

ANTICHRIST

by

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in 1980 entitled:**

*Concerning the Antichrist
and His Soon Arising*

ANTICHRIST

*“...in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.”
(Dan 7:8)*

David W. Dyer

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Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from the New King James version of the Bible.

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AN OBSERVATION

Many believers today confess that they don't understand Bible prophecy. At the same time most also admit that they never read it. This becomes a kind of vicious circle. We don't read it because we don't understand it and we don't understand it because we don't read it.

If we do not meditate on the scriptures, it is almost certain that God cannot reveal to us what it means. If we do not familiarize ourselves with the prophetic passages, it is virtually impossible for Him to enlighten us about them.

But there is a simple solution for this. When we have our times of daily meditation in the scriptures, we should include the prophetic passages. Although we may not understand them very well, at least we will become familiar with the verses.

With the passage of time and the unfolding of events, we will find that God begins to speak to us about these passages as He does with the other parts of the Bible. Soon, we will discover that our understanding of them begins to be fruitful.

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PREFACE

In this book, we are going to be investigating the persons and events which surround the end of this age. Possibly many of the ideas presented here may seem new or different from what you have heard in the past. With this in mind, this author would like to make one request: Please do not simply react emotionally to these things. Do not shut your spiritual eyes and your mind.

Instead, search the scriptures for yourselves. Read and reread the Bible passages. Become familiar with them. There is no need to take my word for anything. Weigh what is said here for yourself. Open God's word and open your spirit to Him and allow Him to show you whatever it is that you need to see.

As we approach the end of this age, it seems logical that the Lord would be unveiling more and more for us to understand. No doubt, as we see the day approaching these things will become clearer and clearer.

However, much prophetic revelation is understood with complete clarity only after all the events unfold or as they are unfolding. For example, many of the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah were understood only as they were happening or even after His death.

Therefore, although we may be able to perceive some of what will occur beforehand, no one will ever have a complete understanding, in every detail, of all future events.

Certainly God will show His servants many things which are going to come to pass. However, the full comprehension will inevitably come only after the fact.

As in any discussion of the future, this author will from time to time indulge in some conjecture. It is almost inevitable that as we read the prophetic scriptures, we try to imagine how they might fit into our present world situation. The result is that there is always some degree of guesswork involved.

When what is being written is not certain or when there is some degree of speculation being expressed, I will indicate this by using words such as "possibly," "it could be," "perhaps," etc. The reader must realize that when such words are used, the author is making a kind of educated guess about the future. Such speculation should not be taken as fact.

I will make every attempt in this writing to plainly state when the biblical record is quite clear and when some degree of imagination is being employed.

D.W.D.

1.

THE PROPHECIES

PART I:

THE RAM AND THE GOAT

A number of years ago, I had a conversation with a young woman. She, perhaps because we had been talking about England, began telling me about her father. Her father had been a judge. Not long before, he had lost his wife, I believe to cancer. He had recently retired from the bench and decided to make a trip to visit England, perhaps to distract his mind from his recent loss.

There, while stepping off the curb, he looked to the left as he usually did to check for traffic. Seeing nothing, he proceeded into the street where he was struck and killed by a bus coming from the other direction.

You see, he was looking the wrong way. Consequently, he was blind-sided. He was

looking left as he would have in the U.S. but not right, as he should have done in England. The reason for this is that the traffic in England travels on the left and not the right side of the road.

Now there is a little spiritual lesson here. Many Christians are in danger of being blindsided by the coming of the Antichrist and end-time events. Why? It is because they are looking in the wrong direction. Due to the teachings they have received, they are focused on certain events coming together to fulfill some prophetic scriptures. But many of these teachings appear to be mistaken. There is every possibility that these believers have been misinformed and therefore misdirected.

Many are looking today for a “revived Roman Empire” which will rise up to be the kingdom of the Antichrist. Others believe that there soon will be a “one world government” perhaps with the U.N. taking over the world. Still others think that the Antichrist will be a backslidden Christian or former Jew. Many seem to think that some kind of microchip will be the mark of the beast. Yet as we take a careful look at the prophecies concerning these things, an entirely different picture emerges.

This book is an attempt to provide a new viewpoint concerning the end times. Here we will investigate from the scriptures the exact location from which the Antichrist must arise. Then we will look at precisely where his ten

kings and their kingdoms will be located. This then will enable believers to look in the right direction and not be taken by surprise when these events begin to unfold.

In the church today, there is much confusion and speculation about the future Man of Sin. However, many of the scriptures concerning him and his soon arising are quite clear and easy to understand. These things are not as mysterious and difficult as they may seem.

As we investigate together some Old and New Testament prophecies, please do not be intimidated by them. At first the imagery of beasts, horns, etc. can seem a little daunting. However, the Bible uses these images in a consistent, logical manner throughout its pages.

In many cases they are almost as simple as a children's story, using pictures and figures such as animals to explain the future. Once you understand how these figures are used to typify certain kingdoms and leaders, everything will be quite easy to understand. Although this author does not claim to understand every detail of every verse, the truths which we will be looking at together are quite uncomplicated.

FROM WHERE DOES ANTICHRIST COME?

The first thing which is strikingly clear as we read the prophecies in the book of Daniel, is

where the Antichrist originates. He arises in the Middle East. That is correct. The Antichrist does not come from Rome, or from Europe or any other area of the globe, but clearly arises from the Middle East.

Please remember this fact, because it is an important key for us to understand the events which will unfold at the end of this age. We are now going to look at the scriptures which teach us this truth. If you are not intimately familiar with them, you may find the following discussion easier to understand if you take a moment and read Daniel chapter 8 at this time.

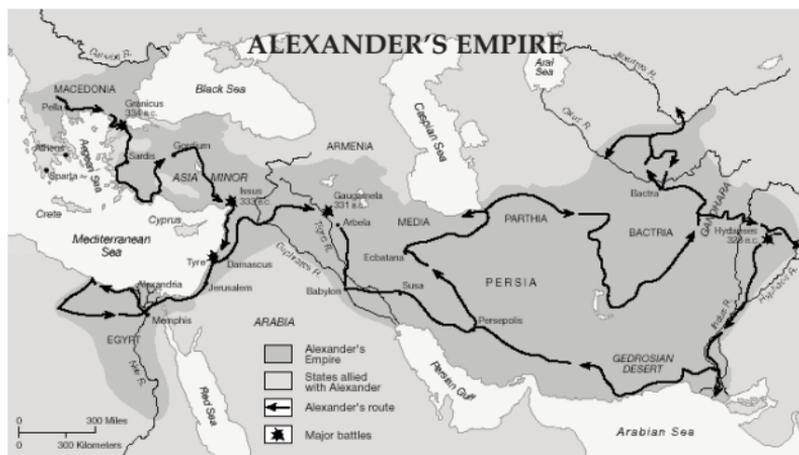
The place of origin of the Antichrist is perhaps most evident in the vision which we find in Daniel chapter 8. This vision concerns two animals: a ram which has two horns and a male goat which has one big horn. In this vision, the male goat attacks the ram and destroys him.

An angel explains to Daniel what these two animals represent. He says, "The ram which you saw, having the two horns – they are the kings of Media and Persia" (Dan 8:20). So the ram is the Media-Persian empire and the two horns represent the two leaders of this empire. This is the empire which conquered Babylon in the days of Daniel (Dan 5:30,31).

The goat represents the empire of Alexander the Great. The angel explains, "And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first

king” (Dan 8:21). It is an historical fact that Alexander the Great conquered the Media-Persian empire. This then is the fulfillment of this prophetic vision from the book of Daniel, i.e. the male goat destroying the ram. This is very simple and easy to understand.

Alexander’s kingdom was based in Greece. From Greece, his kingdom spread east, through what today is known as Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan – all the way to India. He also conquered to the south, encompassing the Middle East and Egypt. It is worth noting here that Alexander’s kingdom included very little of modern-day Europe. The extent of Alexander’s empire can be seen from the map included here.



Later in this vision it is revealed what would happen to Alexander. He established a tremendous empire, stretching from Greece to India and down to Egypt, but then what happens? We see in the prophecy that the large

horn on the goat, representing Alexander, is broken. This occurs after he becomes “very great” and “strong” (Dan 8:8). In the place of this one horn on the goat, four other horns appear. What could this mean? This too has a very logical and simple interpretation.

It is a historical fact that Alexander died suddenly at the peak of his power. How he died is still debated, whether it was in a drunken fit or from some accident or poison is not certain. We will probably only know this later on. But the important thing here is that he died abruptly. After his death, his empire was divided among four of his generals.

This too the Bible predicts by saying: “...the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones [horns] came up towards the four winds of heaven” (Dan 8:8). The four horns here represent these four new leaders. So we are informed by Daniel’s prophecy of some events which now have become history.

Let us take a minute and do a brief summary. First we are told about the Media-Persian empire (the “ram”). Then we are shown that it will be destroyed by Alexander the leader of Greece (the male goat). Next, we are told that Alexander would die suddenly and his kingdom would be divided into four parts which we now know were led by four of his generals.

Why does this ancient history matter to us? The reason is that it shows us clearly where the

Antichrist will come from. He will arise from the territory of one of these four generals.

Please pay careful attention to this. The Antichrist will come from one of the parts of Alexander's empire. We know this because of the scripture which says, "...out of one of them [referring to the four horns] came a little horn which grew exceeding great toward the south, towards the east and towards the Glorious Land [which probably means Israel]" (Dan 8:9).

In the scriptures, the Antichrist is often referred to as a "horn" or "little horn" (Dan 8:9; 7:8, 11, 20, 21). It is clear that this "little horn" is the Antichrist because of his activities which are described in Daniel 8:10-13 and also in the verses of chapter 7 which are listed above.

Here we are explicitly told that the "little horn," which represents the Antichrist, will come from some part of the world which was in Alexander's Empire. He will come from the territory of one of the four "horns." This gives a clear direction in which to look. The vision which Daniel saw, does not focus upon Europe but on parts of the globe which are "east" and "south" of Greece, i.e. the Middle East.

This is quite a good clue. But God does not leave us here to speculate, He defines even further for us exactly from where the man of sin will come. He gives us an even more explicit prophecy which we will examine in the next section.

PART II:

A "HISTORICAL PROPHECY"

In the two chapters of Daniel we will study here, God reveals to us in detail the place of origin of the Antichrist. He traces for us a lineage, beginning again with the Medes and the Persians and Alexander, through their successors, and finally to the Antichrist himself. Once again, these things are quite simple to understand. As we proceed we will see the amazing precision with which God foretells the future.

The vision of chapters 10 and 11 of Daniel is brought by a glorious angel in answer to Daniel's prayers (Dan 10:5,6). He was fasting and praying for more understanding about what the future would bring. God heard his prayers and sent an angel to enlighten him. But this messenger was delayed by an evil angel "three full weeks" (Dan 10:2) or "twenty-one days" (Dan 10:12,13).

It may be that the understanding of this vision has been delayed for many in these days also. But I believe that as we are approaching the end of this age, God is opening up the scriptures and wants to give His children understanding of what is coming upon us.

In this vision, God focuses our attention even more specifically upon just where the Antichrist will arise. It begins with what for us now is ancient history.

Simply repeating the last vision, it commences by telling us about the future of the Media-Persian Empire. This is where Daniel was living at that time. Next, we are again told about Alexander the Great (Dan 11:3) and of his four generals who divide his empire (Dan 11:4).

PTOLEMY AND SELEUCUS

Then the vision focuses upon two of these four generals. This part about the two generals is new, so please follow along carefully. One general is called the “King of the South” (Dan 11:5). Historically, this king was a general named Ptolemy who assumed control of Egypt after Alexander’s death. Since Egypt is south of Israel, calling him the “King of the South” makes perfect sense for an Israelite such as Daniel.

The other king is “King of the North” (Dan 11:6). The general who took control of the area north of Egypt was someone named Seleucus. He took command of what today is known as the Middle East.

As we go along, it will become clear that the Antichrist arises out of the territory of one of these two generals. Therefore, we have now

KINGS OF THE NORTH

Seleucus I Nicator
312-281 B.C.
("one of his princes" vs 5)

Antiochus I Soter
281-261 B.C.
(not mentioned)

Antiochus I Theos
261-246 B.C.
("him who
strengthened her" vs 6)

Seleucus Callinicus
247-226 B.C.
("king of the North" vs 7)

Seleucus III
226-223 B.C. &
Antiochus III The Great
223-187 B.C.
("his sons" vs 10)

Seleucus Philipator
187-175 B.C.
("imposes taxes" vs 20)

Antiochus IV Epiphanes
175-164 B.C.
(verses 21-35?)

ANTICHRIST

KINGS OF THE SOUTH

Ptolemy I Soter
323-285 B.C.
("king of the South" vs 5)

Ptolemy II Philadelphus
285-246 B.C.
("king of South" vs 6)

Ptolemy III Euergetes
246-221 B.C.
("one shall arise in his
place" vs 7)

Ptolemy Philipator
221-203 B.C.
("king of the South" vs 11)

Ptolemy V Epiphanes
203-? B.C.
(last "him" vs 17)

(succeeding "kings of
South not clear)

narrowed down the area at which we must look. Instead of the four horns, now we have only two left. Which one of these horns is the "one horn" will become clear as we proceed.

The next passages of this chapter deal with the relationships between these two kings and their successors. It is a history which covers several hundred years and involves various rulers who came after the "King of the North" and the "King of the South."

As you read this passage you will notice a series of wars, intrigues, marriages, and interactions between these two kingdoms. These are historical events which were predicted beforehand by God and, up until verse 35, have already happened.

At left we have a chart of two of Alexander's generals and their successors. This should help the reader have a more visual image of this prophecy. This abbreviated list will give the reader an idea of how and when all these events took place. These kings are represented by two of the four "horns" in Daniel 8:8.

It is not essential for everyone to remember all these kings and their deeds in these two columns. What is important is to realize that it is the "Kings of the North" side which eventually gives rise to the Antichrist. This points us in a very specific, clear direction.

If you are interested in a more detailed study of this subject, I would like to recom-

mend to you a book entitled, *Daniel, the Key to Prophetic Revelation* by John F. Walvoord, published by Moody Press. According to Mr. Walvoord, this vision of Daniel, chapter 11 up until verse 35, contains 135 statements which have already been literally fulfilled.

ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES

Our investigation will now continue by focusing on someone named Antiochus Epiphanes. He is the last historical ruler on our "King of the North" list. He is the last successor of one of Alexander's generals mentioned in the Bible. Walvoord states: "The title Epiphanes, meaning 'glorious,' was a title which Antiochus gave himself, in keeping with his desire to be regarded as god."

This ruler is called a "vile person" (Dan 11:21). He was not a legitimate heir to the throne of the Syrian kingdom. But it appears that he was a very shrewd operator. He managed to take control of the kingdom through "intrigue." Perhaps because of this he was not given "the honor of royalty" (Dan 11:21). It appears that Antiochus was power hungry, sneaky, and violent. "Vile" seems to a very accurate description of him.

After consolidating his power, he began to persecute the Jewish people. He worked to force them to change their laws, including stop-

ping their sacrifices. He is reported to have sacrificed a sow on their sacred altar in the temple and even set up an idol there. This was an act of desecration. The Jewish people regard pigs as unclean. Also, their sacrifices were always done with male animals. So the sacrifice of a female pig was an attempt to pollute and dishonor the Jewish religion.

This is the event which the Jews of that time called “the abomination of desolation.” It seems that Antiochus Epiphanes had a hatred for the Jews. He tried to do whatever he could to destroy their religion, including favoring any who would turn their back on the law and work along with him to defile the Jewish nation.

ANTIOCHUS – ANTICHRIST

Antiochus is important to us in our discussion for the following reason. As this prophecy in chapter 11 of Daniel progresses, Antiochus morphs or changes into the Antichrist. Up until a certain point, the prophecy is very easily verified historically. The different actions, wars, etc. predicted by God through Daniel, actually happened.

But around verse 35, a peculiar thing happens. The prophecy ceases to have any historical fulfillment. It seems as if the sacred writing takes a great leap through history, from Antiochus Epiphanes to the Antichrist. It is as

if Antiochus “becomes” the Antichrist (in a manner of speaking) during the prophecy.

It seems very clear that God is demonstrating for us something important. Our Lord is showing us the exact location from which the Antichrist will come. This “leap of history” is not just some kind of prophetic accident. Instead it is God’s way of revealing to us the origin of the future enemy of His people. This prophetic vision is a wonderful example of how God shows His servants future events so that they can be prepared.

There is no other logical reason for God to spend so much time explaining to us, in such detail, about the “Kings of the North” and their activities. If this kingdom is of no importance to us in understanding the origins of the coming Antichrist, why would God dwell on this theme? Why would Antiochus and the Antichrist be connected in the scriptures in this way?

Clearly, God is revealing to us the exact area of the world from which the Antichrist will arise. Beginning with the Babylonian Empire, following on through the Media-Persian reign, Alexander the Great, his four generals and their successors right on down to Antiochus, the Bible focuses us down to exactly the point of origin of the Antichrist. Although this is ancient history, it is really not very difficult to understand.

THE BEAST WHO “WAS AND IS NOT”

In the book of Revelation we also read about the Antichrist, or the “Beast.” But here a mysterious fact is mentioned. It almost looks like this antichrist figure has been on the earth before.

During the end times, this beast seems to be resurrected from the bottomless pit. We read: “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and [then] go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is {*or, shall be present*}” (Rev 17:8).

It is possible that this beast which reappears is Antiochus Epiphanes. Perhaps it is not the literal person. But just as John the Baptist came in “the spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk 1:17), so too the spirit of this “vile person” reappears again to persecute God’s people.

Certainly the same spirit of hatred for and persecution of God’s people that seemed to possess Antiochus will be upon the end-times Beast. This would fit very well with what we have been seeing about Antiochus “turning into” the Antichrist in the Daniel prophecy.

So here we have laid out clearly for us the exact origin of the Antichrist. He will come out of the Seleucid Empire and from that portion of

the globe which Antiochus Epiphanes governed. He will originate from and rule over the Middle East. So far two prophetic visions have confirmed this. We will now investigate still another revelation which says the same thing.

PART III:

THE FOUR BEASTS

We have studied two prophecies which point us to the origins of the Antichrist, but there is still more. Yet another prophecy in the book of Daniel confirms what we have been seeing. This vision, too, shows us where the empire of the Beast will be situated. Not only have we been shown where the Antichrist comes from, but God also reveals where the ten nations over which he rules will be. His kingdom will also be located in the Middle East.

The prophecy concerning the four beasts is found in Daniel chapter 7. It is of special importance to us since it is so clear and speaks to us so much. Therefore, we will examine this vision at some length to extract the maximum benefit from it. Here, four beasts or animal figures are seen by Daniel. They are: a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a fierce looking beast that is not

likened to any specific animal. These four “beasts” represent kingdoms which are of some importance in the world.

Most Bible teachers have taught that these kingdoms are simply a repetition of what we have just studied. They teach that: 1) the Lion = the Babylonian Empire, 2) the Bear = the Media-Persians, 3) the Leopard = Alexander the Great, 4) the “Dreadful” = the Roman Empire (which conquered the Middle East after Antiochus) and then, 5) the Antichrist.

Well, now you might say, “Wait a minute, the scriptures only mention four beasts but you have listed five empires.” The explanation for this is quite simple. The Bible explains to us that the Antichrist’s empire (symbolized by ten horns) arises out of the remnants of the fourth beast kingdom. Therefore the last empire is “revived” so to speak, turning four beasts into five kingdoms.

We read concerning the fourth beast: “The ten horns [of the Antichrist empire] are ten kings *who shall arise* from this [fourth] kingdom” (Dan 7:24). This is a very important clue for us. The ten kings and their kingdoms, who comprise the empire of the Antichrist, arise out of the remnants of this fourth kingdom. Therefore, it is very important for us to identify this fourth, “dreadful and terrible” beast.

As we have mentioned, many Bible expositors have identified this fourth animal or beast

as the Roman empire. Perhaps you have heard that there will be a “revived Roman Empire” which will be the kingdom of the Antichrist. This passage is the origin of this teaching. So, let us take a further look at it together.

THEIR LIVES WERE PROLONGED

Upon careful examination, a few problems arise with this understanding. The most notable difficulty is that when we read these verses carefully, it becomes clear that each of these four beasts exists when Jesus returns to this earth. The rulers of these nations are alive and well when our Lord comes to judge the nations!

Therefore, they *cannot* be these ancient, historical kingdoms. They must be nations which are contemporaries of the Antichrist. They must be countries which we can identify today.

How can I make such a statement? Let us look together at Daniel 7, verses 9-12. In verses 9 and 10, Jesus is sitting on His throne. His description matches the one of His appearance in the first part of the book of Revelation. He is preparing to judge the nations. But in verse 11, the Antichrist comes to His attention due to the sound of his great, pompous words. At this point, the Beast / Antichrist is killed.

But the other beasts, the Lion, the Bear, and the Leopard, (referring to the rulers of these nations) receive a different fate. They lose their

kingdoms, but are allowed to remain alive for a while longer. We read in verse 11, "As for the rest of the beasts [the other three], they had their dominion taken away, *yet their lives were prolonged* for a season and a time."

In order for this verse to make any sense, these other empires must exist at the time of the Antichrist. They cannot be ancient kingdoms.

For example, the Kingdom of Babylon was destroyed by the Medes and the Persians. Of course you remember what happened to the ruler. The handwriting was on the wall. "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans [Babylonians], was slain" (Dan 5:30). His kingdom certainly was taken away, but his life was *not* prolonged.

The same is true of Alexander the Great. As we have studied, he died unexpectedly at the peak of his power. His kingdom was taken away too, but his life was not prolonged for any "season" or any "time." Furthermore, the deaths of these rulers was not something that occurred when Christ returned and sat on His throne of judgment. These scriptures do not fit with a historical interpretation.

Therefore, these kingdoms cannot be Babylon, the Medes and the Persians, Alexander the Great and Rome. So for a better interpretation, we must look in another direction which will be discussed further as we proceed.

“SHALL ARISE”

In the scriptures we find even more difficulty with the “revived Roman Empire” idea. Let us now turn to verse 17 of chapter 7. Here we read that, “Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings [representing their kingdoms] which *shall arise* out of the earth.”

I include the word “shall” here following the translations of the Septuagint, the King James Version, the New American Standard Bible, the American Standard of 1901, John Darby in his New Translation, and possibly others.

You see, here we have a problem. This vision was given to Daniel “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon” (Dan 7:1). He was the *last* ruler of Babylon. So this vision is given very near the end of the Babylonian Empire.

But we hear the angel explaining that four beasts “shall arise,” meaning sometime in the future. Therefore, this cannot include Babylon, since it had already arisen long ago.

If then Babylon is not the Lion, the other beasts cannot follow the traditional interpretation either. The only logical conclusion we can draw is that the angel is not referring to what we know as four historical kingdoms, but of future ones – kingdoms which will exist at the same time as the Antichrist. Consequently, we

should not view this prophecy as a simple repetition of the one before it, but a new revelation about the last days.

The conclusion of all this is that the Bible is not teaching us here about a “revived Roman Empire.” An honest, unbiased examination of the verses at hand do not lead us to this conclusion. Therefore, Europe, the Common Market, the Pope as the Antichrist, and other such teachings based on the “revived Roman Empire” theory must be discarded.

THE SEVEN MOUNTAINS

Another passage which many teachers often cite to support a revived Roman Empire teaching is found in Revelation 17:9,10. We have already studied these verses about seven mountains in the book *Babylon* which is the first part of this end-times series. In the previous book we learned that the seven mountains also do not point to Rome as a source of the Antichrist empire. If you have any doubts about this, please review note at the end of chapter 7 of that book about: “Mountains, Heads and Kings.”

What we studied in the book *Babylon* is that even in John’s day there were no longer seven prophetic mountains. Five of them had already fallen (Rev 17:10). This left only two. Therefore, this cannot be and is not a secret reference to Rome. Consequently, the revived Roman

Empire is not in view. Also, nowhere in the Bible is Rome referred to as “the city on seven hills” or any similar thing. We cannot take our inspiration from secular literature such as the story of Romulus and Remus, but only the word of God.

WHO ARE THE FOUR BEASTS?

We have been discussing the four beasts, the Lion, the Bear, the Leopard, and the “Terrible.” We have been seeing that these cannot be: Babylon, Media-Persia, Alexander, and Rome. But if then the fourth beast is not Rome and the other beasts are more contemporary kingdoms, who could they be?

Seeing who these beasts might be, will greatly help us in knowing where the Antichrist empire will arise. Identifying these countries will of course involve a little bit of speculation. The meanings of these animals, representing kingdoms, are impossible to determine with total certainty. So, please bear with me as we consider the possibilities together.

Remember that we are looking for empires which can still be identified today. The fourth one of these kingdoms, although it still exists, will have largely disintegrated. It is from the remnants of this kingdom that the ten horns of the Antichrist empire emerge (Dan 7:24). These beasts rise up from “the great sea,” which is

usually identified as the Mediterranean. Their arising from the sea is precipitated by a violent storm caused by the "four winds of heaven" (Dan 7:2). This could indicate that these four empires are, over a period of time, in conflict with each other for control of and/or influence in the Mediterranean region. This would include countries in the regions of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

The first beast is a lion which has wings like an eagle. As Daniel watches this vision, the wings are plucked off and the Lion is made to stand up on two feet like a man and its own heart is replaced with a human one (Dan 7:4).

The two wings might represent rapidity of movement or expansion of the empire. This conclusion would come from the fact that of all the animals, birds are certainly the fastest and travel further (Deut 28:49; II Sam 1:23).

If we accept this interpretation, having the wings removed would signal an end to rapid expansion. Standing on its feet like a man and receiving a man's heart seems to show that what was once a mighty, warlike kingdom would become somewhat weak and human.

One country which might fit this description today would be Great Britain. Once, the sun never set on her empire. At one time, she expanded her influence and holdings rapidly over the entire globe. But today, things have changed. Now Great Britain is much less signif-

icant on the world scene. Her empire is in pieces. She has become much less lion-like and much more human. Interestingly, the symbol for this nation is a lion. Over the last few centuries, she has been directly involved in conflicts for control of the Mediterranean region.

The next beast we see is a bear. It "was raised up on one side" (Dan 7:5). Some Bible translators say that this could mean that it "established for itself one dominion" which seems to be a more logical translation. The Bear has three ribs in its mouth. It is told, "Arise, devour much flesh."

Meditating on the Bear, Russia or the old Soviet Union comes to mind. Certainly, her history is a very bloody one with countless millions of her own people being killed for one reason or another, especially under Communist domination. This would fulfill the "devour much flesh" part of the vision.

If Russia is the Bear, then the three ribs could represent the countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania which it first gobbled up when expanding its territory. Russia too has been involved through the years in conflicts over the part of the world which we have mentioned.

ABOUT HEADS AND HORNS

Before we proceed, we must study an important clue to understanding Bible prophe-

cy. Please remember this because we will refer to it again in our later discussions. Many beasts which appear in prophetic visions have several heads and/or multiple horns. What does this mean?

When a prophetic animal has several heads, this refers to a *succession of rulers*. From our detailed discussion of Revelation 17:9,10 in the previous book *Babylon*, this progression of seven heads/kings is quite evident. This succession does not need to be immediate, but, as the case of Babylon, these rulers can be separated by hundreds, if not thousands of years.

On the other hand, when the animal has multiple horns, this indicates *simultaneous rulers*. We can see this by looking at the Antichrist empire. There we find ten horns, indicating the ten rulers who hold power together with him, all at the same time.

So we have a simple formula: multiple prophetic heads = a succession of rulers; multiple prophetic horns = simultaneous rulers. Using this formula, we can now proceed.

THE LEOPARD

The third beast is a leopard. Its notable features are four heads and four wings. Not much more is said about it except that “dominion is given to it.” Applying our “multiple heads” formula to the Leopard, we would then need to

look for an empire in the region which we have described, which has had or will have a prominent progression of four rulers. The four wings might mean that each of these rulers rises up rapidly to power.

By the way, our "several horns" understanding discounts the Leopard beast from being Alexander's empire and his four generals. Four simultaneous rulers should be represented by *four horns* (as they certainly are in the vision of the Ram and male Goat) not by four heads which appear on the Leopard.

This beast is not so easy to identify. We must look for a nation which has been prominently involved in the conflicts in the Mediterranean region which also would be a contemporary of Russia and England. No nation springs to mind in this area which has the national symbol of a leopard. However, there is one country which has had a notable succession of rulers and has been much involved in the conflicts of that area. It is Germany of which I speak.

When Adolph Hitler came to power, he claimed that his kingdom was the third reich. Reich means "kingdom" in the German language. He identified his rule as being the third in a series of important rulers. Perhaps the earlier Otto von Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm could be the two previous ones which he was recognizing. Although I do not know the history of these two earlier rulers, certainly Hitler's

rise to power was startlingly rapid. This would fit with the four wings.

(Someone else has suggested the Holy Roman Empire [900-1806 A.D.] and the German Empire [1870-1918 A.D.] as being the first two "reichs" or kingdoms.)

If this is the correct identification of the Leopard, then we should soon see another strong, charismatic leader quickly rising up to power in Germany. Such a ruler does not need to be a Nazi. He (or she) only needs to be someone who captures the hearts of the German people and galvanizes the population to some end.

Therefore, the readers should keep their eyes open for a popular leader rising up in Germany who would lead this nation to a position of greater world prominence.

Our identification of this third "beast" is somewhat tentative. The weak points seem to be that the national symbol of Germany is not a leopard and it has had only three "heads."

However, this third beast certainly must be some nation which we can identify today. It needs to be a country in the region which we have been discussing. Furthermore, it must have had or will have a prominent succession of four rulers. So, let us keep our hearts and minds open to the Holy Spirit for any further revelation which He might give to us. If Germany is not the right choice, God will certainly reveal this as time goes on.

THE FOURTH BEAST

The fourth beast is not described in the same way the others are. That is to say it is not compared to some kind of animal which we could recognize. We are only told that this beast has large iron teeth and bronze claws (Dan 7:7,19). It is further described as being “dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong.” Significantly, it is “different from the beasts that were before it.” This beast decisively smashes all opposition wherever it goes.

For the identity of this beast, I would like to select the Ottoman Empire or the Ottoman Turks. The reason I choose this empire is that it was located in the exact spot which the other prophecies indicate. Also, it was a huge kingdom which was extremely powerful but now has disintegrated. This empire was intimately involved in the struggle for control of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

Most Westerners know little about this empire. Some have never even heard of it. Yet it was a dominant, overwhelming force in the region about which we speak for hundreds of years, right up until after the First World War.

The reason for this kingdom being “different” from the other three would be that the others were secular, political empires. This fourth beast kingdom was a religious one. In recent

years, this kingdom has fallen into pieces. What remains is the country of Turkey.

Yet, it will be out of this disintegrated empire that the ten nations of the Antichrist alliance will appear. Remember that we read: "The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this [fourth beast] kingdom" (Dan 7:24).

As we have already studied, it is this area of the world, the Middle East, from which the Antichrist and his ten nations will come.

Perhaps it would benefit all the readers to take a little time and review just what the Ottoman Empire was all about. Here I am quoting excerpts from the website:

www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/OTTOMAN/OTTOMAN1.HTM

"The Ottomans are one of the greatest and most powerful civilizations of the modern period. The empire they built was the largest and most influential of the Muslim empires of the modern period, and their culture and military expansion crossed over into Europe. Not since the expansion of Islam into Spain in the eighth century had Islam seemed poised to establish a European presence as it did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Like that earlier expansion, the Ottomans established an empire over European territory and established Islamic traditions and culture that last to the current day (the Muslims in Bosnia are the last descendants of the Ottoman presence in Europe).

The Ottoman empire lasted until the twentieth century. While historians like to talk about empires

in terms of growth and decline, the Ottomans were a force to be reckoned with, militarily and culturally, right up until the breakup of the empire in the first decades of this century.

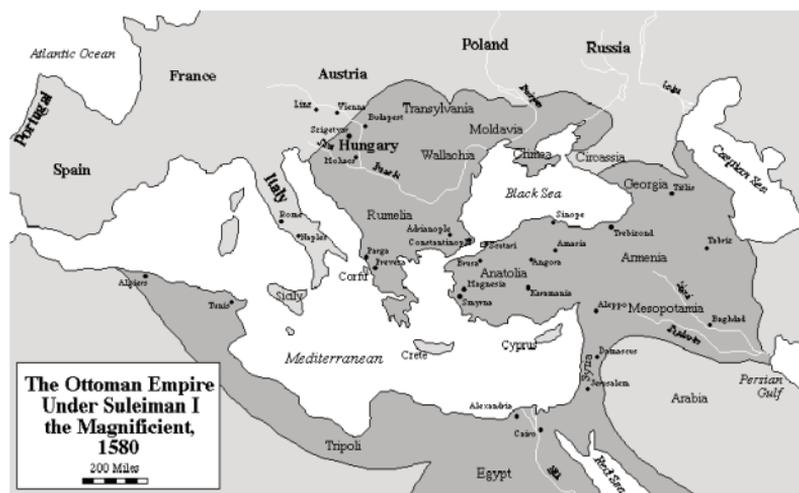
We will start with the greatest figure of Ottoman history, the Sultan Suleyman, who built from the conquests of his father a great city, military machine, empire, and culture.

*The Ottomans arose from the obscure reaches of Anatolia in the west of Turkey; these Western Turks were called the Oghuz. Some of them were warriors to the Islamic faith **carrying out jihad**, or "holy struggle," to spread the faith among hostile unbelievers.*

In 1402, the Ottomans moved their capital to Edirne in Europe where they threatened Constantinople. The city seemed to defy the great expansion of Islam. No matter how much territory fell to the Muslims, Constantinople resisted every siege and every invasion. The Ottomans wanted to break this cycle. Not only would the seizure of Constantinople represent a powerful symbol of Ottoman power, but it would make the Ottomans master of east-west trade. In 1453, Sultan Mehmed (1451-1481), who was called "The Conqueror," finally took this one last remnant of Byzantium and renamed it, Istanbul. From that point onwards, the capital of the Ottoman Europe would remain fixed in Istanbul and, under the patronage of the Ottoman sultans, become one of the wealthiest and most cultured cities of the early modern world.

The Ottoman Empire had been started. It expanded greatly under Sultan Selim I (1512-1520),

but it was under his son, Sultan Suleyman (1520-1566), called "The Lawmaker" in Islamic history and "The Magnificent" in Europe, that the empire would reach its greatest expansion over Asia and Europe."



This empire was divided up after World War II. The Ottomans sided with the Germans and were defeated. Then their holdings were parceled out between several European nations. Many territorial boundaries were redrawn. This conquest and subjugation of the Islamic world by the European powers after hundreds of years of prosperity and dominance is the source of much of the hatred against the West you will find among Muslims today.

One great hope for many Muslims is that their empire and culture will some day be restored to its former prominence and greatness. It is worth noting in the above article how they are especially proud when Islam conquers and takes root in Europe.

You see, this empire was really “different” from all the others. The leaders and even citizens were trying to prove something. They were attempting to establish a religious empire and demonstrate that their religious society was superior in every respect – culturally, militarily, economically, and politically – to that of those they fought against.

For them, Western civilization was a “Christian” culture. They were, in many respects, anti-Christian. If you speak to any Muslims today, they will know all about the history of the Ottoman Empire. Certainly it conquered, smashed, “trampled,” “broke in pieces,” and “devoured” much of the civilized world of its day. This empire fits very nicely into the picture of what we are calling the fourth beast because of its activities and location.

It is from the territory once held by this fourth beast that the ten horns of the Antichrist empire come. From this general area arise (and probably have already arisen) ten nations.

This author does not insist that the coming Antichrist kingdom will be a strict “revival” of the old Ottoman empire. It is possible that some of the older empire will be left out. It is even conceivable that some neighboring lands, which were not governed directly by the Ottomans but were dominated by Muslim authority, could be included in the ten. This will probably only become clear as time goes on.

There are probably more than ten countries today which occupy the territory once ruled by the Ottomans. This does not change our understanding. What is necessary is that the ten nations which will form the Antichrist empire will come from the general area of former Ottoman rule and/or influence. Thus, this vision too dovetails perfectly with the other prophecies which we have been studying.

PART IV:

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, a very troubling dream. In this dream, he sees what will happen in the future. He views a succession of empires, beginning with his own and then continuing on through four more. The last empire which formed part of this huge image is the reign of the Antichrist.

During his dream, a stone is cut out of some location without human hands. This certainly is a supernatural stone. It then smashes the feet of this image. Not only the feet are destroyed, but all the other parts of the image were also "crushed together" and blown away "like chaff" (Dan 2:35).

This stone represents the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus will return to earth, smash the Antichrist empire and extend His authority over all the inhabited earth (Dan 2:44,45).

In this image, we are presented with a progression of kingdoms. Beginning with Babylon (the head of gold), we then pass through the Media-Persians (chest and arms of silver), Alexander the Great (belly and thighs of bronze), the Roman Empire (legs of iron), and finally the Antichrist kingdom (feet of iron and clay) (Dan 2:31-43).

During the period of time represented by this image, there were no doubt many other great kingdoms on the earth. China certainly had its magnificent dynasties for thousands of years. Egypt has often been a dominant force on the world scene. There have been great empires of the Aztecs in what is now Mexico, the Incas in South America and others in Africa.

Yet none of these kingdoms have a part in this image which Nebuchadnezzar saw. Why not? What is it about these particular kingdoms which make up the image that makes them special? The answer is that all the empires which constitute this image have one thing in common – they all conquered the Middle East. They all had influence over the holy land, Israel.

Israel has been and always will be the focus of God's attention. When and if any other

nation begins to gain control or influence over this part of the world, God takes notice. This is the glue that holds all the parts of Nebuchadnezzar's image together. Each one, at some time, took control over the holy land.

NOT A "REVIVED ROMAN EMPIRE"

Some theologians, noticing that the Roman Empire in this vision is succeeded by the Antichrist, then have mistakenly used this to support a revived Roman Empire theory. From there, they go on to teach about the European Common Market being the kingdom of the coming Beast. However, nothing in this revelation suggests this. No verse would give rise to such an interpretation.

Each of these kingdoms was not a "revival" of the former one. They did not all cover the same parts of the globe. Also, each did not come in an unbroken succession to the previous one. For example, the Roman Empire did not conquer Alexander the Great. It was not until hundreds of years after his death that Rome conquered the Middle East.

These nations in the image are merely a series of notable empires which touched upon God's people, the Jews. The last kingdom, that of the Antichrist, is simply the final one which will dominate the land of Israel. It is true that the coming beast will control part of the world

(the Middle East) which was once ruled by Rome. It will assume authority over *that particular part* of the old Roman Empire. This much is biblical and clear.

Yet this empire, coming from and centered in the Middle East, as all the other prophecies clearly show, could not be considered a revival of the Roman Empire. It would only qualify for this if it was centered in Italy and conquered much of Europe also, therefore encompassing much of the same territory as Rome did. This is very, very unlikely.

Further, and extremely importantly, the empire which is “revived” cannot be an ancient one but must be a modern one, to fulfill the scriptures we have already studied (Dan 7:24).

ROMAN EMPIRE

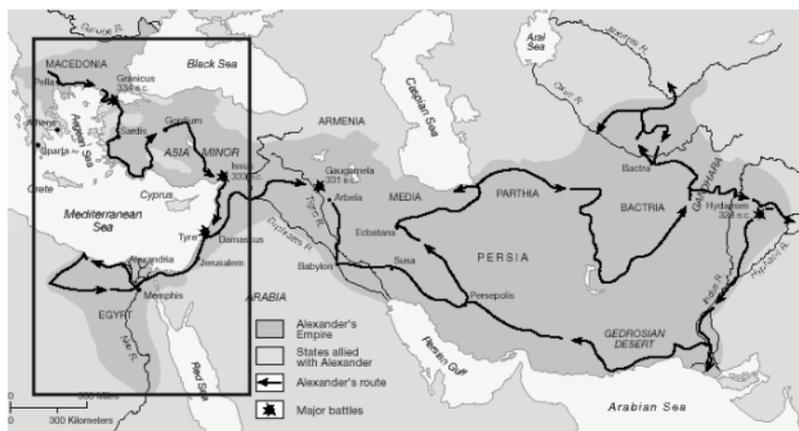


Here we have two maps of the territory of the Roman Empire compared with Alexander’s Empire. The boxes mark the approximate over-

lapping areas of these two kingdoms. Clearly, they shared little of the same geographical areas. Rome conquered to the west. Alexander spread to the east. Basically, what is known today as the Middle East is common to both.

In fact, of all the other kingdoms included in Nebuchanezzar's image, *only* the Roman Empire embraces much of modern Europe. All the others were situated to the east and south of Greece, approximating more closely the conquests of Alexander.

ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE



In short, the only strong basis for a revival of Rome is the fact that so many insist that it must be so. There are no clear verses which mandate this conclusion. If we can lay aside tradition and the general clamor of those who have not really studied these things thoroughly and honestly, we will be led to a more logical and biblical understanding.

THE COHESIVE PART OF THE IMAGE

As we have mentioned, the cohesive part of this image is that all these kingdoms ruled the Middle East. This is the part of the world that they all conquered, making them part of Nebuchanezzar's image. In order for any coming empire to be included in this list, it too must conquer and dominate the Middle East and the land of Israel. (By the way, the possibility of the Common Market doing so is extremely remote.)

Therefore, this dream also completely supports our thesis. The coming Antichrist must have, as part of his kingdom, the Middle East. He must eventually dominate the land of Israel. This is the message of Nebuchadnezzar's image.

This conclusion very strongly supports our thesis of a "revived" Ottoman Empire with all its Muslim roots. Interestingly, this too fits very nicely with our present-day geopolitical situation.

2.

THE ANTICHRIST

As a prelude to this discussion, I would like to take a moment and return to the prophecy of Daniel chapter 11. You may remember that in verses 21-35, most Bible expositors see a description of Antiochus Epiphanes and his evil deeds. Furthermore, we have stated how Antiochus morphs or changes into the Antichrist as the chapter progresses. Then, after verse 35, the passage seems to be speaking only about the Antichrist.

What I would like to suggest here is that some of the earlier verses, i.e. verses 21-35, could and probably do describe *both* Antiochus and the Antichrist. I believe it is very possible that two people could fulfill the prophetic words uttered here. These verses could very easily apply to both the past and the future Antichrist. As proof for this idea, let us consider verse 31. Here we read: "...then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation."

The Jews from the time of Antiochus had referred to this event – the one in which he sacrificed a pig and set up an image in the temple – as “the abomination of desolation.” Perhaps even today, they still believe this to be the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. Certainly the Jews of Jesus’ day held this belief.

But Jesus blew their mind. He rattled their concepts. He said: “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place...” (Mt 24:15). In essence He was saying: “You think that you know what this abomination was. You think it has already happened. But the one of which Daniel spoke has not yet taken place. It is still in the future!”

Returning to our discussion, verse 31 of Daniel 11 is part of the passage which historically speaks about Antiochus. Yet we know from Jesus’ words that it is the actions of the future Antichrist which will be the true or final realization of this verse. So this verse must refer to both men.

Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to think that some of the other verses of this section will also have a double fulfillment in both Antiochus and the Antichrist. With this in mind, we will now take a closer look at the character and activities of the Antichrist.

Many believers are expecting the Antichrist to be a famous, worldly politician. They imag-

ine an urbane, popular, glad-handing, back-slapping, probably immoral political animal, perhaps something like a Bill Clinton, running the U.N. Yet this is not the image which the Bible portrays.

To begin, the scriptures call the Antichrist “a little horn” (Dan 7:8; 8:9). This indicates that he is a relatively insignificant figure until he gains control. In contrast to this, the horn which represents Alexander the Great is described as “notable” and “large” (Dan 8:5,8). He was a strong, able conqueror. He had world-wide fame. The horns representing the four generals who succeeded Alexander are also labeled “notable” (Dan 8:8). These were well-known people.

But, at least in the beginning, the Antichrist “horn” is “little.” In fact, of all the “horns” which appear in Bible prophecy, he is the smallest and least impressive. Therefore, we can know that before he assumes power on the world scene, he will be a small, despised individual whom no one ever imagines could rise up and become what he eventually becomes. This is an important fact of which we should be aware.

Drawing from our Antiochus/Antichrist verses of Daniel chapter 11 we learn even more. We are led to believe that he is a liar (vs. 11:27). He will act “deceitfully” (vs. 11:23). “Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand” (Dan 8:25). He comes to power

in a devious manner, using flattery and deceit (Dan 11: 21).

One of the things, therefore, which we can use to identify the Antichrist will be this ability to deceive people through his words. He will corrupt many through “flattery” (Dan 11:32).

In fact, one of the most striking features of the Antichrist is his mouth. Right in the middle of this little horn is a big mouth. We are shown “a mouth speaking great things” (Rev 13:5).

Also in Daniel we read about “a mouth which spoke pompous words” (Dan 7:20) and “in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words” (Dan 7:8). This horn has prominent eyes and does a lot of boastful talking.

Surprisingly, the popularity of the Antichrist is not great, since he will “become strong with a small number of people” (11:23). Please pay careful attention this. Contrary to popular belief, he will *not* be well known and popular! He will be looked upon by many as being a “vile person” (vs 21).

No cheering crowds crown him king. They do not give him “the honor of royalty” (vs 21). Therefore, we should not be looking for someone who is well liked and universally popular. This is a mistake which many make.

Initially, the Antichrist will not be an outstanding figure on the world stage. In fact, he will be hated by many. The coming man of sin

will, in the beginning, be a rather unknown and disliked person who likes to brag about what he will do.

THE MAN OF *THE* SIN

Many have supposed that since the Beast is called the “man of sin” that he would be an notably immoral, man-of-the-world sort of person. There is nothing in the scriptures which supports this.

While other world leaders and famous people have become renowned for their sexual exploits, lovers, different wives, etc. nothing of this nature is said about the Antichrist. His sin is his claiming to be deity.

In my recent effort to translate the New Testament, I discovered an interesting fact. The coming Antichrist is not really the “man of sin.” This is a faulty translation. Instead, he is the “man of **the** sin.”

That’s right. There is a definite article in front of the word “sin” in the Greek text. This means that instead of being the man full of all sorts of sin, which is implied by “the man of sin” translation, this is not what the scripture says. There is just one particular sin which qualifies him to the enemy of God.

What then is then **the** “sin” which qualifies him? The scriptures are clear. He “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or

that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (II Thess 2:4). This is **the** sin which sets this man up for his confrontation with the Most High.

SEVERE ASCETICISM

So we see that the Antichrist will probably not be a womanizer or an immoral person from a perspective of sexual impurity. In fact, it may be that he will preach his own brand of morality. We read that he will not regard "...the desire of women" (Dan 11:37). It is possible that he will be a severe ascetic, priding himself in his extreme self-denial in the area of sexual relations.

This fact would not discount the possibility that he might be married. Yet it is probable that the religion which he ultimately adopts will involve an extremely strong position of denial with regard to sexual involvement of men with women.

Bible scholars differ widely on the interpretation of this phrase "the desire of women." Many and various opinions have been offered. Some have seen a rejection of the worship of various goddesses.

Others synthesize a denial of Christ, thinking that the "desire of women" is Jesus. Still others postulate that this "desire of women" is to have children and that the Antichrist will be

against this. However, none of this really rings true.

Now that we have clearly identified the area of the world from which the Antichrist will come, it is not at all difficult to imagine that he will espouse some form of religious asceticism.

It might be that he would be involved in, or be a leader of, the current movement among some Muslims of radical, religious self-denial. It may be that his attitude toward women and their natural, human desires for self-expression and satisfaction is severe and repressive.

This group already has today an almost vicious reaction toward women and any sort of male/female interaction. Women are often treated as subhuman. Women's desires, including the wish to be seen as attractive, to be educated, and to have places of importance and responsibility in society are countered with the utmost ferocity by Islamic radicals.

The idea that this phrase refers to such a severe religious tendency gains a lot of support when we remember that it is the Antichrist and his ten nations who destroy Babylon. They hate her because of her rampant immorality, sensuality, and self-indulgence (Rev 17:16,17).

We will explore these things in more detail later, but for now I believe it is a good bet that he will be a prominent leader in an extreme, anti-Christian religious movement. This religion will probably be some form of Islam.

Some might argue that Islam is not anti-Christian. Well, certainly we must be able to agree that it is not pro-Christian. I am told that inside every mosque is a prominent sign which reads: "God has no son." Of course, since it is written Arabic, few outsiders can read it. This can only be considered anti-Christian, since the foundation of the Christian church is the profession that God indeed does have a Son. It is significant how much John emphasizes this truth in the epistle we know as I John.

Here I am not teaching any kind of hate against Muslims. Certainly God's attitude, and ours also, must be one of love for every man. However, it is obvious that the basic tenets of Mohammedism and real Christianity are in opposition to one another. There is no way to reconcile the two.

Although Muslims concede that Jesus was a prophet, they deny that He was God's only begotten Son. This then puts them firmly in a position of being against New Testament truth which is that Jesus was much more than another prophet. He was God's Son.

The conflict of Islam with God's people – both the Jews and the Christians – is long standing. Certainly Islam is a religious substitute for the true worship of the true God. It should be no surprise to discover that this false religion could play a prominent role in the rise and reign of the coming Antichrist.

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

In II Thessalonians 2:7 we read about something called “the mystery of iniquity,” or “the mystery of lawlessness.” What could this be? The Greek word “mystery” here is not referring to a mystery as we know it – i.e. something really difficult to understand – but rather to a secret. These “mysteries” are secrets known only to a few insiders, such as the secrets of different fraternal lodges, secret societies, or cults.

In this case, it is one of Satan’s secrets. He has a plan, a secret plan he has been wanting to put into operation for a long time, but something has been hindering him.

His desire is to radically eliminate from the earth all men and women who do not harmonize with who and what he is. He would probably even like to destroy all of mankind. But he can’t. You see, God won’t let him.

The devil is limited by God. There are things He won’t let him do. For example, Satan cannot just kill millions of human beings outright. God won’t allow him to do it.

But there is a “loophole” here in God’s limitation which the devil knows about. Although *he* is limited by God, men aren’t so limited. The Most High does not always and immediately stop evil men from destroying others. Adolf Hitler, Idi Amin, Muammar al-Gaddafi, Joseph

Stalin etc. were good examples of some men who annihilated many others.

So, the loophole is that if Satan can get control of a man, he can work through that man to do many things he is not allowed to do by himself. Once he dominates an evil man, he can work through that man to carry out his plans.

The “mystery” or secret plan then is that the devil would like to find a man he can control and then use his power to give that man domination over the entire world. Then, through that man, he can work to annihilate on a global scale those who oppose him. This is the “secret plan (or mystery) of iniquity.”

But this secret plan has been held back. Something has been restraining it. This “something” is the hand of God. Since God understands what the devil is wanting to do, he has not let him have success.

Yet, at the end of this age, this restraining hand of God will be removed. We read: “...only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way” (II Thess 2:7). Once the restraint is taken away, then the man of the sin will begin to make war against God’s people, annihilating as many of them as he can.

THE “GOD OF FORCES”

In Daniel 11, verse 38 we find an interesting detail about the Antichrist. He will: “...honor a

god of forces {or, fortresses}, and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things.”

It is not hard to imagine someone, perhaps from the Middle East, coming to know this kind of god.

In recent years, many groups in that region have been constantly at war, against the U.S., against the king of Syria, against each other, etc. No doubt, the leader of such a group would come to appreciate a spirit being who was anointing him to have success and protecting him.

It is this spirit which is giving him victories and is keeping him from being killed. He has found a god, one which guides and protects him in every way. It is his “god of forces {or, fortresses}.” This god becomes his helper and stronghold.

With respect to the phrase, “which his fathers did not know,” we can only speculate. If we were to take this to mean those who preceded him in the Daniel prophecy – in other words those who “fathered” his lineage spiritually speaking – then certainly this would be a “new” god. It would be one which, until more recent history, was not acknowledged.

The Antichrist, due to his geographic location, will probably refer to this “new” god as Allah. He will likely insist that this one who is

energizing and protecting him is the “real” Allah and that he himself is some kind of reincarnation of the “Prophet.”

But the truth is that this god of his is Satan himself. The devil is the god of the Antichrist. We can confirm this from the verse in Revelation 13:2 where we read that the dragon (which in this case is Satan) “...gave him [the Antichrist] his power, his throne, and great authority.”

Since the Antichrist worships this god, he will soon insist that everyone else does too. We read: “So they [the people of the world] worshiped the dragon [Satan] who gave authority to the beast...” (Rev 13:4). This is the god which becomes real to, protects, and empowers the man of the sin. Evidently, Satan sees this man as someone whom he can use in the future to do his will on the earth.

Some might argue that Allah is just another name for the devil. Others think that the Mohammedans use it as a name for the true God but are in error in what they believe about Him. These are questions which are beyond the scope of our study here. What we do know certainly is that the coming man of the sin will come from and have his territory in the Middle East. Therefore, there is little doubt that his name for his god will be Allah.

By the way, some have taken the phrase “god of his fathers” and insisted that the com-

ing Antichrist must be a Jew who rejects God. Others see him as a backslidden Christian.

There is nothing in the text which demands this interpretation. The word for "god" here is "elohim" which can be but is not always a reference to the God of the Bible. It is a kind of generic Hebrew word for "God." It can also be rendered "god" or even "gods" since it is a plural word. Therefore, it can refer to any sort of deity or deities, even if they are pagan ones.

If the word "Jehovah" (Yahweh) or "Lord" (Adonai) had been used in this passage, this would have been a certain identification of the true God. But since "elohim" is used, this in no way demands the interpretation that the Antichrist be a Jew or Christian. (The translation "gods" has given rise to the possibility we already mentioned that the "god(s) of his fathers" refers to the ancient gods of Babylon and Assyria which the Antichrist will not worship.)

Instead of the "god [or gods] of his fathers," this evil person will promote the worship of his god, which in reality is the devil. I think that it is very unlikely that he will use the name "Satan" or "the devil" to describe his god. He will probably use the title "Allah," thus obscuring who this god really is.

But the truth of the matter is that the god whom he will promote is the ancient serpent, Satan. He will popularize this god with whom he is in communion and advocate the worship

of him. In Daniel we are told that the Antichrist will honor this “god of forces {or fortresses},” “acknowledge” it and “advance its glory” (Dan 11:38,39).

ANTICHRIST WILL DEMAND WORSHIP

But the coming Antichrist does not stop with merely worshiping this god. As his power and influence grow, his head also swells up proportionately. His pride and ego begin to expand to an almost unprecedented extent. He begins to imagine that he too is god. He arrives at the place where he wants to be worshiped also.

It appears that as the anointing of the devil becomes ever stronger in his life, this power goes to his head. Experiencing the authority of Satan and even sitting on his “throne” gives him a greatly inflated idea of who he is.

So the Antichrist will begin to demand worship of himself. We read that the man of sin “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped” until finally, “he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (II Thess 2:4).

No doubt the self-exaltation is related to the “mouth speaking great things” (Rev 13:5) and “speaking pompous words” (Dan 7:8). The Antichrist will, with time, become completely carried away with his successes and following.

Eventually, his opinion of himself will balloon to such a point that he will blaspheme the Most High God, verbally denigrating him and challenging His authority. "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High" (Dan 7:25). And: "Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven" (Rev 13:6). This will prove to be a great mistake.

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

We have been speaking to a small degree about Islam and how this will play a part in the coming of the Antichrist religion. To understand this, we must know that Islam today is not a unified movement. This religion is divided up into many different sects. Each has their own emphasis, beliefs and leaders.

Over the centuries since its establishment, Islam has been changed many times by various charismatic leaders to suit their own purposes, giving rise to various factions and belief systems. Therefore, the possibility of the Antichrist modifying and molding Islam to suit his own agenda is not very remote. It would be nothing new.

It is my guess that the Beast will use the Islamic religion as a springboard to gain followers but after he assumes a position of great authority and control, he will modify it to

include himself and his actual protector (Satan) as objects of worship. His will probably be a kind of mutant Muslim religion.

In fact, some sects of Islam are actively expecting a kind of “savior” to show up and lead them back to their former unity and glory. There are many millions of Muslims today eagerly waiting for the arrival of an anointed, quasi-supernatural Imam or leader.

Author Paul Williams explains that, according to some Muslims: “The ‘Mahdi’ is the rightly guided caliph who will appear during the last days of human history. His coming is foretold by the Haddith, the sacred teachings that supplement the Quran. In such writings, the Mahdi is depicted as the figure who will bring forth the ‘Day of Islam,’ when all the people throughout the world – believers and unbelievers alike – will fall in submission before the throne of Allah.”

No doubt, the Antichrist will be happy to assume this position for them. It is very probable that the Antichrist will appear to the Muslim community as a savior and a uniter. It is likely that many will welcome him as a fulfiller of this messianic role. Later, he will mold this religion to suit his own ends.

Many will no doubt argue that the international community would never tolerate any Middle East military leader taking over any nations in that area. They would throw their

might and military power against him to try to destroy him. Yet, right now today in 2014 that very thing is happening with little international opposition.

It is possible that the “West” will try to intervene in that area again. But you must remember who the Antichrist’s protector is. He is the “god of forces {or, fortresses}.” This spirit being, who is the “ruler of this world” (Jn 14:30) will, with all his power, protect the Antichrist from assaults. He will be his impregnable fortress. It will be virtually impossible to kill anyone with this kind of protection.

Just as an example, remember how many times the U.S. attempted to assassinate Fidel Castro? They also tried to get Muammar Gaddafi, but without success. Many such leaders seem to have an uncanny knack for escaping and avoiding all attempts on their lives. The Antichrist will have an extremely powerful, satanic anointing of protection around him.

Still another factor which the reader must consider is that God Himself is planning to use the Antichrist. He will use him for various purposes, including carrying out divine judgment on Babylon (Rev 17:17,18).

So, it is logical that God too will be protecting the Antichrist from whoever would try to destroy him, until he has carried out His plans. With so much supernatural protection, the Antichrist will be hard to kill!

THE FALSE PROPHET

To aid him in his rise to power and “deity” the Antichrist seems to have a kind of helper or prophet. This figure acts perhaps as a sort of vice-president. It is possible that the Beast himself keeps to the background and allows this false prophet to front for him, especially in the area of claiming to be deity. We read that this figure “...causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast” (Rev 13:12).

Further assisting this prophet in proclaiming that the Beast is divine, are his miracles. He is permitted by God and energized by Satan to perform incredible miracles. This second beast “...performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast” (Rev 13:13,14).

Perhaps you have often thought of this second beast or false prophet as just an individual. But biblically, he must be much more than that. He must also be a ruler of some nation. This is shown to us by the fact that he is called a “beast.” In Bible prophecy, both in Daniel and Revelation, any “beast” which appears is *always* the leader of a kingdom.

In all the other visions, a beast is representative of both a kingdom and its ruler. Therefore, for the false Prophet or second beast to be a simple individual without a nation behind him would be inconsistent with the rest of the scriptures. The false Prophet must be the ruler of some country. This is an important sign.

Not only is the second beast a national leader, but it seems that he must be a joint ruler together with someone else. We read that this second beast has “two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon” (Rev 13:11).

If you remember our previous discussion of the meaning of horns in Bible prophecy, you will recall that two horns on a beast represent two simultaneous rulers. Therefore, to be consistent, this second beast must be some kind of co-ruler of a nation.

Although this may seem a little strange to you, we might find something like this in our world today. The nation of Iran, for example, seems to have a dual governmental system with two rulers. They have their religious government with its Ayatollah or spiritual ruler alongside of a secular government with its ruler or president. This would give us two “horns.”

Perhaps the scriptures are indicating this very kind of arrangement. Therefore, we might be wise to keep our eyes on the developing situation in Iran, both on its leadership and on its nuclear development program.

It could be that the nation which the false prophet leads would be part of the ten which the Antichrist will eventually unite. Yet this would not be scripturally necessary. It is only important that it exists and that one of its rulers becomes a very active participant in the dominion of the Antichrist. It seems quite likely that it will be a nation which is dominated by radical Muslims. Perhaps they will see the Antichrist as someone they can use to push their agendas.

ANTICHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Still another factor which will promote the coming beast worship is what some have termed a "false resurrection." Evidently, the Antichrist is not popular with everyone. Sometime along the way, someone tries to kill him.

For a while the Antichrist will be invulnerable. Due to his supernatural protection, no one will be able to get to him. Yet, eventually someone will succeed in wounding him, probably fatally. It seems that this may be a head wound. We read: "I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded."

But this isn't the end of him or his kingdom. Somehow, this "deadly wound was healed." The result of this return from death is that "all the world marveled and followed the beast" (Rev 13:3).

It is very possible that this miraculous healing is a result of the devil's power. It is probably Satan who cures this Beast. Certainly such an amazing revival from the dead would cause people, especially Muslim religious people who are seeking such things, to be amazed.

It would increase the Antichrist's esteem in their eyes and serve to allay any doubts that they might have had. This "resurrection" from the dead, no matter how it is accomplished, will strongly work in the Beast's favor. It will give him a kind of supernatural aura of power and invincibility.

This gives rise to another thought. After the Antichrist is wounded, it is possible that the devil himself enters into his body, thus effecting some kind of cure. This might possibly coincide with the time when Satan is finally thrown out of heaven to the earth (Rev 12:9,13). This then could be how this false resurrection is accomplished.

Another possibility is that at this time the spirit of Antiochus Epiphanes is retrieved from wherever it happens to be and inhabits this body. Whatever actually occurs, this wound and its healing only serve to promote the popularity of the Beast.

3.

“ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT”

Throughout my years as a Christian, I have constantly heard about the coming “one world government” which supposedly is headed by the Antichrist. But as I have read through the scriptures, time and time again, I cannot find one verse which teaches this. It seems that the vast majority of Christians believe in this coming universal administration, but where is the Biblical basis for it? Let us take a moment to look at some verses together.

Every reader should know by now that the Antichrist’s coalition consists of ten nations. That’s right, just ten. This fact is repeated over and over again. In our world today, we have about 195 different nations. Now how is it possible for Antichrist to be the head of some kind of “one world government” when scripturally, he only rules ten countries? This just does not make sense.

In fact, when he rises up, he doesn't even take over these ten nations himself. He seizes control of only three. We read: "I was considering the [ten] horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots" (Dan 7:8). The angel explains to Daniel that this means the Antichrist will "subdue three kings" (Dan 7:24).

You see, when he comes to power, the Antichrist will only take actual, personal control of three nations of the world. This may not be your concept but it certainly is scriptural. Eventually, after managing to gain control of three countries, this Beast persuades seven other nations to join in with him. We are not told if they do so out of fear or if they agree with his agenda.

One clue we have is that "he will divide the land for gain" (Dan 11:39). This may mean that he grants rulership or portions of land to those who will agree with him and work toward his goals. For whatever reason, seven other "kings" join in with him to accomplish his (and, as we will see, some of God's) purposes. What we can know certainly is that these other kings "give their power and authority to the beast" (Rev 17:13).

By the way, dear readers, you can forget about all the conspiracy theories you have heard as explanations for the end-times events.

Don't worry about the United Nations, the Illuminati, the Bilderburgs, the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Skull and Bones Club or any of the rest of this stuff. The problem with all these supposed conspiracies is that they have no biblical basis whatsoever, or they are synthesized from a very few verses. They hang from very slender doctrinal threads having almost no scriptural foundation but volumes of imagination.

Consequently, these things have a mental appeal, but are not doctrinally sound. No doubt these various groups exist. Perhaps they even imagine that they are moving the world. But what we find in the scriptures is what will really take place. What we really need to understand end-times events is a teaching which unites all the various prophecies in an orderly, logical manner – not conspiracy theories.

Getting back to our “one world government” discussion, some will undoubtedly say to me: “But the Bible says that the Antichrist is given authority ‘over every tribe, tongue, and nation’ ” (Rev 13:7).

Yes, I do know this verse. It must be the origin of the “one world government” idea. Certainly this verse, along with all the others we have been reading, must be true. However, we cannot devise a doctrine or end-time scenario based on only one verse. In order to understand what God is revealing to us, *all* the

verses of the Bible must be considered. Whatever it is that we conclude must harmonize with all the scriptures.

This verse does not say that he “governs” every tribe, tongue and nation, but only that he has “authority,” or power, over them. This is an important distinction. To govern an area, or the world as a whole, you would have to regulate almost every aspect of the social, economic, and legal system. To control, or “have authority over” you merely must have the power to make the others do a few things which you want them to do. This is a very important distinction.

If you think about the situation logically, no one would be able to conquer the world militarily. Logistically it is impossible. No ruler could ever have enough troops and equipment to invade and subdue the world. Yet this is exactly what the Antichrist would have to do to establish a “one world government.”

Using the recent situation in Afghanistan as an example, we quickly see the absurdity of such an idea. In spite of all its manpower, technology and equipment, the United States is having trouble dominating one single country. In the same way, any invader of the world would quickly encounter insurmountable obstacles, especially from guerrilla type warfare.

Going back to our discussion of the Antichrist, we have learned that he becomes strong with a small number of followers (Dan

11:23). Obviously, he will not have the military might to even think about a global conquest.

Perhaps you imagine the U.N. might be able to do the job of subduing the world for him. Many suppose that if the Antichrist could control the U.N., then he could use this entity to do his work for him. But wait, the U.N. has had tremendous difficulty handling even the most minor regional disturbances that it has tackled. Small, "third world" countries have proved impossible for the U.N. to control. Recently, for example, they weren't able to straighten out the situation in Haiti, one of the tiniest, poorest countries in the world.

Even with many nations contributing, the U.N. could never dominate the world militarily. It simply would not work. They do not have enough men and equipment. No, the Antichrist must have some other mechanism by which he forces the world to accept his new brand of religion.

Another idea which many believe is that someone will gain world-wide popularity, for example as the leader of the U.N., and then unite the world under his leadership using this forum. This possibility is so remote as to be almost absurd.

Right now, for example, we are seeing an much of Europe "united" in the Common Market. Yet recent events are exposing the weakness and fragility of this arrangement.

Various nations have rejected the new constitution. Some are discussing the possibility of pulling out of the one currency arrangement. Others are even analyzing the idea of nations withdrawing from membership entirely.

An article I came across on the internet a few months ago confirms this weakness. The CIA has produced a paper predicting the disintegration of the European Union. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to unite countries with different languages, cultures, and religions. The Antichrist will not even try to do this.

Please remember this: the Antichrist will not be universally popular! The Bible plainly tells us this fact. Therefore, he must gain his control over the world through some other means.

When you stop to consider all the facts carefully, there are some other interesting possibilities (besides a one world government) of how the Antichrist could control the world which spring to mind. There are a few ways that the Antichrist could rule only ten nations and still have power to make the rest of the world do what he wants. Let us consider these possibilities together.

Here are our facts which we have at hand with which to work: 1) The Antichrist arises in the Middle East. 2) His ten nations are taken out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire which includes the Middle East and North Africa. 3)

He directly rules over only ten nations. Yet, 4) the Antichrist somehow is able to force the rest of the world to do his will. He will evidently even be able to exert some control over the economic systems of the nations, dictating who can or cannot buy and sell (Rev 13:17).

So how is it that he might acquire this kind of control? How is it that someone from the Middle East, ruling over only ten nations might be able to dominate the world and get the nations to do his will? His power is so great that he will cause millions of believers to be put to death. What hold could he have over the nations that they would be willing to participate in this sort of atrocity?

This part of our study is intended to give the reader some food for thought about these subjects. It is hoped that it would provide some possibilities to look for as the events of the future develop.

The following section is not based on any scripture. Therefore, it must be considered speculation. The Bible verses which we have studied about the Antichrist coming from and having his kingdom in the Middle East are timeless. They will always be true.

But our speculations about *how* such a dictator might control the world could change over time. Nevertheless, it is worth spending some time here to look into how a modern-day Antichrist could make this work.

OIL

Oil is a very small word. But it has a big impact on our modern world. Today, all the nations around the globe are addicted to oil. They have to have it. They depend upon it. Without oil, they could not plant. They could not reap. If they did, they could not transport what they grew. No one could travel to stores to buy food, clothing and other goods.

Without oil, planes would not fly, trucks would not run and ships would not move. No one could really buy or sell (except locally) since virtually all modern transportation systems rely on petroleum. If any nation today could not get oil, panic and pandemonium would result. The world's addiction to oil is acute.

The modern world is completely dependent on oil. Therefore, if someone could manage to gain control of the world's oil supply, or at least a good part of it, they would be able to manipulate all, or at least most of those who depend on it. In short, they could dominate the world.

Interestingly, a good share of the world's oil supply is in the Middle East. It is there that God saw fit to put a lot of oil. It is precisely this region which the Bible says will be the domain of the coming man of sin. Therefore, it is an extremely reasonable supposition that he

would gain control of a large share of the world's oil reserves. If so, then the Antichrist and his ten nations would be in a position to begin dictating what the other nations must do in order to continue receiving oil.

This is an extremely important point. There is virtually no other commodity which is so necessary in our modern world. It is literally the fuel which powers every modern economy.

This cannot be any secret to some individual seeking power from that region of the world. Saddam Hussein in his day realized this. He attacked Kuwait and seemed to have further plans to invade Saudi Arabia. He fought wars with Iran. No doubt he had some thoughts about consolidating his control over the oil fields in that region.

In the same way, the future Antichrist cannot be unaware of the immense possibilities which would be available to someone who could seize control of these oil rich areas of the world.

Interestingly, the Bible hints at the possibility that the Antichrist will control some Middle East oil fields.

Daniel 11:2 reads: "He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province." The Hebrew word "richest" can be translated "oil" (Strong's number 04924). (Certainly there is a correspondence between oil and riches). The word "province" is literally

“Medina” which is both a desert region and a city in Saudi Arabia today.

Using these two possible translations we could then read: “He shall enter...the places of the Median Desert [Saudi Arabia] which are full of oil.” Although we cannot insist that this translation is the correct one, it certainly does support our postulations here.

Anyone who could manage to conquer or acquire control over the Middle East would have the rest of the world over a barrel – a barrel of oil. They would be able to call the shots. They could dictate to most of the other countries what they had to do in order to continue receiving oil.

In order for any commerce to carry on, for the other nations’ economies to continue functioning, they have to have oil. In fact, in order for most countries to continue to eat, they depend completely on oil for their transportation system. The more industrialized a country is, the more they must have oil. Consequently, someone who controlled the oil could control them. The formula is simple, if you could control the oil, you could control the world.

Interestingly, many of the more “developed” nations produce very little of their own oil. Japan, for example, imports 99% of her oil. Europe produces very little, except in the North Sea. India and China with their burgeoning economies and populations are dramatically

increasing their use of oil every year. Yet they produce very little themselves. This is one reason that oil is so expensive today.

Consequently, these and most of the other nations in the world are completely vulnerable to anyone who could succeed in gaining control of the Middle East oil-producing areas. Therefore, if the coming Antichrist would consolidate his control over the Middle Eastern oil fields, he would be in a good position to begin to dictate his terms to those who need this oil.

Perhaps there are a few countries which would not be heavily impacted by a consolidation of power in the Middle East. Nigeria produces oil and so would probably be exempt. Furthermore, the national leadership of this nation is principally Muslim.

Venezuela also pumps lots of oil. Mexico produces more than enough for her needs at the moment. Brazil hopes to be energy self-sufficient in a few years. Russia would seem to be immune to threats concerning oil. Yet it is very possible that the coming Antichrist will have another weapon besides oil which he can use to force others to do his will.

TERRORISM

It is very logical to believe that someone, like a middle eastern fanatic, who would manage to consolidate power among ten nations in

the Middle East and North Africa would be familiar with the use of terrorism. Some of these countries already have or soon will have nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them. These nuclear nations could easily be a part of what will become the Antichrist empire.

Therefore, the coming man of sin could have two different weapons with which to control the rest of the world. He will probably have a "two-fisted" approach so to speak, with one weapon in each hand.

On one hand, he will have the oil weapon to persuade the nations to obey his will. On the other, he will probably have weapons of mass destruction at his disposal for those countries who are somewhat immune to his oil threats.

Many nations who might not capitulate easily because of being deprived of oil, might quickly change their minds if one of their major cities suddenly went up in fire and smoke. Also, merely seeing some other country suffer this punishment for disobedience might be enough to persuade them.

In the Middle East today, there is no shortage of fanatics ready to sacrifice their lives to further their cause. Human bombs seem to be plentiful. It is part of the Islamic religion that to die for their cause guarantees them a place in paradise. This appears to be a powerful incentive. Therefore, the threat of nuclear retaliation against some ruler who used an atomic bomb

for terroristic purposes might not have the same deterring effect that it would have on other nations.

It is quite plausible to think that the Antichrist will have and use atomic weapons. Although there is no absolute biblical proof of this, we do have some indications in this direction which we will examine as we go along. Also, it is a very logical conclusion to draw from our present-day world situation.

Any Middle East despot who wished to dominate the world would certainly think of these possibilities. Using these techniques, he would pressure the other nations to convert to his new brand of Muslim religion. Using these two levers, he could become very persuasive.

ALTERNATIVE FUELS

If some tyrant gained control over much of the world's petroleum and started trying to dictate policy to the nations, what would they do? One possibility is to try to find alternatives for the fuel they need. Yet finding alternative fuel sources has not proven to be very easy.

In the U.S., for example, there has been a strange resistance to developing new forms of energy. There has been some progress in a few areas, but it has had little impact on the fossil fuel consumption of the population. Besides this, if other such fuels were developed, the

infrastructure to produce and widely distribute these products would take many years to install. Hydrogen fuel, for example, is something which is many years away from being commercially viable.

Also the U.S. has been very slow to exploit the energy she has available today. It seems that there is a lot of oil in Alaska, but until recently, the environmental protesters have made it almost impossible to drill there. Canada has tremendous deposits of oil sands, but the infrastructure to take advantage of this is underdeveloped. Although there seems to be oil which could be used, circumstances have prevented it.

It almost seems as if there is some kind of invisible resistance to the world becoming independent of Middle East oil. It almost looks like events are being controlled or guided by powers which supersede all logic.

This might lead us to suspect that there is some supernatural force or forces behind these things. It is certainly true that God Himself is the power behind the many decisions and events which impact our lives.

Through some supernatural design, it is the Middle East which possesses a large portion of the world's oil reserves. The world's dependence upon oil is certainly not an accident.

Furthermore, the seeming inability of the nations to develop other sources of energy also has not happened by chance. It is as if the stage

is being set for a Middle East dictator to rise up and be able to make many demands upon the other nations simply because he will control so much oil.

Of course, no one can be sure about exactly how the future will unfold, but certainly the world situation today gives rise to such possibilities. The modern world as a whole is vulnerable to anyone who might control the Middle East oil.

Scripturally, we have seen that it is the coming Antichrist who will assume dominion over that portion of the globe. Therefore, it is almost certain that he also will control a lot of the world's oil supplies. This will likely put him in a position of being able to dictate his terms to those needing oil. The nations over whom the Antichrist might make demands would either have to go to war or give in.

If, as we have postulated, this dictator possessed nuclear weapons and had shown a disposition to use them, this would greatly deter any military action against him. Many nations would have no viable alternative other than cooperation. It will certainly be interesting to see how all these things work together in the coming end of the age.

4.

GOD'S TIMETABLE

God has a timetable. He is not doing things randomly. Neither is He sort of ad-libbing as time goes along – seeing how things develop and then changing his plans accordingly. Instead, from the beginning, God has known exactly when and how each event will occur.

Unlike God who is infinite and not confined to time, we human beings are finite and are limited by both time and space. We cannot know the future unless God reveals it to us. We are entirely dependent upon Him.

In discussions regarding the end times or the end of this present age, there has been a lot of speculation through the years. Teachings, opinions, predictions and interpretations have abounded and still do abound.

I know of no other area of Bible interpretation which is fraught with so much confusion, differing opinions and error as the subject of prophecies concerning the future.

Many of the mistakes which have been made in the past have been made because people interpreted the prophetic scriptures in the light of their contemporaneous events. They looked at the Bible through the lenses of their present sociopolitical situation. For example, many people during World War II thought that Hitler was the Antichrist. This is understandable. Certainly he was an evil person who persecuted the Jews.

Others have predicted the second coming of Christ. Perhaps some of you readers remember the brief furor created by a little book claiming that Jesus was returning in 1988. None of these things have turned out to be true.

However, the ideas being presented here serve a good purpose. They are food for thought. If the man of sin is manifested in our time, then there are certain events which will have to occur to fulfill the scriptures.

This book then, gives believers directions in which to look. If nothing happens as we have imagined, well and good. But if the very events, or events similar to what we have been discussing, begin to unfold then we will know that the time has come.

A DIVINE FORMULA

These things being said, God does reveal to us part of His timetable. He does give us a kind

of chronology of events to guide us. It is true that no one knows the day or the hour of Jesus' second advent (Mt 25:13). But, even though it is impossible to nail down exact dates for the coming events, we are given some general guidelines. God has not left us entirely in the dark. My favorite of these guidelines is the explanation given by Peter.

Peter was a fisherman. He was not an educated man. Yet, he became someone who was intimate with God and heard clearly from Him. While teaching us about the end of this age and Jesus' second coming he speaks about the problem of the coming skeptics.

He addresses those who, towards the end of the age, will be faced with many "scoffers...in the last days" who will say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (II Pet 3:3,4). He asserts that they "willfully forget" how God has judged the earth before and will do so again (II Pet 3:5-7).

Then he urges his readers not to forget one thing. There is an important fact about this subject which he is very keen for them to remember. It is this: "...that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet 3:8). Here Peter is reminding them of God's timetable. It is something which the Lord has revealed to him and that he is urging them (and us) to remember.

Many seem to suppose that Peter is simply waxing poetic here. They imagine that he is

merely saying something like: "Oh, it's just going to be a long time." "Who knows how long." Or, "You never know. You never can tell with God, He's just so much beyond us."

But could this really be what Peter is so anxious for us to remember? Could this be his anointed response to all the skeptics? Is something so vague and wishy-washy what he really intended to communicate? Or could it be that Peter was actually explaining something concrete which he urgently wanted us to understand and remember?

What might happen if we took Peter's words literally? What if he is giving us a literal equation? Then we would have a simple, divinely inspired formula for the end of the age. This formula would be: one day = one thousand years. If we would apply this formula to the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest, we would arrive at the following idea: God designed from the beginning for this earth to exist for 6,000 years plus a 1,000 year Millennium. This would give a total of 7,000 years, or seven "days."

Applying this formula in this manner is not stretching the scriptures beyond their context. Peter is talking here about "the beginning of creation" (vs 4), the heaven and earth which were created and the future judgment or end of the world. So it is very logical to apply his formula in this way. If we do so, then we would

expect the return of Christ to be about 6,000 years after the creation of Adam.

According to various Bible chronologers, we are very close to that date now. Many learned brethren have traced the often slender thread of dates through the Bible. They calculate their conclusions based on the ages of individuals, the reigns of kings and other numbers given in scriptures. Although no two seem to agree with one another exactly, they all arrive at approximately the same conclusion.

This is: that from the creation of Adam and Eve until God's covenant with Abraham was about 2,000 years, from Abraham to Christ was about 2,000 years. From Christ until today about 2,000 years. This last number is easy to figure. We can simply look at any modern calendar and find that about 2,000 years have passed since the birth of Christ.

Therefore, Peter's simple formula works just as we might expect. From the six days of creation until today, more or less 6,000 years have passed. So, we should be expecting the end of the age at any moment. However, we must remember that these dates are not exact.

Scholars argue, for example, over the precise date of Jesus' birth. Also, some of the Old Testament chronologers differ with each other by as much as 85 years. So we can only conclude that we are now *about* 6,000 years from the beginning.

Another factor which we might consider is that the crucifixion of Christ was much more of a pivotal date in world history than his birth. So if we were to count 2,000 years from the cross, rather than the manger (which would have been approximately 27 to 33 A.D.), then we would not expect Jesus to return until 2,027 to 2,033 A.D. This would put the second coming about 13 to 19 years from today. Such a rudimentary calculation is nothing to base your life on. But it does give us an idea of about where we might be on God's calendar.

TWO IMPORTANT EVENTS

One other thing we know clearly from the scriptures is that the "day" of the Lord's appearing will not come until two events occur. One of these is called a great "falling away" (II Thess 2:3). Literally, this means "defection" or "revolt." Incredibly, some Bible teachers have tried to make this into the rapture. They teach that this word can mean "departure." From this basis, they insist that Jesus will not come until the church has "departed."

It is interesting to note that the Greek word here is "APOSTASIA" which is literally translated "apostasy." Thus, we have the honor of being the only generation in the history of the church which has twisted the scriptures to such an extreme point. We have managed to convert

the greatest apostasy of all time into the rapture. But, getting back to our original thought, this great apostasy or departure from the true following of Jesus must occur first.

The second event is that the "man of sin" must be revealed (II Thess 2:3). This means that the Antichrist will be seen and known for what he is before the day of Jesus' return. It is not clear from the word of God exactly when the Antichrist will be "revealed." Some think it will be at the beginning of a seven year period known as the tribulation. Others speculate that it will be in the middle of this time, three and one half years before the end.

But there is no verse which demands either of these two interpretations. It is possible that the Beast will emerge in an identifiable manner many years before the events which will mark the beginning of the tribulation. We will probably be able to recognize the Antichrist by seeing him involved in the events which we are studying in this book. These things could occur a number of years before he consolidates his power or begins his persecution of the saints.

Our rough calculation above gave us 13 to 19 years until the end of the age. Subtracting 7 years of tribulation from this would give us 6 to 12 years from today. But, it will take some time for the Antichrist to establish his kingdom and consolidate his power. This will not happen overnight.

So, the Antichrist could be recognizable some years, let us say 5 to 10 years before the beginning of the tribulation. This could mean that very soon we may be able to identify someone who is beginning to fulfill the prophecies concerning this figure. However, this timetable cannot be thought of as being exact, prophetic, or dependable.

Only the passage of time will tell us if our cogitations are correct. But these ideas do give us a direction in which to look. They are useful as some kind of points of reference to compare to current events. So, if we see things beginning to fall into place according to the scriptures which we have been examining, then we can know that the time is indeed short.

“THIS GENERATION”

Another passage which comes into play in our discussion is found in Luke chapter 21. Here Jesus is teaching His disciples about the signs of the times and the end of the age. As part of this dissertation He says: “Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things are fulfilled” (Lk 21:32).

This verse has been the subject of much debate. Just what Jesus meant by “this generation” is often disputed. However, it seems clear that this must include the generation which sees certain signs. Among these signs is that:

“...Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles [remain in the possession of the Gentiles] until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Lk 21:24).

In 70 A.D. the Roman general Titus conquered and destroyed Jerusalem. Beginning at that time until recently, it has been under “Gentile,” rather than Jewish domination. But in 1967 the older, historic part of the city of Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Jews again, after almost 2,000 years had passed. This event is probably the fulfillment of the above mentioned pronouncement of Jesus.

This then would tell us that the end will be within one generation of this event. (Some have mistakenly begun their calculations from the time when Israel became a nation, ie. 1948. But the verse here specifically says “Jerusalem,” not Israel.)

But what is a biblical generation? There are verses which mention the figure 40 years. Other verses seem to say 100 years. Due to their sin, the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness until one generation died out. This took 40 years.

However, this group was all 20 years old or older when their rebellion took place (Num 14:29). So, some of this “generation” which died out could have reached 60 years of age or even more, depending on how old they were when they were cursed.

The 40 year figure in the Bible must mean that it takes forty years for one generation to generate or reproduce another generation. This does not mean that a generation is limited to 40 years. The exact words which we have read in Luke are “this generation will *by no means pass away.*” So the “generation” which has seen Jerusalem come back into the possession of the Jews would all have to die out in order for them to “pass away.” This would take roughly 70 years if we count the average life-span of modern man.

But remember here that this generation will *not* pass away. So we must be looking at a period of years which is less than this, let us say 60 years. If we would take our 1967 date and add 60 years, this would put us at 2027. This number dovetails very nicely with our calculations using Peter’s formula. Subtracting 7 years of tribulation, gives us 6 years from today.

You can no doubt see that there is a lot of guesswork involved in our mathematics here. These figures can by no means be thought of as exact. They only give us some ideas about what might take place.

Therefore, the only reliable source we have to confide in is Jesus Christ. He is the One who will be showing us how the events of our day fit or do not fit into His plan. It is only if we are walking in intimacy with Him, that that day will not “come on you unexpectedly” (Lk 21:34).

5.

BABYLON

In the following section, we will engage in some speculation about how some future events could unfold. Therefore, these ideas should be held somewhat lightly as we wait to see what will actually occur. But, if and when these things begin to become real in our world, when the news is full of stories along these exact lines, then it is time to take seriously the warnings contained in this series of books about the end times.

The future Antichrist will have a problem, a very formidable problem. He will want to consolidate his power in the Middle East. His ambition is to dominate the world and make the inhabitants of the earth do his will. But, if he is manifested in these days, there is one nation which will stand in his way.

That pesky “world policeman,” the United States, will no doubt oppose his rise to power and also his control over the oil fields. They, as they have done in the past, would probably

send troops, ships, and missiles to try to stop any such endeavor. So, if he is to accomplish his will, he must eliminate the United States from the picture.

At the time of this writing, the U.S. is finishing up a very messy war in Iraq. They suppose that they are going to bring peace and stability to this region. It is a very volatile part of the world where almost anything can and does happen. The chances of their establishing a lasting peace are virtually nil.

The peoples which comprise the Middle East are very divided and warlike. Although the U.S. may, from time to time seem to have some successes, the likelihood of some kind of victory which would definitively pacify the population is almost nil. When the American troops leave, the chances for further conflict are huge.

Furthermore, this war is having a psychological impact on the American people. The longer it continues and the more soldiers are killed, the less the American people will want to be involved in a conflict in this region. It is possible that before this is over, they will be sick and tired of it. It is conceivable that if the situation deteriorates in the future, the U.S. would never want to send its armies there again.

For example, I don't believe that America would ever send troops back to Viet Nam. Almost anything could happen there, and the United States would not go to war. The emo-

tional pain over the past is too great. Something very similar could easily occur in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East. This has already happened with the mighty Red Army of Russia.

A humiliating, or less than satisfactory exit from Iraq (which has now come to pass) could play into the hands of the coming Antichrist. He could use the power vacuum which this would create, along with the unlikely possibility of the U.S. returning, to rise up and overthrow the governments of three nations. This is not an unthinkable possibility in view of current events.

Any Muslim fanatic with aspirations to be a leader certainly realizes this. Consequently, he and his cohorts will do everything in their power to make sure that this happens. The terrorist attacks will not stop, but probably only escalate. Such a leader could easily take advantage of the current state of affairs to springboard himself into power and influence in this region.

Let us suppose that someone succeeds in taking power and uniting ten countries. Even so, he would still sooner or later, have the threat of the United States resisting him if and when he tries to begin controlling the rest of the world. Therefore, the Antichrist must find a way to paralyze her and/or eliminate this threat to accomplish his agenda. This will be absolutely essential.

Due to her overwhelming military might, the United States would have to be removed from the world picture if the Antichrist is to accomplish all his will. In order for any Middle Eastern dictator to consolidate power and use his oil resources to control the world, the U.S. would definitely have to be taken out of the way.

Another piece of this puzzle is the tremendous hatred that the Islamic zealots have for the U.S. Supposing her to be a Christian country and witnessing the luxury in which she lives along with the enormous amount of sexual impurity and filth in which she indulges, many such fanatics have developed an intense hatred for her.

In their hearts they have a firm purpose to destroy her. This should be evident to anyone who is familiar with the present world situation. Don't think that 9-11 was enough to satisfy them. The radical Muslims' goal is the total destruction of the United States.

WEALTHY, INDULGENT BABYLON

These thoughts harmonize exactly with what we have studied about Babylon in the first book of this series. There, from the book of Revelation, we saw her revealed as a self-indulgent, opulent, sinful location. She is proud, world-dominating and unrepentant. Her

wealth, extravagance, and lust for more and more things requires the services of every ship, ship owner, and mariner in the sea (see Revelation 17 and 18).

Babylon is isolated from the rest of the world and mainly thinks about herself. Her sinfulness, in terms of adultery, fornication, murder of the unborn, homosexuality, and other such things, has become rampant. She has abandoned God as her Protector, casting Him out of her government and schools and turned instead to idols of so-called science and humanism. Consequently, God decides to judge her. (For a more thorough analysis of this subject, please refer to the previous book entitled *Babylon*.)

Interestingly, He chooses the Antichrist and his ten nations to be the instruments of His judgment. They are the ones who will attack her and thoroughly burn her with fire.

We read: "And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. *For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill his purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled*" (Rev 17:16,17).

Let us look at the phrase "hate the harlot." It is certain that many of the countries which will probably take part in the Antichrist's schemes already hate the United States. Iran, for exam-

ple, attacked the U.S. embassy and took some hostages a number of years ago, calling America the "Great Satan."

The hatred in the Middle East towards the U.S. is tremendous and increasing every day. The terrorist acts being perpetrated against America and her allies today are motivated by a great, deep-seated hatred. These individuals see her as a corrupt, immoral society doing whatever she wants to on the world scene, trampling on anyone who gets in her way.

The Antichrist's military efforts against Babylon will probably occur in two stages. First he must back her off until he consolidates his power. Then, biblically, he will destroy her completely.

No matter who he turns out to be, the U.S. will certainly oppose the Antichrist's rise to power in the Middle East. She has a long history of interfering in that region. So, how could the Antichrist neutralize this threat while he is consolidating his power?

The first stage of "backing her off" might be done by some humiliating attacks with weapons of mass destruction, either chemical, biological or nuclear. This could be what the Bible is referring to when it says that the Antichrist will "make her...naked" (Rev 17:16). The connection here is that when you strip someone of their clothes or "make them naked" you humiliate them.

If the Antichrist could acquire some nuclear bombs or other such weapons, he could then put some on old cargo ships and sail them into American harbors. Or he could smuggle some biological weapons into the country. Next he could attack in one place and then say to the U.S., "I have more weapons in your country. You either leave me alone or I will do it again."

Through the fear that this kind of attack could create, he could possibly get the U.S. to tolerate his agenda, at least for a while. Finally, after humiliating her and getting her reluctant cooperation for a time, he will then destroy her with great hatred.

Of course, no one can predict how these events might occur. Such speculations are only given to show how such things might be possible in today's world. Although many Americans don't really think such events are likely and believe that their government and even God will protect them, the fact is that God is on the other side. God Himself will help the Antichrist execute His judgment upon Babylon.

That's right. God will put His power behind the Antichrist and use him to do His will. The Almighty Himself will empower the coming man of sin to bring down the world's most powerful, wealthy nation and judge her. We read again: "...for God has put it into their hearts to fulfill his purpose...until the words of God are fulfilled" (Rev 17:17).

With such a divine anointing, all the protection in the world, all the intelligence gathering, along with all the safety measures will not be enough to avoid her eventual destruction. Please, for your own sake, don't depend upon human government or resources to protect you.

WEALTHY, SINFUL BABYLON DESTROYED

A passage in Daniel chapter 8, verses 23-25, says a lot to confirm that a wealthy, powerful, sinful nation, such as the United States, will be destroyed by the Antichrist. Let us take some time and analyze this passage together.

We read: "And in the latter time of their kingdom [the kingdoms of the other three beasts, possibly England, Russia and Germany] when the transgressors have reached their fullness, [here we see that the sinfulness of the prostitute must reach a peak as it did in the land of Canaan before the Israelites destroyed them (Gen 15:16)] a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes."

"His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power. [We have already seen how the Antichrist will be empowered by the devil.] He shall destroy *fearfully* [possibly referring to the use of terrorist attacks], and shall prosper and thrive; He shall destroy the *mighty*, [this could be the U.S.] and also the holy people [this

would refer to the coming slaughter of the saints].”

Going on in this passage we read: “Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their *prosperity*. [This too is probably speaking about the destruction of prosperous Babylon.] He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand.” Another verse which indicates the destruction of some especially strong nation or nations is Daniel 11:39 where we read: “Thus he [Antichrist] shall act against the *strongest fortresses*.”

Today, in the area of the globe once occupied by the Ottoman Empire (from which will come the kingdom of the Antichrist) there are several countries which have or soon will have nuclear armaments. These same countries also have and are further perfecting missiles which can deliver these warheads. Some of these countries also have ships and “decommissioned” nuclear submarines bought from the former Soviet Union.

As we have speculated in the book *Babylon*, it would be very possible for the U.S. to be “destroyed in one hour” “by fire” through a nuclear attack. This attack could be accomplished with only about ten ships and another ten submarines, each carrying ten missiles apiece.

Such ships do not even need to be military vessels. Average cargo ships can carry missiles in their holds. They can be fired by simply removing the hatch covers and pushing a button. These vessels could keep well outside the territorial waters of the United States and yet hit every major city, even in the interior of the country. Such an attack of 100-200 nuclear missiles, hitting many or most of the major cities would completely destroy the country.

As an example of how this could happen, we have seen recent news reports on the web which indicate that Iran is placing some of its long-range missiles in cargo ships. Further, the current president of the country Georgia has revealed that in 1999, his country sold Iran twelve cruise missiles left over from the Soviet era. This means that they have had 15 years (until today) to copy and reproduce them.

If and when they succeed in producing nuclear weapons, these could easily be fitted as warheads. Although we cannot know the future or if Iran will be involved in the end-time scenario, they certainly are in the right place geographically.

I am told by a friend of mine who is a scientist that someone with a really evil intention could make this attack even worse. If a significant amount of the metal cobalt is included in a warhead (for example the casing around the actual bomb) the area where the missile hits

would be contaminated by radiation for as long as seven to eight hundred years or even longer. This means that that region would be uninhabitable and no one could safely travel through it or near it for centuries.

At this moment, the United States is working very hard to develop a missile shield. They are inventing various means to intercept and shoot down incoming missiles. But, if these attacks are launched close to her borders, it may be that there will not be enough time to detect them, activate the defenses and then intercept the missiles.

The Bible says that God will work against Babylon and help her enemies destroy her. He will anoint the Antichrist and his ten kings to execute His judgment against Babylon. Don't put your hope in some kind of missile defense.

Some may argue with me that at least parts of the U.S. military would certainly survive such an attack and would retaliate, thus eliminating the Antichrist or his kingdom. Of course I cannot say what they might or might not do.

But, I do know that during the "cold war" era, there was a large debate as to whether or not the U.S. would respond to a full-scale Soviet nuclear attack. Many thought that they would not. The loss of life and the lack of any benefits besides revenge might mitigate against it.

Also, if the leadership of the country were destroyed, or if the president or any leader who

survived was rather indecisive, a retaliation might not take place.

Certainly, because it is God who is judging Babylon through the Antichrist, He knows what will happen. God Himself will be orchestrating the entire situation.

THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON

The reader may wish to take some time here and read Jeremiah, chapter 50 and 51. Here we have detailed for us the destruction of Babylon. But while you are reading, please remember that part of this prophecy refers to the ancient Babylon and part to the modern one.

Some of these verses have already been fulfilled and some have a future fulfillment. It is very possible that many have a dual significance and apply to both "Babylons." Which exact verses refer to each one and which to both is almost impossible to tease out. As you read, you will no doubt see in some verses events which could easily happen today. Among them are a few points which seem very clear.

Babylon is destroyed by someone who comes "out of the north" (Jer 50:3), "an assembly of great nations from the north country" (Jer 50:9) and "a people" who "come from the north" (Jer 50:41). You may remember that much of the old Ottoman Empire was "north" of Israel.

These passages do not seem to demand that the nations which destroy the “end-times Babylon” be literally “north” of her geographically. For example, the only nation literally north of the U.S. is Canada. It could merely indicate where they are located in relationship to Israel, therefore demonstrating a geographical position which the Jews of that day could understand. This interpretation corresponds exactly to what we have been seeing about the Antichrist empire coming from the Middle East.

DESTROYED BY “ARROWS”

As you read these two chapters, you will no doubt notice that there is a strong emphasis on “arrows.” Babylon is principally destroyed by arrows. We read: “Their arrows shall be like those of an expert warrior” (Jer 50:9). “...against Babylon all around, all you who bend the bow; shoot at her, spare no arrows” (Jer 50:14).

“Call together the archers against Babylon. All you who bend the bow, encamp against it all around” (Jer 50:29). The attackers from the north “shall hold the bow and the lance” (Jer 50:42). “Against her let the archer bend his bow” (Jer 51:3). “Make the arrows bright” (Jer 51:11).

These verses about arrows could refer, and probably do refer to missiles being launched at Babylon. For example, missiles fly through the

air like arrows and are often “bright” because of their metallic skins. Of course, this idea cannot be proven. In the days of Jeremiah, there were no missiles. Arrows or lances would have been the closest thing to a missile that the people of that day would know or understand. So it is not impossible that God used the word “arrows” to symbolize something in the future.

But now we come to an astounding fact. Ancient Babylon was *not* destroyed by arrows! It was conquered by shovels. The Medes and Persians spent their time digging a canal to divert the Euphrates River. This river ran under the wall of Babylon, through the city and out the other side.

By diverting the river, the attacking armies lowered the level of the river enough so that they could come in under the wall, thus conquering the city. These invaders encountered little resistance. The defenses of ancient Babylon were rendered useless.

Since ancient Babylon was not literally destroyed by archers or arrows, we are led to conclude that these verses *must* apply to the end-times Babylon.

Another feature of these two chapters is the destruction of Babylon by “fire” and the desolation that results. The result of being uninhabitable is also mentioned. Jeremiah 50:3 says that the attack “will make her land desolate.” “Because of the wrath of the Lord she shall not

be inhabited, but she shall be wholly desolate. Everyone who goes by Babylon shall be horrified and hiss at all her plagues" (Jer 50:13).

We are told that Babylon will "become a desolation among the nations" (Jer 50:23) and that her attackers will "destroy her utterly" (Jer 50:26). God will "kindle a fire in his [Babylon's] cities [it is significant here that this says more than one city] and it will devour all around" (Jer 50:32).

Babylon "shall be inhabited no more forever, nor shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation" (Jer 50:39). The destruction of Babylon is compared to Sodom and Gomorrah in which a fire fell from heaven that made it uninhabitable (Jer 50:40). God will make Babylon "a burnt mountain" and she "shall be desolate for ever" (Jer 51:25,26).

She will become "an astonishment and a hissing, without an inhabitant" (Jer 51:37). "Her cities [again plural, indicating a nation] are a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness, a land where no one dwells, through which no son of man passes" [possibly because of the residual radiation] (Jer 51:43).

If this author is correct and modern Babylon will be destroyed by an atomic attack, this would produce all the effects about which we have been reading. No doubt such a large scale strike would also contaminate the air, which as it moves across the globe, will have some effects

on other nations also. It may be that other countries will make attempts to deal with the fires and the sources of this radiation, as they did when the Chernobyl accident occurred in the Soviet Union, but they will have little success. Perhaps this is why "The people will labor in vain, and the nations, because of the fire, and they shall be weary" (Jer 51:58).

GET OUT OF BABYLON

The consequences of this attack are extremely severe and lethal. Therefore, God constantly warns his people to get out of Babylon. God says: "Go forth from Babylon!" (Is 48:20). And again he says: "Move from the midst of Babylon" (Jer 50:8). He warns: "Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life!" (Jer 51:6).

God further exhorts: "My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the Lord" (Jer 51:45). Finally, God admonishes us with a voice from heaven saying: "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Rev 18:4).

It may be possible that after this attack, some inhabitants of Babylon will still be able to escape. As mentioned in the book, *Babylon*, it is probable that many millions will survive this attack. Some of them, because of where they

live, may be able to get across the borders or put to sea and still escape some of the aftermath of the plagues and death. To them God says: "You who have escaped the sword, get away! Do not stand still!" (Jer 51:50).

This means that those who survive should take every opportunity to leave and keep going until they get to somewhere safe. Incredibly, even after such an attack, some still seem to be reluctant to leave! But God urges them to do so for their own good.

Since writing the book, *Babylon*, I have had some feedback from various brothers and sisters. One comment which has been stated several times is the opinion that no one really needs to leave Babylon. God will surely protect Christians where they are. Since there are so many believers in America, God must love them and would not let anything really bad happen to them.

This thought process is foolishness. If our identification of Babylon is correct, then God's judgment on her will be prolonged and severe. His instructions to His people who live there are extremely clear: "Get out, get out, get out, get out!"

If we do not obey His voice, then we will suffer the results of our disobedience. We will participate in the judgments which God is going to give her which are: fire, mourning, death, and famine.

Today is the time to begin preparations to leave the place which will be judged by God in the near future. The more prepared you are, the easier it will be for you to flee when you see the signs mentioned in this book begin to happen.

The longer you wait, enjoying the ease and pleasures of Babylonian society, the more difficult and stressful the situation will become when the end-time events begin to unfold.

6.

WAR ON THE SAINTS

At the very bottom of the Antichrist's agenda (or perhaps I should say the top) is the issue of worship. His contention with the rest of the world is, in the end, all about religion. It is a question of who will be worshiped, who will be the god (or God) of this world.

This struggle is really an earthly manifestation of the spiritual battle which is going on in the heavens. It is a contest between God and the devil, between light and darkness, between truth and the lie.

The Antichrist himself is, in fact, simply a pawn in this deadly serious game. The people of God, who are called "the saints" in the prophetic word, also play an important role.

As part of this struggle, a war begins. It is called a "war on the saints." Although this battle has been going on all through the ages, the end-times manifestation of it seems to begin around the time in which Satan is thrown out of heaven to the earth (Rev 12:9). He has just lost

his foothold in the heavens. The only place he has left is the earth. So, he will try to fully assert his authority over it.

The way he can do this is by eliminating all people who do not worship him. In order to demonstrate to the universe that he is the rightful ruler of this planet, he must cause all its inhabitants to accept his rule. Consequently, his goal will be to rid the globe of Christians and Jews alike who won't submit to him.

The Antichrist, because his heart is under the control of Satan, will also be promoting this eradication program. He too will be full of hatred toward God's people along with anything and everything which is labeled "Christian."

Just as Haman in the book of Ruth determined to destroy God's people and as Hitler had a hatred for the Jews, so the Antichrist will try to exterminate both believers and Jews. With time, it seems he will adopt a philosophy of "convert or die." Although many of its adherents try to deny this, the religion of Islam has often used such tactics before.

As the Antichrist's power and influence grow, he begins to think very highly of himself. His ego grows alongside of his successes. It is this writer's belief that he will gradually modify Islam to suit his own purposes. If so, as we have already pointed out, he will not be the first one to do so. Over time, he himself will want to

be seen as a kind of supernatural savior. He will begin to demand worship of himself along with the dragon. Satan will put his power behind this surge to the top. This will be a substantial amount of power. The Antichrist's new buddy, the false Prophet, will also lend a hand in urging the world to worship the beast.

This new Antichrist religion seems to reach a peak with the construction of a large image which resembles the Beast. The second beast, the false Prophet, is granted power to do miracles with this image. He can make it speak (Rev 13:15). One of things that this talking image says is that everyone who does not worship the Beast should be put to death.

Of course, any believer in Jesus Christ will not want to be a worshiper of the Beast. Consequently, he will soon be looking death in the face. So we see that not only will the Antichrist destroy Babylon, but he will also begin a campaign to rid the world as a whole of real Christians.

This period of persecution will be a terrible time for believers. It will be a time of "...great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt 24:21).

It may also be the "time of Jacob's trouble" mentioned in Jeremiah 30:7. Possibly this refers to the Jews also being persecuted. This will be a time of war. But it will not be a war in the usual

sense. Instead, the Antichrist will wage a one-sided war against believers.

We read that the "...horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them" (Dan 7:21). We also are told that he: "...shall persecute the saints of the Most High" and that "...the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time" (Dan 7:25).

In the book of Revelation it is reaffirmed that God permits the beast to prevail against His people for a time. Verse 7 of chapter 13 reads: "And it was granted to him [by God] to make war with the saints and to overcome them."

Not only are these faithful believers persecuted, but they are frequently put to death. Significantly, one of the principal methods which the Beast will use to kill these Christians is beheading.

In Revelation chapter 20, verse 4 John sees an awesome sight. "And I saw the souls of those who had been *beheaded* for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands." I'm sure all readers know that one of the main ways that the Muslim radicals of our time use to kill their captives is beheading.

So we see that there is coming to this earth a tremendous slaughter of believers. It is so pervasive it is called a "war." How might this

work? Here again, we will indulge in some speculation as we seek answers.

As we have discussed, after the Antichrist consolidates his power and his control over the oil fields, he then would be in a position to dictate his policies to the rest of the world. But what are his policies? Is it job creation? Is it universal health care, or more retirement benefits? Is it some new plan to stimulate the economy? No! Instead his agenda is solely religious. He will demand that the world convert to his new brand of Islam.

Some may think that this religious preoccupation of the Antichrist is ridiculous. Much of the world today is very humanistic and has little orientation toward worship or God. But you must understand, for a religious fanatic, this is everything! The most important thing for such a person is his religion. Everything else is secondary.

Also, for these fanatics, conversion of the world to their way of thinking is paramount. It may also be hard for many readers to imagine that suddenly, modern, sophisticated men and women will start worshipping a new god. This possibility may seem extremely remote. How could much of the world suddenly be convinced to convert?

As time progresses, this will be the Antichrist's position, convert or die. This may seem a little ridiculous to you readers but it

does not to him. It will not seem trite to you either when it is happening. If anyone refuses to cooperate with his program, then off with his head.

Some have argued that some Muslim radical could never be the Antichrist. They reason that such a person could never become universally popular and therefore no one would worship him. But the Antichrist will not be worshiped by most because he becomes popular. In fact, we have seen that he will not be well liked or universally accepted.

But death is a strong persuader. When men and women are faced with the option of conversion or death, they can suddenly become religious. This method of securing converts is time tested. It really works. When it becomes a question of losing your life or bending your knee, you will be amazed by how many people will suddenly “see the light.”

THE IMPACT OF OIL

We have guessed that the nations will have to go along with the Antichrist’s new demands because if they don’t they won’t receive oil. Not only won’t they receive oil which they desperately need to keep their society functioning or even keep on living, but they might be subject to terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction. Such attacks could prove to be very

powerful persuaders. The amount of pressure which could be applied will be enormous.

Truthfully, the economies of this world are all very fragile. They depend upon transportation, the flow of imports, exports, etc. to continue functioning. If this is disrupted, economic disaster would quickly follow. Unemployment, default on national debt, riots and demonstrations by angry citizens, shortages of food, and many other things could soon come to pass. So, unless these countries are willing to go to war with the Antichrist to stop his program, they will have to go along.

Some may reasonably ask, "Why don't these other nations just attack the Antichrist and his nations to stop all this worship nonsense." Well, there are very few nations in this world which have standing armies large enough, along with the equipment necessary, to do the job.

At this writing, the U.S. was trying to subdue Iraq with very limited success and she is the acknowledged superpower of the world. The European nations do not have large militaries. Japan also does not. If the Antichrist has nuclear weapons, this would serve to deter any invaders. The truth is that the rest of the world apart from the U.S. is not well positioned militarily to stop the schemes of the Antichrist.

Every government of the world will be required to participate in this worship. They

and their populations will have to worship the dragon, the Beast, and his image. If not, no oil. This may seem strange to you, but it could soon become very real.

Think about this for a moment. If your average person were required to perform a little religious duty to continue to be able to work, pay his bills, and even eat, would he do it? Of course he would! If his family would starve on the streets unless he did a little genuflecting, well that would be a small price to pay.

You must understand the desperate situation in which these populations will find themselves. At first, no doubt, the oil reserves of some nations would carry them along. Perhaps their alternative fuels would hold them for a little while longer. It is possible that nations such as the United States, if they could not get Middle East oil, would pressure other countries such as Mexico or Venezuela to make up the difference.

But if these other nations were subject to threats of terrorist attacks with nuclear weapons, would they ship oil or protect themselves? Therefore, it would be quite easy for the situation in nations who depend on oil to become critical.

Most economies, except the most primitive ones, are completely dependent on oil. If you cannot fill up the tank of your car, you cannot work, you cannot buy food. Soon you won't be

able to pay your mortgage or bills. Without enough oil, rationing would be mandatory and thus many individuals would not have enough. Consequently, the citizens of these nations would begin pressuring their respective governments to give in a little.

A general outcry would be heard to do whatever is necessary to restore the flow of oil and therefore their survival. When people become pinched financially because their governments, influenced by those stubborn Christians, will not go along with the Antichrist's agenda, they will become vocal and enraged.

Everyone desperately needs oil. So, when push comes to shove, most people will do whatever it takes to preserve their lifestyles. They will pressure their leaders to make some concessions so that they can continue to live at the level to which they have become accustomed. The respective governments of these countries will be forced to cooperate.

THE ANTICHRIST RELIGION

I think it is possible that the Antichrist will offer his religion in a package which, at least in the beginning, will offer the minimum of offense to other religions. He may even seem to be a peacemaker, or unifier of the world. With the power of Satan backing it, there will certainly be a great amount of deception involved in

his program. With this extremely powerful spiritual force behind him, he will succeed in deceiving many into thinking that his way is some sort of solution or even that he is right.

This is referred to in the Bible as “all unrighteous deception” (II Thess 2:10). Incredibly, God actually assists the Antichrist with his deception. We read: “And for this reason God will send them [the unrighteous] strong delusion that they should believe the lie” (II Thess 2:11).

Here we find an unbeatable combination. The devil puts his power behind this new religion. The Bible calls this “all...deception.” Then God aids this process by sending “strong delusion” on the non-Christians. God actually anoints people to be deceived by the Antichrist’s religion! Will this new religion succeed? Will people go along? You can count on it!

Many suppose that what people believe is based upon their being convinced of some facts. But this is not the case. People believe something because they want to believe it. They allow themselves to be “convinced” because it harmonizes with what they really want. Belief is really a question of choice.

If, then, the incentive to believe is very strong, many will allow themselves to be convinced. When the financial impact begins to be felt, many will begin to rethink their ideas and opinions.

The pressure from the Antichrist upon the nations to conform to his religion will not diminish. Once a few concessions have been made, he will probably demand more and more. Once a foothold has been gained and these nations have begun to compromise and accede to his demands, he will probably begin to exact even more cooperation.

It is possible that the first of such demands made upon nations in order to continue receiving oil might be to withdraw recognition of Israel as a nation. Next they might be required to declare that Allah is really the same God as the Jewish and Christian God. The Antichrist might insist that these are just different names for the same God.

Perhaps for many, this might seem to be a small concession to make to continue to live and work as usual. Perhaps with time, people would be required to confess that Allah is the true God and that Mohammed is his prophet. It is probable that the demands will escalate as the nations give in more and more.

Many Christians in the "West" today have not had much experience dealing with Muslims and their religious ideas. Islamic teachings concerning Abraham and Ishmael; about Christ being merely a prophet; the claim that the Jews and Christians have changed the scriptures and many other things will be new to them when the Antichrist emerges.

Since they have never heard these ideas before, many young and inexperienced believers are going to find themselves in a spiritual battle. It is without a doubt that the Antichrist will present his religion in a way which will sound appealing, benign, attractive, and even "holy." It is possible that his subtlety will seduce many away from their true faith, especially when their financial well-being is also involved.

Eventually, this Antichrist religion will arrive at the point where everyone must worship him and his image. They must worship or be put to death. If it comes to "believe or die" you will be amazed at how many "believers" will suddenly appear. As we have already mentioned, when it comes down to a decision of life or death, converts become easy to get.

THE "ABOMINATION OF DESOLATIONS"

Just a quick word here about the phrase "the abomination of desolations" found in Matthew 24:15. This verse could also be translated "the false god who causes plundering." You see, an "abomination" to the Jews was something very specific. It was an idol or false god, not just some horrible, abominable thing.

Furthermore, this word "desolation" can be translated "plundering" and is reminiscent of Hitler and his actions against the Jews. He allowed people to attack them and plunder

their possessions. So, it is possible that the coming man of sin will use this tactic against Christians and Jews. He might give incentives for worldly people to attack and kill believers. Then, as a reward for this service, they can plunder them and take what they have. He would give such people immunity from prosecution, since they would be “doing the will of God.”

ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE?

It is here that real Christians will enter into the battle. They will be in a battle for their souls. They will look death in the face. Then they will have to make a decision. Will they compromise a little? Will they simply go along and hope that God will forgive them later? Or will they willingly sacrifice their lives in order to remain faithful to Jesus?

It is probable that many will make some mistakes here. The thought is unrealistic that every Christian will suddenly make the right choices when many have been making wrong choices about many things for years.

The scriptures seem to indicate this where we read that “...some of those of understanding shall fall” (Dan 11:35). This could mean that some believers, who should know better, will make some wrong decisions. God allows their mistakes for a purpose. It is to “...refine them,

purge them, and make them white" (Dan 11:35).

If some take some wrong actions and make wrong decisions during this time, as the power of the Antichrist grows and his agenda becomes evident, hopefully they will realize their error. Their consciences will torment them. Yet God will use their mistakes, as He does with our errors today, to chastise and correct them.

The coming time of trouble will be a time of testing of our faith, of our love for each other and of our commitment to Jesus. It will reveal just where our hearts really are. It will bring to the surface any and all secret loves for other things besides our Savior.

God is going to allow this coming persecution or "tribulation" for a good reason. It will be a method to help His church become purified.

Today, much of the Christian church is lukewarm and half-hearted. Many believers are pursuing wealth, comfort, entertainment, pleasure, and all the things which this world has to offer. Many are already worshipping whatever will bring them these earthly things.

However, the coming time of trouble will change all that. It will test and try the faith and commitment of every believer. It will be a time of pressure, stress and difficulty. It will be like a very hot fire, such as is used to refine gold and silver, only God will use it to purify His church. All of us would do well to prepare our hearts today for this coming time of trial (Rev 3:10).

7.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Seemingly, the evidence of each person's submission to the worship of the beast will be some kind of mark. This mark comes in three varieties. It can be the Beast's "mark," his name, or the number of his name (Rev 13:17). Without this mark, no one can buy or sell. Having this mark will be necessary to continue to participate in any and all commercial transactions.

Why is it that the Antichrist will demand the use of this mark? We must remember here that his main purpose is religious. He wants everyone to convert. His goal is that all the world would worship him, his image and the dragon. So, how could he go about accomplishing his end? How could he get everyone to participate in this worship? How could he have so many instant converts?

It is probable that, outside the Muslim world, most people would be resistant to this

religion. Of course there will be a lot of spiritual power behind it, but nevertheless, many people of the world today are atheist, agnostic, and/or just plain opposed to the thought of worshipping a superior being. Also, anyone who today is not a Muslim would no doubt object to the idea of being converted.

Persuading people to change their religion is not an easy thing, as many missionaries know. Such changes do not come quickly. Even with the devil's anointing on it, it is not likely that the religion of the Antichrist will be instantly embraced by the whole world.

As persuasive as the Antichrist might seem to be, he will still have a lot of trouble convincing everyone. In fact, it would seem that there would be quite a bit of resistance to him.

Consequently, the Antichrist will have to apply some pressure on people to impel them toward his goal. We must remember here that he is not going to have huge armies with which to conquer the world. So, applying direct, physical pressure would be very difficult.

But, one way to control people is to control their money. If you can get hold of their pocketbook, you then have power over them. Securing control over their ability to buy and sell would seem an ideal way to have dominion over anyone.

How might such a thing work? Here we will again indulge ourselves in a little specula-

tion. We have hypothesized that the Antichrist will control much of the world's oil. Using this control, he could then pressure the various governments of the world to do his will in order to receive their oil. This pressure will be extreme due to the desperate dependence of the modern economies on petroleum.

One tactic he could use would be to demand that the various governments pass a few new laws regarding banking. These new rules would affect all the financial institutions.

These regulations could work something like this: in order to continue to use the services of any financial institution, each citizen would be required to supply proof of their conversion to the Beast religion. This proof would be some kind of mark. This mark would be their ticket to continue to buy and sell.

People would have to show through documentation or actual, physical examination that they had received the mark, whatever this mark proves to be. If anyone does not submit the required proof within a certain time limit, then he or she will no longer be able to use the services of any financial institution.

Let us say that you refused to cooperate. This would then mean that your bank account would be frozen. You could no longer write checks to pay for what you wanted to buy, including food, clothing, and gasoline. You would no longer be able to pay your bills sim-

ply by writing checks and sending them through the mail. You could not transfer your money anywhere, including to another country.

Also, you would have difficulty liquidating your assets, especially if they had a mortgage or loan on them. Any loans, including home mortgages, might be called in. No financial institution would be able to do business with you.

Next, your credit cards would be canceled. You could not simply call up some company or store and order what you needed. Your credit card would no longer be valid. This would then put anyone who had this happen to him or her in a very difficult position. Their mortgage, if they still had one, would not get paid. If their home was already paid off, they still could not pay their taxes or utility bills.

Soon, they would have no place to live. They could not buy food, so their family would begin to go hungry. They could not travel unless they had cash, so they could not easily escape to some place else where the influence of the Antichrist would have less impact.

Then, more laws could be passed regarding businesses or individuals buying or selling to those who did not have this mark. They would be prohibited from doing business with anyone unregistered. Even if you had cash, officially stores would be reluctant or unable to sell you anything. The results would be far-reaching and catastrophic.

In this way, tremendous pressure, unbelievable pressure would be brought to bear on anyone who did not conform. Those who refused to worship would be subjected to the most extreme circumstances and difficulties.

Even more than this, those who continued to refuse to cooperate could be imprisoned and put to death. Eventually, it is very possible that governments would be required to round up the holdouts and turn them over for execution or execute them themselves.

Such a scenario might seem remote to you. Perhaps you cannot imagine your government being involved in such practices. Maybe you live in a country where you believe your rights are guaranteed. But take a moment to contemplate this: the coming days are going to be extremely trying. Your government will be under great duress. Without oil, the economy will collapse. Food will become scarce. Citizens will riot, demanding that the government do something.

In such difficult circumstances, leaders will be forced to take steps which they would never consider in a time of peace and safety. The worse the situation gets, the more world leaders will be willing to compromise to escape the consequences.

It is probable that in such conditions a sort of black market would suddenly appear. There will always be those who are ready and willing

to profit from the misfortune of others. So, profiteers and gougers would materialize out of the woodwork. These would be people who would buy for you what you need and resell it to you at an exorbitant price.

If you refused to receive the mark, but had various valuables in your home, you might survive for a while. Cash, gold coins, jewelry, antiques, tools, and other items of intrinsic value might be traded at a fraction of their true worth for food, gasoline and other things which you might need. Yet such trade would only last so long or take you so far.

Such circumstances would certainly try your faith. Your commitment to Jesus would be severely tested. If you found yourself in such a bind, what would you do? Are you ready and willing to sacrifice your life and even the lives of your family to remain faithful to Christ? Is your love for Him such that it would withstand such tremendous pressure? Have you settled in your heart that you are ready to suffer and even die, rather than deny Him?

No doubt, believers in countries where there is or has been severe persecution have dealt with these issues already. They have been forced to do so. But how about you? Where is your heart today?

There is no doubt that the Antichrist will make it as easy as possible for people to accept his way. He will certainly propagate many lies

to make his religion seem palatable. He may even insist that his way is somehow compatible with Christianity with only a few, slight adjustments. Not only will the pressure to conform be enormous, but the lie which the Antichrist puts forth will seem very attractive. It may seem to be a fairly innocuous, small thing to do to conform to his way. Remember, all of the devil's deceptive power will be thrown behind this new religion.

THE "HOLY" MICROCHIP

Many, many Christians have spoken to me about the possibility of a microchip being implanted under their skin. This they think will be the "mark" of the beast. They imagine when they make any financial transaction that this chip will be scanned and then the information transferred to a computer in the possession of the Beast or which might even be called "The Beast." Then, they suppose the Antichrist will be able to keep track of all their transactions. Please bear with me as we examine this idea together.

There is nothing in the Bible which indicates a microchip. There is simply no verse which demands or even points to this conclusion. This is merely modern fiction and imagination. The fact that bar codes have three sixes on them (if indeed they do) is not scriptural proof of any-

thing. So much of modern eschatology is based on nothing more than mere imagination.

Not only this, but there are many problems with the microchip idea. First, the logistics of the implementation of such a scheme are astoundingly complicated. Secondly, it would be enormously expensive to achieve.

In order to accomplish this, the Antichrist would have to manufacture billions of chips for everyone in the world. Then he would have to individually program each one of them to identify the wearer. Then he would have to surgically implant billions of these chips.

Next he would have to make and install special scanners to read these chips in every point of sale in the world, costing possibly trillions of dollars and involving millions of hours of work! If you stop and think about this sanely, this method is not practical.

No world ruler would invest so much time and money in this project. It simply is not necessary. There is no compelling reason for the coming Antichrist to set up such a scheme. It is impractical, expensive, and unnecessary. Also, we must remember that he will not have this power over the world for very many years. Therefore, it is a good bet that he will not do it.

The truth is that this method would not function in about half of the world today. In many places, if you would tell them that in order to make a purchase, they would have to

have their chip scanned at the store, that this information would be transmitted by telephone and then money would be deducted from their bank account, they might die laughing.

Their stores have no scanners. There are few, if any, telephones. If there were, many citizens have no bank account from which the money could be withdrawn. Such a system would be impossible for them. This situation is true for much of the world.

For example, there are places today where just a few people in a town have phones. These are cell phones. Others come from miles around and pay to use these few phones. There are entire cities of thousands of people in today's world with only one bank of telephones at one location to serve them.

Just a few years ago, it was reported that there were 600 million people in India who have no electricity. Many other countries of the world are in the same situation.

Many people are not familiar with other parts of the world. They think only in terms of where they live, which may be modern and convenient. But there is a large portion of the world where such things simply would not work.

To modernize all nations to the point where such transactions were feasible would take decades or even centuries, if it were possible at all. A few countries in the world today are not

only not developing, they are going backwards. In some places the infrastructure which once existed is falling apart.

In short, a microchip simply is not necessary. The Antichrist will have no need to track all your purchases as if he were your credit card company. There will be no necessity for you to be continually tracked anywhere. He will have no interest in your day-to-day activities.

All he will require is for you to show up once to try to buy one item without a mark. From then on, you won't be thinking about spending any more money. If you submit, well and good. If you don't, they won't need to track you. They will know where you are. You will probably either be in their custody or dead.

When the situation becomes very critical, whenever you try to buy or sell, whoever is responsible will check to see if you are qualified by examining your mark. This might work much like the clerk checking your driver's license to verify your signature. If you don't have a mark, then you might be carried away to another place to await another fate.

Huge computers also are not necessary to carry out this scheme. The Antichrist will not be like "big brother" watching your every move. He will have no desire to be leering into your living room, bedroom, or bathroom like the recent television program. He will have other things to do.

The only thing that interests him is if you have submitted to his worship and accepted his new religion. If so, you will have evidence to prove it. If not, then you will either convert or face the consequences. Trying to buy without a mark will only need to happen once. After that, there will be no need to track you or your purchases. Your fate will already be decided.

This mark or sign of your allegiance does not need to be a complicated affair. It need not require special electronics. Any sort of identifying mark might work. But it seems logical that something readily visible might serve the Antichrist's purposes the best.

The necessity for a mark in order to buy or sell is simply the easiest way to check people for their submission. For example, instead of going house to house, checking to see if everyone is practicing the correct religion, the authorities responsible can simply monitor the points of sale where people buy their goods. Then the clerks who are running the register would have to verify a person's mark before completing the sale. If someone does not have the mark, then they would summon the store security or some kind of officer to take care of the situation.

Also, a visible mark would work better in other situations. For example, officials could monitor public places such as malls or grocery stores to see if those entering and leaving were marked. Also, friends and neighbors could

much more easily tell if you had a mark or not if it were visible.

No doubt the Antichrist will have to have his minions in every country verifying compliance. Since many governments and even the populations might resist such efforts against believers, the Antichrist would be required to send some of his representatives to check on things. They would need to verify that no non-worshipper was getting away.

Fortunately for the Antichrist, many countries of the world have embraced a substantial population of Muslims who might gladly volunteer for these positions. They have immigrated in large numbers to many of the world's nations. Perhaps they would be grateful for the employment and the opportunity to spread their religion.

In any case, a plainly visible mark would be much faster and easier to show and to verify. I know that many, many people will argue with me about this microchip. It has been taught so much that it has become holy. To deny the microchip has almost become equal to denying Christ.

Nevertheless, it has not one verse to substantiate it. Also, it is not necessary. Think about this a minute. If you were in charge of a worldwide crackdown on believers, how would you do it? What would be the simplest, cheapest way? Technology is expensive and

difficult to implement. Simple marks or even documents could be very cheap.

If our Lord tarries for many decades or even centuries, perhaps the world will reach a point where the microchip idea will become feasible. This is not impossible. My point here is that it is not necessary or demanded by the scriptures.

Therefore, it is not a good idea to be focusing on it as a means to identify the Antichrist or his schemes. There are other ways – more convenient, less expensive, and easier ways – for the Antichrist to make his mark. Don't be caught looking in the wrong direction.

Furthermore, the Antichrist will rule ten nations in a part of the world that is less developed. He will not have the technology or the time to try to develop a universal microchip system. He will have little interest in where you go or what you do after work. He will not care about your personal habits. His one goal is to make converts of all inhabitants of the planet. How can he do this in the quickest, easiest way?

I do not insist that his system will be fool-proof or even that it will be universal. I would only care to point out that Christianity today has been taught many things about the last days which are composed largely of speculation and imagination and have very little, if any, biblical basis. Consequently, a great many believers are making a lot of commotion about things which will prove to be a waste of time and energy.

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

Interestingly, there are two words in the Greek language for “mark.” One of them is STIGMA. This word means, according to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*: “a tattooed mark” or “a mark burnt in, a brand.” This refers to some kind of physical mark which could be put on the skin of a person.

The other word translated “mark” is CHARAGMA. This word means, according to *Vine*: “a stamp” or “impress.” This word refers to the form which is left in hot wax after a seal or stamp has been pressed upon it. It is this Greek word from which we get our English word “character.”

The word found in Revelation 13:16,17 for the mark of the Beast in the Greek is CHARAGMA *not* STIGMA. Therefore, we can conclude from this that the mark of the Beast is not simply a physical tattoo or brand. It is something which is directly related to our mindset, the formation of our thinking or character.

To accept this mark, then, means that we have chosen to adapt our thinking to that of the Antichrist. Due to the pressure put upon us, We have modified our character to conform to the Beast. We have chosen to change our way of thinking to conform to his “image.” To accept the mark of the Beast is to accept his religion.

We don't really know what the "mark" of the Beast will be. But we can learn from this discussion that taking the mark will be intimately related to our character, our way of thinking. Consequently, it also means that it will change what we do.

In Revelation 14:1 we read about some people who have "...the Father's name written on their foreheads." It's not likely that these people have "Daddy God" or something like that, written literally on their foreheads. This verse undoubtedly speaks to us about the mindset of these people.

Here are some folks whose minds have been renewed (Rm 12:2). Their thought processes have been transformed to be in harmony with the ideas and attitudes of Christ. Their thoughts, opinions, and reasonings are controlled by the Holy Spirit. They have subjected their minds to the control of Jesus Christ and He is reigning over them.

The decision to take or not to take the mark of the Beast will be an intense battle. It will be a struggle for who will control and dominate the minds of men. The physical mark, if there is one, will only be the evidence that someone has decided to allow the image of the Antichrist – his religious programs and purposes – to be impressed upon his malleable mind.

Any believer who has not submitted his or her mind to the complete control of Jesus

Christ, will find themselves in an intense struggle. They will have to decide whether to let their natural impulses and physical needs dominate their decisions, or to let the Lord govern their thoughts and decisions.

You see, if your mind is now conformed to this world, if you are loving and pursuing all the things and pleasures of earth, suddenly someone is going to get in between you and what you think you need and want.

The Antichrist will, by gaining control of the financial system, also gain control of your access to your desires. In order to continue on with your lifestyle, you will have to go through him. To continue to buy and sell, you will have to conform yourself to his religion. Your mind and your character will have to take on the image of the Beast.

This will be an hour of intense spiritual battle with very high stakes. You see, in order to survive, many will be pressured right up to and including the point of death, to take this mark. If they have lived a life of self-serving and indulging their natural appetites, then this decision will be extremely difficult.

Those who love this world along with its things and pleasures will be in a bind. But those who have already learned to deny themselves and submit to Jesus, will be victorious.

8.

PERSECUTION

Perhaps you remember the scandalous “oil for food program” made for Saddam Hussein and administered by the U.N. Well, it could be that the Antichrist will initiate something similar. I call it the “oil for Christians program.”

He may say something like this to the nations: “You hand over those who will not worship and you will get your monthly quota of oil. If you don’t give them or their heads to me, you get no oil.”

This then would leave the government of each nation responsible for rounding up and handing over to death anyone who resisted this new faith. No doubt a large number of these would be Christians.

You see, the Antichrist will have no need to invade your country. He won’t have to send his armies to come and get you where you live. He will be able to simply pressure your government to do it for him. They then will have to use whatever means are at their disposal to do his

will so that they can get their oil and continue to function.

Naturally, the more developed the country, the better the officials will be at tracking you down and handing you over. The “first world” nations will have many sophisticated gadgets and techniques to do this job.

It may be that as part of this program, he could assign quotas to various governments. Adolph Hitler used this method. He would assign to each of the conquered areas under his control a quota of Jews to be rounded up. He would give the local governments a time limit in which to search out and hand over that number. No doubt, he had some informants or officials to give him an idea of what that quota should be. This system could work very well for the Antichrist.

RISING HATRED

At first it is probable that in countries where Christians are numerous, they would stiffly resist such action. They could become vocal and visible, marching and protesting against the Antichrist’s religion and programs, against making concessions and, of course, eventually against being traded for oil.

But, without petroleum, the economies of these countries would begin to suffer. The non-believers would soon begin to feel the impact.

When the lack of fuel began to touch their lives, i.e. their jobs, their prosperity and even the feeding of their family, they will begin to hate anyone who seems to be standing in their way. They too would begin to riot and protest. They would insist that their government do whatever was necessary to restore the status quo.

If there were some vocal Christians who are opposing the capitulation of their government, then these will be blamed for any shortages of oil. When the people of the world begin to suffer because a few Christians won't go along with the program, then the believers will become a target of wrath. Anyone who stands in the way of people continuing on with their usual, prosperous lifestyle will become expendable.

Naturally, this sentiment will take some time to grow. These things will not happen overnight. But, when the choice becomes between individual survival and those "religious fanatics" who are simply too stubborn to bend a little or give in, well...who knows?

Further, the prince of this world, Satan, will be putting all of his power behind this scheme. So, as the pressure grows due to a collapsing economy, unemployment, and even starvation the thoughts and feelings of many will change. They will turn against those who are keeping them from what they want and need. Their unholy, fallen nature will begin to reveal itself.

Soon, betrayal will become common. Folks will begin to report on others whom they suspect of not cooperating. After a while they will turn in their friends and even their family to the government.

We read: "*Then* they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And *then* many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another" (Mt 24:9,10). Also: "Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all men for my name's sake" (Mk 13:12, 13a).

During this time, anyone who is getting in the way of people receiving their oil (and therefore their survival and comfort) will be hated, persecuted and betrayed. They will be tortured and killed. The hatred toward God which many people of the world have hidden away within them will come out toward you.

If you are standing in the way of what they want and what they believe they need, they will kill you. Your friends will turn you in. Even other Christians will not be reliable.

This will be the hour of trial for many Christians. It is probable that millions will be killed. The Holy Spirit who is now restraining this flood of wickedness will be taken out of the way (II Thess 2:7). The protection from God

which we enjoy will also be much less. The Antichrist is "...granted [by God] to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (Rev 13:7). This will be our Lord's way of testing and purifying many believers who today are lukewarm and have little commitment to Him or His work. It will be the hour of decision, revealing whether we really love Jesus or not.

These will certainly be "perilous times." This will be a time for which the events in Nazi Germany and the Communist Soviet Union may seem like just a dress rehearsal. This will be a period of tremendous turmoil and confusion on a global scale. Many people will just not know which way to turn.

They will be under tremendous pressure. There will be pressure to conform, pressure to feed their families, pressure to follow what other Christians are doing (or not doing). These pressures will generate many conflicting thoughts, emotions, opinions, and directions. No doubt, others who are also in confusion will offer their insights and ideas as well.

It is impossible to predict or imagine all the different things which will happen. What the Antichrist will do, how people will react, how each different nation might try to implement his demands, all these things are far beyond our speculation at this time.

What has been written here is but a feeble attempt to give an impression of what those

times will be like. But we do know some things for sure. It will be a time of “great tribulation,” confusion and trouble. It will be a time of testing for all believers. All Christians will have to get in intimate touch with Jesus for themselves and learn to follow Him.

Please do not make the mistake of thinking that the word “tribulation” here refers to the judgments of God which He will pour out on the world. This is not the biblical meaning of the word. Instead, it refers to what will happen to believers.

Remember, we read that “...they will deliver YOU up to tribulation and kill YOU” (Mt 24:9). You see, “judgment” is for the unbelievers, but the word “tribulation” refers to what will happen to Christians through the actions of the Antichrist and the people of the world. You, if you are alive, will go through this tribulation.

FALSE PROPHETS, FALSE CHRISTS

Just at this critical time when everything is in turmoil and disorder, many individuals will rise up claiming to have a word from the Lord. They are called by Jesus “false prophets” (Mt 24:24). Incredibly, they will be performing “great signs and wonders” to prove that their messages are from God. It is possible that many of these will claim to be manifestations of ancient prophets or well-known men of God.

The false prophets' words and emphases may be different from one another, but they will all have one thing in common. They will be trying to promote themselves. They will be the ones ultimately gaining from their "revelations." It may be that they will garner prestige, followers, money, or some other thing. But their motives will not be the humble service of God and others. Instead, they will really be serving themselves.

Additionally, also at this crucial hour, false christs will proliferate. Due to the pressure on believers to find an answer to their dilemmas, the second coming of Jesus will seem to be the ultimate solution. So, many christs will appear in many different parts of the globe.

Rumors of their appearing will spread like wildfire. Where they have shown up and who they are will be a topic of much conversation in Christian circles. Many will waste their time and money flocking to these false messiahs in desperation, looking for help and direction.

We read: "Then [precisely during that time of trouble] if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, he is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as

the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt 24:23-27).

So we see that at this time there will be many conflicting voices. Many will be claiming to have or even to be the answer. How will Christians know what to do in such an hour? The answer is that we must cultivate an intimacy with Jesus today.

Don't wait until later. Don't put your confidence in some human leader to make your decisions for you. Every believer right now today must get to know his Savior personally and intimately. It is only by following His instructions that we will either survive what is coming or glorify Him in our death.

THE RAPTURE

No doubt reading through this book, many Christians are thinking: "But what about the rapture? All these horrors couldn't happen to Christians. They will already have been raptured by the time all these things take place. Therefore, we don't have to worry about them."

Well, God bless you my brother or sister, may it happen just as you say. But if it doesn't, then you may find yourself in a very difficult situation without having made any preparation.

Truthfully, the Bible is very specific about the timing of what is called the "rapture." There

is really no mystery. The word of God leaves us little room for doubt. The secret here has to do with a trumpet, a very specific trumpet called the "last trumpet." When this last trumpet sounds, "...the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Cor 15:52).

This very same trumpet is found again in I Thessalonians 4:16,17 where we read: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the *trumpet of God*. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

So this "last trumpet" is the signal for the rapture (I Cor 15:52). This is easy to understand. No last trumpet, no rapture. But when is this final trumpet? By definition, it must be: 1) the same as the seventh trumpet which sounds very near the end (Rev 10:7) or: 2) a later "last trumpet" which is not mentioned in the book of Revelation.

Supporting the idea that the "last" trumpet is after the tribulation we read: "Immediately *after* the tribulation of those days...he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Mt 24:29-31). In order for the word "last" to have any meaning, it cannot be before the other tribulation trumpets. It must be the "last" one.

Therefore, the rapture must come literally “after the tribulation” just as the scripture says.

Some Bible teachers have engaged in some rather fantastic theological gymnastics to try to counteract this obvious truth. Suddenly, for them, the “elect” mentioned above are not believers any more as they are in other parts of the New Testament (Mt 24:24; Lk 18:7; Rm 8:33; Col 3:12; Tit 1:1; I Pet 1:2) but Jews – an interpretation which has no supporting verses.

Next, this trumpet becomes merely part of some feast of Israel and is disassociated from the other trumpets of the gospels and Revelation, thus annulling the other “trumpet” scriptures which apply. These arguments are tricky and convoluted. Needless to say, they will only convince those who want to be convinced.

One major argument some teachers use to dispute the possibility of Christians experiencing the tribulation goes something like this. “During the tribulation period, God pours out His wrath. But He would never pour out His wrath upon His own children.”

Well, let us think about this for a minute. Couldn't God judge the unrighteous and still protect His own people while He is doing it, even if they were still on the earth?

When God's judgments were executed on the land of Egypt, God protected His people who lived there from some of the plagues (Ex

8:22). Before the opening of the seventh seal, when the judgments of God begin to fall heavily on the earth, some servants of God are sealed on their foreheads (Rev 7:3). It is obvious from the context that they are sealed so that the judgments which come upon the others do not fall upon them.

Whether these servants are only Jews or symbolic of Christians does not really matter. The fact is that God is able to and is protecting His people in the middle of His judgments. Therefore, it is not necessary for Him to whisk His children off the earth before His judgments come.

As a young Christian I remember watching a film about the end times. It was a movie about the tribulation. In the beginning of the movie, before the real action started, a Bible teacher came on the screen to explain that no Christians would be in the tribulation because God would not allow His children to suffer.

Then they went on to show the film which was about some of God's children suffering through the tribulation.

The only difference between those who suffered and those who didn't was that the suffering ones were unlucky enough to have received Christ *after* the rapture. Evidently, someone thought that God will love those children less and so allow them to suffer what the others did not.

This kind of thinking is completely illogical. For example, it is not possible for any believer to suffer in the future more than many Christians have already suffered at the hands of their enemies.

Countless believers have been tortured in every conceivable manner from the early church days until now. God allowed them to suffer and suffer intensely. Yet you can be assured that God did love these people. Please don't be fooled by those who are preaching "peace and safety" (I Thess 5:3).

It is my impression that many Christians do not really want to hear this message. They don't want to be told anything which might disrupt their prosperous, easy lives. They would like to shut their eyes and their ears so that nothing could enter in which might challenge them to change their relationship with the Lord, their lifestyle, or their place of residence.

What most are concerned about is just peace and safety. Anything which disrupts this is rejected and discarded. Yet, it is precisely at a time of seeming peace and safety that all these things will begin to take place. Furthermore, they will take place suddenly (I Thess 5:3). If we are forewarned, then we also can be ready. This readiness might involve both spiritual and physical preparation.

9.

IMPORTANT SIGNS

We have been speaking about the Antichrist and his rise to power. But what are the signs for which we should look? How can we identify such a person when he arrives on the world scene? One of the main clues is that this man takes over three countries. When the “little horn” arises, three of the other ten horns fall before him (Dan 7:8).

Now we know clearly from what part of the world the Antichrist will arise. We have also been shown where his ten nations will be. So what we have to look for is some relatively minor individual rising up to seize power in three nations of this region. This is a very important sign. Keep your eyes out for it!

Next we would expect to see seven other countries joining with him to form an alliance to make a total of ten. These countries will proba-

bly include Libya and Ethiopia. We read: "...the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels" (Dan 11:43).

These ten nations will probably include a good part of the oil producing regions of that area of the world. These would be Muslim nations and it is likely that some of them will have nuclear capabilities. When you see these things come together, it is a sure sign that the end is upon us.

We should expect this ten nation confederacy to be somewhat shaky. As has been stated, although all these countries will probably be Muslim, not all Muslims agree with one another. In fact, some hate the others and even have fought wars against them. There are many different Islamic sects and factions. These would include the Shiites and the Sunnis.

While it seems that the Antichrist will be able, through his popularity and Satanic anointing, to unite these countries and groups, it will be an uneasy alliance.

We read: "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, *the kingdom shall be divided*; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so *the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile*. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not

adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay" (Dan 2:41-43).

This section which mentions mingling with the "seed of men" could refer to the fact that although ten nations will ultimately join together under the Antichrist's rule, they will not really like each other. So we see that, even though the Antichrist succeeds in bringing together ten nations and eventually subduing the world, his kingdom will be fragile and not very unified.

Another part of the picture for which we should watch is that when the Antichrist joins together his ten nations, he will not do this by force. He will "...come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue" (Dan 11:21). Somehow, he will be able to assume control over them without a fight.

Once again, this future world event should be an important signal for us. This is an occurrence for which we should watch carefully. The joining together ten of Middle East nations by one individual without a military confrontation is a crucial sign. When the Antichrist finally comes to power, we should immediately put into action any plans which we feel God has given us if we have not already done so.

WARS WITH EGYPT

Still another identifying event for which we should look is that, after taking over the ten

nation confederacy, the Antichrist will have conflicts or wars with Egypt. Egypt will not join in with the Antichrist. She will not be part of the ten nations. In fact, it seems that Egypt attacks the Antichrist and is defeated.

We read: "At the time of the end the king of the South [Egypt] shall attack him; and the king of the North [Antichrist] shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through" (Dan 11:40).

It may be that the Antichrist's victory over Egypt will involve nuclear weapons. This conjecture is based upon the fact that parts of Egypt will be uninhabited for 40 years after this time. This could be the result of nuclear fallout and contamination.

In Ezekiel we read: "And the land of Egypt shall become desolate and waste...and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Ethiopia. Neither foot of man shall pass through it nor foot of beast pass through it, and it shall be *uninhabited forty years*" (Ezek 29:9-11).

Not only does the Antichrist fight a war with Egypt at the end, but it seems that he has some previous conflicts with Egypt. It should be remembered that Egypt today is one of the nations of the Arab world still opposing the radical Muslim elements. This is not to say that

they are not Muslim, but that they are standing against the more radical elements.

Also, Egypt has cracked down on and even persecuted some of the participants in the recent radical Muslim “revival.” She has imprisoned and/or expelled many of the leaders involved. So, it is very easy to believe that the Antichrist could try to punish Egypt for these positions and actions. Daniel 11:25-27 describes some events surrounding this previous war if you are interested.

Returning from his first defeat of Egypt, the Antichrist also appears to attack Israel. He is puffed up by his conquest and tries to defeat the Jews as well (Dan 11:28). Perhaps it is after this conflict that he will make some kind of agreement with Israel which he later breaks (Dan 9:27).

Another interesting fact is that on still another expedition against Egypt, “...ships from ‘Kittim’ (KJV) [this word means western lands] shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant” (Dan 11:30). These ships could be from almost anywhere “west” of the Middle East, which could include the U.S. or parts of Europe.

The attack on the Antichrist by ships from the west, along with the fact that he fights wars with Egypt, indicate that his government is not as “one world” as many have thought. His direct rule is over only ten nations. The rest of

the world will cooperate with him only by being forced into subjugation.

Even so, his domination of the world is not total. Returning from his final war with Egypt which is "at the time of the end," "...news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with a great fury to destroy and annihilate many" (Dan 11:44).

One explanation for this passage could be that Russia, because she produces enough oil to meet her needs, will not be completely subject to the Antichrist. Also, Russia has plenty of nuclear weapons and would not be easily cowed into submission to any Middle Eastern figure.

It is possible that Russia will become troubled by the situation and begin threatening some kind of action. This could be the "news from the east and north." Of course from this distance, we cannot know exactly what will occur. This is only being mentioned to show that the Antichrist is not the absolute ruler of the entire world. He too will have his troubles.

SITS IN THE TEMPLE AS GOD

At one point, it appears that the Antichrist enters the Jewish temple and proclaims himself God. In II Thessalonians 2:4 we read that he "...sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

This verse has been the subject of much speculation. At this writing, there is no Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Since there is no temple, people have created many fantastic interpretations to explain the meaning of this verse.

However, it seems quite possible that before the occurrence of the end-times scenarios which we have been discussing, the nation of Israel will build a temple.

Where this temple would be built and how this might work is impossible to predict. The problem of having a Muslim shrine at what seems to be the site of the ancient temple appears insurmountable. However, God has His own means and ways. If this is His will, it will come to pass.

It is very possible for this scripture to have a literal fulfillment. The actual construction of a temple could take place very quickly. This would be especially true if materials are already being stockpiled as so many Christian rumors insist.

THE END OF THE ANTICHRIST

Eventually, the Antichrist will make a final effort to wipe Israel off the map. To do this, it seems that he will enlist the aid of many different nations. Perhaps he persuades them that Israel is really the cause of all the trouble over oil. If only they were out of the way, the "black

gold” could flow freely again. So he convinces many countries, possibly including China and India, to join him in attacking Israel.

He is helped in recruiting these other armies by three evil spirits “...like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Rev 16:13,14).

After crossing the Euphrates river, which will be dried up especially for this event (Rev 16:12), this tremendous army of several millions arrives at a place called Megiddo. It is a place called Armageddon in the New Testament. This seems to be a large flat area near some hills upon one of which stands the ruins of a city called Megiddo.

It is a place also called “the winepress of the wrath of God” (Rev 14:19). It is here that God will execute his judgment against those who have come to attack Israel. Probably this very place was prepared by God for this event when He made the world (Mt 21:33).

When this enormous army arrives there, we can imagine they are tired, thirsty, and just longing to set their up tents and rest a little. We don't know how long they are camped there, but sometime after their arrival it begins to rain.

Much to their disgust, they have to live in mud and water.

But the situation gets worse and worse. The rain becomes stronger. Soon it begins to hail. The lightning is terrible and frightening. It almost seems as if it runs along the ground. Finally, the size of the hail increases until each hailstone weighs about 100-200 pounds (Rev 16:21).

It is with these hailstones that Jesus “treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev 19:15). The “grapes” in this case are human beings who are squashed by the hailstones until the blood runs out in such great quantities that it reaches the incredible depth of “the horses’ bridles” and flows for a great distance (Rev 14:20).

The Antichrist himself and the false prophet are captured alive. Then they are thrown into the lake of fire which God has prepared for the devil and his angels (Rev 19:20, Mt 25:41).

So the Beast will end his reign ignominiously, being defeated and judged at the coming of Christ. His armies are destroyed and he is finished. All his proud boasting against the Lord Jesus is ended. His rebellion is over. His error regarding who is really the God of the universe has been exposed as a great lie. Those who sided with him will also be ashamed and punished.

10.

WORTHY TO ESCAPE

I believe it would be a mistake to think that there will be no places of refuge or safety to which believers can flee before or during the tribulation. It would be wrong to think that there is nothing which we can do, now or in the future, to survive what is coming. Obviously, some believers do make it through to the end of this tribulation period.

Speaking about the coming rapture, Paul writes about "...we who are alive and remain" (I Thess 4:15) thus indicating that at Jesus' coming there are still living believers. The Antichrist, in spite of his best efforts, will not get everyone.

Also along these lines, in Revelation 12, we read about a holy woman who gives birth to the man-child. The dragon persecutes this end-times woman. He spews "water" like a flood out of his mouth (vs 15) trying to destroy her.

But the earth “helped the woman...and swallowed up the flood” (vs 16).

This may mean that the Antichrist puts a great effort into extinguishing the church. He will give it his best shot. But the earth is so big that the Antichrist just cannot reach into all the corners and kill everyone. His greatest efforts are not enough to span the globe. The sheer size of the earth “swallows up” his attempts. He has too many other issues to deal with and too many other things on his mind.

Consequently, it may be realistic to conclude that there are some countries or places on the earth where Christians will be relatively safe. There may exist places where the power and influence of the Antichrist will be less. I am not talking here about some kind of total immunity from persecution, but about places which will be impacted less by the agenda of the Antichrist.

According to the Bible, there must exist “a place prepared by God” to which this woman is able to flee (vs 6). This place, singular in the scriptures, could in practice be many different places around the world. Or, it could be a continent or some larger area which includes many different countries. (The “wings of a great eagle” in verse 14 could possibly refer to airplanes.)

Logically, these localities would be in countries which are energy self-sufficient. They

would be places that do not depend on foreign oil. They would either produce enough of their own oil or have other alternatives to use for fuel. They might be areas with large Christian populations which would resist pressure to kill believers and Jews. They would be remote, that is, isolated from other parts of the world.

They would probably be countries which are not considered to be “key” in the global economies. It would be helpful if they had monetary and/or banking systems which are not completely dependent on the rest of the world. Also, these countries would likely be less developed. Such could be the places (or the “place”) which today are (is) being prepared by God to shelter some of His own from what is coming.

Such nations or areas of safety would probably have plenty of local agriculture. They might have a system of food production and distribution which does not rely heavily on transportation over long distances. They would likely generate their own electricity. In short, they would be places which are less dependent on the rest of the world for their day-to-day living. These would be good places to which to flee.

One part of the world which historically has been an area of refuge is Central and South America. Some of these nations produce oil. Many grow their own food and manufacture a large part of other necessary goods. This region

is not central to the world economy and is somewhat isolated in terms of distance. Politically and militarily, it is not pivotal to the present world order. I certainly don't mean to offend the citizens of these countries by saying this. It is only that this may be a good place to consider for believers who must flee.

Interestingly, the location of relative safety mentioned in Revelation, is a place "prepared by God." This means that He has arranged everything in terms of geographic position, oil self-sufficiency, food production, etc. to work to protect His people who flee there.

The overall strategy here is not something that a man or a group of men has planned out. This will not be a result of some new Christian movement. Rather it is some place which God has furnished. It is not the result of human preparation such as hoarding of food, or buying land but somewhere which our Lord has arranged.

I believe it extremely unwise to think of anywhere in the United States as a place of refuge. It is already the focus of hatred for the Middle Eastern nations. According to the reasoning in the previous book of this series entitled *Babylon*, it will probably be attacked by nuclear weapons and largely destroyed.

The aftermath of such an attack would produce death by fallout, famine, and widespread lawlessness and confusion. This country would

not be safe. It could not be thought of as a "place prepared by God."

Furthermore, it is very possible that after such a nuclear attack, other nations which are hungry for land could invade the U.S. Some, such as China, might not even give much consideration to the safety of their troops in regard to residual radiation, but merely be motivated by the thought of grabbing a huge chunk of arable land. China and others are very short on agricultural areas and could decide that they should take advantage of the situation.

It might sound absurd to you today, but it is very possible that with the U.S. brought to her knees, various other countries, including Mexico, Russia, China and others would send troops to gobble up land and/or to "restore order."

Think about it. If some catastrophe like this happened to another country, would the U.S. send troops to "help out" or "restore order?" Certainly they would. Therefore, other nations will do so also. Many surviving Americans might consider these troops to be "invaders."

Such a situation would provoke even more confusion and probably guerrilla warfare. This would be especially true if these other nations were under the influence of the Antichrist and committed to helping him carry out his agenda of exterminating believers. Certainly this would not be a place of refuge "prepared by God."

WHAT MANNER OF PEOPLE?

What we have been discussing is both sobering and somewhat frightening. Here in this book we have a word of warning. We see that our time is short. Therefore, "...what manner of persons ought [we] to be in holy conduct and godliness?" (II Pet 3:11). Since our Lord is going to return to this earth, very probably in "this generation" how should this knowledge affect our living?

I believe it would be valuable for all of us to take a moment and consider the following questions. What are our priorities? What are our goals? What are we pursuing with our time, energy, and money? How are we using the gifts which God has given us?

Are we, as faithful servants, investing in a way which will please our Master when He comes? Are we building His kingdom? Are we serving His body? Are our lives a testimony of humble purity and love? Or are we mainly serving ourselves and pursuing our own interests while putting seeking and serving God in second place in our lives?

If we cannot honestly say that God is our number one priority, then it is time to repent – His kingdom is at hand. Very shortly, our faith and our commitment to Him and His people is going to be tested, severely tested. This test will

be based on our love for God and our love for one another. It will show whether or not we are willing to die for Him and/or for other believers, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Will we deny Jesus and betray our brothers and sisters or will we be faithful even unto death? Will we go along with the Antichrist program to preserve our present lifestyle? Will we turn in others to save our own skin? Will we be willing to suffer and even die?

It will be much better for you if you settle these issues in your heart today. This writer is convinced that what the future holds will not be pleasant or easy. Perhaps we have just a few more years of relative peace to get our hearts right with God, to do His will and to accomplish the purposes for which He created us.

There is absolutely no time to waste! Perhaps we have squandered some of God's precious time already. Possibly we have become "weary while doing good" (Gal 6:9), being discouraged by the apathy of others, lack of "success," or the difficulties which we have encountered.

God will certainly forgive us for what is past, yet the future is before us. Definitely, it is time to: "...strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed" (Heb 12:12,13).

One thing to do immediately is to stop our involvement with anything and everything we know that is not God's will. No one will have to tell you what this is. You, no doubt, already know in your heart what it is that you have in your life which doesn't please Him. You know what it is that will make you ashamed if He were to come today. As you repent of these things, you will find His forgiveness.

The next thing to do is recommit your life to Him. Firmly decide and then declare to Him that you will dedicate the rest of your life to Him and to doing His will. It is not yet too late. While it is still called "today" (Heb 3:7) do what you know you should to renew your relationship with Him and begin from today onward to do His will.

Today, there is still time. There is time to serve Jesus by laying down our lives to serve others in His name. There is still enough daylight to work the works of God (Jn 9:4). Take full advantage of it! When the persecution starts, it will be very difficult to travel, preach, teach, and evangelize. The work of the Lord will be complicated by many barriers and difficulties. Wars and turmoil will make it very tough to complete what God has given you to do.

So, get going now! Use the time which is still available to us and make the most out of it! Begin today to lay aside those things which have been hindering you from doing the work

of the Lord that He has called you to do. Don't put it off any longer. We should be "redeeming the time because the days are [and will become even more] evil" (Eph 5:16).

WE SHOULD NOT WALK IN DARKNESS

It is not God's will for His children to be in darkness. Paul teaches us that "...you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief" (I Thess 5:4). Therefore, believers who are intimate with Jesus will see what is coming. He will show it to us. It should be no surprise to any believer.

God's children should not be in a position of being weighed down with the "cares of this life," and then have that day "...come upon [them] unexpectedly" (Lk 21:34). Rather, walking in intimacy with Him, we should be keenly aware of the signs of the times which are unfolding before us (Mt 16:3). As we understand the times, we can then adjust our life to more perfectly align with the will of God in these last days. Walking in intimacy with Him, we can be ready for what is coming.

The events which are coming upon this earth should not be a discouragement for us but an encouragement. Jesus, after teaching His disciples about the signs of the times and the coming end of the age says: "Now when you see these things begin to happen, look up and lift

up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Lk 21:28).

These things should be an encouragement for us to know that our life of struggle and travail, our labor, our frustrations, and our pains are soon to end. So, just as a long-distance runner sees the finish line and so increases his pace to finish strongly, so we too have the opportunity to see the end coming and make a last push toward the goal.

Naturally, no one wants to suffer. It is simply our human tendency to want to avoid any pain and difficulty if we can. Our heavenly Father does not like to see His children suffer either. Yet, the "perilous times" which are coming upon the earth will serve two purposes for God.

One purpose for sending His judgments upon the ungodly is that this may help some of them turn to Him because of their sufferings. A proof that His love still exists for the ungodly is that in the middle of His judgments upon the earth, He will send an angel to preach the gospel from the midst of heaven (Rev 14:6).

The second purpose is to purify His own children by allowing them to suffer persecution. It is sad but true that the church of our day is not perfect. She is not "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph 5:27). In fact, the situation is honestly lamentable. The more you look, the more problems you can see. The number of believers

involved in selfishness and sin is beyond count. So, God will use the coming time of trial to test, refine, and purify His sons and daughters. It will be a time of trial which will benefit those believers who turn their hearts back to God in the midst of it. Through the furnace of affliction, believers will be purified during the tribulation period.

Those who did not seek God before this time will have an opportunity to do so. Any believers who did not take advantage of their time to become ever more like Jesus will need a little heat and pressure to refine them to perfection.

The coming tribulation period will be one of God's ways to accomplish His purposes in His people. He will use all these things for our good and to further His eternal plan as we turn to Him in the hours of trial. Please remember again that the word "tribulation" in the New Testament does not refer to God's judgments on the world, but to what the Antichrist will do to believers and Jews.

WORTHY TO ESCAPE

But it may be that this intense purification will not be the same for all Christians. Depending upon where believers live and what their relationship with Jesus is, the intensity of this persecution may vary. It is possible that for

some there may even be a way of escape. We find a hint of this in the gospel of Luke where we read: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Lk 21:36). This "escape" could be effected in several different ways.

It seems as if there are a few whose lives are pleasing to God who will not need the coming testing and refinement. Some are already living righteously. Their lives are already purified and ready. Therefore, God will not need to allow them to go through the time of trial. If you are ready to meet the bridegroom, having your robes spotless and white, then perhaps no further fiery trials and testings are necessary.

One verse which supports this idea is found in Revelation 3:10. Here Jesus says to some faithful believers: "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."

So we see that one good way to avoid the coming persecution and tribulation period is to allow God to purify your life today. If God considers that you are ripe – that your life is wholly pleasing to Him – you have His promise that He will protect you from what is coming. He will "keep you from the hour of trial."

Does this mean that there will be a partial rapture before the tribulation? I cannot say. However, such a “rapture” is not really necessary to fulfill this verse. It seems very clear that God will find a way to remove and/or protect His faithful followers from danger. How He will do this is not explained.

One possibility is that it could be through death. Although many fear death and look upon it negatively, this is not God’s viewpoint. We read: “The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil [that is to come KJV]” (Is 57:1). You see, God can and will arrange to take some of His children home before the future events become intense.

There is also another possibility. It could be that some of the righteous will have the foresight and wisdom to flee to that “place” of refuge which God has prepared before things get really bad. This is the “place” which we have spoken about before. It is somewhere God is setting up for this very purpose.

One translation of Luke 21:36 cited above, hints at such a possibility. Instead of being “counted worthy” to escape, some ancient biblical texts read: “may have strength to escape.” This translation hints at the prospect that some will have the spiritual foresight and divine guidance to get themselves out of harm’s way.

This understanding would also coincide with the verses in Proverbs which read: "A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished" (Pr 22:3; 27:12). These passages reveal the possibility of God guiding His servants in the last days to take steps which would protect themselves and their families from the worst of the persecution which is coming. This would show that person to be "prudent."

However, God's ways are always far above ours and it is difficult to imagine how He might lead His children. It is quite possible that He might use all of the above means (along with others which we have never imagined) to protect those who love Him supremely from the evil days ahead.

This book has not been intended as a complete dissertation on end-times prophecy. Our object here was to look closely at the Antichrist, the events leading up to his arising and the things which could take place afterward.

Knowing what is coming will aid us all in looking in the right direction so that we will not be blind-sided by the future. Walking in the light of God, we can see how things are unfolding and then take any necessary steps of preparation which He might show us. May God add His anointing and blessing to you as you meditate on these things.

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