together in bodies in order to rob the people of the country, insomuch that for barbarity and iniquity those of the same nation did no way differ from the Romans than by themselves.”<sup>75</sup> These seditionists within a short time converged on Jerusalem from every place and continued their ravaging of the people there. The Herodian Party under the leadership of Annas, the High Priest, sought to quell the power of the Zealots but, after a vigorous struggle, the Zealots slaughtered the leaders of the Herodians and became rulers of the city. But the Zealots were divided also. They were divided into three warring factions: those under Eleazar, the leader of the first Zealot sedition; those under John of Gishcala; and those under Simon, leader of the Idumeans. Each of these

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 19, 7-9

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 4, 2

<sup>73</sup> Merivale, Vol. VI, pp. 428-429

<sup>74</sup> *Jos.*, *Wars*, 2, 20, 3-4

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 2 (cf. Matt. 24:10-12)

men sought control of Jerusalem. They divided Jerusalem into three sections, each ruled by a different man. All were at war among themselves while they prepared for war with the Romans.

Meanwhile, Vespasian, who had been leisurely waiting for the Jews to destroy themselves,<sup>76</sup> received word of disturbances in Gaul which forced him to seek a speedy end to the conflict. In the spring of 68 A.D. he swept through the regions north of Jerusalem while another section of his army subdued Perea. He then conquered the remaining regions and was about to lay siege to Jerusalem when word came that Nero was dead. Delaying his plan for taking Jerusalem and contemplating the future of the empire, Vespasian patiently awaited new orders concerning the Jews from the new government of Rome. For many months he waited. Disorders and uncertainties characterized the Capital city. Meanwhile, Vespasian's soldiers prevailed upon him to go to Rome and claim the empire for himself. Sending part of his army through Asia Minor and Greece to prepare the way for his ascension to the throne, he took the southern route through Egypt to Alexandria. Here he received news that Vitellius, the ruling emperor, had been slain. Vespasian at the insistence of his soldiers went to Rome where he was acclaimed emperor. Upon his acceptance of the throne, he directed his son Titus back to Palestine to complete the task of destroying Jerusalem and subduing the Jews. "Titus returned to Cesarea. Having gathered an army of more than 80,000 men, he began to attack Jerusalem about the first of April, 70 A.D., during the feast of unleavened bread. The siege continued approximately five months and the city was completely destroyed by the middle of August, 70 A. D.

The deed was done. The city was wrecked beyond recognition. Jesus had said, "*There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*" (Matt.24:2). Josephus says, "Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple ... It was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited."<sup>77</sup> Jerusalem had been **utterly destroyed** and biblical Israel ceased to exist. Both head and heart perished. God had demonstrated that "the heavens still reign" (Rev.11:15). **He had fulfilled every promise and carried out every threat!**

### Conclusion

As we approach a discussion of the text of the Revelation it is hoped that the material covered in this introduction will be kept clear in the mind of every reader. With this background, both the message and one's understanding of the message of the Apocalypse can be greatly simplified.

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 6, 2

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 1, 1

# The Date of the Revelation

The Early Date?  
54-68 AD

Or

The Late Date?  
95-96 AD

A.D.	26	30			Here? 67-70 AD	Or	Here? AD 100
J E S U S	J E S U S	J E S U S	3½ Yrs.	N.T. Begins to be Written 52 AD	J E R O M E		J O H N S
B I R T H	J O H N	J O H N	Church Begins	61 AD Paul in Rome	A L L O F M E D		D E A T H
	3½ Yrs.	Pent.	Gentiles				

## Emperors Of Rome

AUGUSTUS CAESAR	TIBERIUS CAESAR	C A L I G U L A	CLAUDIUS CAESAR	NERO CAESAR	VES- PASIAN	T I T U S	DOMITIAN	N E R V A	T R A J A N
31 BC-14 AD	14-37 AD	37 - 41	41-54 AD	54-68 AD	69-79 AD	79 - 81	81-96 AD	96	98

## Roman Rulers In Judea

Coponius 6-9 AD Ambibulus 9-12 AD Rufus 12-15 AD Gratus 15-26 AD	Pilate 26-36 AD Marcellus 36-37 AD Marullus 37-41 AD King Agrippa I 41-44 AD	Fadus 44-46 AD Alexander 46-48 AD Clumanus 48-52 AD Felix 52-60 AD	Festus 60-62 AD? Albinus 62-64 AD? Florus 64-66 AD?
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