

'The Time of the End'

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In this article we will examine the major events in the time approaching the return of Christ. This phase of history is referred to as "The Time of the End". There are **five strategic points of time** that are critical to our understanding. They are:

- The 'time of the end'** - the opening of the seven-sealed book.
- The Day of Atonement** - the day of perfection and of the appearing of Christ to His church.
- Revelation 12** - so named because the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelation describes the events that lead up to the 3½-year rule of the antichrist kingdom.
- The second coming** - when Christ returns "*in the same way as He went.*" (Acts 1:11; Rev 19:11-16). This event is concurrent with the "*first resurrection*" when the "*dead in Christ*" are raised. (Rev 20:4-6; 1 Thess 4:16). It immediately precedes the period of 1,000 years.
- The second resurrection** - the resurrection of the ungodly, also called the '*second death*', which follows the period of 1,000 years. (Rev 20:4-6).

There are two specific periods of time that are of further interest to us in this study. They are the:

- **3½ years** - also referred to as "*forty-two months*" (Rev 13:5), "*one thousand two hundred and sixty days*" (Rev 12:6), and "*time, times, and half a time*" (Rev 12:14, Dan 7:25). This period is the last half of the 70th week in Daniel's '70 week prophecy.' It is the time when the final 'beast', the antichrist kingdom, rules the world. Hence this time is often called the '*great tribulation*.'.
- **1,000 years** - also called the '*millennium*' (from the root word for 1,000). This period separates the two resurrections; the first for the '*dead in Christ*' and the second for the ungodly. Those who "*share in the first resurrection ... shall be priests of God ... and shall reign with Him for a thousand years. The rest of the dead (the ungodly) do not come to life until the thousand years are ended.*" (Rev 20:4-6).

Until the '**TIME OF THE END**'

*"But thou Daniel, shut up the words, and **seal the book**, until **the time of the end** ... the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly."* (Dan 12:4, 9-10).

According to this scripture passage, there is a '**book**' that is '**sealed**' until the '**time of the end**'. This 'book' is a symbol of the '**title deeds**' to our full inheritance in Christ. The content of this book, involves both the word of the **inheritance**, and also of **judgment**. (Dan 12:1; 7:9,10).

This 'sealed book' is to be opened, or unsealed, at the 'time of the end.' (Dan 7:10; 12:1).

We read in Revelation 5, of a '**book** sealed with **seven seals**' that is opened by the Lamb Himself. The opening of this seven-sealed book marks the specific commencement of the 'time of the end' referred to by Daniel. (Rev 6-7). He was told to "**seal the book until the time of the end**", and he also saw a vision in which the "**books were opened.**" (Dan 7:9,10). This vision of Daniel in relation to the 'book' or 'books', was the same picture as John saw concerning the seven-sealed book - as we shall see by comparing the scriptures from Daniel and Revelation.

In Daniel

*"As I looked, **thrones were set** (RSV) - placed for the assessors with the judge (Amp) - and the ancient of days took His seat ... **ten thousand times ten thousand** stood before Him ... the court sat in judgment and the **books were opened.**" (Dan 7:9-10).*

In Daniel's vision of the 'books', he was viewing the events of the 'time of the end.' He saw a horn (a king) rising up, who was allowed to rule 'for a time, times, and half a time'. This refers to the 3 1/2 year period in which the antichrist kingdom rules. (Dan 7:25; Rev 13:5).

He writes that "*the time has come for the saints to possess the kingdom*" (Dan 7:18,22); so "*the court will sit in judgment and his (the horn's) dominion shall be taken away - consumed gradually and destroyed suddenly until the end.*" (Dan 7:25,26 Amp).

In Daniel's vision and in his prophecies about the 'books', he writes of both the **inheritance** for God's people, and of the **judgment** that will proceed, when the 'book' is opened in the 'time of the end.'

*"At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who has charge over the people. And there shall be a time of **trouble** (tribulation) such as never has been ... at that time shall your people be delivered, every one that shall be found **written in the book.**" (Dan 12:1).*

In Revelation

In his revelation, the apostle John describes the same prophetic vision that Daniel saw.

- "And lo a **throne was set** with one seated on the throne ... around the throne were twenty-four **thrones** ... with twenty-four elders seated ... with golden crowns on their heads." (Rev 4:1-4).*
- "And in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne was a **book** ... **sealed** with seven seals ... and no-one was worthy to open the book or loose the seals." (Rev 5:1-4).*
- "the Lion ... has prevailed to **open the book** and **loose the seals.**" (Rev 5:5).*
- "and I saw a **Lamb standing** ..." (Rev 5:6).*

- "and have made them a kingdom of priests to our God and they reign on the earth." (Rev 5:10).
- "I saw and I heard the voice of many angels numbering **ten thousand times ten thousand**, and thousands of thousands." (Rev 5:11).

A Comparison

Daniel's vision and John's revelation are of the same scene in the 'time of the end.' The main focus in each, is the **opening of the sealed book** resulting in judgment and inheritance. When we compare and combine the details from the visions in Daniel and Revelation, we see:

- the throne that is set.
- the other thrones that are set (twenty-four in number), for the court of judgment. This is a symbolic picture of apostolic authority functioning in the 'kingly' aspect of judgment.
- in Daniel "*Michael stands up*" (Dan 12:1); in Revelation, "*the Lamb is standing*". (Rev 5:6). This picture of the 'Lamb standing' is symbolic of the final processes of atonement and judgment being ministered in and through the church. Having been seated in His Melchizedek priesthood, now at the 'time of the end', the Lamb stands and the activities of His throne and kingship result in a 'time of trouble' with the opening of the seven seals. These openings proceed and extend through to His appearing at the Day of Atonement. (Rev 6 - 7).
- ten thousand times ten thousand ... from every tribe, tongue, people and nation, worshipping the Lamb. This multitude is functioning as "*a kingdom of priests*" (Rev 5:10) in the Melchizedek order, ready to 'reign' with the Lamb in kingly authority as the 'seals' open.

We conclude that it is the seven-sealed book of Revelation 5 that is sealed until the 'time of the end.' (Dan 12:4, Rev 5:1; 6:1). **When** the stage is set according to the scriptures, with the court of judgment, and a vast company gathered to the Lamb in the Melchizedek order, **then** the seven-sealed book of the full inheritance can be opened.

Restoration

Before this 'book' can be opened there must be a restoration of **divine order**, the order of Melchizedek. We know that the return of Christ is to be preceded by a "*restoration of all things that God spoke by the prophets*". (Acts 3:21). The church today is beginning to experience this restoration, as the Spirit begins to call the body of Christ to unity, to 'go on to perfection', and above all, to "*repent ... that times of refreshing may come from the face of the Lord*". (Acts 3:19).

The book of Revelation describes the **progressive experiences** of John in his vision of 'the end.' The church going on to perfection will actually encounter the **same stages** of experience as did John in his vision.

• **Revelation 1 - 3:** John's vision of letters being sent to the overseers of the seven churches (or candlesticks) is a call to the church today to restore and re-establish what has been lost, so that we may go on into the Melchizedek order.

Revelation 4 - 5: John describes the divine order of saints gathered to the Lamb which will follow the restoration of chapters 1 - 3. This gathering leads on to the opening of the seven seals, with the seventh seal being the day of perfection, the Day of Atonement.

Revelation 6 - 8 details the seven seals, which are followed by the seven trumpets (Rev 8:2), and then by the events of the '3½ years' (Rev 12), and so forth through to the end.

In the time schedule of the last days, the church is already involved in the events of the book of Revelation.

The body of Christ is in the time of **restoration, the first stage** in the unfolding of the book of Revelation. The seven letters to the church in chapters 1 - 3 contain a call to repentance, to 'first love', to first principles, to divine order, and to go on to perfection. The content of these seven letters is the present emphasis of the Spirit, as He leads us in restoration and on unto perfection. The restoration of the church to the order of Melchizedek will set the stage for the Lamb to stand and open the seven-sealed book. The opening of the seventh seal coincides with the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement

*"After this I looked and behold a great **multitude which no man could number** from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in **white robes**, with palm branches in their hands and crying out ... **salvation** belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb! ... then one of the elders said, "Who are these clothed in white robes and where have they come from? ... these are they who have come out of **great tribulation**, they have **washed** their robes and made them white in the **blood** of the Lamb ... therefore they are **before the throne** of God, and serve Him day and night within His temple; and He who sits upon the throne will **shelter them** with His presence. They shall hunger no more neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

*When the Lamb opened the **seventh seal**, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God and **seven trumpets** were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and He was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the **golden altar** before the throne; and the smoke of the **incense** rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God. Then the angel took the censer and filled it **with fire** from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, voices, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. Now the seven angels who had the **seven trumpets** made ready to blow them." (Rev 7:9 - 8:6).*

We have seen that the opening of the seven-sealed book signals the 'time of the end.' (Rev 6:1). The opening of the **seventh** of these seals, coincides with the events of the **Day of Atonement**, the second major event in the overview of eschatology.

The above passage from Revelation 7 - 8, describes a numberless multitude from every nation that is gathered as one 'body' to the Lamb, approaching the seventh seal. They have 'washed their garments ... and made them white', 'unto perfection', by the blood and water. They are now fully "*cleansed ... to serve the living God in His temple.*" (Heb 9:14).

This is the time of His 'appearing', when a living company are to be presented as a spotless bride.¹ They shall "*see Him as He is, for they shall be like Him.*" (1 John 3:2).

At the time of the seventh seal, the great 'communion' gathering of the body of Christ to the Lamb in the midst is joined by the high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is there to receive and offer the "*living sacrifice*" (Rom 12:1) of this great company, as an "*incense*", at the "*altar ... before the throne.*" (Rev 8:3).

This description of the Day of Atonement draws on all the symbols and themes that have pointed to perfection throughout the scriptures - the white robes, the palm branches, the blood and water, the communion of the body, the true temple, the spotless bride, the sons of God, and the high priest's ministry on the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement in Hebrews

The book of Hebrews reveals that the blood of Christ, and the high priesthood of Christ, are the true form of what the blood of bulls and goats on the former Day of Atonement foreshadowed. But Christ did 'much more' than fulfil the shadow. The apostle in Hebrews, looking at true temple procedures, points out two significant differences between the true and the shadow:

- In the true temple, the altar of incense is seen in the "*holiest*" **with** the ark (Heb 9:4) - which was not its position in the shadow tabernacle, except on the Day of Atonement;
- Christ entered once into the 'holiest' and '**sat down**' to await the conclusion of the Day of Atonement processes at the end of the church age. (Heb 10:12-14).

This position of **Christ** seated in the '**holiest**' agrees with the description of the **altar** as being with the **ark**.

By this the apostle was signifying, that the process of perfection is extended until Christ's appearing - until there is a fulfilment of the Day of Atonement for His people in the 'time of the end.'

Writing at the **beginning** of the church age, the apostle in Hebrews spoke of the relationship between the **altar** and the ark (**throne**). (Heb 9:4). When John saw the

¹ The saints of the New Testament looked forward to His appearing when their salvation would be fully revealed, and lived as if this were imminent. 1 Peter 4:7. For them the resurrection will be the time of His appearing. Nevertheless, in the last days a company of saints will actually be alive for His 'appearing', some time before His second coming and the resurrection. A 'living bride' will be presented to Christ, albeit the full manifestation of the bride city, the New Jerusalem, includes the resurrected saints.

end point in Revelation, he described exactly the same thing - Christ ministering with the saints at the **altar** of incense before the **throne**. (Rev 8:1-4).

"When the Lamb opened the seventh seal ... an angel came and stood at the golden altar² before the throne, and He was given incense to mingle with the prayers of the saints." (Rev 8:1-4).

Both the Hebrews writer and John were describing the ministry of perfection in the true temple - one was looking at the commencement of the process, and one at the conclusion of it.

The Altar of Incense

The ministry of the high priest at the altar of incense was a central aspect of the Day of Atonement. The apostle in Hebrews spoke of the altar in relation to the ministry of perfection in the true temple.

Now the description in Revelation 8:1-4, specifically features the symbolic language of the altar and of the Day of Atonement. This symbolic reference to the altar presents us with the **key to understanding the Day of Atonement** in the 'time of the end'.

What do the symbols reveal - the angel, the altar, the incense, the censer, and the fire? The events and symbols must of course be interpreted as an incarnate dimension, because these things are happening within the true temple, that is the 'incarnate temple', the body of Christ. What then do the symbols mean 'in the flesh' of His people, who are gathered and being perfected at the time described.

- The 'other angel' who comes to minister at the altar is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, for only the high priest performs this 'incense' ministry on the Day of Atonement.
- The altar, the incense, the prayers and the smoke all refer to His people, who are offering themselves as a 'living sacrifice', totally committed to the Lord - a living 'intercession' for the salvation of the world. This is the fullness and the finale of all offering and prayer.
- The 'fire thrown into the earth', symbolises the judgment which results from this conclusion of prayer.

His people at this point in time, are a spotless offering, selfless and perfected in love. (1 John 4:12,17). Hence, Christ the high priest meets them to actually present them as a final offering. In this giving of themselves, they move through the 'veil', in the sense of the rending of their own 'flesh' nature; and now they stand with Him before the throne in the glory of God.

Insight into the nature of perfection is found by referring to the symbols of the 'bride' and the 'body'. Here again, these aspects are the key to the description of the Day of Atonement, the day of perfection.

² 'Golden altar' is another name for the altar of incense. Ex 40:26.

The Bride of Christ

The full expression of 'atonement' is seen when His people are actually **made one** with Christ.³ The Day of Atonement is the day of marriage between Christ and His living 'bride'.⁴ Having 'sanctified her' and '*cleansed her by the washing of the water of the word*', Christ will "*present His church to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing.*" (Eph 5:26-27).

Because the 'veil' of their flesh has indeed been rent,⁵ the people of God on the Day of Atonement come into a revelation of His glory in the flesh. The "*glory of the Lord has risen upon them*" (Isa 60:1), and they are clothed with His perfection, arrayed in the order of His light and glory.

A short time after this day of marriage, when the woman, the church, is ready to bring forth the manchild as the product of her marriage, the glorious bride is described:

*"And a **great wonder** appeared in heaven, a **woman** clothed with the **sun**, with the **moon** under her feet, and on her head a crown of **twelve stars**; she was **with child** and travailed in birth, in pain to be delivered."* (Rev 12:1-2).

In the gospels, the two marriage or wedding parables show us much about this Day of Atonement, when the bridegroom comes at the midnight hour for His bride. (Luke 14:16-24, Matt 25:1-13).

- Many hear the word of invitation to the wedding, but make excuses, and then miss out.
- An ingathering of wedding guests follows, so that the feast will be full.
- One who has no 'wedding garment' (the perfect righteousness of Christ), is cast out into 'outer darkness'; (referring to the 3½ year tribulation period).
- The lesson of the five wise and five foolish virgins is that the 'wise' had a 'double portion' of oil, enough to last until midnight when the bridegroom came. (Matt 25:1-13). The 'foolish' had then to go and buy⁶ but returned too late.

These parables warn that many will miss the midnight hour of marriage in the 'time of the end.' We are urged to hear the call regarding the perfection of the bride of Christ, to beware of cost-saving religious alternatives, and to sell everything in order to buy the 'double portion' birthright.

³ To 'make one' is the final result of atonement - the everlasting covenant is an everlasting marriage of God and man in the flesh of Christ. Jesus' prayer in John 17 was for this atonement.

⁴ At the time in history being spoken of, those alive in the last generation might be called the 'living' bride; not forgetting the inclusion at the resurrection of all overcomers in the 'bride city' the New Jerusalem.

⁵ The veil, that is of the true temple, is declared to be 'His flesh' (Heb 10:20). We, the body of Christ, 'bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh' (Gen 2:23), as the incarnate temple, are to express the rent veil, so that His glory may be fully seen in flesh.

⁶ i.e. the truth. Prov 23:23.

The Body of Christ

Before this perfection of the many 'sons' is manifest, the whole 'body of Christ' will be perfected in unity, and joined to the head to form one 'Son', one new man, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 2:15, Col 3:10). This unity is another aspect of the Day of Atonement, the day of marriage. Our gathering to the communion of His body and blood, will culminate when we fully partake of His life on the Day of Atonement.

"Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will save it. I tell you in that night there will be two in a bed ... two grinding at a mill ... one will be taken and the other left. And they said to Him - 'where Lord?' He said to them, 'Where the body is there will the eagles be gathered.'" (Luke 17:33-37).

*"If they say to you, 'Lo, He is in the wilderness', do not go out; if they say 'He is in the inner rooms', do not believe it. For **as the lightning** comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man. Wherever the **body is**, there will the **eagles** be gathered together." (Matt 24:26-28).*

Because an eagle is drawn by nature to a dead body, this symbol aptly describes the believer who is led by the Spirit, and who gathers to the 'body of Christ'. *"And where the slain are, there is she."* (Job 39:30). The desire of those who are born of God, **is to gather** to His body in true communion and relationship, with a faith for the 'hope of perfection', and a vision of being one world-wide united body. It is in this faith and vision that we are to meet at one communion table,⁷ gathering to the body of the *"Lamb who was slain."* (Rev 5:6).

To the body of Christ gathered in such communion as this, the Son of man will appear, able to be seen from east to west by those of every nation and tribe who are gathered 'where the body is.' Here on the Day of Atonement, there is at last a full communion with Him face to face - perfect unity - complete atonement.

We can only wonder at this great multitude that is gathered for this great climax, the great Day of Atonement, and ask as the elder did, *"Who are these ... and where have they come from?"* (Rev 7:13).

A Numberless Multitude

A multitude that no man can number from every nation and tribe, will be gathered for the Day of Atonement.

Referring back to the 'time of the end', the company of His people described at that time already numbered *"ten thousand times ten thousand ..."* (Rev 5:11). They were worshipping the Lamb as He stood to open the book of inheritance - the seven seals that would conclude with the Day of Atonement.

Here now at the seventh seal, at the Day of Atonement, the multitude is numberless.

⁷

The word for 'communion' also means fellowship, participation.

They have *"palm branches in their hands ... and cry **salvation** ..."*. (Rev 7:9-10). At Jesus' entry to Jerusalem, the crowd waved palm branches as symbols of joy and triumph, and cried 'Hosanna!'⁸ This use of palm branches also associates with the 'booths' that were built during the Feast of Booths to celebrate the wilderness deliverance from captivity. (Lev 23:40ff).

They have *"come out of **great tribulation**."* (Rev 7:14).⁹ We recall that when Daniel was told to seal the book until the 'time of the end', he said - *"at that time shall Michael **stand up**, and there shall be a **time of trouble** such as has never been."* (Dan 12:1).

At the 'time of the end', the Lamb **stands** to take the book and unseal its inheritance and its **judgments**. When He stands, a *"time of trouble"* begins, which extends right through to the end. Thus 'great tribulation' and judgment will indeed *"begin at the house of God"* (1 Peter 4:17), and then will also fall upon the world. For the church then, the period of the 'seals' is a time of 'great tribulation' out of which a great company emerges who have overcome and 'gone on to perfection' amidst trial and persecution. This is the time of **great tribulation** for the **church**. It is later that 'great tribulation' comes upon the world. The full cup of God's wrath is poured out for 3½ years, while the 'woman', the church, is protected. (Rev 12:6).

- They have *"**washed** their robes and made them white in the **blood** of the Lamb."* (Rev 7:14). The blood and the water (which washes the 'robes') - the two spiritual cleansing agents - have been applied in the process of their perfection. All overcomers are promised *"white garments"* (Rev 3:4-5,18), symbolic of the perfect righteousness of Christ. This company has put on the perfection of Christ (Eph 4:24), but not yet the immortal body.¹⁰
- They are *"**before the throne** and serve Him day and night in His temple."* (Rev 7:15). We recall that the **altar** of incense is **before** the throne', as are this company of saints. By applying the blood and water, this multitude have followed the Forerunner upon the *"new and living way"* into the holiest. (Heb 10:20).
- "How much more the blood of Christ who offered Himself ... can **purify** our hearts to **serve** the living God."* (Heb 9:14). This company truly serves in priesthood, still in the earthly dimension of *"day and night"* (Rev 7:15), yet in His temple in 'heavenly places.'
- "He who is sitting on the throne will protect and **spread His tabernacle** over them and shelter them with His presence."* (Rev 7:15 Amp). In the 'shadow' tabernacle, the wings of a cherubim were woven into the curtains above the holy place. Here on the Day of Atonement, His people come into complete protection

⁸ The events in Revelation 7, containing this symbolic reference to palm branches, echo the cry of the palm-bearing multitude at Christ's entry to Jerusalem - hosanna (lit. 'save us now'). The full salvation seen in Revelation 7 is in fulfilment of the prophetic psalm from which their cry was taken. *'The Lord is become my salvation ... save us now, O Lord ... blessed is he who enters in ... we bless you from the house of the Lord.'* (Psalm 118:14-26).

⁹ This mention of 'great tribulation' in Rev 7:14 is often misunderstood to refer to the 31/2 year period. Rather, here it refers to the time of trouble for the church, which is followed later by the 31/2 year judgment of the world.

¹⁰ This is not the perfection of immortality (realised at the Second Coming); rather these saints appropriate the perfection of Christ as the Head of their order. They are now as Christ was on earth, whose perfection did not protect Him from mortality; He had not yet put on the immortal body.

'under the shadow of His wings' in His temple. The spreading of His tabernacle over the church symbolises the marriage union which takes place on this day.¹¹

- "They shall **not hunger or thirst** any more, the Lamb will be their shepherd and guide them to springs of living water, and God will **wipe away every tear** from their eyes." (Rev 7:16-17). His people are now to be sustained by the 'living waters', i.e. by His life alone.¹² They have overcome death and appropriated resurrection life while still in the mortal body. (I Cor 6:13; 15:47-54).¹³ Now the curse of the fall is removed and the sting of death is gone.*

The Seven Trumpets

The incense offering of the saints upon the golden altar symbolises the fullness and finale of prayer for mercy. The role of the altar before the throne of grace will now be reversed, and the *"censer is filled with fire"* and *"thrown into the earth."* (Rev 8:1-6). We may say the censer of prayer is 'inverted'. The Day of Atonement is past - the day of judgment and vengeance has now come.

From this conclusion of the high priest's ministry of intercession, the seven trumpets will now sound out the stages of judgment to be poured on the earth. The six trumpets are sounded in turn (Rev 8:10), until just before the seventh. The Lord¹⁴ then declares *"that there shall be no more delay, but that in the days of the seventh trumpet, the mystery of God should be finished"*. (Rev 10:6-7).

The days of the seventh trumpet are to embrace the full revelation of reward and of judgment. (Rev 11:15). This is the **last trumpet** and must, as the number seven suggests, announce and complete all aspects of the mystery of Christ and the church. It therefore encompasses the full judgment of the 'nations'; the 'destroying of the destroyers' with the seven vials of wrath; the judgment of the dead; and the giving of reward to the godly. The seventh trumpet 'sounds' and includes all the events from just prior to the 3½ year period, through until the 'second coming' and resurrection.

Revelation 12

*'And a **great wonder** appeared in heaven, a **woman** clothed with the **sun**, with the **moon** under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve **stars**; she was with child, travelling in birth, in pain to be delivered.'* (Rev 12:1-2).

*'And another wonder appeared in heaven; behold a great red dragon¹⁵... stood before the woman ... waiting to devour her child; she brought forth a **manchild** who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to*

¹¹ Compare Ruth 3:6-10

¹² On the progression in the theme of 'living waters', compare John 7:38, Rev 7:17 and Rev 22:1.

¹³ The full change of body, when mortality puts on immortality, is not until the day of resurrection.

¹⁴ According to the symbolic language used here, this 'mighty angel', who 'stands upon the earth and the sea', with the 'voice of a lion', is describing a dimension of the revelation of Christ Himself. (Rev 10:1-7).

¹⁵ Called elsewhere the ancient serpent, the devil, or Satan. Rev 12:9.

His throne; and the woman fled from the serpent¹⁶ into the wilderness to be nourished in a place prepared by God for a **time, times, and half a time**.¹⁷ (Rev 12:3-6).

'Now war arose in heaven, **Michael and His angels** defeated Satan and his angels, and no place is found for them in heaven any longer. And the dragon is thrown down to the earth with his angels ... and they overcame him by the **blood of the Lamb** and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death. Rejoice then O heavens and you that dwell therein! But woe unto you, earth and sea for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows he has but a short time.' (Rev 12:7-12).

'Then the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went off to make war with the **remnant of her seed**, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus.' (Rev 12:17).

'And I saw a beast rising ... and to the beast the dragon gave his power and his throne and his great authority ... And the beast ... was allowed to exercise authority for **forty-two months**... and it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.' (Rev 13:1-7).

There are five major strategic points in time leading up to the return of Christ. Earlier articles have referred to the 'time of the end' and the 'Day of Atonement'.¹⁸ We refer to the third of these points, simply as '**Revelation 12**', because this particular chapter records the events which lead up to the 3½ year period. Concerning this period of 3½ years, we read that:

- for this time the woman (the perfected church) is protected in the 'wilderness.'
- Satan meanwhile, having been cast out of heaven, comes to the earth with great wrath, and gives his power to the beast (i.e. the antichrist kingdom) which then rules for 42 months, or 3½ years.

We will now examine the sequence of events which lead to this 3½ year period.

The Seventh Trumpet

Approaching the time for the seventh trumpet, a mighty angel (a revelation of Christ Himself¹⁹) announces that there should be '*no further delay*' (Rev 10:5-7) but that the mystery of God should be finished **in the days of this seventh trumpet**. The 'finished mystery' or the climax of the mystery, is the revelation of the bride of Christ in her full glory, bringing forth the product of the marriage, the manchild. (Rev 12:1-6).

¹⁶ The woman is given two wings of a great eagle. Rev 12:14.

¹⁷ 1260 days, 42 months, or 3½ years.

¹⁸ Refer to 'The Time of the End' Parts 1 & 2 in the 'Vision' articles in the 'Mystery of God' Vol 4 Iss 5.

¹⁹ As in the whole of Revelation, Old Testament symbolic language is used to refer to the dimensions of Christ which are being revealed in the time of the end.

We recall that at the opening of the seventh seal, the seven angels prepared to blow the seven trumpets. The seven trumpets issued from within the seventh seal. (Rev 8:1-6). Likewise, from within the seventh trumpet, issues the completion of all things - the fullness of **reward**, and the full **judgment** of the seven vials. (Rev 15:1).

*'Then the **seventh** angel sounded His trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ ... the nations raged but Thy wrath has come, and the time for the dead to be **judged**, and the time for giving **reward** to your servants the prophets and saints ..." Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the **ark** of His covenant was seen within His temple ... and a great wonder appeared in heaven, a **woman** clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars.'* (Rev 11:15 - 12:1).

Within the compass of the seventh trumpet (the 3½ years through until the resurrection), full **reward** will come to all His servants, both the living and the dead. Also the full **judgment** and wrath of the Lamb will be heaped upon the unrepentant world.

A Great Wonder in Heaven

The climax of the '**great mystery**' of Christ and His church is this '**great wonder**' in heaven. (Eph 5:32) The temple of heaven is opened and a '**woman**', the bride of Christ is by, or in the '**ark**', the **throne** of God. For a woman to be found in the '**Holiest**', is something that has never occurred before in the history of God's temple and His purpose. This is a new thing, a great wonder! This is the climax of the mystery and the beginning of a whole new reality - God in the flesh, the order for the '**new heavens and new earth.**'

- She is clothed with light, with the '**order**' of the heavens, and has no darkness in her; she is a perfect, glorious church. (Eph 5:27) The sun, moon, and stars are symbols of the triune glory of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- She is a queen crowned with twelve stars. Her husband is the King of kings. Twelve last-day apostles, filled with the Spirit and ordained by the Lord Himself, will lead the church.
- She is married, her bridegroom is the Lord Jesus Christ. (Psalm 45:1-8; Rev 19:6-7) She is about to give birth.
- She is said to be '**in heaven**', yet when we interpret the language of the symbol, we realise that she is in '**heavenly places**'; in the temple of God, **on earth**. We know this because:
- She is involved in a final '**travail**', an experience that cannot be in '**heaven**', but rather in '**heavenly places**'.
- Her child is caught straight **up** to the throne in heaven, she being yet on earth.
- She is protected for 3½ years from earthly events yet to take place; she will be '**alive and remaining**' to be caught up with the dead in Christ in the day of resurrection. (1 Thess 4:14-17).
- When the dragon is '**thrown to earth**' he is able to '**pursue the woman**'; however she escapes by eagle wing power to a '**wilderness**' place.
- The '**earth helped the woman.**' (Rev 12:16).
- The '**remnant of her seed**', those not part of the bride company, are also on

earth, but are not protected; they are warred against and overcome by the beast. (Rev 12:17).

The woman is 'with child', in the 'holy of holies', where the ark of the glory of God is seen. She is giving birth to a manchild. Such an event has never happened in the history of the temple, for a woman was not permitted to give birth in the temple. 'Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things?' (Isa 66:6-8).

After a birth in the land of Israel, the mother was required to fulfil the rites of purification. At the conclusion of her days of uncleanness, a burnt offering and sin offering were offered to reflect the fact that the child had inherited the fallen sinful nature. This woman giving birth in Revelation 12 is remarkably different; she is a 'great wonder'. We do not read of any symbolic reference to a fulfilment of the purification rites, because she bears no taint of original sin - she has been perfected. She is married to Christ and is seen as glorified here under the seventh and last trumpet.

The 'redeemed' company of 144,000 mentioned in both Revelation 7 and 14, are symbolically described as 'pure virgins' (Rev 14:3-5), because they bear no defilement of sin, 'no guile', 'no fault', and have no need of purification. In Revelation 7, those in this company are sealed for their special ministry within the bride, the church. In Revelation 14, they receive the reward for their participation in the ministry of 'bringing forth'.

The mystery of godliness can only be finished in a perfected, sinless, married woman - the church. (I Tim 3:16; Rev 10:7). That which she brings forth, is of the incarnate order of the 'new heavens and new earth.'

Her Manchild

The manchild is born as a result of the marriage of Christ and the church - born of a perfect mother, from the seed of a perfect Father. The result of the finished mystery is a new creation of God in flesh.²⁰ This manchild is free from every taint of sin and corruption, needs no redemption,²¹ and so is immediately 'caught up to God and His Throne.' (Rev 12:5).

The theme of the manchild is presented three times in the scriptures, and the same elements are present in each case.

- Moses was the manchild in connection with the tabernacle; he was almost destroyed by Pharaoh.
- The Lord Jesus was the manchild in relation to the church - the true temple of 'heavenly places', whom Satan attempted to destroy through an earthly king,

²⁰ The manchild will be a new creation and not drawn from the present order, hence it is clear that the supreme goal for mankind through redemption, is to be part of the bride of Christ.

²¹ The rites of purification for the mother of a male child extended for seven days. The child was then circumcised on the eighth day. Concerning this manchild we find no antitypical 'spiritual' circumcision which would indicate, as formerly, the need of redemption from sin through the circumcision of Christ. Col 2:11.

Herod.

- The manchild of Revelation 12 stands in relation to the 'new heavens and new earth.' Once again Satan, the great red dragon attempts to devour him.

In each case the manchild is associated with a mighty deliverance to the people of God. In the final case, the birth and translation of the manchild in Revelation 12, provokes the war in heaven,²² as a result of which, Satan the accuser is cast out of heaven into the earth. *'She brought forth a manchild, who will rule (lit. 'shepherdize') all nations with an iron rod.'* (Rev 12:5).

The Casting Down of Satan

The other '*great wonder*', the '*great red dragon*' (Rev 12:3), is symbolic of Satan and his counterfeit purpose, the '*mystery of iniquity*' (II Thess 2:7), that has spanned the ages.²³ He also has a mystery 'bride' - Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, who is utterly destroyed. (Rev 17:1).

His place as the '*accuser of the brethren*' (Rev 12:10), and his access to 'heavenly places' is about to be ended. Michael and His angels fight against Satan and his angels, and overcome '*by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by loving not their lives unto the death.*' (Rev 12:11). Since angels do not function '*by the blood*', by '*testimony*', nor by '*loving not their lives*', we know that 'Michael and His angels' refers to the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. It is the saints who are involved in this casting down of Satan.

Eagle Wing Power

The woman is given the 'wings of a great eagle' to flee to her prepared place in the wilderness, where she is protected for 3½ years, while judgment comes upon the earth. God brought Israel out of Egypt '*on eagles' wings*' (Ex 19:4), by His own supernatural power, and made constant miracle provision for every need. It will also be this same power by which the church flees '*to the wilderness*' and is protected and nourished. (Rev 12:6,14).

The 3½ Years

The woman is protected in her place for '*one thousand two hundred and sixty days*' (Rev 12:6), or for '*a time, times, and half a time*' (Rev 12:14). A 'time' is understood to represent one year, which in biblical time includes 360 days - hence 1260 days is 3½ years. The beast (the antichrist kingdom), receives Satan's power after he is cast down, and rules for '*forty-two months*' (Rev 13:5), for this same period of 3½ years.

The Remnant of her Seed

²² This war in 'heavenly places' in the true temple is fought by Michael and His angels who overcome by the blood of the Lamb. This can only refer to Christ and His blood-redeemed Church.

²³ His seven heads are symbolic of the seven kingdoms of Gentile dominion through the ages - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the final great world power which will involve ten heads, or kings. Rev 17:12.

After Satan has been cast down, and the woman has fled to the wilderness, it is declared that a **'remnant of the seed of the woman, who keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ'** are warred against and overcome by the dragon. (Rev 12:17; 13:7; 20:4). In this instance, the expression **'seed of the woman'** does not refer to Christ, although He was the **'seed of the woman'** that **'bruised the serpent's head'** at Calvary (Gen 3:15); nor to the newly born manchild who is the seed of the bride of Christ. In this case, the **'remnant of her seed'** are not **from** the woman but are **'of the woman'**, i.e. of the church. This is a group of Christians who keep His commandments and bear testimony to Jesus.

From this statement, it is quite clear that there are some Christians who do not escape to the wilderness as part of the woman, the bride. Further, the dragon vents his wrath on them and causes them to be overcome and killed under the rule of the antichrist kingdom. (Rev 13:7, 20:4). When Satan gives his power and authority to the final 'beast', or kingdom, all must bow to the system of the beast, and receive his mark and his number. (Rev 13:2,16-17). The ones who keep their testimony of Jesus and do not take the mark are then killed as martyrs.

The scriptures refer to, and warn us about a group of foolish Christians who do not overcome through the tribulation of the seven seals, to be perfected and clothed in the **'white wedding garment.'** (Matt 25:1-5; Rev 7:14; 3:5, Matt 22:12). They must now face the **'great tribulation of the world'** and be overcomers through death, or else deny the Lord.

The Second Coming - The First Resurrection

*'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the **same way** as you saw Him go into heaven.'* (Acts 1:11).

*'Behold He comes with **clouds** (Acts 1:9) and every eye will see Him.'* (Rev 1:7).

*'Behold the Lord comes **with ten thousands of His saints** to execute judgment on all.'* (Jude 14-15).

*'When the Lord Jesus is **revealed from heaven** with His mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance.'* (II Thess 1:7-8).

*'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, with the sound of the trumpet ... and the **dead in Christ will rise first**; then we who are **alive and remain** until the coming of the Lord, shall **not precede** those who are asleep ... but will be caught up **together** with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air ... and so we shall always be with the Lord.'* (I Thess 4:15-17).

The return of Christ 'in the same way as we saw Him go' coincides with the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the first resurrection. (Rev 20:5). This advent of Christ is commonly called the 'rapture' because of the reference to being **'caught up to meet the Lord in the air.'** This 'rapture':

is not just at 'anytime', since the whole of His purpose must be completely

fulfilled before His return;

- is **not before** the 3½ year tribulation period. It is not to be confused with the *'eagle wing' flight of the church into the wilderness. (Rev 12:6,14).*
- is the final aspect of the seventh trumpet, the last trumpet which sums up all reward and judgment. *(Rev 11:15).* The living overcomers in the wilderness who are *'alive and remaining until the coming of the Lord'*, and the dead in Christ, are all caught up together, not one preceding the other. *(1 Thess 4:15; Heb 11:40).*

At this final day, the 'bride city', the New Jerusalem, *'comes down from God out of heaven' (Rev 21:2,9,10)*, and the overcomers of all ages live in the full glory of this incarnate dimension. This city, which represents God's ultimate dwelling in flesh *'with men'*, will pass on into, and become the centrepiece of, the *'new heavens and new earth'*, once this present order has been *'rolled up'*.

For 1000 years the saints will rule and reign with Christ, with Satan bound, and the beast and false prophet already cast into the lake of fire. *(Rev 19:20; 20:2,4).* Only at the end of the millennium will the rest of the dead (the ungodly) be raised to their eternal judgment.

The Second Resurrection - Second Death

*'The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were ended ... And when the **thousand years are ended**, Satan will be loosed for a short time (v.3) and will come out to deceive the nations ... and gather them to battle; and they march up ... and surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire comes out from heaven and consumes them, and the devil is thrown into the lake of fire ... then I saw a **great white throne** ... and the dead were judged.'* (Rev 20:5-11).

The second resurrection could more appropriately be called *'the second death'* (Rev 20:6) for it is a resurrection only to eternal death. Satan, who has been bound for 1000 years, causes the ungodly to be raised, and gathers them against the city of God in a final futile assault. Satan is cast into the lake of fire, and the ungodly now face their final judgment before the great white throne. The *'blessed and holy'* who had their part in the first resurrection (Rev 20:6), have already faced their judgment in the 'time of the end' and have entered into reward. It remains only for the 'goats' to arise to the awful realisation of their judgment, and to *'be cursed to everlasting fire along with the devil and his angels.'* (Matt 25:31-41).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The overall purpose of the scriptures is to reveal the mystery of Christ. The last book in this record is called the 'Revelation of Jesus Christ.' This book doesn't just deal with His second **coming**, in the sense of His **final** revelation from heaven. It is a description of His **progressive** revelation (the *'coming of Christ in the flesh'*) in the time of the end. The fullness of the 'Revelation of Jesus Christ' will be **in** His saints, **to** His saints, and then **with** His saints in the final appearing from heaven.

Jesus' own revelation

'The revelation of Jesus Christ **which God gave to Him** to show to His servants ... He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John.' (Rev 1:1).

In this first verse of the book, we learn that Jesus has Himself received a revelation '*which God gave to Him*' - a full disclosure of the Father's will which He did not previously have.

In His gospel discussion on the end of the world Jesus said, '*But of that day and hour no-one knows not even the angels of heaven **nor the Son**, but the Father only.*'²⁴ (Matt 24:36). He did not have the full overview until He ascended. Then from His ascended position with the Father, He could make known the 'Revelation' of the 'time of the end'.

With this in mind, we realise that this last book holds the key to interpreting the gospels. The statements about the end of the world in the gospels are not in themselves the keys to the book of Revelation. The true temple operations that conclude the ministry of perfection, are the keys to an understanding of the book of Revelation.²⁵ **It is these keys, and not the gospel statements, that must be used as the basis for eschatology.**

Interpretations drawn from the gospels alone lead to 'sign-watching' in anticipation of the 'rapture'. This then tends to lead us away from God's purpose in the church, away from 'going on unto perfection.' The 'sign-watcher' is waiting and hoping for the 'rapture', whereas the coming of Christ will first of all be experienced '**in His saints**' and then '**to His saints**' as we go on unto perfection. Only at the final revelation from heaven '**with His saints**', will there then be a 'catching up' (rapture) of both the living and the dead in Christ.

His revelation in, to, and with His saints

The Revelation of Jesus Christ then, is more than just His 'second coming' and the events which lead to it. This final book records the 'coming of Christ in the flesh', i.e. His revelation in His church and the final stages in the building of the incarnate temple.

In and through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. (Eph 3:10) The body of Christ, the kingdom of priests in the Melchizedek order, will show forth a mighty revelation of Christ in the last days. The final book declares the complete Revelation of Jesus Christ - the revelation that is first **in His saints**, **to His saints** and **with His saints**.²⁶

²⁴ Some translations of this verse omit 'nor the Son', but the point being made here is still clear on the basis of Revelation 1:1.

²⁵ The 'eschatology of perfection', i.e. the framework which is based on the understanding of the ministry of perfection, is the content Chapter 5 "The Day of Atonement".

²⁶ This endeavour to explain the progressive revelation of Christ is not in any way to denote **separate events**. There is only one second advent that succeeds His first advent. For those saints who 'died in faith', (whose reward is no less than those alive at the end), the final coming will be the '*second time ... unto complete salvation*'. (Heb 9:28). Nevertheless, those alive at the end will experience aspects of His revelation (coming) that are distinctive within the framework of the true temple operations.

In His Saints

*'That Christ may dwell **in your hearts** by faith; that you ... may apprehend with all saints the breadth, length, height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.'* (Eph 3:17-19).

*'For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live **in them** and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*' (II Cor 6:16).

*'The riches of the glory of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.'* (Col 1:27).

As we 'go on unto perfection' in the last days, the life and nature of Christ is to be revealed more and more in His people. The body of Christ is to grow up to be the habitation of God, the incarnate temple of God. (Eph 2:19-22) This revelation of Christ in us proceeds from the present, right through the 'time of the end', and reaches its climax when perfection is manifest on the Day of Atonement.

To His Saints

*'So Christ having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will **appear a second time**, not to deal with sin, but unto complete salvation to those who are **eagerly looking for Him**.'* (Heb 9:28).

*'So if they say to you, "Lo, He is in the wilderness", do not go out; if they say, "Lo, He is in the inner rooms", do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming the Son of man. **Wherever the body is**, there the eagles will be gathered together.'* (Matt 24:26-28).

'Therefore they are before the throne of God ... and He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.' (Rev 7:15).

On the Day of Atonement in Moses' tabernacle, the people were all gathered at the door, '**looking**' eagerly for the high priest to reappear after making the atonement for their sins. When he appeared, atonement was complete.

To those who are **looking** for Him, Christ will appear the second time on the Day of Atonement.²⁷ From east to west He will appear like 'lightning' to a multitude from every nation and tribe who are gathered to the communion of His body. As the bridegroom to the bride, the Lord will come to His temple. As the high priest, He comes to make atonement complete. As the Head, He is to be united with the perfected body.

With His Saints

²⁷

See previous footnote.

'The Lord comes **with ten thousands** of His saints to execute judgment.' (Jude 14-15).

At His final apocalypse, His revelation from heaven, the Lord is revealed with His saints. At the 'time of the end' in Revelation 5, a 'court of judgment' is established with the 24 elders as 'assessors with the judge'. The myriads of saints gathered to the Lamb, begin at that time to be involved **with** the Lamb in this principle of judgment. This cleansing of the temple by the Lord **with** His saints, extends and increases until the whole of heaven and earth are cleansed.

Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets, Seven Vials

The number seven, in the language of the symbol, refers to perfection and completion. Hence it occurs frequently in the book of Revelation, which is the book of the full consummation.

The 'seals', 'trumpets', and 'vials', in the language of the symbol, refer to the final openings, announcements, and outpourings which bring God's purposes to an end. The 'seals' upon the book of the inheritance are opened in chapters 6 - 8; the 'trumpets' announce the judgments coming upon the earth in chapters 8 - 11; and then the 'vials' of the wrath of God are poured out in conclusion, in chapters 15 - 16. The events of each 'opening' do not conclude with the next, but in many cases they continue and overlap as they move toward the consummation.²⁸

Seven seals

The Lamb opens His book of life and judgment in seven stages. (Rev 6 - 8). The emphasis of these openings is firstly towards the church, and then as a result, toward the world. The seven seals release the full double portion inheritance to His church. They also reveal a judgment '*which begins at the house of God*' (1 Peter 4:17), and which is then exercised toward the world, by the saints, the '*kingdom of priests*.' (Rev 5:10).

At the opening of the first seal, the '*white horse and rider*' (Rev 6:1-2), Christ and the church bearing the gospel of the Melchizedek kingdom, ride forth with unprecedented impact upon '*all nations*.' (Matt 24:14). The other seals proceed through until the seventh, which corresponds with the Day of Atonement, when a numberless multitude enter into the full inheritance.

Seven trumpets

The seven trumpets issue forth out of the seventh seal, and are the next phase of judgment upon the earth. (Rev 8 - 11). The seven angels with the seven trumpets are immediately seen upon the opening of the seventh seal. (Rev 8:1-2). The saints

²⁸

It is an important key to note that in each seventh 'opening', the next seven are contained. The seventh seal brings the revelation of full atonement but also comprehends the sevenfold trumpet judgment of the inverted censer. The seventh and last trumpet, embraces the total consummation, including the seven vials of God's wrath.

(who are called 'angels' in this 'heavenly places' scene) are actively participating in the judgments of the seven trumpets.²⁹

At the Day of Atonement, the perfected company of saints offer themselves as a living sacrifice of prayer. They are the living coals of fire. They are the altar of incense within the incarnate temple. The result of this finale of all prayer is that *'the coals of fire are cast into the earth.'* (Rev 8:5). We say that the 'censer is reversed.' The fullness of offering converts to become the fullness of judgment. The seven angels with the seven trumpets will now announce phases of judgment upon the earth in the time of final harvest, the period of the ingathering.

As the climax of His own revelation, the Lord Himself stands as the Lion to utter the seven thunders of the 'book' of the finished mystery. Then He declares *'that there should be no more delay, but that in the days of the seventh trumpet', which is the last trumpet, 'the mystery of God ... should be finished.'* (Rev 10:6-7). The sounding of the seventh trumpet encompasses all the events of the finishing of the mystery - from the opening of the temple in heaven, where the wonders of the finished mystery appear, right through to the resurrection of the dead in Christ *'at the last trump.'* (1 Cor 15:52). (Rev 11:19 - 12:5).³⁰ The seventh trumpet comprehends the whole consummation of reward and of judgment (including the seven vials), in a period spanning the last 3½ years. (Rev 11:15-18).

Seven vials

The seventh trumpet comprehends the seven vials, which represent the full and unmitigated wrath of God poured out upon the world through until His final revelation from heaven in burning, cleansing cataclysm. 'Seven angels' are again seen to be involved in this judgment. This 'order of seven'³¹ throughout the book of Revelation is an expression of the saints' active participation.

Before the plagues are poured out, the full company of martyrs is to be made up by the addition of those who overcome the *'beast and his mark.'* (Rev 13:15-17). A group of Christians is killed for their testimony during the rule of the antichrist kingdom. They are seen in relation to the *'sea of glass mingled with fire'* (Rev 15:2), which in the language of the true temple, refers to the brazen laver functioning in judgment. The martyrs seen under the brazen altar³² at the fifth seal were told to wait for these, who were yet to be killed. (Rev 6:11). The martyrs cry of *'how long before You will judge and avenge our blood ...'* (Rev 6:10) will be answered by the

²⁹ The seven angels, of the 'order of seven' are always in an active role in the book of Revelation: chapters 1-2, the seven angels govern the churches; chapters 8-9, seven angels blow the seven trumpets; chapter 14, six angels plus the Son of Man as the seventh, speak, judge and harvest; chapter 15, seven angels pour out the seven vials of judgment.

³⁰ The seventh trumpet comprehends the fullness of reward and the fullness of judgment. Its effect extends from before the 3½ year period, through to the resurrection when reward is given to the dead as well as the living. Hence, the seventh trumpet is not restricted in its application to the 'last trump' at the resurrection - a misunderstanding that leads to errors in prophetic frameworks.

³¹ In and around the throne, and as part of its 'order' of life and expression, there are various 'orders' of participants throughout the book of Revelation - the four living ones, the twenty-four elders, and the seven angels, which all feature in various aspects of the activity and initiative.

³² Rev 6:9 mentions the martyrs 'under the altar'. We conclude that the brazen altar is meant, because of its association with blood that was poured at its base. Ex 29:12; Lev 4:7 (RSV).

vengeance of God. With the seven vials, the wrath of God is to be '*filled up*' and '*ended.*' (Rev 15:1 AV, RSV).

The Feast of Tabernacles

The first of the three feasts of Israel, Passover, was fulfilled by Christ, and is fulfilled in our experience when we accept Christ as our 'passover Lamb.'

The second feast, Firstfruits or Pentecost, was also literally fulfilled when on the day of Pentecost, the first 'church' of Christians received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father. (Acts 2:1-4, 1:4-5). This feast is fulfilled in us, when we likewise receive the 'firstfruits' of the Holy Spirit as part of our threefold foundation in Christ. (Acts 2:38).

However there has not yet been a fulfilment of the events of the seventh month Feast of Tabernacles, except that Christ fulfilled the true form of the Day of Atonement. Thus He firmly established for the church, the hope of a future fulfilment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles means. There are four main aspects to this feast in the 'time of the end' - the 'blowing of trumpets', the Day of Atonement, the ingathering, and the 'dwelling in booths.'

The 'Blowing of Trumpets'

The 'blowing of trumpets' in the Old Testament shadow, called the whole nation to the door of the tabernacle for the Day of Atonement. (Lev 23:24-25; Num 29:1). Now in the 'time of the end', this aspect is fulfilled in the call of the Lord upon His church to be restored, to go on unto perfection, and to be gathered as one body for the Day of Atonement. (This 'blowing of trumpets' must not be confused with the seven trumpets which announce the judgments that proceed from the Day of Atonement).

In the apostle John's first experience of the 'Revelation of Jesus Christ', he heard His voice '*like a trumpet*' (Rev 1:10), as the Lord called the 'sevenfold' church to restoration. When next he heard the '*same trumpet voice*' (Rev 4:1), it was calling him to the door into 'heavenly places', into the divine order of the throne, the Melchizedek order. From this door, the opening of the seven-sealed book leads to the greater door into perfection itself - at the Day of Atonement.

Truly the trumpet voice of the Lord is calling us today. With the corrective words of the 'first book', the book that He sent to the seven churches, He is seeking to restore the church. Then the Lord is calling us through the door into the conclusion of His purpose in the true temple. (Rev 4:1 - 5:14). The opening of the seals of the 'second book', will bring together a multitude from every nation, tribe, people and tongue, who will gather as one body to the 'door' for the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement

The tenth day of the seventh month, the day that sin was atoned for, was the climax in Israel's year of festal gathering. So also for the church, the full perfection of 'number seven' provided for by the seven wounds of Christ's atonement, will be

the glorious climax of this seventh month Feast of Tabernacles in the time of the end.

The ingathering

In the shadow, the Day of Atonement was followed by the ingathering of the harvest. (Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:39). Although a *'numberless multitude'* (Rev 7:9) gathers for the Day of Atonement, their remains yet another *'reaping of the earth'* before the 3½ year reign of antichrist begins. During this time the manifest, perfected sons of God will *'swing the sickle'* with the *'Son of Man'*, for the *'harvest of the earth is fully ripe'*. (Rom 8:19). This will also be the time however, for the final harvest of judgment, and for the *'treading of the winepress of the wrath of God'*. (Rev 14:14-20).

In the parable of the wedding feast prepared for the king's son, when many of those invited made excuses, others were gathered in from the byways, as guests of the wedding feast. (Matt 22:1-14, Luke 14:16-24). When one was found without a wedding garment (the righteousness of Christ), he was cast into the outer darkness.

This parable scene corresponds exactly with the events of the *'time of the end'*. Many will respond to the call to be a part of the bride of Christ. Others will make excuses. A subsequent great ingathering will draw many wedding guests. Others however, will find themselves cast out into the *'outer darkness'* of the great tribulation period when men must take the *'mark of the beast'* (Rev 14:9-10) and be accursed, or else be slain for their testimony of Jesus. (Rev 12:17; 20:4).

The *'dwelling in booths'*

The ingathering of the harvest was then followed by a time of dwelling in booths or tabernacles made of palm and other branches - hence the name Feast of Tabernacles. (Lev 23:26-44). This time of rest and rejoicing served as a memorial of their supernatural deliverance from Egypt *'on eagles' wings.'* (Ex 19:4).

The fulfilment of this final aspect of the seventh month feast, corresponds with the *'eagle wing'* escape and flight of the church to the *'wilderness'*, to the place prepared by God. There she is nourished and protected for the 3½ years of the antichrist kingdom rule. (Rev 12 - 13).

Aspects of Tribulation

The scriptures declare that the increase of great tribulation, or trouble, is a clear sign of the approaching end of the world. When Michael stands up at the *'time of the end'*,³³ *'there shall be a time of trouble such as never has been'* (Dan 12:1). *'Great tribulation'* then, is manifest right through the *'time of the end'*, and reaches

³³ In Daniel 12:1, Michael is seen to represent Christ. In Revelation 5:6, Christ is seen as the Lamb standing.

its full climax in the 3½ year period - which is conventionally called 'the great tribulation.'³⁴

The numberless company of members of the body of Christ who attain perfection at the Day of Atonement are declared to have '*come out of great tribulation.*' (Rev 7:9-14). So clearly, there is a tribulation for the church, as part of God's purpose for her perfection. This '*judgment*' which '*begins at the house of God*', then makes way for a mounting judgment and tribulation to come upon the world. (1 Peter 4:17).

Great tribulation for the church

Afflictions for the Christian are an evidence of the '*righteous judgment of God*' by which each one is made '*worthy of the kingdom.*' With this same judgment, God will then '*repay the wicked*', take '*vengeance*' upon the disobedient, and then '*exclude such from the presence of the Lord.*' (II Thess 1:5-9). If '*judgment begins at the house of God, what will be the end of those who obey not the gospel.*' (1 Peter 4:17).

So the judgment of the Lord Himself, as He stands in the midst of the church '*with eyes as a flame of fire*' (Rev 1:14), will itself bring tribulation. In addition to this however, as the seals open and the Melchizedek kingdom is revealed in power, the '*principalities and powers*' of the world will also provide hostile opposition.

As the restored body of Christ emerges, so too will a unified world political order.³⁵ Hence there will be 'great tribulation' as the church is resisted by Satan and man, and '*hated by all nations for His name's sake.*' (Matt 24:9).

Great tribulation for the world

'Woe unto you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short.' (Rev 12:12).

'I saw another wonder in heaven, the seven angels with the seven last plagues, for with them the wrath of God is ended.' (Rev 15:1).

The woman, (the bride, the church) is protected in the wilderness for the 3½ year period. For the rest of the world, there is indeed 'great tribulation' as God pours out the final vials of His vengeance and judgment upon the world, and upon the antichrist kingdom to which Satan has given his power and authority.

The Harmony of the Gospels With Revelation

³⁴ The 31/2 year period of antichrist rule (Rev 13:5) during which time judgment is poured out, will indeed be a time of great tribulation. However take note that the expression 'great tribulation' appears twice in the New Testament, and in neither place does it refer specifically to the 31/2 year period. In Matthew 24:21 it is more general in its application, while in Revelation 7:14 it refers to the trouble out of which the church emerges as perfected for the Day of Atonement - this being before the 31/2 year period.

³⁵ On the seven world-wide dominions of history and the 10-kingdom antichrist rule, see "Prophetic Themes of Scripture", study notes by VJ Hall, available from TRI BOOKS.

See chart - The Time of the End (Matthew 24) page 31

Having discussed the framework of the 'time of the end' in respect to the book of Revelation, we need to make a brief comment on the harmony between the book of Revelation and the gospel statements on the end of the world. (Matt 24; Luke 17). We will refer to the substantial account of 'the end' in Matthew 24 as the basis of comparison.

The related chart shows that the conditions described in Matthew 24 as '*the beginning of the birthpangs*' relate to the period **approaching** the 'time of the end'. (Matt 24:4-8). When we see wars, famines, and false Christs, we are '*not to be alarmed, for the end is not yet.*' (Matt 24:6).

The persecution, betrayal and hatred 'by all nations' described in the next section, i.e. Matthew 24:9-13, depicts the restored body of Christ as an emerging threat to the system of ten nations which will form, then be led by the antichrist, and empowered by Satan. (Rev 9:1-6; 13).³⁶

The announcement that the '*gospel of the kingdom*' will now go forth to '*all nations*' (Matt 24:14), corresponds with the 'time of the end' in Revelation 5, where a kingdom of priests has been restored to the Melchizedek order. This company, numbering '*ten thousand times ten thousand*' will ride forth as the '*white horse*' with the gospel of the Melchizedek kingdom to gather a further numberless multitude '*from every tribe and nation*', for the Day of Atonement. (Rev 5:9-10; 6:1-2; 7:9).

The appearing of Christ to His church at the Day of Atonement, is specifically referred to in the gospel account. '*Then if any say to you "Here is Christ" ... believe it not ... for as the lightning shines from the east unto the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man, for wherever the body is there will the eagles be gathered together*'. (Matt 24:26-28). This description of His coming is not referring to His apocalypse from heaven with clouds, angels and flaming fire, when '*every eye shall see Him*'. (Rev 1:7). Rather He is alluding to a revelation to those from every tribe and nation who are gathered as eagles to the communion of the body. It is essential therefore, that the schedule of God for the preparation of His body be the focus of attention, rather than the many signs, events and conditions in the world.

The lesson of the '*days of Noah*' and the '*days of Lot*' (Luke 17:26-30) is not just that the increase of wickedness heralds the end. Rather in each case, salvation was clearly seen first. Noah entered the ark (a symbol of the body of Christ), and Lot fled the city - before the fullness of judgment fell. The lesson of the whole chapter in Matthew, is that we are not to be preoccupied and deceived by the signs of degeneration. We are to be the '*children of the light*' who are aware of God's preparation of His body as an ark of salvation, and who are not overtaken by His coming.³⁷

³⁶ Note that the system of ten nations will take shape but will require the authority and power given to it by the fallen apostle, the antichrist, before it will truly become effective as the 'beast' that exercises world-wide government.

³⁷ Note that the coming of the Lord is only 'as a thief in the night' to those who are in darkness. 'But you are not in darkness brethren for that day to surprise you like a thief.' (I Thess 5:1-5).

Let us again stress, that the truth of 'perfection', and the conclusion of the ministry of perfection in the 'time of the end', are the keys to the book of Revelation. We must understand God's purpose for His church, and keep our eyes and hearts fixed upon it, for 'the times' are in God's hands. 'Sign-watching' only feeds fear and banishes peace, and draws us away from a full commitment to God's purpose for the body of Christ.