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Who is the Antichrist?

...the seven chapter solution

Bob Faulkner

Who is the Antichrist?

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DEDICATION

This book is written to honor the Lord Jesus Christ and His prophets and apostles who spoke Truth to us through the centuries. I am also grateful to those who picked up the message in our own day, and in my early years passed it on to me. I offer to you now the things I have learned from them.

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INTRODUCTION

Who is he? Is he alive today? How will we recognize him? Won't Jesus come first?

The subject at hand is not exactly new for me. Those who have followed my works online have seen full commentaries on the book of Revelation and Daniel, plus several other smaller works about "last things." It's a topic that won't go away. And why should it? Our life is about eternity, and we are of course curious about the passageway to that place.

Please join me now on this search for deeper understanding of what God has told us in His Word about the man of sin.

"Who cares?" is surely a response to my title on some Christian fronts. My answer is that the Holy Spirit cares. Through Daniel, John, Paul, and the very Son of God, He has given us an answer to the question asked by some of the first disciples. Do you remember the incident? It is recorded in Matthew 24:3. They wanted to know specifically when Jesus would return to them, and what would be the sign of that coming. Jesus gave them a very specific answer. But we have been locked in a traditional interpretation for so long that we are afraid to venture out and listen to what He *really* said. His response was clear and understandable. And knowing that response is the first step in knowing the "who" behind the "what" that is coming.

We'll talk about all that later. My point here is to respond to the somewhat lazy attitude of many western Christians to the Word of God. Some of it comes from teachings disseminated by those opposed to the literal meanings of Scripture. For them, antichrist is

a force, or a church system, and the question that I raise is preposterous. They believe that narrowing everything down to one man in one short period of time is not an option. But in the end, Scripture reveals such a man and his personal demise in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20). Empires and church systems are not normally thrown into perdition all at once. But men are.

I am not yet quite as old as was Daniel, who was physically overwhelmed when he received the messages we will examine. But even at my age, dealing with the revelations he saw (and we need no new ones, thank you!) is a bit draining. The implications raised by the facts I have discovered are mind-consuming as well as time-consuming. The pictures conjured up because of the staggering truths of our future tend to crowd out lesser thoughts. And this too is an answer to those who would still say, Who cares?

I care, for one. The Spirit told us all in Revelation 13:18, "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast..." and in Matthew 24:15, "...whoever reads, let him understand." Wisdom, knowledge, understanding, are not forbidden by Scripture, especially knowledge of His Holy Word. Only a love-less proclamation of that knowledge or an attempt to bring pride and glory to self because of that wisdom are condemned in the Word (1 Corinthians 13).

Would so many chapters be devoted to the end-time theme if God meant His people to remain blind and ignorant? No, let's give to the study of every detail of the Word the same time and energy we might otherwise spend on true vanities, such as sports activities, the media in general, and all else the world has to offer for our distraction. Those who say "Who cares?" need to be asked what their own priorities are.

We've all heard it said, "I'm looking for the Christ, not the antichrist!" But, pre-tribulation message notwithstanding, the apostle Paul adamantly affirms that the day of Christ's revelation will *not* precede the day of the antichrist's. Though some may be convinced that somewhere hidden in Paul's words is the secret knowledge Paul had that Jesus would be stealthily snatching away believers seven years *before* this revelation, the Scripture is truly silent about such a thing. But even if it were so, can it do harm for us to be diligently searching the Scriptures so that we know when our visitation from above is drawing near? What could possibly be a more important way to spend our free time than in digging into God's Word and sharing our findings with those around us?

If antichrist is coming, will it not be good to know where He will arise, and where not? What political situation must be in place before he takes power? A little of his background?

In the pages to follow, I have tried to exercise a slavish obedience to the text as it is written, with no apologies. It is the doctoring of texts, the smoothing of them for rational moderns (now called post-moderns, I am told. No matter, it's the same unbelief) that eventually waters them down altogether and causes seekers to go away empty.

What if the texts mean exactly what they say? For example, what if both Daniel and Matthew saw "the abomination of desolation" happening in the end of time? If we could prove that, would we be looking elsewhere for fulfillment? Following both the writing of Daniel's prophecy, and the words of Jesus in Matthew 24, something happened in history that Bible scholars mistook as the fulfillment of the prophecy. Today nearly every commentary one reads on these two passages will attest that Daniel's "abomination"

was fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes, and that Jesus' prediction was fulfilled by the Roman general Titus.

Case closed.

But in both cases, the Enemy distracted us from the truth and from the real fulfillment, still in our future. We were swayed by "history". This has happened many times since. People see a rising candidate for "Babylon" or "antichrist" and they begin to rework Scripture to make it all fit. And of course it never does, though there are always compelling reasons to believe the new theory. Hitler, Nero, Franco, Caesar, the Pope, Rome in general, and tons more have been lifted up as possibilities by persons who failed to read the text as it is written.

What if the Spirit was forever giving clues which true searchers would find as they attempted to solve the mysteries of the ages? What if the pictures painted in Scripture were obvious for the one pursuing Light? What if the Bible is enough after all and the only reason we "need" extra-Biblical facts is for confirmation? Some day there may be many apologies to Jesus for having overlooked the facts He so laboriously presented through at least four men, one of them Himself!

Let us agree here that our method will be to go to the Word first, not history, news, or personality. What saith the Word? That is all that matters! And it is the Word for which we will be held accountable! May God protect us from sharing or receiving anything that is not directly deducible from one of the sixty-six books of the Bible.

Actually this task will be much easier than combing through all of the Bible's books. We'll be able to find the entire truth of this antichrist matter in only four of the sixty-six: Matthew, Daniel,

Revelation, and II Thessalonians. Better still, of these four books, seven *chapters* carry the entire message. Fifty plus *verses* will tell it all! We'll meander around in a few other places, but the drama unfolds in these few places. The trick will be to keep our eyes open and travel very slowly through this turf.

A little over fifty verses, taken as they are, un-edited, with no desire to please any man, church, or dogmatic system, and no worry about a publisher's financial concerns... oh my! There is power! There is truth!

Here is the plan. Let's go to Jesus first, in Matthew (with Luke as a back-up) and listen in on his response to the question posited above by the disciples: When is the end? When will You come? Now, we are to be faithful and productive whatever the answer is to their question, but it is still a fair question, and Jesus gives a very precise answer. In the process, He answers the question posed on the cover of this book.

Jesus leads His hearers to Daniel. Following this lead we will study in detail the definitions of the sign Jesus gives in Matthew 24. By the time we have drunk in Daniel's visions in chapters 8-12, our mind will be reeling. With Daniel we will be overwhelmed with the truth before us.

This truth will then be corroborated for us by similar visions given to the apostle John in his Revelation, specifically chapters 13 and 17. We will see that we are not dealing with some "Old Testament truth," but that the same Spirit spoke to both men a complementary message. Daniel and John are one in their proclamation of end-time truth.

Our final expert will be none other than the apostle Paul, obviously a student of Daniel, but also a man who by the Holy Ghost

surpassed Daniel and added to the revelation as only a Spirit-filled apostle is allowed to do. We don't often think of Paul as a "prophet" but we forget that he was caught up to Heaven (II Corinthians 12) and offered an incredible array of revelations, most of which he was not permitted to share with us. He has very important information to add to the antichrist doctrine. He warned his first-century flock about the coming man of sin. How much more should we be heeding the warning?

What will be the sign of Jesus' coming? When will be the end and the beginning of the end? And what man, before the coming of Jesus, will be at the center of it all?

1. JESUS AND THE "SIGN" OF MATTHEW 24 (LUKE 21)

Let me say it as directly as I can. We have not been told the whole truth about Matthew 24. Scholars have seen historical facts and reached what they considered to be obvious conclusions. But facts cannot be allowed to confuse truth. It was facts that blinded the Israelites as they approached the Promised Land. Ten spies, you recall (Numbers 13) saw one set of "facts", that the giants were real and would eat them up! Two spies saw facts that differed, through eyes of faith, on the same trip. We must read the Scriptures with eyes like the faithful spies, ever believing God is able to do even the most spectacular things. The truth of Matthew 24 can only sink in if every word of it is allowed to hit us full force, attached to our faith. Let "history" wait. Let men's theories wait. Let us read it as it is! If you have ever read the conclusions of men about Matthew 24, and went away a bit unsatisfied, the reason is that you were made to understand rather than to believe. Many scholars feel it is their calling to explain away texts that are "too hard". They do not deserve a following.

To the text.

Jesus pronounced an amazing statement of doom in Matthew 24:2. He claimed that everything in the beautiful temple site around them would be reduced to rubble! *Not one stone would be left upon another.* The common people must have been a bit annoyed. The religious leaders would use this gloom and doom talk against Him later. But the disciples were given grace to come to Him privately and ask merely when it would all take place.

The Herodian Temple of Jesus' day had taken decades to complete. Some say it was still under construction during the life of Jesus. It was an awesome structure, and as the text implies, was made of several buildings, not just a place of worship. There were a number of separate courts for a number of separate groups of people. There were porches, and stairways leading everywhere, rooms like our storefronts to be used for shops. There was even attached to this structure an *entire fortress* to be used by the Roman Governor when he was in town. And there were huge walls surrounding the entire site, one of which still stands...

Were you listening? I just said *one of those walls still stands*. In plain sight to all of us humans for 20 centuries has been a wall from the days of Herod's Jerusalem that was *not* destroyed when the Romans changed the course of Israel's history in the year 70 A.D. In fact, Rome, it is said, left it there to remind the Jews of what they, the Romans, had accomplished in their war of near annihilation. Now, the Jews like to point out that the standing wall was a sign of God resisting the Romans and letting Israel know that His bond with them was unbroken. Whether your viewpoint is Roman or Jewish, the text before us is in trouble.

Again, Jesus: "Assuredly I say to you, *not one stone* shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down (Matthew 24:2)."

We are either off to a bad start here or we have stumbled onto something. From the beginning of our search for truth we are being asked to rearrange thinking that has settled in since scholars have convinced us not to look further than their findings. Their findings are that Jesus' words about the coming destruction were fulfilled in A.D. 70. But they have trouble explaining the sequence of the wording that follows in this chapter. And for sure they cannot deal with a certain "western wall" (sometimes called the wailing wall by

those less respectful of Israelite feelings) that nullifies the literal acceptance of Jesus' words.

Jesus' words stirred the disciples into thoughts to which they had not often been drawn. All of this destroyed? How could that be? Would it mean the end of the world? The return of the Master? For, though they still had not fully believed He would die and rise again, as witnessed by the difficulty Jesus had in convincing them of such even after He was raised (Luke 24 *et al*), they had at least picked up the significance of His "long journey" parables (*e.g.* Matthew 21:33 ff). Somehow Jesus was going to leave them for awhile, then return. That much they knew.

Their question (24:3) showed they were concerned about end time matters. Jesus did not rebuke them for it, but went into significant detail explaining what is surely to come. They asked very clear questions, and Jesus answered them very clearly. Speculation has arisen as to whether they were asking several questions or one question with several parts. But the effect is the same, and Jesus' answer is the same. He tells them when *not* to look for Him, but also when to know that His coming, and Jerusalem's ultimate fall, and the end of the world, are all very near.

The Holy Spirit has seen to it that this discourse was recorded three times, to be sure we would not be unprepared when it was the time for its fulfillment. Let none of us say that these things don't matter. They do! And we *can know* when these things will be. We *can know* the very real sign that will point to the end of all things. We can therefore know also *who will be ruling* the earth when it is about to go under.

First, Jesus tells us what is *not* the sign of His coming, and the end of the age (vs. 4-14). Heed the list well, for every so often in

your life and mine, someone is going to mention one or more of these signs to you, and glibly add: "Jesus must be coming soon!"

No, these are the negatives. "See that you are *not* troubled...*the end is not yet*," (v.6) and "All these are the *beginning* of sorrow," (v. 8). The beginning is not the end.

Here is the list of things that *prove* nothing, but that *will happen* down through the years:

- Many will come saying they are Christ.
- There will be actual wars.
- There will be talk about a war starting.
- Nations and kingdoms will rise against each other.
- There will be localized food shortages.
- There will be localized spread of contagious diseases.
- Earthquakes will multiply.
- "You" (beginning with the 12 but on to our time in all of this list) will have trouble.
- "You" will be killed.
- "You" will be hated by all nations for the sake of Jesus.
- "You" will be betrayed by members of the church family.
- False prophets will arise.
- A growing sense of lawlessness, immorality, will be so pervasive as to cause many believers to love Jesus less.

(This trait will be the defining characteristic of Paul's "man of sin," a leader the world will deserve! II Thessalonians 2.)

- This Gospel will have been preached all over the world.

After this final item, the world is ready for the end. Although many see this last event as the answer of Jesus to the disciples' original query, I suggest that the preaching of the Gospel everywhere is not as specific a sign as is needed to satisfy those disciples or the ones living in the last days, who want something they can see. They want a "no-doubter," something that says, "When you experience *this*, Jesus will be there *very soon!* These are not backslidden saints, by the way. These are people in love with Jesus, who want to see His face!

The Gospel has been making inroads world-wide for many centuries. It is at its all-time greatest expansion today. The Gospel is on every continent and in every country. But there are cultural groups, some say several hundred, living in those countries that have not a word of Scripture in their native language. Do all qualify as "nations" in the Bible sense? Will Jesus wait until every man, woman, and child has had a chance to hear a word of Scripture in his own language? Is that the requirement? Then what of the millions who have *already died* without hearing that Word?

Or was Jesus' statement general on purpose, adding only one more backdrop for the condition of the world when He is about to come? It is true that the world will not end until the Gospel has gone around the world, but that process has taken many hundreds of years, and may take many more. It cannot be a "sign", for no one knows exactly when it is fulfilled. In fact, is it fulfilled now?

In the next verse, 15, is a statement that is so specific that it far overshadows all that has been said so far. I believe it is the answer

the disciples were seeking. It is backed up by Scripture and followed up by an action scenario that leads quickly to the end of the world!

Let me make that last point again. It will change forever your idea about the end times. If you are able to grasp what I am sharing here, you will be able to lay aside human opinions that have for so long governed Matthew 24. The point is this: There is absolutely no textual need for any break between verse 15 and verse 31. That is, the “sign” mentioned in verse 15 kicks off a series of events that leads in a relatively short time to the very revelation of Jesus Christ in the clouds. This is one understanding you will not receive in most other discussions of this passage available today. It sweeps away theories. It frees itself from historical speculation. *It ties itself directly to passages in Daniel and Revelation and leads God’s people to see that One Spirit spoke to all.* The message is awe-generating, even frightening at times, but not confused.

Do you see it? A signal is given, panic ensues, worldwide trouble follows this, so bad that the time period is shortened by God Himself, more false prophets appear, Jesus comes! Those who see the beginning of this series of events will most likely see its end (Matthew 24:34). Otherwise it could not be considered a sign. If the “abomination” took place in the *first* century but I live in the *twenty-first*, why should I think it was signaling anything?

Granted, in A.D. 70, armies did encircle Jerusalem, and the Roman conquerors destroyed almost everything standing. And the Temple was defiled by Caesar’s general Titus. And those in the vicinity panicked and ran, not necessarily because Jesus had told them to (for the unsaved Jewish community had long since written Jesus off) but because that’s what you do when you are met with such a forceful attack. Yes, Jews were protected in neighboring Edom, at Petra, etc. But the rest of chapter 24 did not happen. Jesus

did not return to Earth! And the instructions given to us remain intact: “Let him that reads understand.” I think no one was reading about this catastrophe in A.D. 70. But we read. And more and more, we understand. *This event has not yet occurred*, though the Jews of the first century had a very real dress rehearsal.

I realize that what I am proposing will set predictive prophecy study back many years, and that’s a great idea. Let’s set it back, in fact, to the days when it was first spoken, and read for ourselves what Jesus said!

Let’s continue on with chapter 24 and then go back to verse 15 to answer the key question that arises there: *What is the abomination of desolation?*

Verses 16-20. Those listening, and especially those *reading*, are told to get out of town when they see the signal. Yes, there is still some unfinished business to take place in the Jewish community. The fact that A.D. 70 was a “false alarm” does not cancel out the ultimate judgment coming to that part of the world. The Word of God still stands, and it is unfulfilled. Thanks to Him for the many who have gone to Israel to call out a remnant of the Jewish people to salvation. But the great majority of Israelites will not accept Israel’s God until forced to do so.

Yes, Israel will run again on that day. In the midst of the prophecy of this destruction given in Zechariah 12, God says to Israel (v. 12) that they will be asked to *look on* the One Who was pierced for them. A spirit of supplication will come upon them as they look and are grieved at what they see. While fire rains from Heaven all around them, they will be taken to a place of refuge and exposed to the truth about Messiah. 144,000 such believing Jews are enumerated in Revelation 7:1-8. The woman of Revelation 12,

whom we know to be Israel, is taken to a hiding place for three and one half years and nourished miraculously. Here is where they meet Messiah, in my opinion. This would explain why there is still going to be some running in Israel's future. They will run right into Jesus' arms.

Needless to say, none of this happened in A.D. 70. The prophecy is not fulfilled.

Verse 21 should have been the "give-away" thought to all of us who lived through the turbulence of the 20th and early 21st centuries. We should have seen that a temporary destruction of Jerusalem by an ancient Roman army was not what Jesus was talking about when he mentioned *unprecedented* trouble. Never before, never since, says verse 21. No world catastrophe that comes near this one. And yet we can all think of or read of times when the peoples of our world, or even the Jews alone, were in greater trouble than those days of history following Jesus' stay here. How many people perished in the World Wars? How many Jews in the Holocaust? What about atomic bombs and nuclear warheads?

Jesus saw the chaotic drama of all time taking place. So horrifying, so universal, so devastating that our Sovereign God will step in and shut it all down (v. 23) before every living thing on the planet, including those chosen to enter into Kingdom life, is snuffed out. That was not A.D. 70. Our thinking must change. The sign of Matthew 24:15 points to the end.

Verses 23-25. During the course of this destructive period, which we have not yet entered, more false prophets and Christs arise. Great signs and wonders will occur, orchestrated in part by the religious assistant of the man of sin described in Revelation 13, and alluded to in II Thessalonians 2. People love signs and wonders.

Not content with what the Word says, they will have itching ears and listen to anyone who can back up his message with a miracle. In antichrist's reign there will be miracles a-plenty, and this is how he will keep the world in his grasp.

Verses 26-28. Many will try to say that Jesus has already come, as they did as early as the first century, in Thessalonica. It was this perversion of the truth, an early attempt at a rapture theory, that occasioned the book of II Thessalonians... and thank God for it! Jesus asserts in Matthew that He is not coming back gradually, slowly, casually, or spookily. When He is here, you will know immediately!

Verse 29, coming here as it does, following a lengthy response to his beloved and very curious disciples, ought to stop forever the thought of a pre-tribulation catching away. Is it conceivable to you that Jesus, having been asked what He was asked by disciples, not Jewish rabble, not enemies, would fail to tell His closest friends and allies about a secret coming seven long years before His arrival again to the planet? When they wanted to know about His coming, would He have deliberately passed over the fact that *they* would not have to run when the others did, that *they* should not fear false prophets as the others feared, that *they* should not be bothered about looking up to the heavens as the others when signs in the heavens occur, because *they* would already be with Him?

Two key words appear in this verse. "Immediately". After the trouble caused by the abomination of desolation, the "sign" the disciples asked for, no years, months, weeks or days intervene. When that time period, defined by Daniel and John in their visions, is over, *immediately* it is the end of the age!

And need I say it, “after”. Jesus comes for His own *after* the tribulation, the world’s great trouble, Jacob’s trouble. What more can Jesus say to our confused church generation than what He already said? No hint of a previous coming. But a clear statement of this one. All the powers of the heavens shaken. Jesus appears. He sends His angels. They sound the last trumpet. They gather His chosen from the four winds. They are caught up! They are raptured! They are spared the judgment that now falls on the planet. But they are not spared the great tribulation.

So there is Matthew 24. How clear it is. How muddled has been our thinking. Oh how much better to take what Jesus says as He says it.

Here now is the sign He spoke in that chapter, verse 15: Read it carefully:

“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand),”

One thing Jesus does not do anywhere in this discourse is tell us *what the sign means!* Instead, he refers us to the Prophet Daniel. And there we must go, if we are to understand. Daniel spoke no less than four times about the “abomination of desolation”. He approaches the subject several ways, and leads us to some clear conclusions. He also points us to a man in history who actually desecrated the temple in an abominable way. Yet evidence within Daniel and the clear sense of what Jesus is saying tell us that that ancient king has not fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel or Jesus. Not yet.

Jesus says that when we see this abomination, this thing God hates, it will be *standing in the holy place*. Standing because it is

placed there? As in the previews we get in history from Antiochus Epiphanes two centuries before Christ? Or General Titus forty years after Christ? Or *standing of his own accord*, and sitting too, as Paul reveals in his second letter to Thessalonica, chapter two?

Standing in a place that is holy. No need to conjecture as to what was the holy place to the Jews. Daniel speaks of a Temple. Jesus was standing near the Temple when He spoke these words. Paul says this man will actually be in the Temple of God!

Yes, we know that our bodies and the church of Christ are both referred to as temples in the Bible. But there is no need for such an interpretation when the text cries out to be literally understood. We are talking about a man here, in one historical –yet still prophetic - incident, who sits in a physical space, inside the yet to come Temple of the Jewish people. Many seem not able to believe that God can do the things He seems to be saying. Like, how could there be yet another Temple? Perhaps many asked that when Solomon’s Temple was floored. But a new building came. Actually the plans for such an edifice in our day are already on the table. A quick “Google” search for the “Temple Faithful” will yield more than enough evidence that real live Jewish people are planning a comeback of sacrificial worship just as soon as it is politically possible. Never mind that it will not be “efficacious” or necessary, it is coming.

So the verse says that when we see what Daniel *said*, it’s time to run. And it closes with an all-important admonition to all Bible-readers. The Spirit of God knew that the words being spoken in that day would be more important to *readers* than to *hearers* in the long run, and so made sure that they (readers) got the message: *understand!* Read it over and over, do your homework, figure out what this means! What is inside will eventually jump out at you.

Yes, the Lord knew that the words being spoken that day would be committed to pen, to typewriter, to computer, and that literally billions of people would one day have access to them. It has now reached you. May you have the grace to seek the Lord with all of your strength until you have unlocked fully your future.

Before we follow the Lord's leading to go back to Daniel, it is necessary that we take a quick visit over to Brother Luke. In his 21st chapter is a parallel passage, presumably spoken at the same time by Jesus. But there is at least one clear difference in the text that might be disturbing to some. Luke heard from the Spirit and/or his Spirit-filled sources some words that Matthew was not led to share with us. Remember, Matthew was there. Luke was not. But we believe both men have given us the Spirit's message from the lips of Jesus.

In verse 20, having gone through all the same preliminary listings of things that will *not* be signs that the end is near, Jesus turns to a sign *related* to the abomination, one that must come before that horrid scene, and one that is similarly mentioned by Daniel. According to Luke, what we will see before fleeing, should we be there on that appointed day, is an army fully surrounding Jerusalem.

Oh my, the armies that have surrounded this city! I imagine Jerusalem holds the record there! Nevertheless it is one part of the sign that the Lord wanted us to have, and fulfils exactly Daniel 8:12, where an army is supplied to the evil ruler to enforce his will. He takes over the city, and then according to Paul, enters the Temple itself. There is no real difference then in the two accounts.

Noting the above truth reminds one to say that Jesus speaks nothing of the identity of a *particular man*, His archrival. He points

us to Daniel for that piece of work. He does not tell us much about background, the times, the political structure of the end times. These pieces are scattered all over the Scriptures, assuring that only the diligent and caring will find them and fit it all together. Unfortunately, the "cares of this life" choke out most of this desire to search the Word for answers. May God change our priorities!

Luke brings out another important piece of information. In the same passage in which Jesus talks of the very end of all things, parallel to Matthew and Mark, Luke quotes Jesus as saying that Jews will once more be led away captive to all nations!

We remember how this happened when Babylonia and Assyria attacked Israel. Surely the Jews have been all over the world since the much later days of Rome too. But Luke says this happens yet again after the signal of the surrounding armies and the following desecration of the Temple. He says further that following the abomination are the days of vengeance when *every* prophecy about everything is fulfilled (verse 22)! This is the end time.

Will there indeed be time in the few short years that follow before the coming of Jesus for yet another Jewish dispersion? Especially when we have already seen how the remnant Jews, the 144,000, are going to be protected and confronted by Jesus?

I believe that an answer for this question is in Revelation 11:2, where according to John, Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles for three and one half years. It will be a replay of the Assyrian invasion, when that people sent their own citizens to populate Israel while taking Jews to captivity.

Yes, the book of Revelation assigns only three and one half years to the "times of the Gentiles". We were taught that that period was all the way from A.D. 70 until 1948, when the Jews

recaptured Jerusalem. There were indeed some Gentiles there, mostly of Mid-eastern descent. But the Bible seems to be showing us a cosmopolitan urban center where Jews are no longer a threat to world peace. Where Gentiles rule.

I believe that this process will begin a few years earlier when a contract is signed with the Jewish nation, allowing them to have their Temple worship if they will relinquish the city to humanity. Then antichrist will reverse things and finish the process he has begun by eliminating Jews from their own city.

In some of these last things I speculate. But there are some definites I hope we have gleaned from Matthew 24. Let's review.

- The disciples asked for a specific sign about the end.
- Jesus gave the disciples a specific sign and referred them to the Book of Daniel.
- When the Temple is surrounded and desecrated, the end is near.
- After the "sign" there is unprecedented devastation.
- After the devastation, Jesus comes.

So the key to understanding all these things is to be found in Daniel's prophecy. This will mean a journey back 500 years before Christ to visit a very old and respected man living as a life-time servant of two Empires, yet prospering in the things of God. Daniel, that is, the Spirit in Daniel, has some very important clues for the solving of this mystery. The journey will be well worth the effort. Prayerfully then we go...

2. DANIEL'S EIGHTH CHAPTER

I assume that the prophecies of Daniel and the history of Daniel, the words on every page, are true. This is the famous man who has been subjected to hungry lions and hungry critics desiring but unable to rip him to shreds. Only unbelievers continue to discredit this most astounding work of the Spirit. Daniel's fulfilled prophecies as well as those yet to be fulfilled continue to astonish us with their accuracy. The fulfilled ones are so on target that they have become a target. "Nothing could be that perfect," say the critics. They say this because they do not know our perfect God and His ability to communicate to man.

Daniel single-handedly answers nearly every question that there is about the world's final ruler before Christ. Where is he from? How does he rise to power? How long will he last? What will be his way of ruling? How successful will he be? What are his supernatural connections? Will saints survive his slaughters? Jesus refers to him. Paul obviously read and believed him. And the great Revelator at the end of the Bible saw what Daniel saw from the same Spirit-guided messengers.

If you want to know who is the antichrist, you're in the right place by reading Daniel. God's people can see in Daniel's few chapters the truths of the last days. In fact the recorded prophecies tell the history of mankind from the days of the great Babylonian Empire, through Medo-Persia, Greece, and the various manifestations of the world's last reign in Rome. That last formation of Romanism will be ruled by the subject of our study, called in Daniel "the little horn" or simply "the king."

In chapter two is the giant human statue seen by King Nebuchadnezzar, each part of which represents a phase of history from Babylon to Rome. In chapter seven is a vision of animals seen by Daniel, paralleling Nebuchadnezzar's vision but adding crucial details. Having established twice God's knowledge of the total view of history, the Spirit focuses on two of the four featured kingdoms in chapter eight. Medo-Persia and Greece are singled out for our attention, and finally the period of the late Grecian and early Roman time. It is from out of this period that the man of sin originates, says Daniel. Later in the book are more details about Christ and antichrist, the times of their kingdoms, the steps leading up to them.

Before we begin chapter 8 in detail, some words about Daniel the man. Most that we know about him is drawn from the first part of his book where the wonderful stories of the fiery furnace and the lion's den appear. We meet a young man who even though he is a servant of Babylon, brought against his will from his own land, is sold out to the God of Israel. He repudiates a comfortable life-style, the diet of his time, the gods of Babylon. But God is with Daniel as he was with Joseph in his prison experience. He protects and exalts Daniel and bit by bit honors his love for Israel by telling him details of Israel's future. Of course, in doing so, he touches us, the people of God who have been grafted into the tree of which Paul spoke in Romans 11, the very Kingdom which was Daniel's.

In the first chapters of Daniel, he is a teenager. Later we see him middle-aged. By the time of chapter eight's vision, he is in his 80's. We see him weak and often confused, and wish God might have visited him this way in his full strength. That is how we think. But God chooses our weakest times to do His strongest work in us. Daniel will receive no credit for having thought up the incredible

ideas that follow. It is God saying these things, and we will do well to heed the Voice that comes from Heaven.

Verses 1-4, 20. The last emperor of Babylon is reigning. Soon Medo-Persia will be replacing Belshazzar and company, as recorded in the famous "handwriting on the wall" story of chapter five. But before Belshazzar's demise, the God of history intervenes via a vision to His prophet. Daniel sees a two-horned ram, with uneven horns. It is pushing north, south, and west. No one is able to stop him. Since he is not pushing east, we assume the ram is an eastern power. But no need to speculate any further, for Gabriel, Daniel's guide in most of his visions, tell us that the ram with two horns is the uneven amalgamation known in history as Medo-Persia. The two-ness of the ram's horns matches with the uneven sides of the bear of chapter seven and the two arms of the statue. Three visions, but one message.

Verses 5-7, 21. Next comes a goat. From the west. It is flying. Goats don't fly, and neither do leopards. But a flying *leopard* represents this same nation in chapter seven. Medo-Persia, eastern, pushed west, as in the great marcher Xerxes. But this nation is western, pushing east and covering the whole known earth! What a perfect description of the rise of Greece and its first major push by Alexander the Great, represented here by one horn. But all of this too is not guesswork, for Gabriel *tells* us that the goat is Greece and that the horn is the first or primary king of that emerging empire, whom we know to be Alexander, the one who some say wept because he had conquered the earth so quickly that there were no more challenges.

There is a confrontation between ram and goat and the eventual victory of Greece, which now rules the world several hundred years before Jesus' visit. But you say, why is world history

suddenly so important? Did you not offer disparaging remarks about how Bible scholars depend on history when defending their interpretations of Scripture? Yes, that's what I said, but this is *very* different! Here, the Holy Spirit Himself, via an angel and a prophet, are the historians. They are giving the interpretations and deliberately pointing us to historical settings. We are *compelled by Heaven* to look closely at Greece and the politics that follow. When you look long enough you will see the answer to the question of the disciples...

Verse 8, 22. The goat in the vision grows. Greece expands. But the goat's horn is broken. Alexander dies. Greece does not die, only the horn, the leader. In place of the one horn grow four horns. In place of the one leader there are four leaders with four separate territories. Gabriel points us to more history. He says that four kingdoms will arise from the Greek Empire. Did it happen? Most definitely! The generals of Alexander fought for many years over his legacy and who would rule what. The conflicts that ensued have been dubbed the "successor wars."

When the dust settled there were indeed four regions vying for power. One was Greece itself, tied to Macedonia. We might call this area, roughly, the Balkans today. Another was Egypt. Then there was Asia Minor, or Turkey. By far the largest and therefore the most difficult to control was the eastern portion of the empire. Today that portion is the combination of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Palestine, and even more territory to the east.

Are you following? Look where the Book of Daniel has gone in just a short time. All the kingdoms of the world from Daniel's day to the end of time. Then just Medo-Persia and Greece. Then Greece. But we must narrow further to find the one we seek.

Verses 9-12, 23-25. The heart of Daniel's message here and in other chapters is the defining of another horn on the goat, the territory of the Grecian Empire after Alexander, represented by four horns now, thus four parts. Now Daniel sees a *fifth* horn. It is small at first. Thus the term "little horn" has been applied to the person represented. He was small at the beginning. "Vile", says the angel in chapter 11. Despised. Rejected from royalty. But he does not stay small. Over time, over the ages, he grows to become a fantastically significant world power.

In this tiny fragment of a verse hidden away in your Old Testament is a secret that is larger than you can imagine. Let's see where the angel takes us.

First we see the temporal or earthly rise of the little horn. It/he grows to the south, to the east, and toward Israel, the "glorious land." Two things we learn here about the man who will come. One, there must be a land farther south of him than Israel. And, two, from where he is at the beginning, Israel is not east. Chapter eleven will identify him much more clearly, and show how he indeed did move to the directions here indicated.

Then am I saying that he is merely a historical figure and that this passage has been fulfilled? A thousand times, no! Historical yes, fulfilled, no! Bear with me until you see the whole vision *as Daniel saw it!* And you still will have trouble. That's why God saw fit to give Daniel another view of the same man from a different perspective in chapter eleven. There will be *no mistaking* the identity of this man.

And let me pause here to remind readers that we are not talking about a bright young man named Daniel who conjured up a cool story about the future of nations. We are talking about a very

old, confused and overawed man who cowers in the presence of angels and who is being given visions directly from Heaven. Let not cynicism enter our thinking here or we will lose sight of what God is saying. This Word is from heaven. It is pure in every syllable and must be examined carefully.

Verse ten is a turning point. Read it again. This man suddenly is having influence in heaven as well as earth. This is no mere mortal any longer. Something has changed! The “little” king has grown up! Grown up to the heavens! Because of him, some of Heaven’s armies are cast to the ground! Perhaps they are in part responsible for the earthly army that surrounds Jerusalem (or is this army heavenly too, in the worst sense?).

The plot sickens. This vile contender for the throne of Syria and surroundings is now contending for a universal throne, and the throne of the King of Kings. He wants it all! That’s what Gabriel says. He exalts himself to the Prince of Heaven.

As the army encircles Jerusalem in this last showdown of history, the horn commands that daily sacrifices of the Jews be stopped. No more need to sacrifice to this Jewish God, when a better one is available. The sanctuary is entered, then cast down.

Historically this man has been identified as Antiochus Epiphanes. But Biblically, so far, there is no need to do that. I say, there is no need *so far*. Chapter eleven will tie together the historical man with the future man. But chapter eight does not do that except in one phrase. In explaining who this man is, Gabriel says simply that he *arises* (not that he is *born and raised*) in the *latter days* of one of the four divisions of Alexander’s Empire. This clue, coupled to the descriptive “out of one of them” phrase earlier in the chapter (verse 9) lets us know *only* that the end time

tyrant comes originally from somewhere in post-Alexander Greece. That is, he was born either in Greece, Turkey, The Middle East, or Egypt.

We cannot bring prior knowledge into a text. We let the text speak first. So far the text has only pointed us to Greece and the very end of time, and tied these two eras together in a man. There is no demand by the chapter eight text to bring in Antiochus or any man we have known in history. All that this man does in this text can be done in the future.

We now know, with certainty, *where* antichrist arises! We also know that when he arises it is with supernatural help. We know that it is he who will, aided by an army –perhaps a heavenly one– stop the Jewish sacrifices and himself profane and destroy the Temple. We see soon the phrase “transgression of desolation” (verse 13) and know we are close to the very sign Jesus gave for His soon return. And then comes the clear definition of the timing of this man:

Verses 13-14. First there is the exchange between two angels who identify the time period involved as a little more than six years. This time seems to comprise the lead-up to the abomination, the abomination itself, and the subsequent “trampling” (remember that word from Luke 21?) of Jerusalem. We’ll discuss the seven-year time frame when we get to chapter nine.

Verses 15-17. The key conversation which we are granted grace to overhear is between a Man and the angel Gabriel. The Man commands Gabriel to help Daniel understand the vision. The first and perhaps most important thing that Daniel is made to understand is that (verse 17) the vision refers to *the time of the end*. This phrase will be spoken and expanded on several other

times later in this book. There is no doubt allowed here that the little horn vision culminates in the *end time*, not 200 years before Christ came to earth, via Antiochus Epiphanes!

So our conclusion can only be that “the abomination of desolation” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, *still in the future when Jesus spoke about it*, refers not to any episode in the life of Antiochus Epiphanes, but to the end of all time, as demanded by the angel Gabriel and the Man who commanded the message.

I understand why books and teachers in our day try to make everything fit neatly in pre-Christian history. The alternative explanation, that the man Daniel saw was actually *alive* thousands of years later, is too incredible for words. But all who ignore what is being said must give account to Gabriel and to his Master. Fair warning, before we get to chapter eleven, when the incredible becomes nearly unbearable. There we will discover a master plan that has been executed by the enemy of our souls. It is a plan for world-wide domination. It has reared its ugly head time and again. Many have been the willing tools in Satan’s hand to grasp world power and attempt to dethrone Jesus and all those for whom Jesus has throne plans, His elect. He shall fail. But the attempt is clear, and we have been privileged to see it beforehand, so that we will not be deceived when it surfaces yet again. Truly the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and no other!

Verses 23-27. So he who begins in the Near East winds up in a lake of fire, by way of Jerusalem, fulfilling every prophecy about the man of sin. When the cup of the nations involved is full, this one will arise. The question that will be answered in chapter eleven is, does this mean simply that he will be born and raised in one of these four nations as they express themselves in modern times, or

that he was already born there long ago, and literally “arises” in the end? You know now my prejudice toward the literal, so you can imagine where this is going.

A few details about the “arisen” man. He will have a fierce countenance. Think Hitler. He’ll be deep. Sinister. Pure evil. He will not rule by his own power. A definite clue that this one will be Satan-filled. He will be a destroyer. Again think Hitler. He will persecute and kill believers. He will magnify himself. We will discuss this very scenario in II Thessalonians. But he’ll be broken without human hand. Think Lake of Fire. We surely must all be in agreement now: This is *not* talking about Antiochus Epiphanes! Or is it? Make no conclusions until we have shared together the rest of Daniel’s work.

Poor Daniel. He could not think any of the comments we so glibly discuss today. No Hitler, no Paul, no Matthew 24. He was the very first to receive clear descriptions of our future. It literally made him sick. He could not figure it out. In struggling with God over these texts we too may become emotionally involved. Again I point out that there is certainly no better cause to which we can give our hearts than the finding of God’s plan, both for our personal lives, and, as much as he reveals, for the church of God. Let us proceed.

3. DANIEL'S NINTH CHAPTER

So we have learned thus far that Matthew 24 and Daniel 8 have several things in common:

- There is coming to earth a horrible transgression and transgressor that will bring an unprecedented desolation.
- This thing will be accompanied by the surrounding of Jerusalem.
- It will happen at the “time of the end.”
- Following both prophecies were historical, actual, world events that seemed “close” to the fulfillment and were thus jumped on by students of the Word . Obviously both historical events must be canceled out since they are not in the end time, they did not lead to the return of Jesus, and they did not produce an evil man whose life is supernaturally powered.

Thus the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, and pointed to by Jesus in Matthew, *is still in our future*. Allow Daniel himself to speak of this event once more, in the famous “Seventy weeks” prophecy.

The message given in this ninth chapter was meant by the Spirit to shed light on the “when” of Messiah’s coming along with more details about the man of sin that precedes Him. It was given in response to Daniel’s discovery that the *current* time line on Jerusalem was about to be up. Daniel had discovered Jeremiah 25:11 which tells readers that God’s people were to be in bondage

to Babylon for seventy years. But that time was nearly passed, and it was the beginning of the Medo-Persian time. It would soon be announced by Cyrus the Emperor that the Jews could go back to their land.

Caught up in the joyful news he had discovered, Daniel begins to pray a prayer of repentance covering himself and his people (verses 1-19) . While he is praying (verse 20) Gabriel re-appears to him, letting him know how pleased Heaven is with his prayers, and revealing further plans for Israel. These plans involve, not seventy years, but seven *times* seventy. During these 490 years, all of God’s dealings with Israel will be finished. And the looked-for announcement of Cyrus is to be the trigger that will start the clock. So the final years of Israel’s life will begin where Jeremiah leaves off and continue, with one major interruption, until the end of time.

Let us speak first of the concept of interruptions, or “gaps” in Scripture. Daniel actually uses this pattern unknowingly throughout the book. He is unaware of the great period of time that will exist, for example, in his ram-goat prophecy, between the horn of Alexander and the horn of the final conqueror. Reading Daniel casually you might think they are side by side. He does it again in chapter eleven. There, he speaks of one who can only be identified as Antiochus Epiphanes, for the Spirit directs us to that interpretation. Then there occurs the gap again, and suddenly we are in the end time speaking of antichrist. Daniel had no clue. In an even greater way the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue and Daniel’s animals do the same thing. There seems to be a quick resolution of world history after Rome. Though this is true in actual years spent, we are still living in the “gap” between early Rome and its final form.

Thus when the Spirit in Daniel 9 speaks of 490 years to be lived out for the Jewish people, it must be borne in mind that these years are not consecutive. Even the text divides these years into three groupings. Again, every word, every detail, must be taken into account when a mystery is before us.

Daniel is not the only prophet who unwittingly demonstrates the gap phenomenon. Isaiah, chapter 9, predicts the birth of a Child Who will sit upon the throne of David. True enough, brother Isaiah, but the Child was born long ago and still we await the enthronement. Later, Isaiah laments the sorrowful plight of the sin-bearing Messiah in most of his chapter 53, but then rejoices that "(God) will divide Him a portion with the great..." a happening scheduled for the return of Christ to earth in our future. Zechariah touts the lowly Jesus "riding on a donkey..." then praises in the same breath the One Whose dominion shall be "from sea to sea." First and second comings of Jesus, thousands of years apart, spoken of in two consecutive verses, with no hint of a history between.

Is it any wonder that Jesus' disciples, schooled in the precise memorization and understanding of Scripture, would stumble a bit when they heard Him talking one moment of death and the next of victory? Is it any wonder that they expected the Kingdom to be set up immediately? It is this gap mechanism that is at the heart of the Judeo-Christian mystery. A Christ who was, and "is not" (on the earth), but who will be. Antichrist, we now understand, will be able to use that same definition, by the secret workings of Satan who has been granted permission to bring it to pass and deceive the nations.

Armed with this principle we can approach the four verses (9:24-27) that spell out what is coming to Israel and when...

First we learn that a period of seventy "sevens", divided into three separate time categories, will complete all Jewish history. The Hebrew word translated "weeks" simply means a period of seven units of time. The year is the only unit that makes sense of the prophecy. So seventy periods of seven *years* each, or 490 years, is the full amount of time with which we have to work.

Next we discover what exactly must happen during those 490 years.

- Sin will be dealt a death blow via Messiah's death and His return to create a perfect Satan-bound world. Sin will be judged, then eradicated.
- Every prophecy related to Judaism, given by the prophets, will be fulfilled.
- The "Most Holy" will be anointed. Does this refer to the baptismal scene of Jesus, where the Spirit descended on Jesus? Or is this Psalm 45:7, where God anoints Jesus as ruler over all the earth? No matter. Both events occur in the 490 years.
- Everlasting righteousness will be brought in. That is, the Millennial-Eternal reign of Christ begins.

That's a tall order for only 490 years. Some of it has already happened.

Next, having stated what will happen, he spells out when the time period will begin. The announcement that Jews are going back to Jerusalem to dwell in their own land is seen as the signal for Jewish history to continue and begin its final round. This announcement is given twice in Scripture: II Chronicles 36:22-23

and on the next page of your Bible, Ezra 1:1-4. We are told there was historically another announcement given and that there are different ways of counting, but the vast majority of those who have studied this prophecy agree that from this moment in time, whenever it precisely occurred, until the Messiah, was 483 years.

Why 483 and not 490? The prophecy states that there will be two divisions of time between the announcement and the Messiah's death (Daniel uses the term "cut off"). First, a forty-nine year period of rebuilding, followed by a 434 year period leading up to the Christ's work. $49 + 434 = 483$.

In my thinking these first two verses, and these first two periods of time, are very straightforward and seem to be consecutive. Christians have rejoiced in this passage for centuries as it was so succinct and clear that the Holy Spirit was telling us exactly when Messiah would come the first time! Yet, one reflects, the world knew Him not, though this simple math, added to the prophecy about Bethlehem, and many more were there for the reading.

So it shall be in the last days. Though Bibles and books and booklets will abound telling people exactly when and where to look for antichrist and Christ, the world and the professing church will ignore them, in pursuit of feel-good religion and the worries of this life.

But though verses 24-25 are easily grasped, 26 and 27 cannot be tackled so quickly. Perhaps they, along with all passages on this topic have been deliberately "muddied", to insure they are hidden until the right time. I confess I still have questions here and elsewhere in this study. I share with you the things of which I am certain. Others will certainly pick up the rest when it is time.

After the second time period of 434 years, Messiah is killed. "But not for Himself!" Don't you love the way the Spirit injects this sad but wonderful truth in the midst of a preview of history? Now is this immediately after? Sometime after? And the destruction of Jerusalem foretold in verse 26, is it the one that indeed occurred after Jesus, or the one we have already seen coming at the end?

Here I can only give my opinion. I believe that consistency to the text and all the other similar texts in Daniel demands that we place this portion of the prophecy in the end time. For in verse 27 that follows there is no question that the war mentioned must be at the end.

Nevertheless, I am not in denial that Rome did destroy Jerusalem shortly after Jesus was crucified, that temple worship stopped, that the city was surrounded, that Jews fled... but we have already seen that much of this will be repeated in the last days, and lead to Christ's return. Here the mystery is difficult to extricate from the historical. And here is where we need to keep our focus narrow. We are looking for the man of sin who will precipitate the last events of history. He is in this passage...

Notice in verse 26 the destruction of the sanctuary. This matches with chapter 8. Notice the word "desolations", one of the keys all the way from Matthew. You may even want to consider the presence of a flood as in Revelation 12:15's mention of a demonic flood sent to stop the woman, who is Israel.

I offer all of this for your meditation and prayer. But to return to things of which there is a greater certainty we move to verse 27.

One thing emerges right away. The seventieth seven does not immediately follow the sixty-ninth. Verse 27 speaks of an end to sacrifice and offering. We now know for certain that when Daniel

speaks of this happening, he is speaking of the end time, not of Antiochus of old. Remember, we have Gabriel's word on that. But now we have Daniel himself admitting that this does not occur until Jesus is killed, some 200 years after Antiochus!

We have a problem of a different sort if we try to attach this verse to the Romans of A.D. 70. The Spirit says there are 490 years, and that after 490 years, the Millennium begins, sin is gone, etc. Those who try to stop the clock at Jesus (as they should) but start it up again with Titus (A.D.70), will find that the clock runs out in A.D. 77, with no return of Christ. That was the dilemma of thinking back in those days, when Jesus did not come, though the abomination had surely occurred. They thought.

In fact, the only place to put a final week, or seven years, is in the end of history. But that is done easily enough, because that is where Jesus places the event of the end of sacrifices, and the following abomination and desolations that verse 27 mentions.

Ultimately, this work I am sharing with you now does not end with the abomination, the desolations, the end of sacrifices, the surrounding of the city, the army. All of this is present, but my question has to do with *the man*. In verse 26 there is one called "the prince who is to come." This same one seems to be referred to in 27, as "he" and "one who makes desolate."

I cannot prove here that all three of these persons are one. But I believe they are. The coming prince seems to be the dictator over the revived Roman Empire, the final form of the beast seen by Daniel and John. He makes a treaty with the Jewish people that lasts for one week (27a), or seven years. This same person who made the treaty will break it (27b) half-way through. That's about three and one half years later, leaving another three and one half

years for judgment and chaos, the Great Tribulation. It is this three and one half year period that is mentioned in Daniel and Revelation as Earth's final time.

The prince thus starts the clock of Judaism ticking again. No matter that Jewish sacrifices cannot take away sin. They never could. They pointed to Christ. They will still point to Him. No matter that God is not commanding a Temple be built. The Jewish people will be like Israel of old, seeking to go to the Promised Land after God has already pronounced judgment. They will be given seven years to play all of this out, a new Temple, revived worship in the Jewish way, world-wide prominence, even peace for a time. But only a short time. Then the reversal, followed by what Daniel seems to be calling an outpouring of judgment. He uses the word consummation, and "poured out", reminding us of the bowl judgments of the book of Revelation, chapter 16. And he pinpoints the "one who makes desolate." Notice here it is not referred to in the neuter sense. Not a "thing" placed in the Temple, but a man.

It is said this man will be on the "wing" of abominations. The old King James used the word "overspreading," but that word would be a very uncommon usage of the Hebrew "*kawnawf*". "Wing", as in a bird, is a common usage of that word in Scripture. It can even refer to angels' wings. It is the wings of cherubim (man-made) that sit above the Ark of the Covenant, and are a part of the mercy seat Moses was commanded to make. According to Exodus 25:22, God ordained that this would be the special place where he would speak with his man, between the two overspreading wings of the cherubim. Here God would actually appear "in the cloud above the mercy seat (Exodus 16:2)." Is it possible that when the Jews put together this magnificent structure again that they will create once more the mercy seat in all its detail? And will the one who is so

jealous of our God decide to sit there and mock His Holy Name before the world? Could this be the “wings” of abomination?

Be that as it may, the clock of old Jewishness ends when the final earthly-satanic messiah is cast into the Lake of Fire and Christ’s true Judaism is set up in the Holy City. Soon perhaps will come one who will announce to the world that the clock of Israel is about to begin its last works.

We must continue reviewing, so that we not forget important pieces of the puzzle:

- There is a specific sign of the beginning of the end of the world.
- It is the abomination of desolation, albeit it must be the one spoken of by Daniel.
- Daniel speaks of such an abomination, twice so far, and the surrounding of Jerusalem, and the removal of the daily sacrifices, all followed by desolations as God Himself backs off from the scene. Nothing can be more desolate than this.
- No less than a messenger from Heaven, Gabriel, is behind all these prophecies.
- All agree that these things happen in the final days of earth’s history.
- Daniel points out a man behind all the problems: “a little horn”, “a king,” and “the prince who is to come.” He sees him not as a “type” but as the actual perpetrator of the evil.

I tremble as I think ahead to chapter eleven. I believe I have identified there the one who will come. I ask that you reserve your

own judgment of this until we confirm the details in Revelation and II Thessalonians. But for now, the last prophecy of Daniel. It is like no other in Scripture.

4. DANIEL'S TENTH THROUGH TWELFTH CHAPTERS

I will refer to Daniel 10-12 as one chapter, as they tell one story, one prophecy. There should be no chapter divisions here, especially between chapters 11 and 12.

Daniel 8 tells of one whose ancestry goes back to Alexander's kingdom and who later arises as the antichrist. Daniel 11 tells us that *the ancestor and the antichrist are the same man*. Some preliminary details for study are in order for this chapter also.

First it will be necessary again to employ the "gap" thinking that we have seen in chapters eight and nine. Though a narrative unfolds and takes the reader from beginning to end, first time readers usually need to be *told* that somewhere in the story there is a *huge* gap in time. When they see it for themselves they are left with the problem that has had Bible students scratching their heads for centuries. Closing the gap is the object of this book. The explanation that is confirmed by reading the book of Revelation and picking up other clues here and there is not comprehensible by the human experience. I will still maintain that this is what the Spirit is saying to the churches in our time and forward. I believe that more and more people will see this as the time for His appearing draws near.

A second concept must be grasped before Daniel 11 can be understood. Put simply, history does repeat itself. We have seen it happen already in the discussions of this book. Consider the ways there have already been repeats of events, just in regards to Jerusalem:

Who is the Antichrist?

- Armies encircle the city. 163 B.C. and 70 A.D. to name only two times.
- In those same 2 occasions, the Temple is desecrated, then destroyed.
- The people of Israel are scattered to other nations, by Assyria, Babylonia, Rome.
- An evil anti-Semitic king or emperor or dictator surfaces and wreaks havoc.
- Someone seeks to kill all Jews: Haman, Raamses, Hitler, and others.

History *does* repeat itself. Consider also:

- While a Father looks on, a Son climbs a hill carrying the wood on which he is scheduled to die: 2000 B.C., Abraham & Isaac. But also 33 A.D., Jehovah and Jesus.
- A man climbs the ascent called the Mount of Olives, crying. His people have rejected him, and are trying to kill him and take away his throne. His best friend has just betrayed him. Yet many of the people walk along crying with him. 1000 B.C., David. 33 A.D., Jesus. Many events can come around to be replayed, proving that the first ones were only shadows and prefigures.

There is a section of chapter eleven that I have struggled with for some time. I am forced to believe that this small group of verses can only be explained in the light of repeated history. To me there is no question that at least most of that portion of the text has already happened. But there seems to be equally strong evidence to support the notion that *it will happen again*.

And thirdly, it is important for us to understand the concept of the preservation of life. All life is preserved, though most of it is behind the scenes. All human lives have an appointment with death, and then receive a new body that will be eternally with God or suffering apart from Him. You will recall perhaps that there are two men of the Bible account who never died, but have an appointment with death, and will return to the planet as prophets in the end time. Many say they are Elijah and Enoch, and they are prophesied both by Zechariah and John as future invaders of our planet. God is able to preserve lives, and cause them to re-appear. They will come, die, leave us again, to meet us in the air when Jesus comes back.

With Antiochus Epiphanes a similar principle is at work. He already died. But he is scheduled to receive a new body. It is with that glorified body that he returns. The pattern for all three of these men is not unusual, but the placement before our eyes is strange. All three die, then are hidden from us, then get a new body and re-appear.

Let's look now at the last prophecy of the now 91-year-old man of God, Daniel the prophet, still following the lead of Jesus who told us that we are to be in search of the abomination of desolation mentioned by this man.

I have written in great detail about Daniel 10-12 in a book called *The Last Message of Daniel*. I will not be sharing all the specifics of the rulers and the intrigues that are brought out in prophetic manner by the prophet, but refer my readers to that earlier work for this. Here I will summarize a lot, to get us to the salient points of the prophecy.

One note to recall here: Daniel 10, 11, and 12, are all a part of one long prophecy. There is extensive preparation, followed by the prediction itself, then some follow-up questions to deal with.

10:1. We cannot get past the first verse without commenting on the phrase "the appointed time." The Spirit wants us to know that the time of this fulfillment will be "long". Later, the "time of the end" is re-introduced. All of this points us back to chapter eight and reminds us of the incredible unity in the plan of this book (See Appendix C).

After a period of sorrowful fasting over some unknown issues, probably longing to know more of the plan of God (verse 12), Daniel sees a vision much like John will about 600 years later on the island called Patmos. The first person he sees seems to be the Son of God. Mixed in with messages from this Person are those of the angel Gabriel, who tells Daniel that once more he has been sent to him, but was involved heavily in spiritual warfare with demons controlling Persia and Greece, the two nations that were the subject of chapter 8! This latter piece of information points us to Gabriel as opposed to Jesus. As in Revelation, there is some confusion about who is being seen, who is talking.

But whoever is talking, it seems as though this message to Daniel is being opposed in a mighty way. After all, if Daniel receives this message and passes it on, the Enemy's plan will be exposed for the whole world and church to see. But although the angel prevails, and the message is recorded, the book of Daniel has been hit so hard by "scholars" that in many circles it is totally discredited. Those who do believe it is the very word of God find that most churches just aren't interested. After all, merely to read the book is to name names of people and nations. It is not politically correct to preach from it. Those who take it seriously have relegated all its prophecies

to the past, making it true but irrelevant. We have the word of angels to the contrary, but thus will the book remain “sealed” until the time is upon us (12:9). What wisdom of God! How the Enemy must have thought he had ripped this book from the Collection. But he *will be* exposed in due time!

In the remaining verses of chapter 10, Daniel is encouraged, strengthened, so that he can take in the predictive details of the following message, nearly every one of which certainly happened in history. But it is the way that history blends into prophecy that is the fascination of this message. Before you have heard it all, you too may need time to regain your strength. Are you ready for this?

11:2-4 is nothing more than chapter 8:3-8 retold. We should be ready now to understand Daniel’s style. He starts with familiar ground, and leads into greater detail. Remember Persia? It shall rise. It shall be great. A Persian king (we call him Xerxes) will stir up trouble with Greece (remember the push west?). Indeed the march of Xerxes’ armies westward was rivaled in history only by the subsequent eastward march of Alexander the Great, mentioned here in verse 3. Verse 4 then tells of the breaking up of Alexander’s Kingdom among his four generals (not among family members, adds this chapter’s vision). All known facts, right?

11:5-20 . The Spirit then travels ahead to the kingdoms that arise from Alexander’s heritage. He lets us know that they have been established now, and are in competition. But his focus has narrowed already from *four* to only *two*. Later it is *one* that will be at center stage, the one from whence comes “the little horn.” For this is where the angel is leading us...

Verses 5-20 are about two of the horns, one in the North, one in the South. Let us look at the South first. Here is where

Alexander’s general Ptolemy arrived and over the years got himself entrenched with the Egyptian people and other nations of that region. “Ptolemy”, at first a family name, soon came to carry the same weight as “Pharaoh”, a title of honor given to all the following rulers of Egypt for many years.

Egypt proper was never satisfying enough a territory to rule, and the Ptolemies, kings of the South, were forever reaching north, sometimes as far as Syria, but nearly always to Israel, for more ground. In doing this they were in constant conflict with the king of the North, originally General Seleucus, who considered his domain to be from Israel and Syria to points east. And of course, Egypt, if he could manage it. Sometimes he actually did, either by force or marital intrigues.

Sixteen verses tell, ahead of time, the actual details of this tug of war between North and South, the jockeying for power, the shifting loyalties of Israel in the middle. But lest we think that the Spirit is only interested in giving us a history lesson, in verse 21 there is a zooming in on the reason for all this lineage being shared. In Daniel 11:21 we are introduced to a vile man who inherits the throne by deceit. He was not next in line to receive it, he surely was not fit for it. Some say he was mad. And the writer of Daniel’s prophecy never once calls him “the king of the North.” His name is Antiochus Epiphanes. Epiphanes, *the manifested one*. Later Antiochus himself would add the term “Theou...” *A manifestation of God*. That’s blasphemy. In his very name. Many of his subjects referred to him as “Epimanes” , *the mad one*.

I want to remind us again here that from verse 15, dealing with Epiphanes’ father Antiochus the Great, the term “King of the North” is not used again until we are into the clearly prophetic portion of this passage. Though the vile Antiochus truly seems to be taking the

place of kings who rule in the North, it seemed good to the Spirit not to confuse the reader with this title. I believe that it will become clear later, why.

Early deceitful dealings with Israel are mentioned in verses 22 and 23, establishing his way of working with the Jews early in his career. In verse 25 his complete mastery of the South (Egypt) is foretold, but also the whittling away of that power at conference tables (26-27). Also see in verse 27 another mentioning of “the appointed time” as though the Spirit is readying the reader for something unusual. Though these two liars sit at the same table and make their schemes for annihilating the other in public, it is God who rules over the affairs of men, and the plans He has made for Israel will happen His way, and at His time.

In verse 28 we see a rich and powerful Antiochus, happy about how life is treating him, going into Israel to add to his riches by stealing from the Temple treasury .

But in verse 29 there is an immediate reversal. Antiochus returns. And from here until verse 35 is a troubling series of verses. Most historians agree that Antiochus did make a second excursion approach toward Egypt. Surely the incident of verse 30, his rebuff by a Roman commander, has been documented. His subsequent desire to dump on Israel has been verified also. The ensuing martyrdom and exploits of the Maccabees can all be made to fit into this passage.

But there are some curious features about what is said from 29-35 also. The passage begins with “at the appointed time.” From Daniel 8:19 to 10:1 to 11:27 and later to 11:35, and 11:40, the “appointed time” or “time of the end” is where the Divine Originator seems to be going.

“He shall return” gives one pause also. Yes, he returned to Egypt, or tried to. Is it possible that hidden in this text is the idea that he shall return to earth?

He approaches Egypt but the writer tells us that it will not be like the “former” (time he came here) , that is, he will not succeed this time. He also says that it will not be like the “latter”. What does that mean? That can only mean that another trip is in view by the angel. Indeed, such a campaign is mentioned in verse 40. And by the time we get to verse 40, no one doubts that we are talking about an end-time series of events. Our only struggle is 29-35, when it could be that history must be repeated.

The ships from Cyprus of verse 30 remind me of the ongoing evacuation this very week of American citizens to that island from Lebanon, where there is a struggle being funded by a king of the North of our own day in Iran. I am not stating that antichrist lives now in Iran. I only suggest that situations of ancient days can easily be re-lived in our own.

It is verse 31 that gives us the largest clue that this passage, fulfilled already or not, must come again to the world stage. Another look at chapter 8:11-13 which has already been defined by Gabriel as an end-time scenario, and a comparison of phrases used there to ones used here in 11:31 will remind us, I hope, that we are in search of “the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel” which was future in Jesus’ day and cannot therefore be tied to history already passed. Look at what is said:

8:11, “by him the *daily sacrifices* were taken away, and the place of his *sanctuary* was cast down. **11:31**, “ they shall defile the *sanctuary* fortress... then shall they take away the *daily sacrifices*...”

8:12, “Because of transgression, *an army was given over to him to oppose the daily sacrifices...*” **11:31**, “*Forces shall be mustered by him...*”

8:13, “... *transgression of desolation...*” **11:31**, “...*the abomination of desolation.*”

Historical, you say? Already done in history, you say? Yes, that can be proved. And it was done again in A.D. 70. And history will repeat itself one more time...Jesus said that when we see the event Daniel spoke of, it's quitting time. And that same event is here before us. The army. The defiling. The removal of sacrifices. The abomination in place. The chaos. The desolation. The martyrs. The heroes. Daniel spoke of end time events here and in chapter 8 and 9 and 12. To be consistent, I suggest that the events of verses 29-35 will be back.

Consider: Antiochus, like his father of the same name, is out to conquer the world. He is stopped by Rome and Jewish desire for independence. He dies an utter failure, diseased and heavily in debt. It seems to me that his return is very significant to him and it makes sense that one of his first moves will be “South”, to pick up where he left off. This time he must conquer Rome, control it, and claim the planet as his own.

Perhaps the reason we have had such difficulty in the past identifying the man of sin is because he has been hiding in plain sight in the book of Daniel. Nowhere is this more true than in these few verses. Notice that nowhere, even yet, are we told exactly what the abomination is! Checking history you will find a pig and an idol. But Daniel does not say that. He deliberately keeps the end-time option open. We'll not know exactly what it is until we hear Paul's revelation at the end of this work (Yes, I said Paul's).

Verses 32-35, referring to the way antichrist uses the Jewish people, and the suffering of other Jews who will not compromise, can easily be seen historically or prophetically. A savvy leader knows how to win people to his cause, in any generation. But God's people will forever be strong and creative, whether they are called Maccabee or modern saint. And as throughout church history, the Lord's army is willing to die at the hands of those who hate them.

Verse 35 is yet another key to the dual role of this passage. It is linked by word usage to chapter 12, verse 10. Look at them:

11:35, “...those of understanding shall fall to *refine* them, *purge* them, and *make them white...*” **12:10**, “Many shall be *purified*, made *white*, and *refined...*”

Yes, chapter 12 is in the column of end-time events. The linkage between chapters 11 and 12 is important. Another such link is 11:31 and 12:11. Between these two passages we learn of the abomination of desolation, its happening, its duration, its placement at the end.

From verse 36 on through the rest of chapter 11 and 12, there is general agreement among Bible believers that the subject is the end of history. Our job now is to find clues that the man being described from 36-45 is the same man as was pointed out from verse 21. And once that is established, our crisis is no longer one of understanding, but believing.

The traditional line of thought here is that Daniel is referring in the earlier verses to Antiochus Epiphanes, a great “type” of the antichrist, but that the last verses are the antichrist himself, totally disassociated from the prior verses. It is that thinking I am asking readers to challenge, based on the text itself, and some mysteries that the book of Revelation and the letter to Thessalonica point out.

Yes, I am saying that Antiochus Epiphanes is the antichrist, not just a type of him.

To the evidence in Daniel:

Remember the gap idea first. As in Daniel's visions, as in the 490 years, chapter 11 is moving along smoothly when suddenly we jump thousands of years and wind up nearly in the Millennium. Do you remember when you first read this passage, knowing nothing of history? Did it not seem to you a smooth narrative that told the life story of an ancient king? The translators blocked our thinking by making a chapter division at the end of chapter 11. We went on glibly to 12, thinking a new story was starting. But it was the same event. The Tribulation, the judgment, the resurrections, tied irrevocably to the story of the ancient king.

Troubling. But the scholars assured us that *two kings* were being described, one that just looked like the other one, but was a different man. But what if it is the same man?

Historically we know that Antiochus did fill the role of king of the North. The Spirit has brought us to the geographical portions of the understanding, and we must stay with that. He is called a king in verse 27. He is never called in the prior section "king of the North", just a king. So why should he not still be called that in verse 36? Could not the Spirit, the angel, the prophet, have been clear with us that a change in identity was intended?

Is there a change? Or is there an exaggerated capability of the same old Antiochus, who is troubled with the Jews and their God? Antiochus, the first king in history to assume and announce his own deity on the common coinage of his day. Antiochus, a madman who cares about power and property and money. Is he not the

same, yet empowered differently from verse 36? Why must he be a different man?

Finally in verse 40 "the king of the North" is mentioned. It is possible to read this verse in two different ways. One could say Egypt attacks "the king", then the (same) king, that is "the king of the North" attacks Egypt. Or one could imagine that by this time in history, the "king" (antichrist) has graduated from king of the "North" to world dictator, and both the South and the North attack him, but to no avail, for he is Satan-empowered.

Yes, now, whether the title "North" applies or not, he is acting, not as one of the four original horns, but as the "fifth" or "little" horn. It is not until "the latter time of their [the four horns'] kingdom" that the "king" with fierce features arises, the little horn.

He has arisen in our text now. Same man. Re-grown. Re-planted. Dead and resurrected. Infested with Satan himself. Of the fourth but the fifth. In Revelation, the "eighth" but one of the seven. New, yet old. Never been here before, not like this, but lived in a similar body centuries before. King of the North, but maybe graduated to King over all. The old "manifested one" seeking to be "God manifest in the flesh" as the Enemy he hates so passionately, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The enigma has been with us all these centuries. The mystery itself helps to solve the mystery. The fact that it seems so unexplainable but sits there unchanging should tell us to accept it like it is. God Himself, knowing how difficult these things are for us to understand, could have carefully explained the gap, the repeat of history, the preservation of lives, but He allowed the mystery to remain hidden in this text and that, assuring that most will not solve the riddle.

His plan and the course of the war that ends all wars is laid out from verses 38 to 45. There is an indication that things military will be his god. He will be attacked by Egypt and perhaps Syria. He will retaliate with great force and take over other countries. Some will escape, some will not. From the east and north come rumblings of approaching trouble, perhaps China and Russia in a united front, as they often are. In a last mad dash toward world conquest he arrives, perhaps, at Armageddon. But his time runs out. He is unceremoniously picked up "by the scruff of the neck" and thrown by King Jesus into his eternal home far from the love of God.

I have not covered in detail the dealings of antichrist in our future because that is not the purpose of this present work. Much of what could be said would be speculation anyway. I have desired to specify who Scripture has highlighted as the man of sin. In chapter 11 of Daniel I believe it is clear that the Spirit led Daniel to review in prophecy pre-Roman history so as to show us one man, an evil man, a man who desired but never obtained world prominence. A man who passed off the scene for many centuries but who returned, invigorated by demonic power to finish in the end time what he began earlier: the elimination of the Jewish people, and the enthronement of himself in the place of all gods.

Chapter 12 paints the added touch we need to complete this picture. The angel relates to Daniel that it is at the time of the reigning of "the king", that the unparalleled time of tribulation occurs, spoken of also by Jesus as the forerunner to His own approach.

Finally in the book of Daniel, the prophet himself needs attention. He is told to seal the book until the time of the end, in response to his many questions about the future. I am not sure how Daniel and the Spirit sealed this work but it is a fact that men

through the ages have not had access mentally to it. It has been literally a sealed book. Incomprehensible. Under attack. Rejected. Until recently, as more and more people get a grasp of what this book really means. That could only mean that the time of the end is upon us, for that time was to be the time when the sealing would be over, and the book made available (12:9).

Lastly there is a question of timing, after which the book abruptly ends. The phrase "time of the end" blends into verse 10 and lets us understand that from the time of the abomination of desolation, the event we have been tracing at Jesus' advice, coupled with the taking away of the daily sacrifice, which happens at the same time, until the very end of all the suffering, shall be 1290 days, a little over three and one half years. In forty-five more days, something blessed happens. By then, are we in the Millennial reign, at the wedding banquet, the Coronation? And by then, Satan is punished, the world is liberated, we come into our own.

And Daniel will be there, says the last verse of his book. Rising from the dead with the saints who are raptured from earth will be the revered prophet, his new body strong and intact, his questions all answered. And I for one look forward to meeting him! The announcement of his presence there, by the way, confirms to us that his *entire prophecy* was indeed about the "end of days."

5. JOHN: REVELATION 13

Have you ever considered just how much Daniel and John have in common? As young men, both had a personal relationship with the Lord. They were both considered beloved of God. Defiantly strong for the Lord as young men, they both grew into long-term servants of God whose ministry involved prophecy. Both lived until their 90's, when both received the vision of the end of the world, much of which overlaps. Both received these visions as men in captivity to their respective Empires.

Their prophecies were given by the same Spirit, so you would expect common threads running through both. Away, please! with the notion that John was an intuitive thinker who created his own wild vision of the end of the world, with generous borrowings from Daniel's work. I've actually heard that garbage in church settings, and it makes me sick to my stomach.

John was an old ex-fisherman, a life-time disciple of Jesus, and a man full of the Holy Ghost. He was appointed of God to be one of twelve men to lay the foundational teaching stones of the church. His book of Revelation was placed last in the list of accepted books for a reason. And the warning within the book of "don't add-don't subtract" has led all true believers of Jesus to understand that John has been given the final word to the church. Oh how we need to listen!

But in the portions we will hear, there will be a clear resemblance to the tune the Spirit played through Daniel, and thus John will serve as confirmation of what we have learned so far. Let us turn to Revelation chapter 13.

John here sees a beast rising from the sea. Daniel (chapter seven) saw the four winds of heaven stirring up the "Great Sea" out of which came four beasts, the fourth of which was the same as the one before us now. The Great Sea is the Mediterranean Sea. The fourth beast of Daniel and John's beast here are meant to represent the final world power before Christ comes back. Most recognize this to be the power that incorporated all powers before it, centered in the Mediterranean region. So when John sees his beast here, he connects with Daniel in identifying him with the last formation of the Roman animal.

John's beast has seven heads. This characteristic is missing from Daniel's, yet the total number of heads seen by Daniel is also seven, if one includes all four beasts that he saw. The Spirit's object in the Daniel beast seems to be to predict what world powers are coming, one at a time, whereas in John we are being shown a conglomerate of all the world powers at once. The seven heads when thought of as kingdoms are normally considered to be, in chronological order, Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the 10-nation confederation that flows out of Rome at the end. Following Daniel's order, we would start with Babylon, then go to Medo-Persia, then instead of Greece alone would be the four divisions of the Grecian Empire: Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, and finally Rome (in both of its forms.) I must reserve judgment for now as to which of these lists is the correct one for Biblical purposes. Nevertheless, the "heads" of the beast are key elements in identifying antichrist later.

Back to Revelation 13. The beast has ten horns. So does Daniel's. The number ten in Daniel's and John's prophecies is always referring to a ten-nation confederation flowing out of the final world power, Rome. So it is in Daniel 2 and 7, the statue and the animals, toes and horns. Ten. Rome will be colossal and powerful at

first. We will remember her might and authority in the first centuries. It will then shrink to the background noise of human history, stretching as those long legs of the statue and then resurfacing as a pair of feet with ten toes. The imagery is perfect. We are headed for another Roman Empire, somehow divided into ten parts. Each part will have its own crown, or seat of government. Thus the beast we see has ten crowns.

Ten nations, somehow bonded together, part strong like iron, says Daniel, part not so strong, like clay. Many have been the speculations: Democracies and Muslim-style kingdoms merging to form a super-power? An awesome nightmare, don't you think, combining the wealth of Europe and the passion of Mohammed's men? Is not Europe being overrun by Islam this very moment? But I merely speculate. We need to get back to the main discussion...

Notice that it is the heads and not the nations (horns) that have a blasphemous name. The world powers, and one man in particular in each of these powers have risen to fame on the basis of hatred for and emulation of the Deity we serve. An anti-christ, so to speak, in every Empire, every generation. We have them in our day. They will continue to rise and be obviously the enemy until the final manifestation comes, and by the elect will be easily identified.

But wait. The picture before us is very similar to the one John painted in his last chapter, Revelation 12, verse 3. And this chapter 12 beast is called by the author, the Devil. So is this beast from the sea in chapter 13 also the Devil? No. The clue is in 13:2. The Devil gives the beast before us his authority. This person rising in the Mediterranean region of our planet is Satan, but Satan incarnated in human flesh. This is Satan's masterpiece. Often the Enemy has been *behind* these God- and Christ-haters. But to my knowledge never before has he been *inside* such a man, directing every step.

This he will do, I believe, to replicate as exactly as possible what the Father did in our Lord Jesus. Lived in Him, directed and empowered Him. Satan's object is to be so like Christ as to deceive the very elect, if that were possible. (But God will find a way to alert the elect!)

The beast. He is described in verse 2 as having characteristics of leopard, bear, and lion, the very same as the first three animals seen by Daniel. So this beast is a combination of every power that has ever reigned. Daniel sees the only world power that has ever ruled from the end of Greece's time until the end of history (Rome) as a separate animal. John sees that same animal as having combined all former rule in itself. But the images are essentially the same.

In 13:3, 12, and 14 we are introduced to the idea of a resurrected ruler (some say kingdom, but a king and a kingdom are inseparable). Thankfully this concept is not new to us, as we have been studying Daniel's history-gap-history pattern. Simply put, but how simply believed I am not sure: *Someone who reigned before will reign again*. More of this in chapter 17. Let's look closer at what happens.

In verse 3, one of the heads of the beast receives a (potentially) fatal wound. We have identified the heads above in terms of nations of the world. But in chapter 17 they are also considered to be individual men. Which way shall we go when thinking about interpretation? I think we need to see the context of the chapter. The world sees this resurrected entity and concludes that it will be impossible to make war with such a one (13:4)! That sounds more like a man than a nation does it not? Let's see how it fits as we move on.

Again in verses 3, 12, and 14, there is indication that a deadly wound is healed, one who should have died does not, or seemingly dies but comes back from the dead. I am not totally certain that this person experiences an actual death, due to the phrase “*as if it had been*” mortally wounded. Is this sleight of hand? The false prophet, another beast described later in this chapter, is working all sorts of magic tricks, even trying to duplicate Moses’ and Elijah’s command over elements, such as fire. Could such a one conjure up a death experience for antichrist, so that the world could see it and the resultant resurrection? One thinks of the temptations of Christ and the way Satan tried to get Jesus to try death-defying acts so as to prove His Messiahship. Will Satan resort to these methods?

Whatever, the wound is made by a sword, yet Antichrist lives. The world is in awe. Now, some have speculated that what we are seeing here is Sennacherib, the great Assyrian “antichrist” figure, who decimated Israel and incurred God’s wrath. The story of his demise and slaying *by the sword* is actually told in your Bible (II Kings 19:35-37)!

It is hard to take lightly such a story, as it seems to tie in. I believe that after you have heard the evidence in chapter 17 you too will be convinced that *someone* will rise from the dead. Why not Sennacherib? As I pondered this for awhile I began to imagine Sennacherib, or even Antiochus for that matter, trying to prove to people in our generation that he is a resurrected ruler. We remember Saddam Hussein’s attempts to convince us that he was in some way Nebuchadnezzar of old Babylon. The man is crazy, we guessed. Appeal to history is not a powerful tool. It seems to me the man of sin will have to prove his worthiness by a miraculous episode in our own day. And his right hand man, the false prophet, can easily see to that.

I cannot ignore what I have seen of antichrist in the book of Daniel, especially since the Lord Himself has told us to go to that book for answers to the mystery. Though I do not want to write off every other idea, I prefer to stay with Antiochus, as opposed to Sennacherib, about whom little else is said in Scripture. Now, Antiochus died a horrid death. The disease which took him was similar to that suffered by Herod in the book of Acts (12:20-24). He was eaten of worms. But as with all lost and saved persons, a new body is reserved so that persons can be blessed or judged eternally. When Antiochus returns from the dead it will be with a new imperishable body, one that can indeed endure any sort of fatal wound.

As to the use of the sword in our generation, it is not so difficult to imagine any longer, is it? With the Muslim ascent to power, we can readily envision not only the sword, but beheadings, prophesied for believers of the last days.

We readily remember from Daniel the details John now points out in verse 5, the blasphemous words, the three and one half years. No question now who this is. Six hundred years earlier, an angel pointed the finger to a historical figure described in great detail in Daniel 11 and 12, mentioned his blasphemy, mentioned his time limit. It all comes together. Even if only his name, Epiphanes, was on his head, it would be blasphemy enough. He claims to be the manifested son of the living God.

“Great is the mystery of godliness,” says Paul (I Timothy 3:16) “God was manifest in the flesh!” But the mystery of iniquity is that there will be one claiming this “manifested” title for himself and demanding that all give him the honor deserved only by Jesus.

I think I need not detail the rest of the chapter 13 discussion. It is very clear that the one who makes war with the saints (13:7, Daniel 7:21) and who receives worship worldwide (13:8) is none other than the same one who rose to power in the prophecies of Daniel. In chapter 17 I will show you why I consider Antiochus Epiphanes to be the resurrected person who will fulfill this destiny.

6. JOHN: REVELATION 17

The famous harlot, the apostate church-become-governmental-power known as “Babylon the Great” is sitting on a beast in chapter 17. Yes, it is the same creature that we saw in chapter 13. It has seven heads and ten horns, and other characteristics that mark it as the Satan-man, not just as Satan. I have given much time in a previous work (The Scarlet Threads series) to describing the harlot system centered in Rome. I want to skip here to the concise descriptions given by an unnamed angel to a marveling bewildered apostle (note this other similarity to Daniel!). It is in verse 8:

“The beast that you saw [the Satan-man] was [he once existed on the planet], and is not [in John’s day, he is not alive] and will ascend out of the bottomless pit [he will come back to earth from the grave or a special holding place where he has been preserved all these centuries] and go to perdition [placed by Jesus in the Lake of Fire.]” That is not so easy to believe, but it is not hard to understand. Let us learn to ignore our brain if it conflicts with our faith. Someone who lived before the apostle John is going to return to earth. Once more note that Satan is trying to do what Jesus did in as many ways as possible. Jesus died and rose again. Satan’s man died but will rise again. [And if the people don’t believe that he can demonstrate it again.]

Where will Antiochus come from, if he has a new body? We know his ancient nationality, but when antichrist comes back will he start over as a baby again? I think not, unless the pagan doctrine of reincarnation is allowed to supersede the Biblical concept of

resurrection in the end time culture, and there is an accompanying miracle to confirm it.

It seems to me that he will come in his new body, filled with his new master. They have had much time to work out the details of his appearing, as he waits in the Pit. Yes, Antiochus died and went to the place all dead ones go, or so we presume. His spirit only awaits uniting to his renewed body. In that, he is like every human. Then like all of us he rises to be judged. The only difference is that he will be permitted several years to wreak havoc on earth before his public judgment.

The world will be mesmerized by this man, from his mysterious origins, to his invincible body to his Hitler-like captivating ways as an orator.

The Spirit gives us yet another way to look at this mystery in verse 9. We are told that we may look at the seven heads as seven mountains on which the woman sits. This could be the seven actual hills of Rome or the seven world powers that the beast stands for. Or, says the angel we can look back in history for seven *kings*.

Now of all the kings that have ever sat on a throne, how do we narrow the search to seven? I'm not sure I have the answer fully, but I believe that to qualify for this office, a king would have to have had severely negative relationships with Israel, be defiant to the God of Israel, and perhaps even be mentioned or alluded to in Scripture. Probably the kings would have to match the seven world powers we have identified above as heads. That would bring us to the Pharaoh (Raamses?) of Egypt, Sennacherib of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar of Baylonia, Xerxes (Ahasuerus, who signed a bill to eliminate the Jews!) of Persia, Antiochus Epiphanes of the Greek Empire, Domitian of Rome, and the future ruler of Revived Rome.

These are seven men/heads for whom Israel was a problem to be solved. Seven antichrist figures of history.

The angel explaining all this to John says next that five of the above kings have fallen, are dead. One of them exists, is alive in John's day. One of them is yet to come, but will only reign a short time. This fact led many to speculate that it is a *future* ruler who will be slain and rise from the dead. That is, number seven comes, dies, rises, and is immediately number eight! But that will not fit with what we just learned, that the beast *was alive* already but *is not now*. Whoever he is, he *pre-dated John* who lived in the first century.

Now, all seven of these rulers either have failed or will fail in their goal of world dominion and annihilation of Israel. Even the seventh will not succeed in sufficiently hurting the Jews. His reign will be short, to make way soon for the eighth. But are there not seven? Yes there are seven. But there are eight. *This is the heart of the mystery*. One of those seven men listed above is returning to be number eight. He was one of the seven. He is number eight. *Let it sink in, and your choices for "who is the antichrist?" are significantly narrowed*.

Next we learn that the final Roman kingdom is energized at the very end of all things as a power-base for antichrist. He seems to take three nations very quickly (Daniel 7:8). After they have had their short day, forever ruining "Babylon," the worldwide politico-religious system, they themselves will be destroyed, along with their master, by Christ at His return.

We must now examine the short work of Paul to add details found nowhere else in Scripture and, again, to confirm that what

began in the Olivet discourse, pointing us to Daniel and Antiochus, will stand the test of every available writing on this subject.

7. PAUL: II THESSALONIANS 2

Did Paul ever deal with the question of the antichrist? Most assuredly. And as one might expect, this passage, II Thessalonians 2, has been abused quite a bit through the years. Let's look at the first 12 verses.

In the first place, Paul meant in no way to divide the coming of Jesus from our gathering to Him. If he had meant to do this, surely He would not mention these events in reverse order. (I'm using the mentality of the pre-trib people.) In fact, the order is correct, and it happens all at the same moment. Jesus comes to earth, and on His way to us we are gathered up from everywhere.

The church in Thessalonica had caught hold of a rumor that God's people had already been raptured up! Paul writes this note to them to settle forever the church's thinking about some secret unknowable rapture. He does in fact what Jesus does with this question. He places *before the coming of Jesus* a very clear *sign*. Remember Jesus' sign? *The abomination of desolation*. For Paul, it is the one who *commits* that horrible sacrilege. Thus it is the same sign!

In his further comments he uses terminology straight from the book that Jesus referred to, the book of the prophet Daniel! For example compare 2:4 to Daniel 11:36:

2:4, "...who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped..."

11:36, “...*he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods...*”

Two events, says Paul, must come before the day of Christ’s return. They can be viewed as two parts of the same event. First a slow but clear backsliding of God’s people. I believe it could be so large in its scope that the Bible will be largely a forgotten, unknown Book. Remember the conditions at Jesus’ *first* coming! The Scriptures had been hidden from the eyes of men so greatly that the clear prophecies regarding the when and where of His appearing were not commonly known.

So it will be, I believe, when He comes again. The Gospel message, though having gone everywhere, will have lost its grip on multiplied millions, as one can see in Europe and other parts of the West today. Christian values in society will be swept away by the “newer thinking”. There will be a blending of church and world to the extent that lukewarmness will prevail and straightforward Biblical truths will be largely ridiculed or ignored.

Thus it will be easy for the second sign to occur, the rise of a lawless society headed by a lawless antichrist. The spirit of the age will be liberty, which easily erodes into lawless ways, the “no one can tell me what to do” mentality.

Thus will rise, says Paul, “the lawless one”, “the son of perdition.” The self-exaltation and blasphemy which will be his hallmark have been documented not only in Daniel but in John’s work. The Spirit is saying the same thing many times, so we will not miss it.

But Paul adds a few very important facts from the revelations given him personally.

First he indicates the difference between what men like Antiochus (of old) and Titus did, historically, and what antichrist will do. He claims that antichrist will profane an end- time temple, not by placing an idol in it, not by offering a pig at its altars, but by entering that holy structure *himself* and proclaiming to the world that *he is the God of Israel!* He will claim to be God in the flesh!

Paul jumps from that astounding fact to the fact that the Thessalonians should now know (since he visited them and told them, or because of something he just shared) what is holding back the rise of antichrist. If they should know, perhaps we should know too. This is not meant to be a secret. Yet this passage is under contention in most church circles that discuss it. It is as though they too have unwittingly entered into the mystery of the holding back of information, as Daniel was told to do, so that the information would not be lost on persons who did not need it. The more our “scholars” try to unlock these verses, the more bound they become!

The prevalent view is that the one holding back, or restraining, the antichrist and thus Christ’s return, is the Holy Spirit. The teaching goes that when the Spirit, which lives in the church, rises with the church and out of the world, before antichrist and before the tribulation, to a safe place in Heaven, then antichrist, who has been waiting for this very thing, is now free to do whatever he wants! He will then rise to power.

Does not compute.

- The Spirit’s presence is not confined to the church. Remember in your own life how the Spirit came from outside of you to the inside of you to bring you to Christ? Before you were in Christ, the Spirit was working with you.

- The Bible already says that there will be a *falling away* of truth and righteousness to allow for his rise. It is not the removal of bodies but the removal of faith that gives antichrist the nod in any generation. The Bible gives several examples of Satan fully working his work on the earth, with God's permission, and the Holy Spirit still here. His work on Job and Jesus are two glaring examples. Satan does not need the Spirit's removal, only the Spirit's permission, to do his own evil will on earth.
- Without the Spirit in the earth, how can those be saved who will indeed come to Christ during the Tribulation period? All of those who contend for a pre-tribulation rapture agree that there are indeed saints here during that evil time, but they refuse to allow that they are part of the Body of Christ, the Church! If they are saints, holy ones, they had to be saved by the Holy Spirit.

I believe that the concept of restraining is not all that complicated. In fact John the revelator gives us a classic example in Revelation 9. There, an angel is given a key to the Bottomless Pit. When the key is used, there is unleashed on earth a plague of locusts. We are told later that it is out of this same Pit that will come the beast. Cannot we assume that a similar angel is now restraining this evil man, and that at a command from Jesus he will open that Pit once more, and free the one who is now being restrained there?

Another key example is back in the book of Daniel (10-11), where Gabriel tells Daniel that he can only stay a short time because he has to get back into the heavenlies to help Michael fight with the demon spirits of Persia and Greece. Angels under God's

direction are restraining world powers all the time, so that everything is done at "the appointed time."

I believe that he who now restrains, using Paul's language (2:7), is indeed an *angelic* force keeping antichrist in place until the exactly correct time. When the angel is told to step aside ("he is taken out of the way", 2:7) the lawless one will be revealed.

That tells us that the lawless one was being held prisoner in Paul's day (he who *now* restrains, 2:7). This fact alone rules out the possibility that the coming seventh world emperor, still future in Paul's day and ours, will be "killed with the sword" and rise again as antichrist immediately.

Paul shows us, further, what is revealed by John about how antichrist will surface as a world leader. It seems that every step will be prefaced by a lying wonder or miracle. The part of the world that does not know the true God will have no choice but to believe that this man *is God*.

Remember that Paul saw all of this before John did, aided only by Daniel's prophecy, the Gospel accounts circulating, and the messages the Spirit gave to him, perhaps as a part of that mysterious trip he took to the third heaven (II Corinthians 12). His word serves as the final confirmation of all we have found.

CONCLUSIONS

And what *have* we found, exactly? One last review of the important points:

- Jesus says this age will begin to come to an end shortly following the world's greatest catastrophe, which itself follows the revealing of the abomination of desolation.
- Jesus points us to the prophet Daniel for preliminary definitions of that abomination.
- In Daniel we are introduced to Antiochus Epiphanes who began an anti-God, anti-Jew campaign decades before Christ appeared.
- Gabriel leads us to believe that though Antiochus began his career in ancient history, his final blasphemous rise to power will be at the end of all things.
- The abomination of desolation, the sacking of Jerusalem, the persecution of believers, spoken of by Daniel the prophet is fully orchestrated by Antiochus in a three and one half year period of supernatural power.
- John confirms all by using the same visual demonstration that there will arise such an evil man, who will do the same destruction, the same persecution, the same blasphemies, in the same time frame as Daniel has already recorded. He will even rise to power from the same "Great Sea." John and Daniel agree.

- John lets us know that the final world dictator will be one who has been raised from the dead, thus allowing for one who began in antiquity to end in the last days.
- Paul agrees with all of the above, using the man of sin as the sign that must happen before Jesus comes.
- Paul says that even now this one is being held back, so that he will be revealed at the right time in history.

The evidence is then clear and concise. There are things all along the way that we cannot quite figure out. Like, exactly how shall he appear? But then, we believe Elijah shall return and we do not allow that question to stop us from believing it. Our faith tells us that, as a detail is needed, it will be provided.

For now it seems to me important for us to take on a last-days mind-set that is more accurate than that with which we were raised. It demands more faith, more acceptance of the Word as is, less explaining away of hard things. But a solid faith has always demanded this. May the Lord keep our eyes open, ready to see and know what is happening in God's plan.

EPILOGUE

There are many antichrists. The apostle John who gave us much of the antichrist literature lets us know that from the first century on there will be in this last hour those who will be anti-God, anti-Christ (I John 2:18-23). These persons can be politicians aiming for power and wealth, public figures of all sorts in the secular world. Or they can be teachers in our churches (II John 7). These heretics will promote the idea that God did not become flesh, or that Jesus did not die for us, or that there was no Jesus, and a host of other lies. You may label them as John did: antichrists.

And of course, the coming of antichrists precedes the coming of the real Christ in our lives. We are forever surrounded by moments of opportunity for Jesus to come to us. He can come in the Spirit or through His Word. He will one day come to us in death. And this Jesus can be served today in the same way as when antichrist later will be defeating saints of God. We can choose to follow or deny Him every day.

So the cautions and warnings that would apply to that last generation must apply now. When you see antichrists, look even harder for Jesus. When you see antichrists, be aware that you are being deceived. Believe nothing of what this antichrist-dominated world system presents, believe only what God has said.

But none of the above, the existence of antichrists, the daily deaths of believers, none of it nullifies the reality of the *one antichrist* who will come at the end. Antichrist is coming. John said it. To him the existence of previews only proved the main event would be soon. He believed he lived in the very last hour. So do we.

Only his grace and waiting on lost souls prevents him from giving the signal to the restraining angel. Is he waiting on you? On a friend of yours or family member that you care about dearly? Don't stop praying, don't stop trying to bring them in as his grace waits...

Few will recognize antichrist, even though the evidence abounds. Many believers will have fallen away. Faithful ones will be systematically weeded out and decapitated. The world will grow very dark, even as it is in some of its corners today. Let us who are of the light walk in that light, warning all of the judgment that shall surely come on all humanity.

APPENDICES

A. THE DOCTRINE OF IMMINENCE

The doctrine of imminence, that is, the joyful expectation of the soon meeting with our Lord Jesus Christ, has taken some turns which, in my opinion, were never intended by the writers and Fount of sacred Scripture. I would like to define the doctrine, and examine its true meanings, in the light of the Spirit-inspired men of God who first told us about Jesus' return.

Definitions

The word "imminence", like "rapture" and "trinity", is not found in the English Bible. That in itself is not proof of anything. But it seems to me worthy of note that believers often label doctrines based on the descriptions *they* have given those teachings rather than labeling them based on what *the Scriptures* say. For example, though the term "rapture" certainly describes a Biblical concept, it does not in its normal usage today convey a Biblical meaning. Those who speak of *rapture* in our day speak of an added coming of the Lord seven years before His final coming. But even they would have to agree that at the final second coming, believers will be snatched up in the air (that is, raptured) to be with Jesus where He is. Yet rapturists would never refer to this final event as "rapture" at all.

So it is with imminence. There is an English meaning, a Scriptural meaning, and a third meaning that has been assigned by those who have assumed a theological position about the word. The third meaning, theology attached, is something like: "Jesus can come at *any* time. Do not look for signs. Do not worry about times and seasons. Any day is as good as the next for the rapture of the

Church." And yes, here the two doctrines, rapture and imminence, come together and feed one another. I have dealt with the absolute lack of Scriptural foundation for a pre-tribulation rapture in my book Caught Up, But When? . I would now like to challenge the current thinking regarding imminence.

Our word "imminent", says one dictionary, means "likely to happen without delay. Impending. Threatening. Often said of danger, evil, or menace." So from the outset we have a problem with the label given by man. Theologians when speaking of imminence are not talking of some evil *threatening* event . They are talking about the benign appearing of Jesus for His own, seven years before the return of Jesus. But as far as they are concerned the return, which is indeed a threatening time for humanity, will never be imminent in this or any sense. To speak therefore of an imminent - that is to say, menacing, threatening rapture is not the best English, to say the least. I believe it to be poor theology also, as the remainder of this discussion will point out.

So the concept of imminence as it appears in pre-tribulation rapture settings is simply that Jesus could come *at any time* and catch up His Bride, the Church, into the heavenlies. Unlike the pre-trib doctrine itself, the imminence teaching does have a number of Scriptures that seem to point in the intended direction. It is fair to say, though, that there are other Scriptures that speak of *signs* in relationship to Jesus' coming , and not imminence . The solution to this dilemma for the pre-tribulation people has been to allow for two comings, one by surprise, and one with clear signals. It could be said that pre-tribulationism arose to explain this seeming conflict of the Holy Record. But alas! The explanation creates even more confusion, for there simply is no one Scripture that spells out such a thing as two comings. For the record, there *is* a verse that points to the *second* coming, but none that imagines a third! "...To those who

eagerly await for Him He will appear a *second time*... (Hebrews 9:28)"

It behooves us to look at all the Scriptures being heralded as teachers of imminence, to see if they say what they are purported to say. Why not begin with texts that use the word "quickly" or "soon" in reference to the appearing of Jesus.

Tachu

Using the King James Version, there are 17 usages of this word. In every case the Greek "tachu" or a derivative is used. This word family makes no distinction between *speed* of action and *manner* of action. Where English would differentiate between the concepts of "soon" and "speedily", *tachu* can mean either.

In Matthew 5:25, Jesus tells us that when we have an enemy, we should agree with him, *tachu*. In Matthew 28:7, the angel says to go *tachu* and tell the disciples of the resurrection. Notice the two variations already. When one agrees with any future enemy, he ought to do it *in a speedy manner*. That is not to say that one has an enemy at this moment, but when one does, there is to be no lingering, no hesitation in one's actions. This speaks of how. But the message of the announcing of the resurrection is a right now event, speaking of when. Jesus has risen. My disciples don't know it. Go immediately, *now!* You see how the word can lend itself freely to either direction of thought.

Revelation 2:5 and 16 speak of warnings by Jesus to sinning church members. They are told that if they do not repent, He comes *tachu*. We know that Jesus is not saying he is coming soon, but only after a space of time in which they can repent. And when He comes, it will be sudden, immediate. We know these verses are not talking about the end-time coming of Jesus, yet note the similar language,

and how Jesus promises to come locally in judgment in the same language that He promises His entire Church.

There have been many unrepentant churches through history. Jesus did not come back, but He did come to these churches. In the Spirit realm He confronted that church and stopped its forward progress. Invisible, still He was there doing His work. And His promise to come in judgment against wayfaring saints remains to this day. Believers may think they are getting away with it, and suddenly, life is over. Jesus has come for that lukewarm unfruitful saint. In an instant Jesus says, I am here!

So yes, there is a sense of imminence that every believer must deal with, namely the personal judgment of Christ on the personal believer who may be cut off if he does not repent. See John 15:1-8 for a discussion of branches that need to be cut *back* or cut *off*. In that sense alone does the Bible speak of an imminent return of Christ. But regarding the appearing and/or revelation of Jesus Christ we see clues leading us *away from* imminence as it is taught today. More of this later.

For now, what are we to make of statements made later in the Apocalypse (chapter 22) , *not given to a local church*, but seemingly announced to all Christians of all time:

v. 7: "Behold I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

v. 12: "And behold I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every one according to his work."

v. 20: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Declarations like these deserve our notice and meditation. What could He possibly mean, since 1,900 years have passed? Do these statements teach imminence? There are at least three interpretations advanced by those who study eschatology:

1. *John expected Jesus to come back soon and put these words into Jesus' mouth.* Persons who teach things such as this do not believe in the power of the Spirit of God to give us a true accounting of spiritual things. They believe that revelation is dependent as much on man's contriving as God's breathing. Those who believe in a dependable written documents must reject this first choice outright, though it may seem the logical one from a human standpoint. No, this Book came from God.

2. Jesus is saying that he will come soon (*tachu*) by Heaven's standards, not by man's ideas of time. After all, a "day is with the Lord as a thousand years," said Moses (Psalm 90:4) and later Peter (II Peter 3:8). This is the commonly accepted view, and we certainly cannot anathematize it, for it brings in Scriptural truth to attest to it. But one wonders whether it is possible to have a readable account of spiritual truth if it is constantly necessary to question whether a thing being said is literally true or not. Could not Jesus say what he meant and have us understand it too, even though it be hidden a bit by a word with a double meaning? It is true that believers who read these things in the first centuries certainly did believe that Jesus was coming soon in the normal sense. But they were wrong. And they have been wrong in every other generation ! Could they not be wrong today too?

3. "Soon" is not used in the text, though *tachu* could bear that meaning. Instead the more ambiguous "quickly" , also supported by *tachu*, is supplied by the translators. This seems to be a better way to look at it. "In a speedy manner" is what Jesus is telling us

through the centuries. And there is evidence that Jesus has used this thought of speed, and not imminence, elsewhere. Let's paraphrase Matthew 24:23ff :

"If people tell you that Jesus is back, don't believe them! They'll say he's in the desert or some inner room waiting to be manifested. No! Here's how I will come: like the lightning (*Tachu*)! One second not there, the next second, there. Or like a bird of prey. First a dead animal, then immediately after the birds are there ready to eat."

But first there must be the rolling in of the storm. Then the lightning. First there must be the hunting and killing of the animal, then the vultures. Delay is implied in both of these illustrations, along with sudden appearance.

In the case of Christ's coming, first there is business to be taken care of on the planet. The preaching of the Gospel must go into all the world until the last person that Jesus saw before the foundation of the world has been called and sealed. He *cannot* come until that time! The nations must be aligned in such a way that they look exactly like they do in the picture given to us in Sacred Text concerning the end of time. And the Scriptures themselves give other conditions of Christ's coming, which we will address a little later.

Tachu. Without delay? Or in a speedy manner? Which is it to be? If the former, it seems to this writer difficult to justify 2000 years of waiting, knowing how Jesus talks to us in plain understandable terms . Would Jesus say to every generation, "I'm coming without delay!" and then delay for centuries? Would He stretch the truth to motivate His people? No, He comes quickly, *suddenly*, without fanfare. Not as some liberal scholarship theorizes, that He will slowly be recognized by the Body of Christ to

be here. One day, they say, we will look around and realize, after many years of this growing awareness, that He is among us. They confuse the coming of Christ with Pentecost and the subsequent workings of the Spirit. Oh yes, he has come to us already in that sense. But His Body returns *tachu!*, in an instant.

Thief in the night

But, say you, shall Jesus not come as a thief in the night? Does not such a figure imply that there is no way we can know when Jesus will come, that He will surprise all? Not all, but many. There are at least six “thief” passages in Scripture. Let’s look at them.

1.-2. In the Gospels, Matthew and Luke give nearly identical accounts of Jesus’ words about the thief. In Matthew (24:43-44) Jesus says that if someone knows that a thief is planning a visit, he prepares himself for that visit. No thief ever surprised a man waiting for him to arrive! Jesus goes on to tell His people to watch and be ready, since the Son of Man will return at an hour one could not guess.

It is clear from the words of Jesus that “imminence”, in its truest meaning, a threat of danger, only applies to the ignorant, to the un-watching, the un-caring. Yes, multitudes will be caught unawares, sleeping in their dark patterns of sin, woefully and willfully ignorant of the promises of God and the clues Jesus gave His own disciples about His coming. These multitudes will be surprised beyond measure when Jesus comes. But, says Jesus, there is the possibility of a spiritually intelligent believer getting wind of the fact that something is coming, and being ready for that event.

In connection with this it is important to explore another passage of Jesus’ words before we go to Paul’s. In Matthew 24:45-51 Jesus talks about two kinds of servants. There are faithful and

wise ones who have been entrusted with the proper and timely feeding of the household. At the time the Master returns for the evening meal, they will be doing what they were supposed to do. The timing of the Master’s coming was not an issue with these servants. They simply served until he came and were appropriately rewarded at that time. No surprise, no threat, only pure joy when the Master came.

The other servants were evil from the start, though they seemed well-behaved when the Master was around. When he was gone their true nature emerged, and when they saw that the time of the master’s journey was unexpectedly long, they got even worse, until they forgot about the return altogether, and were consumed by the shocking advent of the ruler of the house.

Here then are other elements to consider when discussing Christ’s return. First, faithfulness, and not exact time reckoning, is the main issue. Second, only evil men will be surprised at Jesus’ coming. Thirdly there is here one of the Bible’s clues that the second coming of Christ will indeed be delayed in human terms, namely the long journey of the master of the house.

3. Paul is in perfect agreement with Jesus’ pronouncement about thieves and varying approaches to them. He too sees two groups of people in I Thessalonians 5:2-4. “For you yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night...But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.” The multitudes will be shocked. The believers will be totally aware of what is going on. The pattern holds. Imminence is a threat to the unschooled in the prophecies of Christ, the uncaring.

4. In II Peter the different groups are not so obvious. Peter makes a blanket statement that the “day of the Lord” will come as “a thief in the night.” Later he encourages believers to holiness and watchfulness. Men called to watch, however, are in the same category as the ones Jesus and Paul mentioned: they are ready! And one disturbing fact about this passage for those who believe that “imminence” and the “pre-tribulation rapture” go hand in hand: this passage is clearly about the *final coming of Christ*, and not the (supposed) coming seven years earlier! There is judgment, and fire, and new heavens and earth, etc. Why then talk of a thief in the night here, when even according to pre-trib people, saints on earth during the Tribulation *know* when Christ will come? Because even when there is pending judgment on a world gone crazy, most of the world will have lost all touch with the promises –and threats - of Almighty God.

5. John the Revelator in Revelation 3:3 quotes Jesus as telling the Sardis Church to be warned about a coming thief. Yet Sardis lived in another age. Even those who divide Church history into ages based on these seven churches of Revelation cannot by any stretch place Sardis at the end of history! So the “thief” concept applies in any time when there are Christians who are too busy to watch for Jesus’ coming. And the promise of a coming is not only Jesus’ bodily return, but His personal coming to believers or groups in judgment and death, as we established above.

6. Jesus gives the final word about the approaching thief in Revelation 16:15. Here again the context is the *post-tribulation* coming of Christ to earth. And here again is the encouragement to keep watching so as not to be surprised. “Behold I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

We conclude then that it is possible to watch for Christ’s coming. First we walk in holiness to such an extent that we will not be ashamed at His coming, no matter when it is. We must also allow that His coming may be merely a personal one for us. Peter knew he was going to die (II Peter 1:14) before the coming of Christ, and that knowledge may be communicated to us also.

Another conclusion we gather from all of this is that there must be a generation who will be ready for His coming in a secondary sense. These are the ones who have been watching *the signs* Jesus and Paul gave for Christ’s return. They are men who know the times and the seasons prophesied hundreds of years ago. Do you know those signs, dear reader? Jesus made sure that the answer to His apostles’ questions regarding “signs” would be duly recorded for your perusal. Have you discovered them? Are you looking for them? Let’s look together, in Matthew 24.

The signs

I summarize the relevant thoughts of Matthew 24:2-29:

The disciples came to Jesus privately and asked Him more concerning His comments about the coming destruction of the Temple area buildings. “Tell us when these things will happen and what will be the sign of your coming back and the end of the world,” they said. After giving them signals to look for all through history such as false teachers and prophets, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and persecution, he became *very specific* as he approached the very end, and thus the answer to their question.

1. First, the Gospel must be preached in all the world. 2. When that has been accomplished, look to Jerusalem for the “abomination of desolation” prophesied by Daniel. 3. This will trigger world-wide catastrophe, and even more arrivals of false

messengers. *After* this unprecedented tribulation which will even reach to the very heavens, I will come.

The disciples wanted specifics. Jesus could have said, as He was to say later on His way to Heaven, "It is not necessary to know these things. Just go and wait for the Spirit, then be my witnesses everywhere! That's all that matters."

And yes, the Spirit-filled life of witnessing Jesus is all that matters still, ultimately. But even knowing that does not erase the fact that at one point in His ministry the disciples, the first Christians, the foundation stones of the Church, asked specific questions and got specific answers about the coming of Christ. *This original church of 12 was told nothing of a secret rapture.* They were not told here that there is no way of knowing when Jesus will come. They were given for all time, to be put in writing, an outline of history with a close-up of the last several years of that history. This summary of things from the Master perfectly matches what Daniel had already said, and what the apostle Paul would say later. The Spirit tells us: Not only should you watch, I will tell you what to watch for! And when you see these things happening you will be able to rejoice!

Now how did Daniel's prophecies lead the way? Why would the very Son of God refer to Daniel's work in answering the apostle's questions? Let's look at Daniel 8:9-19. Again I summarize. This is not an exact quote:

Daniel sees a vision of a male goat with a large horn. The horn is broken and four other horns grow in its place. Out of one of the four horns grows a little horn which grows up to be a mighty power on earth. He exalts himself against God as though he were God and stops the daily sacrifices. While Daniel is contemplating all this, an angel informs him that these things will take place *at*

the time of the end. Later, in chapters 11 and 12, the same (evil) man is seen attempting to conquer the world. An incomparable time of trouble arises. Then comes judgment, and the final Kingdom of God is established.

Daniel sees the same man, the same event, the same world-wide trouble, and the same revelation of Jesus to the billions of earth. Nothing secret here. Clearly visible events lead up to the end of this age.

Paul is in perfect agreement. See II Thessalonians 2:2-9, and once more let me paraphrase.

There are people saying that Christ has already come! Don't be deceived. That day will not come unless a great falling away [from the faith] comes first, allowing the man of sin to arise. This man exalts himself above God, even sitting in God's temple! The Lord will destroy him when He comes.

Do you see the pattern? Trouble, man of sin, then Jesus comes. This pattern is attested to by Daniel, Jesus and Paul. None of them talk about a *surprise* for the believers, but the events of the end are spelled out for them so that they can know of His coming. He has no desire to hide it from us, but wants us to be watching history, the Word, current events, looking excitedly for signs of His coming, all the time remembering that such an approach to the coming of Christ in no way sets aside personal preparedness for Jesus to come at any moment for me.

This is not to say that any man can pinpoint the coming of Jesus to the very day and hour, as many have attempted down these centuries. In Mark 13:32 Jesus says that only the Father knows those exact facts. But only three verses before He says (paraphrased), "when you see these things happening (the great

tribulation, the rise of antichrist, the shaking of the heavens) , know that My coming is near, at the very doors. [In fact] the generation that sees the beginning of these specific signs I have given will also see the end of them!”

It would seem we are close. The Gospel travels farther and farther as the days pass. Stirrings in the Middle East are unprecedented. The need for a Temple, the need for a world ruler, it’s all in the making. We may well be in the “times and seasons” spoken of. But Paul says *so emphatically* that that day *will not come* until antichrist rises. Let no man come against the Spirit’s words through Paul.

Let us learn the lesson Jesus taught in the parable of the fig tree. Three times has it been recorded in Scripture for us, matching the importance the Spirit has given to only a handful of Biblical teachings (Matthew 24:32-35, Mark 13:28-30, Luke 21: 29-32) . It must be serious!

When the fig tree, or for that matter, as Luke adds, *any tree*, shows evidence of blossoming, it is obvious that summer is upon us. Don’t know the exact moment it will be ushered in, but it is definitely on the way soon now. Jesus then refers back to the things in the verses just behind the fig tree parable as the “evidences” that have been given us.

He says that Jerusalem shall be the focal point of these evidences. I am well aware of the destruction of Jerusalem that took place in A.D. 70. But careful investigation of Matthew 24 shows that there is an unbroken chain of events from the abomination of desolation, that is, the exaltation of the antichrist in the Temple, to the unprecedented Tribulation, to the advent of Christ in the clouds. There is no break in the action. This is a

prophecy of the end times, and it matches perfectly the series of events foreseen by Daniel. Jerusalem must fall yet again, as Luke portrays even more graphically. When antichrist rises and Jerusalem falls, summer is near. Then will come the true Christ and the new Jerusalem. All we have seen in history so far is only a preview of the final spectacle foreknown by our God.

A long time

Did the Bible *ever* tell us that Jesus would be right back? Let’s look at clues that point the other way.

1. *The far country.* Matthew 25 relates the parable of the man who went to a far country, leaving his servants in charge of the work until he returned. (An abbreviated form of this parable is in Mark 13, and a similar one in Luke 19). It was only after a long time that the lord of those servants returned. This story is said to be a demonstration of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus took that long journey beginning at the ascension, and has left His church to take care of His business. After *a long time* He will return.

2. *The last days.* Peter (II Peter 3) points out that in the last days, days in which Peter did not live, people will laugh at believers because *so much time* has passed since the promise of His return. The last days will be *a long time* from the first days.

3. *Peter prophecies.* Peter did not live with the expectation of the imminent return of Christ. In the first place, Jesus promised Peter that he would lead a long life and then die a death that would glorify God (John 21:18-19). In the second book that bears his name (1:13-14), Peter’s expectation was that he would soon be dying. Notice the mentality. A sure expectation of Jesus’ coming, no doubt! But an equally sure knowledge that certain other events must take place *first*.

4. *Prophecy.* If a prophet says something must happen, it is clear that Jesus will not come until that prophecy is fulfilled. Such a prediction was given in Acts 11:28, where Agabus the prophet foretold a world-wide famine. Surely no one who heard that prophecy believed in an imminent return of Christ.

From the beginning, Jesus never meant, "I'll be right back," when He said, "I come quickly." He meant, "When I come back, it won't be through some slow rise to power, some hidden prolonged entry into the world of men. I will come with the clouds, suddenly, like the eagles, like the lightning."

Yes the early disciples and disciples of every age have lived with a certain expectation that perhaps Jesus will come in our age. This present time is no exception. But it is improper to put into Jesus' words a promise of imminent return, Himself knowing that that return was not at all imminent. Those who have dug deeply into the Word that He left us have eventually found that such imminence is not there.

Does it matter that Jesus might not come today? Isn't it just as true that any one of us could be called out of the body today to meet the Maker? Isn't that a more profitable and verifiable imminence that will keep us watching? James did say, didn't he, that our life is a vapor that appears only for a little while (4:13-16). We are to have such an attitude of imminence about our personal lives that we should never even state a future plan of ours without adding, "If the Lord wills."

Watch

Yes, Jesus calls His followers to watch. Let's take a look at the "watch" Scriptures to see what the Lord is requiring of us.

While Jesus was here, He was especially insistent on watching during the Olivet discourse recorded for us three times (Matthew 24:42 and 25:13, Mark 13:33- 37, and Luke 21:36). In Matthew, the command to *watch* occurs following Jesus' use of Noah as an example of the judgment coming on the earth. Those who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture must agree that here Jesus is calling people to *watch*, not for a surprise snatching away but (for the world) a surprise end of history as we know it. He tells us to *watch* as the master of the house watches *when he knows a thief is coming*. We also know terrible loss is coming, but only to those who are not living for Christ when He comes. In this passage, watching is equated to being ready. It is not concerned with dates and times but a godly life, as the following verses (45-51) point out in speaking of ungodly servants. Far from the joyful expectation of a soon escape from the planet, the command is a call to *holiness* and fear of the Lord lest we too, like the evil servants, be caught unawares.

The exact time of the end of the world is not given us, as also says Mark's account. Mark gives an abbreviated version of the parable of the talents just before the command to *watch*, a command given to the disciples, and to "all", says the text. It is interesting to note throughout that at the time of this speaking, Jesus Himself did not know the Day of His coming. It seems likely that he does now, and that in fact there was much light given to Paul and John about the Day. Those who live in the time spoken of will surely be given light to understand the times. Until then we are all under the blanket command to *watch*, that is, be careful about our lives of holiness.

Luke adds an element that is used by the rapture people to suggest Christians will escape tribulation (21:36).

“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.”

But no such interpretation is warranted. Luke also, in the same context of Matthew and Mark, is speaking of the final judgment, the snare that shall come on all the earth. We are to so order our lives, says Luke, that when Jesus comes to judge the earth we will be caught up to Jesus, stand before him, and be rescued, not from trouble, but from the promised judgment. Yes, that we *will* escape!

The apostle Paul picks up a bit on the “watch” theme in I Corinthians 16:13, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong...” and in I Thessalonians 5:6, specifically talking about end times, “Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.” This is the passage where believers are contrasted to unbelievers as being those who walk in the light, and will therefore know the time of His coming. But notice that they are told to watch even now, so that the patterns of godliness established will serve them well regardless of the time. So it should be said to us.

Finally, John records Jesus’ final usage of the idea of watchfulness in Revelation 3:2-3. “*Be watchful*, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die....remember how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore *if you will not watch*, I will come upon you as a thief...” See again that only those not watching will be unprepared for Jesus’ coming and unaware of the actual event’s nearness.

Imminence as it is taught today is simply not implied in any of these texts. Rather, holiness in every generation is enjoined. Those holy and watching in the final generation will be ready. And they will also be informed, for the Word is clear as to when Jesus comes.

Summary

A belief in imminence, the modern teaching that Jesus could come at any time is reserved for those who have not dug deeply into God’s Word, who in fact often despise deep studies of the Bible in favor of easy fashionable teachings that blast through the Church with regularity. These people have not seen the clear pattern of events that will take place before the return of Jesus to the earth, and prefer to believe that they will be escaping before these events take place. So, they reason, why study the details, if I’ll be gone anyway?

Though all should be ready to go *to Jesus* with their next breath, there is a clearly spelled-out time when Jesus will return *to us*. The details are in Daniel, Matthew, both Thessalonians, and Revelation. I commend my readers to go to these books to discover what God has said.

When Jesus comes, He comes *suddenly*. Many will be ready, having watched the signs unfold. However, true believers in every age leading up to the last one, will go to be with the Lord equally ready, for they will have discovered that it is not the return of Jesus but the love and life of Jesus that motivates them day by day to be holy and obedient, always abounding in the work of the Lord. May it be so with you, dear reader.

B. FURTHER DESCRIPTIONS OF ANTICHRIST IN SCRIPTURE

The chapters I used to show what the Bible says about the coming man of sin are not the only places in the Bible where he is mentioned. Following are several other Biblical resources.

Daniel 7 . Though I did not give a full treatment of this chapter, I did bring it into the discussion of Revelation 13 (pages 27-30). This chapter is a heavy-weight vision on this subject. It sees the “little horn” arising out of the *ten* final ruling nations. He plucks out or conquers three of these nations as a beginning thrust for power (7:8). The vision comments on his eyes and mouth, the power and the blasphemy (7:8). It even follows him to the Lake of Fire (7:11). Further, there is a clear angelic interpretation of the vision making clear to all modern readers that an empire or a system is not in the mind of God when he speaks of this horn. It is obviously a man, and a very evil man, who arises, blasphemes, kills believers, changes times and law (7:25). The familiar three and one half years is also there.

Isaiah 14:3-21. Many conquerors of Babylonia, as the Empire continued to change hands through the centuries, wore the title “King of Babylon”, not just the Babylonian Emperors. Cyrus of Persia and Alexander of Greece wore it, for example. I am not able to prove that Antiochus Epiphanes wore that title, though history says that he was buried in that city. Since Babylon was in the territory of the Seleucid kings, it is likely that he claimed such jurisdiction over it. I say all of that to say that it is possible that the text of Isaiah can refer to him. Whether this is true or not, it is most interesting to see the Spirit addressing not only a human king, but Lucifer, the enemy of Christ. See if the

following comments, found in this passage, do not remind you of the one we have been studying: “the *whole earth* is at rest [since you are defeated]”, “worms cover you,” [Antiochus originally died of this disease, but all the dead suffer this eventually], “Lucifer... you who weakened *the nations*,” “You said, ‘*I will exalt my throne...*’” “You shall be brought to ... *the Pit...*” “Is this the *man* who made *the earth* tremble...”

Ezekiel 28:11-19. The lament over Tyre’s king can be brought in as a sample of how a Satan-filled man operates. Though the human king of Tyre is being addressed, it is the “anointed cherub” of Eden (Lucifer/Satan) that receives judgment here.

Ezekiel 8:1-6. The prophet Ezekiel is brought to Jerusalem by a vision and shown the horrible secret evils, abominations, being committed by Israel’s top men. There he sees (verse 3) “the seat of the image of jealousy.” Later he calls these things (verse 6) “the great abominations” and claims that the committing of this sin “makes Me go far away from my sanctuary.” In other words, an “abomination of desolation.” Something so abominable going on in the Temple of old that *the Lord* is leaving it. This is *true* desolation! What we will see later will be of the same variety. So evil! God is not in it. Judgment falls.

Revelation 6. The first two horsemen of Revelation 6 are world conquerors. One has a bow with no arrow, the other a great sword. One is involved in conquest, while the other produces war. Are either of these two men related to the antichrist?

Revelation 7:14. Martyrs come out of the Great Tribulation, as in Daniel 12:10, and are made “white.”

Revelation 11:7. The antichrist wars against the two prophets, even kills them. And even though antichrist is causing all the trouble, the world will rejoice when the *prophets* are gone.

Revelation 12. Here is the antichrist's power source, the Devil, portrayed as a beast looking much like the antichrist (1-6). Through antichrist Herod he tries to kill Jesus at His birth. He is cast out of heaven (7-9), bringing many with him, as seen also in Daniel 8:10, where the antichrist reaches to the heavens as Satan is reaching to the earth. Their marriage is the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Through antichrist Antiochus Satan tries next to devour Israel, for three and one half years. He is in a hurry and is very angry (12), as is pointed out in Daniel 8:12, 11:36, and 11:44. There he is casting truth to the ground, going out with great fury to destroy, opposed defiantly to God, etc. Since God protects the elect Israelites, antichrist is then used to go after the Church (17). This reminds us of the times the man Antiochus would dump his fury on Israel when rebuffed in another arena. Satan has found a perfect match for his program!

Revelation 13. The reign of antichrist, and his worship, is worldwide (7-8). He is aided by a powerful religionist, quite possibly the Pope of the day. The false prophet convinces people to make an image of antichrist, to which he gives breath. This could well be nothing more than interactive television or computer. Those who do not worship will be killed. And everyone will be forced to imprint the antichrist's code number, "666", on their right hand or forehead in order to buy or sell (13).

Revelation 14. All who do worship antichrist are punished eternally (9-11).

Revelation 15:1. The wrath of God is complete on evil men, as in Daniel 11:36, where antichrist prospers until the *wrath has been accomplished*. Also see Daniel 9:27, where there is trouble until the "consummation" which is determined is poured out...

Revelation 16. The bowl judgments begin, punishing the wicked, not the believers. But that believers are there, we can be assured, as they are addressed in verse 15, and encouraged to endure. The very throne of the antichrist is touched in verse 10. In verse 12, the way of the kings from the east is prepared by the drying of the Euphrates, linking to Daniel 11's mention of trouble arising from the east for the end-time king.

Revelation 17. The false religio-political system that is the very seat of the beast, what he rides to power, is judged. Verse 17 explains that God has put it into the heart of the "final 10" horns to fulfill God's will by turning on "Babylon." Finally Babylon's judgment is complete!

Revelation 19. Jesus returns (19) and confronts all the armies gathered to battle Him. Antichrist is captured and immediately dropped in the Lake of Fire. Satan, left without a body, is taken by an angel and thrown back into the holding pit, whence the antichrist had emerged a short time before (20:1).

C. THE APPOINTED TIME, THE TIME OF THE END

I thought it might be helpful for you to see in one place all the occasions Daniel refers to the special time of appointment, the end of history, as a further confirmation that this was what was in the Spirit's thinking when the vision was given.

8:17. The vision refers to the **time of the end**.

8:19. ...the **latter time** of the indignation...

8:19. ...at **the appointed time the end** shall be.

8:23. ...in the **latter time** of their kingdom...

11:27. ...the **end** will still be at **the appointed time**.

11:29. At the **time appointed** he shall return...

11:35. ... make them white until the **time of the end**, because it is still for the **appointed time**.

11:40. At the **time of the end**, the king of the South shall attack him...

12:4. ...seal the book until the **time of the end**...

12:9. ...sealed till the **time of the end**.

12:13. ...go your way till **the end**...

12:13. ...arise to your inheritance **at the end of the days**.

D. FURTHER STUDIES ABOUT ANTIOCHUS

Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Jerusalem, Daniel R. Schwartz, dept of Jewish history, Hebrew University

Antiochus IV of Syria, Otto Morkholm, Copenhagen, 1966

Babylonian Astronomical Diaries of the Chaldeans

From Epiphanes to Epimanes, Tim Case, lewrock.com/case

Histories, the , Polybius, 6 volumes, London, Putman's Sons, 1922-27

Inter-testamental Period, The, Barry D. Smith, Atlantic Baptist University

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Jewish Persecutor, The, T.G. Colton, Boston, 1860

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Who is the Antichrist?

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