

Dear Church
Supporting Cast: Of Beasts and Babylon
August 6th, 2019

Inhabitants of the Earth

I remember my early journey's into this book and a point of confusion for me was found in statements like in Revelation 13:8; *"All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast"*. I originally thought this meant that all the people who were dwelling on earth followed and worshipped the Beast. And yet this seemed to be contrary to what I was reading about the countless number of people in heaven that had apparently come to faith in Christ during this "Great Tribulation". But just a small amount of study will show that *"inhabitants"* refer to those whose hearts and homes are on earth. They have rejected God and his mercy so now their hearts are earth bound and they worship the Beast.

144,000 and a Great Multitude that no one Could Count

Revelation 7:1-17

"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ³ "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." ⁴ Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

The Great Multitude in White Robes

⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

*“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”*

Who are these two groups:

Verse 2-3; They were given the; *“the seal of the living God”*

Revelation 14:1; *“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads”.*

Verse 4; They are identified; *“from all the tribes of Israel”*

We then jump again to chapter 14 to learn more;

Revelation 14:3: *“And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴ These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as **first fruits to God and the Lamb”.***

Don’t miss the contrast with the 144,00 and the culture and the leader of that time;

- *“No lie was found in their mouths”* verses the great deceiver and father of all lies
- They stayed sexually pure in a culture overrun with sexual immorality

I believe the key is to understand that these 144,000 people is the phrase “first fruits”. There is no time to develop this but suffice to say this is a biblical principle that runs in scripture from beginning to end. From the first fruits of our tithe and offerings to the Lord, to the tribe of Levi who were the Nation of Israel’s first fruits, and 1 Corinthians 15; tells us Jesus is the First fruits of those who have died; *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep”*

It is my belief that Israel as a nation and people still has a place not only in God’s heart and in history moving forward, but in his end time plans. Yes, we as Gentiles have been grafted into God’s family and together all tribes, all tongues and peoples have been redeemed into God’s Kingdom. But I believe this passage is exactly what it appears to be; representatives from all the tribes of Israel who

have found faith in Christ the Messiah, (are likely), actively helping to evangelize the entire world.

Could it be that the original intent for the people of Israel found in Genesis 12 is being realized here;

“The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your county, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

*² “I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and **you will be a blessing.***

*³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and **all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”***

Verse 9; *“ **After this...**”* Who is the second group, a *“great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb”*

We find our answer in verses 13-14;

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.”

*And he said, “These are they who have **come out of the great tribulation**; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

I believe these two groups tell a *wonderful story* in the midst of the darkest time in human history. First, this group John sees in heaven that “no one could count”, are those who have come out of the “great tribulation”. He didn’t say out of “**a** tribulation” or “hard times”, he quoted Jesus calling it the “*Great Tribulation*”. I believe that during this specific time period of 7 years, given to us by Daniel and

now John, we will see the greatest harvest of souls in the history of the world, in the darkest time in all of history!

And the second part, it would appear clear that this 144,000 from the tribes of Israel are right in the middle of this evangelistic effort. God's promise to Abraham finds its fulfillment as they are a blessing in the culmination of all history!

Concerning the issue of having "Gods seal", you might be thinking hey what about us/me. Add to it that next we read about the two witnesses, and then there is that Mark of the Beast thing...but remember this;

Ephesians 1:13-14

*¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were **marked** in him with a **seal**, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

And this in Ephesians 4:30;

*³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption.*

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:3 *"And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."*

There are some bible students that believe that these two witnesses are not actual people, but symbolic. We will approach this passage the way it was written as a story of two people sent by God with a specific assignment.

Verse 3 tells us the two "Witnesses" will show up on the scene and begin to prophesy for 1260 days, (3.5 years, Jewish calendar 360 days), dressed in "**Sackcloth**".

I thought it interesting that the original word for “witness is “martus”, (μάρτυς, υπος, ό) where we get our word “martyr” ...a little glimpse or hint into their future and maybe even their assignment. But what were they prophesying?

Think about what appears to be happening down on earth as they arrive on the scene. At some point the Beast (that we will read about) will show his true colors, proclaiming himself as god, to be worshiped. This Beast will blaspheme God almighty and the lamb, the Beast and his sidekick, the False Prophet will not only mock God, but his people and martyr many of them. So in light of this what might the “witnesses” prophesying? Let’s take a stab at it:

- That God is the true creator and all-powerful God of the universe, not this imposter
- That Jesus came to die on the cross, shed his blood and sacrifice his life to redeem all of mankind, even those in rebellion against God right then
- That Jesus was raised from the dead by the Spirit of God on the third day conquering death, hell, the grave and the works of the devil...and by the way, real soon he’ll be visiting this evil trio of the Beast, false prophet and Dragon
- More than likely: that no one is to be worshipped except the God of heaven, especially this counterfeit imposter that has come on the scene.

No wonder that most of the people in the world didn’t like them very much! But we also get a clue from the clothes that they are wearing. I believe we can conclude they are preaching a message of *repentance* because they are wearing “sackcloth”. (Picture a burlap sack with hole cut out for the head)

*“Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.”²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have **repented** long ago in **sackcloth** and ashes”.*
(Matthew 11:20-21)

What else do we learn about these two;

Verse 5; *“If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die”*

Verse 6; *“They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want”.*

It appears that during their time of prophecy no one, including the Beast could harm them. Let’s continue to read about our two witnesses in verse 7;

*⁷ Now **when they have finished** their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. ⁸ Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. ¹⁰ The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.*

Let’s just be honest these might be the most hated two people on the planet. The Beast kills them and their bodies laid in the public square in Jerusalem for three and one half days. Adding insult to injury, there is a worldwide party and they are exchanging gifts! Let’s see what happens next;

¹¹ But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them.

Okay is this awesome or what!

¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

¹³ At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

As great as this story is, can I suggest a couple of the overriding important truths;

Two Important Truths;

God never leaves himself without a witness.

We remember the epic confrontation of Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings and now the Prophet is feeling alone, scared and wanting to die.

1 Kings 19:14

14 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

God's Response Verse 18

18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

One thing we have learned very clearly in our passage and recently in our time;
No matter how dark or evil the culture
No matter how oppressive the Government or controlling group
No matter how severe the persecution
God will always have a witness and his Spirit will move and people will respond to his grace and mercy...no matter what!
I don't care if that is in North Korea, China, in the Middle East, or in places like Western Europe with empty cathedrals or in prosperous places like the U. S....
God is never left without a witness, a voice proclaiming his truth, even during the Great tribulation!

The second important truth is; **God decides the number of your days, not Man or Devil**

Psalms 139:16

"Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be"

God's absolute protection was over these two until; ***"Now when they have finished their testimony"*** Like the two witnesses, trust God that you will fulfill your assignment and days here on earth, rest easy he has you until it's time to go home!

The Unholy Trinity the Dragon, Beast, (Antichrist) and False Prophet

The Dragon

In Revelation 12:10, we'll read: *"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan..."*

Concerning the Dragon, Theologian N.T. Wright says: *"The Dragon too, will be with us much of the way and part of the whole point of chapters 12-20 to enable the church for whom John is writing to understand how he operates and how therefore his power must be overthrown. The church needs to know that its present struggles and sufferings are not a sign that God has not gone to sleep on the job. They are the sign that a great cosmic drama is being staged in which they are being given a vital, though terrible role to play".*

The Beast (Antichrist)

The Antichrist (The first Beast) is known by 30 different names in the Bible: *"The man of sin" "The son of perdition", "The Lawless One",* etc. "Antichrist" literally means; *"against Christ."* As you read John's original letters you'll notice that it's used to describe a *spirit* not a *person*. A "spirit" that wants to be in place of Jesus, instead of Christ. A "spirit" that longs to receive the praise that belongs to Jesus, this *"spirit"* has been present in our world and within men throughout the centuries.

Listen the Antichrist, the Beast that is revealed in Daniel and Revelation will not be a surprise or a mystery to us, his church. We have seen this "spirit of antichrist" throughout the millenniums and in different kings, rulers, groups and empires.

It's easy to recognize this spirit because it opposes God Almighty and Jesus our Lord. It will always deny the deity of Jesus and his incarnation, but know that it persecutes and tries to kill and destroy everything that's connected to God and our Lord Jesus Christ. From the ruler "Nimrod" in Genesis to Kings and Rulers through the ages, to the 10 Caesar's during the first three centuries that persecuted the church and believed they themselves to be a god or God. Within the more current time we think of rulers like Idi Amin, who persecuted the church

in Uganda terribly or the obvious Adolf Hitler and many others that were possessed or influenced by this spirit that opposes God and Jesus.

What may help a little is to understand that in Revelation, the term “beast” refers to two related entities. Sometimes “the beast” refers to the end-times’ empire. The seven heads and ten horns indicate that the beast will be a coalition of nations that rises to power to subdue the earth under Satan’s control. Later references to “the beast” in Revelation I believe picture an individual—the man who is the political leader and head of the beastly empire.

Let’s see what the scriptures say about the Beast or Antichrist

First let’s read about his appearing:

*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the **man of sin** is revealed, the son of perdition... (2 Thessalonians 2:3)*

*For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then **the lawless one** will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8)*

“I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!”² I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest” (Revelation 6:1-2)

There are many different thoughts on the four horsemen, but the first rider is intriguing in-light of other scriptures that tell us about Antichrist.

But we do see that something or someone is restraining or stopping him from coming. (Some believe when the church is raptured he will be released, others the Holy Spirit and still others a mighty angel) Whether the rider on the first white horse is the “*man of sin*” or not, we know he is about “*conquest*”. In fact, he is “*bent*” on conquest, obsessed with ruling; which will usher in a fiery red horse that users in war. Next will be the black horse and rider with scales in his hands, bringing famine and the last horse and rider is a pale horse following the famine with plague and pestilence.

So let's consider; ***"What is the Antichrist?"*** (Notice we didn't say "who is", I plead with you not to go down this path!)

1 John 2:18, speaks of the Antichrist: *"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour."*

The specific term "*antichrist*" is used seven times in Scripture, twice here in 1 John 2:18 and also in 1 John:2:22, 4:3 and twice in 2 John 7. So, what is this Antichrist that the apostle John refers to?

The meaning of the term antichrist is simply "against Christ." As the apostle John records in First and Second John, an antichrist denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22), does not acknowledge Jesus (1 John 4:3), and denies that Jesus came in the flesh (2 John 1:7). There have been many "antichrists," as 1 John 2:18 states. But there is also coming the Antichrist.

Other biblical references to the Antichrist include the following:

- Daniel 7:25; *"He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time"*. (Some believe "time"- 1 year, "times"- 2 years and "half a time"- half of a year, total 3 ½ years)
- In the 9th chapter of Daniel, he sees a vision of four beasts. The first was like a lion, second a bear, the third a leopard and the fourth was a terrifying beast that most agree is referring to the Roman Empire.
⁸ "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully."
- Daniel 9:27 Covenant broken, ends worship, abomination that causes desolation

²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him

Watch what Daniel says of this man in 8:25:

*“Through his cunning (Policy)
He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule;
And he shall exalt himself in his heart.
He shall destroy many in their prosperity. (Peace)
He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; (Jesus)
But he shall be broken without human means”.*

Paul talking about the Day of the Lord says in 1 Thessalonians 5:3:

³ For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (NKJV)

- Revelation 13; 2 Beast Source of Power
The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.
- Revelation 13:3-4 The Great Deception and Counterfeit
³ One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. ⁴ People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?”
- Revelation 13: 5-8 The Great Blasphemer Wages War against the Saints
⁵ The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. ⁷ It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe,

people, language and nation. ⁸ All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

So what is the Antichrist? In summary, the Antichrist is the end-times false messiah who seeks, and likely achieves, world domination so that he can destroy Israel and all followers of Jesus Christ.

Thankfully, the Antichrist/Beast, along with his False Prophet will be soundly defeated by the King of Kings and will be thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 19:20; 20:10).

False Prophet

Revelation 13: 11-18 A second Beast appears, looks can be deceiving

¹¹ Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. ¹² It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.

Deception Through Signs and Wonders

¹³ And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. ¹⁴ Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. ¹⁵ The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

Commitment through Coercion

¹⁶ It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.

Thoughts on the “*Unholy Trinity*”;

Early in my studies I didn't like this concept or way of looking at these cast of characters. But it will help us tremendously is to remember that Satan wanted to be like God, since the beginning. Satan will imitate or counterfeit the things of God in order to make himself appear to be like God.

The Holy Trinity consists of God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This counterfeit, phony trio (the unholy trinity) are Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. While the Holy Trinity is characterized by limitless truth, love, and goodness, the unholy trinity portrays the diametrically opposite traits of deception, hatred, and unadulterated evil.

Daniel 7: 21-22 says, *“I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.”*

Babylon

So as we consider and try to give definition to this mysterious “Babylon in chapters 17 and 18, here is a quote from N.T. Wright that may help us understand what Babylon truly is: *“...the abiding and overriding lesson for the church then and now, should nevertheless be clear. The brutal but seductive “civilizations” and national empires, which ensnare the world by promising luxury and delivering slavery gain their power from the monster, the system of imperial power. Some have called this “the domination system”, a system which transcends geographical and historical limitations and reappears again and again in every century. John’s readers already know that this system itself gains its power from the dragon, the accuser, the Satan”.*

We will see God’s judgment on this worldwide, evil institution, system or empire...that looks eerily similar to what we have seen throughout history!

So in the simplest definition: “Mystical Babylon” is *paganism* mixed with *politics* and *economics*. (and it touches every human being on the face of the earth)

This is what we learn in Revelation 17:

Come and See

“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters”.

So let’s begin to understand what he is saying. In *verse 15* of this chapter the angel will explain what the “*many waters*” are:

“The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages”

What is very clear is that she has worldwide influence. (17:2)

“With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”

This woman has apparently partnered or joined with these “Kings”, who have “committed adultery” with her. The result was that the inhabitants of the earth were “*intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries*”. The inhabitants became drunk; they had no judgment they are impaired, couldn’t see things clearly and could be easily misled.

She “partnered” with kings to deceive the world into participating in her wickedness.

She was originally partnered with the Beast in her efforts, (Don’t let the “heads and horns” throw you, these refer to power, kings, world leaders and nations)

³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns

Despite the political, economic and religious focuses, the core of Babylon is; slaughter followers of Jesus

⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

Even John was astonished by her

"When I saw her, I was greatly astonished".

These Kings have one purpose, to give their power and authority to the Beast

¹² "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.

They will wage war against the Lamb, but he will triumph over them

¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

The Beast and the Kings will turn on the Prostitute and destroy her

¹⁶ The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God's words are fulfilled. ¹⁸ The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

Although the beast's economic system will bring prosperity to the merchants of the earth, it is going to be destroyed (Revelation 18:3, 15, 19). The people of God will be pleased to see the fall of Babylon the Great and the beast. *"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"* (verse 20). This civil power called the beast and this false religious power have worked together to persecute God's people throughout the ages, but they will both come to an end (Revelation 19:20).

⁸ A second angel followed and said, "'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,' which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." (Revelation 14:8)

“For John one of the major features of the dragon’s whole system is the lie: he creates a world of untruth, a fake world, a sham system from top to bottom. But for the elite, no lie is found in their mouths, (the 144,000) like the lamb himself (Isaiah 53:9) they are without blemish...” N.T. Wright

“the false religions and the economic systems of the world are history, their time is done”. This is why we don’t put our trust in either of them only in God and his Kingdom.

One more point, these institutions are evil and God will righteously judge them. But the *people* in these institutions, systems, Empires, etc. are not necessarily evil. Whatever your conclusions, (if any) about what these systems or empires are, don’t demonize people...there is a lot of that going on as people are studying these prophetic passages.

If we are correct with this perspective, then the woman in Revelation 17 symbolizes a religion, a church, and a system of beliefs and practices that influences other people. The influence from this institution is very powerful and widespread; it says the kings and the inhabitants of the earth were “intoxicated” by her adulteries. This evil institution also hates and kills followers of Jesus to the point that the scripture says they were; *“drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus”*.

Revelation 18:

I think it’s worth noting that at the judgement and crumbling and destruction of this system, became a *“dwelling for demons”*; and *all* that’s left over, are *“impure spirits”* and all kinds of evil and detestable things. To me, it was as if the fake front had been destroyed. We *look behind the curtain* and we see this evil system laid naked, and who was really there pulling the strings.

“After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. ² With a mighty voice he shouted:

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!”

*She has become a dwelling for demons
and a haunt for every impure spirit,
a haunt for every unclean bird,*

*a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal.
3 For all the nations have drunk
the maddening wine of her adulteries.
The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,
and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”*

Time to come out

*4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say:
“Come out of her, my people,
so that you will not share in her sins,
so that you will not receive any of her plagues;
5 for her sins are piled up to heaven,
and God has remembered her crimes.*

So how do we live in this world, how do we use the currency of the day without it using us? How do we serve God when our jobs require us to serve man? The same way that *Daniel* lived in literal Babylon and the same way *Joseph* lived in Egypt. They followed his Law, his commands or as Jesus put it; *“They (us) are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your **truth**. Your **word is truth**.” (John 17:16-17)*

This Babylon is an *old institution*, empire or system, who has not only hurt God’s people but *“all who have been slaughtered on the earth”* (18:24)

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Additional Notes

The Spirit of Antichrist

The name "*Antichrist*" is only used in 1 John and 2 John. There we learn that:

-the Antichrist is coming: *"Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18).*

-the Antichrist denies the Father and the Son: *"Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22).*

-The spirit of the Antichrist denies Jesus is from God: *"Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already" (1 John 4:3).*

-Antichrist denies Jesus came in a physical body: *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist" (2 John 1:7).*

Nicolaitans

- *"But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate"* (Revelation 2:6). We don't know much about the Nicolaitans and their doctrine, except that it was heretical. Irenaeus, an early church father in Lyons (modern-day France), wrote that the Nicolaitans promoted fornication and a compromising position on eating

food sacrificed to idols, leading many into an unrestrained, carnal lifestyle. (Clement of Alexandria would also comment on the group)

- The exact origin of the Nicolaitans is unclear. Some Bible commentators believe they were a heretical sect who followed the teachings of “Nicolas”, who was possibly one of the deacons of the early church mentioned in Acts 6:5. Their doctrine was similar to that of “Balaam”, "who taught Balak how to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication"
- Lastly, their name gives us a clue. “Nicolas”, whose name means “*one who conquers the people*” The name is made up from a compound word; “**Nicos**” which means “*to conquest*” or “*utterly vanquish*” and “**Laos**” means laity or people. Literally to rule over the “laity” or the people of God with an *iron fist*. The name implies that they would like to rule over the people like a *king or dictator*, as opposed to a *shepherd and a pastor*.
- Nicolaitans disobeyed the command issued to the Gentile churches, by the apostolic council held at Jerusalem in 49-50 AD, that they should refrain from the eating of "things sacrificed to idols", in Acts 15:29.

What are the “Seven Spirits” in Revelation 1:4-5 and 3:1, 4:5 and 5:6?

⁴ *John,*

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Without going into great detail there are several guidelines we should follow to be certain we are interpreting any biblical passage correctly. Here is a couple:

- The first is the *context*, what is John talking about before and after?
- Next we will many times check the *original language* and see how a word or phrase was used *elsewhere*.

- Also we should *weigh out* the verse or passage against the *entire Word of God*.

So there is a *greeting* in verse 4, from

- ✓ “Him who is, and who was and who is to come” (God the Father)
- ✓ “The seven spirits before the throne”
- ✓ And then from “Jesus Christ”

It seems odd that a greeting would be from the Father, Jesus and Angels (as some suggest). Leaving the third person of the Triune Godhead out, let’s see how this term is used in the rest of the book:

The *“seven spirits of God”* are mentioned in: Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5 and 5:6.

The seven spirits of God are not specifically identified, so it’s impossible to be dogmatic on the subject.

- Revelation 1:4 mentions that the seven spirits are *“before God's throne”*.
- Revelation 3:1 indicates that Jesus Christ *“holds”* the seven spirits of God.
- Revelation 4:5 *links* the *“seven spirits”* of God with seven burning lamps that are before God's throne.
- Revelation 5:6 identify the *“seven spirits”* with the *“seven eyes”* of the Lamb and states that they are “sent out into all the earth.”

Bible Scholars say that there are at least three possible interpretations of the *“seven spirits of God”*. (The first and third come to the same conclusion from different angles)

The *first* is that the “seven spirits of God” are symbolic of the *Holy Spirit*. The Bible, and especially the book of Revelation, uses the number 7 to refer to *perfection* and *completion*. If that is the meaning of the “seven” in the “seven spirits,” then it is **not** referring to seven different spirits of God, but rather the perfect and complete Holy Spirit.

The *second* view is that the seven spirits of God refer to seven *angelic beings*, possibly the seraphim or the cherubim. This would fit with the numerous others angelic beings that are described in the book of Revelation (Revelation 4:6-9, 5:6-14 and 19:4-5)

A third is believed to be based on *Isaiah 11:2* which says, *“The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”* This could possibly explain the seven spirits of God: The prophet is speaking about the Messiah and says these will *rest upon him*:

- (1) Spirit of the LORD
- (2) Spirit of wisdom
- (3) Spirit of understanding
- (4) Spirit of counsel
- (5) Spirit of power
- (6) Spirit of knowledge
- (7) Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

This sounds very similar to the promise of the “Advocate” as Jesus was preparing to leave and return to heaven.

The Rapture

Just a few scriptures and thoughts concerning the Rapture for your future reference.

There are those in the Church and theological circles that will flat out ridicule people who refer or talk about the “Rapture”. Below you will find some scriptures and thoughts that may be helpful on your journey.

In this letter, Paul is addressing some questions in the Thessalonica Church concerning those believers who have died. During this discussion Paul describes an event that will occur that involves both those who have died and those who are still alive.

¹⁵“According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷After that, we who are still alive and are

*left will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever". (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)*

Now compare that verse, with the return to Jesus as recorded by the prophet Zechariah;

³ Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. ⁴ On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. (Zechariah 14:3-4)

The word "Rapture" is not found in the New Testament, but here's a little information about the word used by Paul ("**caught up**" NIV) in his letter to the Thessalonians;

Harpazó: to seize, catch up, snatch away

Original Word: ἄρπάζω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: harpazó

Phonetic Spelling: (har-pad'-zo)

Short Definition: I seize, snatch, obtain by robbery

Definition: I seize, snatch, obtain by robbery.

The Latin translation of "harpazo" is "rapturo" in the Latin Bible for 1000 years.

"Harpazo" carries with it the idea of (a state or experience) being carried away, the actual removal from one place to another. In other words, it means to be carried away in spirit or in body. The Rapture of the church means the carrying away of the church from earth to heaven.

So as we see above the Greek word from this term "rapture" is translated "*caught up*" or to "*snatch or take away*".

We get some added insight as we see how this word is used elsewhere in scripture:

It is used to describe how the Spirit caught up Philip near Gaza and brought him to Caesarea (Acts 8:39)

*³⁹ “When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly **took Philip away**, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing”.*

To describe Paul’s experience of being caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

*² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. ³ And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— ⁴ was **caught up** to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell”.*

Describes Jesus as he was taken up into heaven (Acts 1:9-11)

*⁹ After he said this, **he was taken up** before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

So there can be no doubt that the word is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 indicates the actual removal of people from earth to heaven. At what point during the tribulation this happens is another interesting discussion.

But this we know for certain;

“...God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him”! (Romans 5:9)

The return of Jesus to earth is mentioned in the scriptures no less than 318 times in the 260 chapters in the New Testament...” Come quickly Lord Jesus”!

The First Antichrist and the Origins of Babylon

King Nimrod, Queen Easter (Ishtar/Semiramis), and “Tammuz” (the “reincarnated” Nimrod)

After the flood, Noah had a talented, but evil, great-grandson named Nimrod (Genesis 10:6-10) who rebelled greatly against God. The Bible says that he was “a mighty one Jewish tradition indicates that Nimrod was a tyrant *“who made all of the people rebellious against God.”* It is evident from history that Nimrod was not only a political leader, but also the lead priest of a form of occult worship. Nimrod built and organized major cities. The Bible notes that these included Babel, Asshur, Nineveh and Calah (Genesis 10:10-12). If you know anything about ancient history, the mention of these places may send shivers up your spine. For these were cities of great, almost unimaginable practices and perversion.

When Nimrod eventually died, the Babylonian religion in which he figured prominently continued on, his wife/queen saw to that. Once he was dead, she deified him as “the Sun god”. In various cultures he later became known as **Baal** “the Great Life Giver”, “the god of fire”, Baalim Bel, Molech etc.

“Later, when this adulterous and idolatrous woman gave birth to an illegitimate son, she claimed that this son, *Tammuz* by name, was “Nimrod reborn.” Easter/Ishtar “claimed that her son was supernaturally conceived [no human father] and that he was the promised seed, the ‘savior’”—promised by God in Genesis 3:15 “However, not only was the child worshipped, but the woman, the Mother, was also worshipped as much (or more) than the son!” Nimrod deified as the “*god of the sun*” and “*father of creation*”. Easter (Ishtar/Semiramis) became the goddess of the moon fertility, etc.

“In the old fables of the Mystery cults, their ‘savior’ Tammuz, was worshipped with various rites at the spring season. According to the legends, after he was slain [killed by a wild boar], he went into the underworld. But through the weeping of his mother... he mystically revived in the springing forth of the

vegetation—in spring! Each year a spring festival dramatically represented this supposed ‘resurrection’ from the underworld.” Thus, a terrible false religion developed with its sun and moon worship, false priests, astrology, demonic worship, worship of stars associated with their gods, idolatry mysterious rites, human sacrifice, and more. The practices, which went on, were so horrible it’s hard to comprehend the human depravity.

It was at Nimrod’s city of Babel (Babylon) that a towering structure was first built in defiance of God as part of their satanic religion. Archaeological evidence indicates that this was a spectacular pyramid-shaped structure (ziggurat). The Bible tells us that at this time there was only one language in the world and that most of the world’s population centered in this area and participated in this religion. It was evident to God that all mankind would soon degenerate into a level of evil that would parallel that of the pre-Flood world. For humanity’s sake, something had to be done to slow and frustrate this organization of an evil one world, tyrannical government.

God confused their language so that they could not understand each other (Genesis 11:7). As a result, many people moved away from the area in groups according to their particular new language. Most, if not all, of these people carried their evil Sun-God-based religion with them. They continued to worship the stars and practice all the other ungodly rituals of their religion. Some also continued to build pyramids reminiscent of the Tower of Babel as part of this mystery religion. Today, we can still find remnants of these throughout the world (e.g., Iraq, South America, Central America, Egypt, Burma).

Babel was the origin of an idolatrous system that swept the world. The Bible says of her, *“Babylon the nations drank her wine; Therefore, the nations are deranged”* (Jeremiah 51:7). The Bible often speaks of the satanic religions, which came from her. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus “witnessed the Mystery religion and its rites in numerous countries and mentions how Babylon was the primeval source from which ALL systems of idolatry flowed.” Austen Layard said “that we have the united testimony of sacred and profane history that idolatry originated in the area of Babylonia—the most ancient of religious systems.”

Basically, almost every vile, profane and idolatrous practice you can think of originated at Babel with Queen Easter/Ishtar (Semiramis), the Mother goddess and Nimrod. As the people scattered from Babel with their different languages,

they, of course, used different names for Nimrod (Tammuz) and Semiramis. Some called the Mother goddess “ISHTAR” (originally pronounced “Easter”). In other lands, she was called Eostre, Astarte, Oстера, and Eastre. Other names for Semiramis, the Mother goddess include: Wife of Baal, Ashtaroth, Ashtoreth and “Queen of Heaven”. The Mother goddess was frequently worshipped as the goddess of fertility—and as a sort of Mother Nature and goddess of spring and sexual love and birth. She was also worshipped as a mediator between god and man. Sexual orgies and temple prostitutes were often used in her worship and in attempting to gain her favor.

More on the “Queen of Heaven” (Jeremiah 44:15-18)

*“Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to other gods, along with all the women who were present—a large assembly—and all the people living in Lower and Upper Egypt, said to Jeremiah, “We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD! We will certainly do everything we said we would: We will burn incense to the **Queen of Heaven** and will pour out drink offerings to her just as we and our fathers, our kings and our officials did in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. At that time we had plenty of food and were well off and suffered no harm. But ever since we stopped burning incense to the **Queen of Heaven** and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have had nothing and have been perishing by sword and famine.”*

Of Course despite this pagan worship throughout history there is no “queen of heaven” and there has never been a queen of heaven. As we know there is most certainly a “King of Heaven”, the Lord of hosts, Jehovah, He alone rules in heaven. He does not share His rule or His throne or His authority with anyone.

The Abomination that causes Desolation

Matthew 24:15-21

*“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the **abomination that causes desolation,**’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—¹⁶ then let those who are **in Judea flee** to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant*

women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be **great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again**”.

This is referring to Daniel 9:27: “*He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an **abomination that causes desolation**, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.*”

Also Daniel 11:31 and 12:11: “*His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the **abomination that causes desolation**”.*

*“From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the **abomination that causes desolation** is set up, there will be 1,290 days”.*

Remember the *dual nature* of prophecy. The coming of Jesus was a great example, while studying the O.T. the Jewish leaders only saw one coming, where in actuality the Messiah came as the *Lamb* and will come a second time as the *Lion*. We see this same principle with this subject.

Antiochus Epiphanes was a Greek king of the Seleucid Empire who reigned over Syria from 175 BC until 164 BC. He is famous for almost conquering Egypt and for his brutal persecution of the Jews, which caused the Maccabean revolt. Antiochus Epiphanes was a ruthless and often unpredictable ruler. His given name is Antiochus IV, but he took upon himself the title “*Epiphanes*,” which means “illustrious one” or “god manifest.” However, his bizarre and blasphemous behavior earned him another nickname among the Jews: “*Epimanes*,” which means “mad one.”

In an act of brazen disrespect, in 167 B.C. Antiochus raided the temple in Jerusalem, stealing its treasures, setting up an altar to Zeus, and sacrificing swine on the altar. When the Jews expressed their outrage over the profaning of the temple, Antiochus responded by slaughtering a great number of the Jews and selling others into slavery. He issued even more brutal decrees: performing the rite of circumcision was punishable by death, and Jews everywhere were ordered to sacrifice to pagan gods and eat pig flesh.

Antiochus Epiphanes is not only a tyrannical figure in Jewish history, but we believe he is also a *foreshadowing* of the coming Antichrist. While what Antiochus

did certainly qualify as an abomination, Jesus speaks of Daniel's prophecy as having a *still-future fulfillment* in Matthew 24:16-16, Mark 13:14 and Luke 21:20-21. The Antichrist will model Antiochus Epiphanes in his great pride, blasphemous actions, and hatred of the Jews.

In Matthew 24:15, Jesus was speaking some 200 years after the "*abomination that causes desolation*" described above had already occurred. So, Jesus must have been prophesying that sometime *in the future* another *abomination of desolation* would occur in a Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Most Biblical prophecy interpreters believe that Jesus was referring to the Antichrist who will do something very similar to what Antiochus Epiphanes did.

This is confirmed by the fact that some of what Daniel prophesied in Daniel 9:27 did not occur in 167 B.C. with Antiochus Epiphanes. For instance, Antiochus did not confirm a covenant with Israel for seven years. It is the Antichrist who, in the end times, will establish a covenant with Israel for seven years and then break it by doing something similar to the original "*abomination that causes desolation*" in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

Whatever the future "abomination that causes desolation" is, it will leave no doubt in anyone's mind that the one committing it is the person known as "Antichrist". Revelation 13:14 describes him making some kind of image which all are forced to worship. Turning the temple of the living God into a place of worship for the Antichrist is truly an "abomination."

Paul gives us great insight into this in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

*"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**"*

In these chapters, Jesus briefly describes the coming destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in 70 AD, and then goes on to describe at length what will happen just before His second coming.

The abomination of desolation is mentioned three times in the book of Daniel. The word "abomination" in the original Greek means something that is *disgusting* and is oftentimes associated with that which is *defiling* and/or *idolatrous*. In the

Hebrew, the meaning is the same and is associated with *pagan idols*. The word "desolation" means to be in a *condition* that is *uninhabitable* and *devastated*.

So by letting Scripture interpret Scripture, we find that a reasonable answer to the question of "What is the abomination that causes desolation?" is that the Antichrist, three and a half years into his reign, takes a place in God's rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and proclaims to the world that he is God and must be worshipped as God. When that occurs, the real Creator will respond to the challenge and will ultimately and eternally destroy the Antichrist Revelation 19:20.

Final Thoughts

In our world today, people read the chapters about God's Judgement and Wrath and may become bewildered. Consider it from this angle:

- Sin has taken root like a fast growing cancer
- that has its tentacles deeply embedded into everything.
- It will take a violent and decisive action to free creation...everything from the grips of sin and the enemy of God's people.
- It's about to begin, earth will be set free and rightful ownership will be restored...completely restored.

But we will miss the entire point of this crucial historical event if we don't realize that as these seals are broken, (along with the trumpets and bowls) that; *"there is work to be done to rescue creation from the deadly dangers that have taken root within it"* (N.T. Wright) He goes on to say; *"there is work to be done to overthrow the forces that are out to destroy the very handiwork of God"*.

Remember this is not an "angry God" who has finally had enough and then explodes. This is the same God in the Bible who is so patient and longsuffering with people and nations that all the people and heavenly host around him will ask, "why so long Lord". We have seen at every turn in this book that God is calling all the earth's inhabitants to repentance. He sent the two witnesses, the 144,000, even Angels to proclaim the Gospel.

People will suffer God's wrath because they chose to reject Christ and his sacrifice. Instead of accepting the gift of God's grace and salvation they loved,

adored the beast and followed him. The last of God's judgments *are here*, the door is closing; it is the most crucial time in the history of mankind!