

THE FULNESS OF TIME

'And He has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ' (Ephesians 1:9-10 BSB)

'Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come' (Psalm 102:13 KJV)

'Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you O Israel' 12th Century Latin text, author unknown

Introduction

What separates these times from any other? Nothing you might say. The prophecies of old are read by many who determine that they are either too complex to understand, they are a puzzle, or that the events described have been in progress for millennia; wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, persecution of minority groups, famine, plagues, and earthquakes in various places (Matt. 24:6-7). Yet there are prophecies laid down in scripture that indicate a punctuation, any ending of this age as we know it and the beginning of another. Matt. 24:37-39 reads *'As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark. And they were oblivious, until the flood came and swept them all away. So will it be at the coming of the Son of Man'*. BSB

When we read these scriptures, we read of events that will take place many days hence i.e., a forthtelling from the heart and mind of God concerning his creation in relation to the dimension of time. When these insights were forth told they came in as visions, dreams, and word. At these times in history there were also wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, persecution of minority groups, famine, plagues, and earthquakes in various places, yet it was made clear to these prophets that what they had received did not apply to their days, but to days set to come.

This is what we read from the prophet Daniel when he concluded his writings in Dan.12:1 *'There will be a time of distress, the likes of which will not have occurred from the beginning of nations until that time'* Dan.12:4-9 *'But you, Daniel, shut up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will roam to and fro, and knowledge will increase.'* Then I, Daniel, looked and saw two others standing there, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. One of them said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, *"How long until the fulfilment of these wonders?"* And the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by Him who lives forever, saying, *"It will be for a time, and times, and half a time. When the power of the holy people has finally been shattered, all these things will be completed."* I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, *"My lord, what will be the outcome of these things?"* *"Go on your way, Daniel,"* he replied, *"for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end"* BSB.

Jesus told the original twelve disciples that (like Daniel) it was not given for them to understand the times and the seasons (Acts 1:7), however, it is also written that, at the time of the end, the wise will understand the times (Daniel 12:5-13). They will seek to view the times and seasons from God's perspective, and they will understand!

In the book of Daniel 12:9-10 it reads: *'And he said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined,*

but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand” KJV.

So, prophesy reveals that for those who are alive at ‘the time of the end’ and who seek the mind and heart of Yahweh-Jehoshua can expect to understand the answer to the question of the holy men of old. *‘How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?’* (Daniel 12:6 KJV).

In our time, the hearts of Christians are being stirred by the Spirit to asking, seeking, and knocking, for the door of understanding will be opened. Jesus tells us in Luke 9:9-10 *‘So I tell you: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened’* BSB. The parable goes on to explain the reason why doors are opened for Luke 11:13 reads: *‘So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!’* For insight into prophecy, the Spirit is needed to gain perspective and light on them.

The words of prophesy concerning the events of our generation are no longer closed and sealed (Revelation 22:10). It is our responsibility to seek God while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6). The Son of Man is the author, and He will explain them. Simon Peter, when he received a revelation concerning the Christ, the Son of the living God, was told by Jesus *‘For this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven’* BSB.

These writings may be difficult to understand yet in the scriptures we are encouraged many times to read and comprehend them as a light might shine in dark places in this world.

In this quest, we must wait for the Holy Spirit to give us insight, for all the wisdom in the world will not discern the truths contained here-in unless there is just one breath of the Spirit on it. In Matt.11:25-26 we read that *‘Jesus declared, ‘I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was well-pleasing in Your sight’* BSB. All that is needed to engage and unlock these truths is an earnestness in prayer and faith, and as Bill Turners writes in his study ‘Don’t let anyone fool you, and lead you astray’ P.3: *‘A resolve to do the will of God releases and opens the soul and mind to the correct interpretation of God’s Word’.*

‘Yet the Bible is given not to mystify but to reveal’ writes C L Parker in the introduction to his book ‘According to Plan’ and at this end of this ‘age of time’ another will follow referred to by the prophets as the ‘Age of Ages’. For more information and to read C L Parker’s excellent studies on this subject go to <https://prophetbillturner.com/> Study 36b ‘The Mystery of God’ and Study #36c ‘According to Plan’.

The reading of the prophecies become much clearer when we realise that they are not necessarily written in a linear fashion but were set down as they were revealed by God to the prophets. In this way many prophecies run parallel and overlap, and can repeat themselves, as two visions of the same event are seen from different perspectives.

So there appears to be evidence, no matter how fragmented, of an unfolding of un-fulfilled prophesy, whereby the events that have gone before are not the same as those happening now, either in the natural world around us or in the global events now facing the nations. Let us then consider the evidence for these distinctions and determine to understand them more clearly. As C L Parker goes on to say in the introduction to his book ‘According to Plan’: *‘He (Jesus) stands before us as One who asks a verdict upon evidence set before us. May those who have given us the picture of Him in the Book be heard and gain the verdict: ‘Truly this man was the Son of God.’*”

I am just a layman in terms of Bible theology but when scriptures keep on jumping out at me then I thought it best to write them down and do something about it, hence the writing of this study. I am consoled to think that in so doing then I am in good company for none of the disciples of Jesus were from the 'school of the rabbis', rather they were laymen who were also open to understand such matters and in so doing wondered at these events. The shepherds of old as they kept watch of their sheep were amazed at what the angels told them and what the found in Bethlehem was *'a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord!'* (Luke 2:8-20).

One great hero of the Christian faith and certainly one of mine must undoubtedly be William Tyndale who in his 1525 translation of the New Testament translated the Greek word 'ekklesia' (Greek: ἐκκλησία), literally 'called out ones' as 'congregation' or 'assembly' rather than 'church'. It has been asserted this translation choice 'was a direct threat to the Church's ancient' however, Tyndale wanted to make clear in his translation that it was not the church structures that laid claim to the fundamentals of Christian knowledge and claim to be the body of Christ on earth but the assemblies of the common people who had become Christians.

These words were to strip the Church hierarchy of its pretensions to be Christ's terrestrial representative, and to award this honour to individual worshipers who made up each congregation. Tyndale was determined to make the scriptures clear to all seekers of the truth. Yahweh our God is too. One of Tyndale's most famous quotes must surely be *'I defie the Pope and his lawes. If God spare my life, ere many years I wyl cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the scripture, than though dost'*.

I am one of Tyndale's 'ekklesia', a 'plough boy', and I am amazed how the scriptures and in particular the prophesies of old can unfold in a new way when pondered on in the light of the Spirit. John 14:26 reads *'But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you'* BSB.

Heathen kings of old such as Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar received profound dreams and visions from the Eternal God yet even with all of their councillors did not understand them. Instead, it was the citizens of heaven who were able to shed light on them i.e., Joseph and Daniel and others too. The people who are unregenerate i.e., have no knowledge of the prime source of spiritual life, will never hear and understand, never see, or perceive, until on the Day they see the one whom they pierced (Zech.12:10; John 19:37; Rev. 1:7). Isaiah 6:9-12 reads *'And He (Yahweh) replied: "Go and tell this people, 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the hearts of this people calloused; deafen their ears and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Then I asked: "How long, O Lord?" And He replied: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left unoccupied and the land is desolate and ravaged'* BSB. This prophesy was repeated by Jesus in Matt.13:15 and John 12:40 and also by Paul in Acts 28:27. Only the 'called out ones' of Tyndale's 'ekklesia' are able to fully comprehend this cause.

So, to this study. It is written to and fro as each topic came rolling as waves upon the beach allowing me to record them where they fell. It is not a linear approach, rather it is a compilation of information as it was unfolded to me and so I have left it where it landed and have put together an index which highlights each heading as it emerges from each previous theme.

I have taken quotations from both the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) and the Berean Study Bible (BSB) because neither of these versions require permissions to use them when

included in other documents or publications. On occasions you will find the same scriptures repeated at different points in the study. These are included intentionally and as they were received and, I hope, help to highlight different aspects of similar themes in the study.

My prayer is that this study will encourage the reader to dig deep into the writings of scripture and in so doing to be strengthened in your understanding of God's heart and mind for His people. Acts 17:11-12 reads *'Now the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if these teachings were true. As a result, many of them believed, along with quite a few prominent Greek women and men'* BSB

As when using a computer, we click on the power button and are given three options; shut down, re-start, or sleep. Today, we need to consider the real source of our power as Christians. It is neither time to shut down nor sleep, it is time to re-start, for the fulness of time is near to hand, even at the door.

D E Thelwell, 03 December 2020 to 28 May 2021

Foreword

It was a privilege to have met Bill Turner, more so to be able to call him a father in the faith. Bill's quiet mannerism belied him as a man who through his Christian walk understood something of the character of God. Bill's primary gifts were that a prophet and a teacher. Bill dies in 2012 yet he spoke to the following generation, to help prepare us for the dark days to come and to see the body and bride of Christ prepared and ready for the come of that great and glorious day when the Messiah comes to meet with His people. Like the five wise virgins, he realised the importance of having the oil of prophetic truth correctly discerned so that the people of God are prepared and ready, waiting for His arrival which is to come at the midnight hour (Matt.25:2).

We today are grateful recipients of his studies and give thanks to those, especially from the fellowships in Northern Ireland, who recorded his talks both in audio and video format and have compiled both the studies and these recordings on the website www.prophetbillturner.com . Alister Hamilton has also incorporated Bill's teachings on his website www.truthforthelastdays.com .

PART ONE: THE GATHERING STORM

'The fulness of times' Ephesians 1:10

In the KJV Ephesians 1:9-10 records *'Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him'*. The words 'good pleasure' (Greek 'eudokia') is better translated as 'what seems good or beneficial to someone' and Strong's Concordance records 'fulness' (Greek: 'pleroma') as a 'filling up' meaning full complement or completion and time or times (Greek: 'kairos') means an 'appointed time', 'season', 'due measure' or a 'measure of time'. The word 'time' in this verse is recorded in the singular in

some translations e.g., BSB, NLT, ESV, CSB, GNT and plural as 'times' in others e.g., KJV, NIV, BLB, NASB, AMP, ASV, ISV, YLT for seasons (Gr. 'kairos') exist in their plurality.

This is not the time of the day seen on a clock face which is defined in the Greek text by the word 'chronos' meaning a general view of time, especially viewed in sequence, a succession of moments; time in duration in the physical-space world, an expression of time quantitatively. This differs from the meaning of the Greek word 'kairos' of which Strong's Concordance comments '*kairós – time as opportunity. 2540 /kairós ("opportune time") is derived from kara ("head") referring to things "coming to a head" to take full-advantage of. 2540 (kairós) is "the suitable time, the right moment (e.g. Soph., El. 1292), a favourable moment" (DNTT, 3, 833)*'.

So 'kairos' refers to an opportune or suitable time, the right moment when things are coming to a head. Such time has a due measure and has a fixed and definite time, an opportune or reasonable time, a limited period of time, what time brings, the state of the time, the things and events of time.

A key verse to understand the difference is to refer to the words spoken of by Christ when the disciples asked Him about His coming again for in Acts 1:6-9 we read '*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times (Gr. 'chronos') or the seasons (Gr. 'kairos'), which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*' KJV. So the coming again of Christ to the earth will involve both 'chronos' and 'kairos' time.

Consider the visions of Isaiah then consider how our God overarches both time and space, for Isaiah 40:21-23 reads: '*Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the foundation of the earth? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth; its dwellers are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing and makes the rulers of the earth meaningless*' BSB. It is said that people have points of view, however, God has a viewing point and, in this respect, prophets are privileged to gain insight from God's overarching perspective.

So, in the scriptures when we find the Greek word 'kairos' translated as 'time' then we are to understand it to be a reference to a time period or periods, epoch or epochs, age or ages, of which our present epoch or age is defined by boundaries which are set in the heavenlies and upon earth. The reading from Ephesians 1:10 above makes it clear that each time period is purposed by Christ as a plan which needs to be brought to a completion; and that He is the one who brings the events of that period to a conclusion for the verse reads '*That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him*'. So, completion will come when the events of an epoch or age have been filled up or completed. Other ages have been before, and others will follow. They are what might be called 'divine epochs'.

Another example given by Christ concerning the closure of one time period is to be found in Luke 19:43-44 where Christ spoke of Jerusalem in this-wise: '*For the days will come upon*

you when your enemies will barricade you and surround you and hem you in on every side. They will level you to the ground— you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time (Gr. 'kairos') of your visitation from God." BSB

Daniel the prophet was given a clear overview of the significant time periods which would present themselves in the lead up to both Messiah's first and second comings when he received the from the angel Gabriel the prophesy of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24-27 where we read: *'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy'* KJV. The prophesy then goes on in Dan.9:25-27 to split up three time periods, which begins with 'the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince' and this comprise of two time periods of seven weeks and then threescore and two weeks. These weeks are considered to be time periods of weeks, multiples of seven and refer to the number of years set in place from the command to re-build Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon to the cutting off of the Messiah on Calvary i.e., 69 weeks x 7 = 483 years. Then reference is made to a second period of time which amounts to the final week of seven years. More of this prophesy will be referred to later in this study, though the point is that set periods of time are set in the economy of God and we are given insights into them to help us to understand more of His ways.

At the end of each period of time we have reference in Ephesians 1:10 to Christ who gathers all things into one and so at the conclusion of his first coming Christ gathered together the events of the previous time period and completed it at the appointed time of His crucifixion, descent into Hades and then resurrection. The same too will apply at the culmination of this present period of time which will end at the point in time when the last and seventh week of Daniel's prophesy commences. That period will then end seven years later, on the Day appointed, the Day when He comes again. That Day will then usher in what commentators refer to as a period of time called the Millennium.

The prophesies of old uphold the law of God, they are spoken by Christ who fulfils them and revealed by him for our benefit for Matt.5:17-19 reads: *'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

Scripture records that *'The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law'* (Deut.29:29 KJV). The prophesies of the End Times are given to us for our benefit, and they cannot be avoided by a church that is the repository of them. Rev.3:2-3 reads *'Wake up and strengthen what remains, which was about to die; for I have found your deeds incomplete in the sight of My God. Remember, then, what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know the hour when I will come upon you'* BSB. To ignore the prophesies means that world events will creep up on the very people to whom the knowledge of their coming has been revealed.

It would be morally reprehensible for Yahweh to take out of the world the very people to whom is given the keys to the prophesies at a time when they are most needed. Likewise, his people must needs articulate them to the world to whom they were given. This is the responsibility of the Christian church. It makes no sense for the prophesies of old to be given and then hidden or lost to the world when they are most needed. Such would be the case if

Christians did not take on this responsibility or were in any sense 'raptured' to heaven before those times and that coming Day.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven' KJV. It is not wise to add or detract from the spoken and written words of Christ. The commands of God to his prophets and his standards regarding the role of his prophets are high for they can lead many to victory, or many to defeat.

As we come to the close of this divine epoch in time the challenge to us and to our generation is to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah. The prophesy of Isaiah 40:1-5 is equally applicable to the generation that precedes his return as to the generation that preceded Messiah's first coming. We cannot dismiss this prophesy as being entirely relevant to the first century to which it is often applied (Luke 3:3-6 -The Mission of John the Baptist), for aspects of it relate to the Messiah's second coming and to do so belies the power of the prophetic anointing given through Isaiah to us today.

Isaiah 40:1-5 reads *'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see [it] together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it]'* KJV.

The cry to the inhabitants of Jerusalem are the prayers of the world in the final years of this age and they need to be 'comfort, comfort' for the warfare in that part of the Middle East will be doubled against the nation of Israel and when that warfare has ended then what is accomplished is that iniquity will finally be paid off, for the Messiah is the righteous Judge. Many will realise the utter destruction caused in the final conflicts brought upon the land by Antichrist will be futile. This utter destruction causes even the angels to fall silent for on that Day, on the opening of the seventh seal 'there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour' (Rev.8:1) for in just one hour Jerusalem will be made desolate (Rev.18:19). Mankind under the hand of Satanic rulers will have brought utter destruction upon many and on that Day will turn to see the glory of the Lord revealed. All flesh will see it together. Messiah's coming will not be secret or clandestine. It will be with such force and vigour that a highway will be seen in the desert and mountains and hills will tremble and made low by the power of his coming (Micah 1:4; Zech.14:4; Rev.6:14). On that Day too, many will rejoice.

This prophesy is applicable 'to all flesh' of which Ellicott writes *'The revelation is not for Israel only, but for mankind'*. Yahweh is faithful to his promises, *'for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it]'* and his predictions will be certainly fulfilled.

Rev.22:10 reads *'And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand'* KJV. This too is our calling, or more precisely, the prophesies are for *'the called-out ones'* i.e., those of the congregation of the King, Tyndale's 'eklesia', to comprehend and articulate for the world to know that *'there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries'* (Dan.2:28).

The prophesies are not to be sealed up in a closed book and left on shelves but spoken of anew, unlocked, and relevant again, for the fulness of time, the near closure of this current

time period, is 'at hand', extremely near, at the door. It is for this reason that I have called this study 'The Fulness of Time'.

The Office of the Prophet

It is vitally important that the office of the prophet is mature and tractable enough to discern change and correction when reproved. Prophets must be humble enough to repent of error otherwise their visions will be dimmed and soiled. Blocks and checks are vital if a prophet is going to learn and develop his understanding and knowledge. True prophetic insight comes when prophets come together in the purer air of anointing whereby each acknowledges and tests each other's ministrations for 1 Cor.14:32-33 reads *'And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints'* KJV and 1 Samuel 10:5-6 reads *'After that you will come to Gibeah of God, where the Philistines have an outpost. As you approach the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place, preceded by harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres, and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be transformed into a different person'* BSB.

It is also vital in such a role that those who hear the words of the prophets do not rush off with half answers, and then add their own interpretations to them. The receiving of the prophesy is as important as the giving because wrong interpretations can lead many people astray and deceive many, not only of their generation but of those generations to come, an example being the pre-tribulation rapture theory for those prophecies are written of in Jude v.12 as *'clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit'* and in 2 Peter 2:17 *'These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest'* KJV who serve no purpose but to deceive others in dry and parched times.

Instead, all prophets and their prophesies must needs be constrained by the risen Christ who has spoken with clarity and truth over many millennia through his people.

It is vitally important in the interpretation of prophesy that not 'one jot or tittle' i.e., not one dotted 'i' or one crossed 't' is ignored or avoided or any detail in the prophesy overlooked otherwise we might miss discerning the heart and mind of God in these matters. The highlights and details as displayed to the prophet might seem superfluous to our reading and minds, but it was not to theirs, and in such circumstances, we need to take a step back and re-consider them to allow for fresh illumination by the Spirit of the Father. This was the way in which Christ received His revelations for in Isaiah.11:2 it reads *'The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him— the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD'* BSB and this was the way in which the early Christians received their insight for in 1 Corinthians 12:8 it reads *'To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by the same Spirit'* BSB. In this way our Father might direct us too, to receive insight and wisdom on these matters. Sometimes a stronger light is needed to show up the detail to be found in fine paintings, and that Light needs to come from the Spirit of the Lord as He rests on us.

Habakkuk 2:1-3 reads *'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry'* KJV.

So, our examples have gone before. The Old Testament prophets, Isaiah, Daniel, as well as Jesus, Jude, Peter, and the early Christians would, I think, undoubtedly all identify with Habakkuk who in the office of being a prophet received messages from the Spirit of the Father, including their receipt in pictorial form. As is said: 'a picture paints a thousand words' and as such it speaks clearly to the minds and hearts of many irrespective of culture, race or creed or gender.

Habakkuk was not the only prophet who testified of his office as being crafted in pictorial form. It is also worth reading how Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel spoke of their office too:

Isaiah 21:6-10 reads 'For this is what the Lord says to me: *'Go, post a lookout and have him report what he sees. When he sees chariots with teams of horsemen, riders on donkeys, riders on camels, he must be alert, fully alert.'* Then the lookout shouted: *'Day after day, my lord, I stand on the watchtower; night after night I stay at my post. Look, here come the riders, horsemen in pairs.'* And one answered, saying: *'Fallen, fallen is Babylon! All the images of her gods lie shattered on the ground!' O my people, crushed on the threshing floor, I tell you what I have heard from the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel'* BSB.

And Isaiah 21:11 reads *'This is the burden against Dumah: One calls to me from Seir, 'Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?' Then the watchman replies, 'Morning has come, but also the night. If you would inquire, then inquire. Come back yet again.'*" BSB

Micah 7:3-5 reads *'Both hands are skilled at evil; the prince and the judge demand a bribe. When the powerful utters his evil desire, they all conspire together. The best of them is like a brier; the most upright is sharper than a hedge of thorns. The day for your watchmen has come, the day of your visitation. Now is the time of their confusion. 5Do not rely on a friend; do not trust in a companion. Seal the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms'* BSB

Jeremiah 6:16-22 and following *'This is what the LORD says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look. Ask for the ancient paths: 'Where is the good way?' Then walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it!' I appointed watchmen over you and said, 'Listen for the sound of the ram's horn.' But they answered, 'We will not listen!' Therefore hear, O nations, and learn, O congregations, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth! I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their own schemes, because they have paid no attention to My word and have rejected My instruction. What use to Me is frankincense from Sheba or sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please Me.' Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'I will lay stumbling blocks before this people; fathers and sons alike will be staggered; friends and neighbours will perish.' This is what the LORD says: 'Behold, an army is coming from the land of the north; a great nation is stirred up from the ends of the earth'* BSB.

Ezekiel 3:17 reads *'Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from My mouth, give them a warning from Me...'* BSB.

Ezekiel 33:6,7 *'But if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the horn to warn the people, and the sword comes and takes away a life, then that one will be taken away in his iniquity, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.'* As for you, O son of man, *I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word from My mouth and give them the warning from Me'* BSB.

In reference to all of the above passages the commentator Barnes writes under the heading of Habakkuk 2:1: *'the idea is that of one who is stationed on an elevated post of observation, who can look over a large region of country, and give timely warning of the approach of an enemy.*

The general idea of prophecy, which is presented in these passages, is that of a scene which is made to pass before the mind like a picture, or a landscape, where the mind contemplates a panoramic view of objects around it, or in the distance; where, as in a landscape, objects may appear to be grouped together, or lying near together, which may be in fact separated a considerable distance. The prophets described those objects which were presented to their minds as they "appeared" to them, or as they seem to be drawn on the picture which was before them. They had, undoubtedly, an intelligent consciousness of what they were describing; they were not mad, like the priestesses of Apollo; they had a clear view of the vision, and described it as it appeared to them. Let this idea be kept in mind, that the prophets saw in vision; that probably the mode in which they contemplated objects was somewhat in the manner of a landscape as it passes before the mind, and much light and beauty will be cast on many of the prophecies which now seem to be obscure'.

In seeing the panorama, the prophets describe all details accurately. Barnes explains that as the visions develop, they might seem random, but the prophet is following the finger and hand of God as he draws and paints the pictures. Only He knows where the emphasis must lie, and where to point the reader to as the picture moves and unfolds. One part of a verse might be relating to Messiah's first coming, the second to events Messiah's second coming. The primary driver in the vision is the determining of the Holy Spirit, His anointing and burden. Isaiah wrote of the Lord as a child, (Is.7:14), in manhood (Is.9:1-2), exalted Ruler (Is.9:6,7), of lineage (Is.11), destroying death (Is.25:8), his reign (Is.35:1-10), the suffering Messiah (Is.53:1-12).

God wants us to understand prophesy

A clear example of the understanding of prophesy comes when we imagine a 'ha-ha'. This is a recessed landscape design element purposely built that creates a vertical barrier while preserving an uninterrupted view of the landscape beyond. The design includes a turfed incline that slopes downward to a sharply vertical face (typically a masonry retaining wall). Ha-has are used in landscape design to prevent access to a garden by, for example, grazing livestock. In the visions of the prophets are many ha-has, God knew this though did not consider them a barrier nor relevant to the whole picture, they can only be seen and only become apparent when you walk up close to them, then they become a feature in the landscape. Today we need to step back and see the whole landscape and not be distracted by detail which is out of sight nor relevant to our overwhelming view of seeing the Messiah in all his glory and knowing his mind as we set ourselves to view the nations and events to come. Isaiah, peerless in his view of the Messiah's role in history writes *'Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket'* (Is.40:15), what a vision, what a view!

Barnes goes on to write *'Another peculiarity, which may arise from the nature of prophecy here presented, may have been that the mind of the prophet glanced rapidly from one thing to another. By very slight associations or connections, as they may now appear to us, the mind is carried from one object or event to another; and almost before we are aware of it, the prophet seems to be describing some point that has, as appears to us, scarcely any connection with the one which he had but just before been describing. We are astonished at the transition, and perhaps can by no means ascertain the connection which has subsisted*

in view of the mind of the prophet, and which has led him to pass from the one to the other. The mental association to us is lost or unseen, and we deem him abrupt, and speak of his rapid transitions, and of the difficulties involved in the doctrine of a double sense. The views which I am here describing may be presented under the idea of what may be called the laws of prophetic suggestion; and perhaps a study of those laws might lead to a removal of most of the difficulties which have been supposed to be connected with the subject of a spiritual meaning, and of the double sense of the prophecies'.

He goes on to write *'They may have been so closely grouped that he could not separate them even in the description. The words appropriate to the one may have naturally and easily fallen into the form of appropriate description of the other. And the objects may have been so contiguous, and the transition in the mind of the prophet so rapid, that he may himself have been scarcely conscious of the change, and his narrative may seem to flow on as one continued description. Thus, the object with which he commenced, may have sunk out of view, and the mind be occupied entirely in the contemplation of that which was at first secondary. Such seems to have been, in a remarkable manner, the uniqueness of the mind of Isaiah. Whatever is the object or event with which he commences, the description usually closes with the Messiah'.*

So, four keys become evident:

First that the prophets often saw the vision spatially though not necessarily in time sequence. Much rarer do we specifically read of sequential prophecies. God sits outside of time hence the revelations come from His perspective. On occasions the reference to time can be obtuse, refer here to Daniel's prophesy of the seventy weeks (Dan.9). This prophesy might seem to be unclear but with pin-point accuracy determines the timing of the events to unfold. Jeremiah's prophesy clearly stated that the Hebrew people will be banished into exile for 70 years as Jer.25:11 reads *'And this whole land will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years'* and the light of this prophesy at the end of those years Daniel sought the Lord for the people's release for Dan.9:2 reads *'in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the sacred books, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and petition, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes'* BSB. Daniel was seeking the release of his people and in so doing received much more, for he received in depth vision and meaning for *'Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days'* (Dan10:14) KJV. Likewise, Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38) were two prophets who sought God regarding events in their lifetime for if Daniel's prophesy of the cutting off of the Messiah was to occur after 69 weeks (483 years) (Dan.9:25-26) they were living in that time and earnestly awaited the coming of the Messiah. Likewise, we too live in a pivotal time for the end of the time of the Gentiles too is near when *'They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations. And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled'* BSB. We too will soon see the Lord of glory, for based on his revealed word we can prepare for the events to come. We can view the landscape spatially and ponder and marvel at the events described before us.

It is profoundly of God and cannot be pre-determined by mankind when events long since forth told become clear. It can only be a revelation of the mind of God whereby though many generations have passed since the visions were given then suddenly, they become clear to the recipients at their time and when the forth-told events and their signs form and occur. For this reason, it was necessary for Jesus to explain the signs of the times preceding His second coming. The prophets had already written in some detail concerning the 'Day' of His

coming, though more revelation was needed for others to understand and be prepared for the moment, hour, day, week, year.

So, the prophecies give us spatial awareness, and on occasions timings. Then on other occasions God specifically refers to numbers. For example, John specifically heard the number of 'mounted troops' in the armies of the kings of the east which will cross the Euphrates in the time yet to come when in Rev.9:16 he wrote '*And the number of mounted troops was two hundred million; I heard their number*', and the number of those who were marked with the seal of God when in Rev.7:4 he wrote '*And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel*' and then he gave the numbers from each of the tribe.

The second key to understanding Biblical prophecy is to understand that the only focus in the revelation of God's heart and mind is ultimately in relation to the Messiah and His relationship to us. Often before a revelation of warnings to come we receive the vision of the Son of Man in His glory (Rev.5). This gives us great encouragement and hope. This has happened throughout history where men have sought their Maker. Before the World Wars of the 20th Century there are testimonies of great Revivals and strengthening of peoples and nations. It is of no co-incidence that the 1904-5 Welsh Revival came about when those who were strengthened therein were soon to be pushed into a terrible war. Another example would be the Great Pyongyang Revival in North Korea of 1907. Since that time, the politics of North Korea has radically changed and according to the Open Doors World Watch List 2021 North Korea has been the worst place for the persecution of Christians for the past 20 years.

There are also many testimonies of Christians receiving warnings from God before great trials. The story is told by Demos Shakarian in his book *The Happiest People on Earth* of the warnings given by God to his family who were Christians in Armenia to flee before the invasion of the Turks who, when they came, carried out systematic mass genocide of the Armenian Christians in the early 20th Century. As with Isaiah's great visions, the close is always to bring us more help and clarity of events to come and to give people a perspective, vision and description of the Messiah and His heart and love for His people.

The third key to understanding end-time prophesy is to understand that all the prophecies in their finality focus upon the Hebrew nation of Israel and in particular, Jerusalem. As the age of the Gentiles draws to a close the focus of all peoples and nations will turn to this focal point. Likewise, the powers of darkness focus there too though their motive is greed and envy.

The fourth key to understand the events is that though parts of the picture might seem to fit previous events in history like the exile of the Hebrews in Babylon or the Romano-Jewish wars of 66-70AD, they do not fit in other respects, so on all occasions we must take a step back and view the picture from a wider angle. Likewise, the visions came fast and clear to the prophets and sometimes they would flit to include a reference to Cyrus or other events and people local to their day, then by the power of the anointing would quickly move on to events which would take place far in the future. So, our understanding too must become like theirs, we must be prepared to lay aside the confusion as it might first appear and instead follow strictly to the anointing as it was given in the first place. A helpful term of reference is to look back not from our perspective but from the perspective of Revelation 22 when all things become clear, His timing ultimately only relates to eternity, and so should ours.

It might also be asked; how more recent prophecies connect with the old? It is best seen as a tapestry where the different prophecies must need to interweave with the old existing and

written prophecies. For example, the recent false prophecy concerning a pre-tribulation rapture are loose threads that do not interweave with the old tapestry. If one tries to thread it in there then what one is left with is a confusing jumbles mess, a tapestry spoilt by man's interference. The result confuses many people and destroys the reputation of the Christians who must otherwise be the repository of clear prophetic teaching and instructions. The nations might need to depend on it, yet when revival wains then the hearts of many grow cold and the nation will lose its way. The prophets of old give us the example of clear teaching at the highest level whereby the nations, their people and leaders could hear the word behind them and change, adjust, or re-direct their pathway, Isaiah 30:21 reads *'And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left'* KJV.

I have taken the following extracts taken from Bill Turner's Introduction to Study #23 'The Book of Revelation' which can be found on the www.prophetbillturner.com :

Page 2: *'In 1Pet.1v10-12., Peter uses three very strong words to describe the prayerful, thoughtful, and intensive efforts that the prophets made in seeking God, to find out WHAT their prophecies meant and WHEN they would occur. We need to seek God with the same earnestness and prayerfulness for the interpretation of prophetic truth that the prophets themselves manifested in searching out the interpretation of their own prophecies, for there is "heavier judgement" for Christian teachers who mislead the children of God. James.3v1.*

Let us humbly seek the truth, for God hates pride, and He hides truth from proud and cocksure theologians, and reveals His secrets to humble seekers. Mt.11v25,26. Lk.10v21-24.'

Page 4: *'Some of the details of the prophecies are not easy to apply or interpret at present. However, it is not necessary to correctly interpret every detail of each prophecy, as long as we have good knowledge of the "Revelation," and an accurate interpretation of the general outline and theme of its prophecies. The more obscure and ambiguous details of the prophecies will be made clear by their fulfilment in world events. Moreover, when Revelation's prophecies are fulfilled and made manifest by events, their fulfilment will give us a very accurate timing of the proximity of our Lord's coming, for some of these prophecies are given in days and months, and will accurately date last day events. This accurate fulfilment of prophecy will encourage us to hold on in faith, knowing that our Lord's coming will be as sure and certain as the fulfilment of these predicted events. These fulfilled prophecies will enlighten our minds and greatly encourage our faith during the dark days at the end of this age, and this is without doubt one of the major Divine purposes behind the prophecies revealed in Revelation.'*

Page 5,6: *'God wants us to understand the Book of Revelation. When our heavenly Father inspired and wrote the Book of Revelation He intended that even the difficult parts should be understood. With diligent prayer and study, most of its prophecies can be understood; and the parts that we do not fully understand will be made more clear by their actual fulfilment. The key to the book of Revelation is found elsewhere in the Scriptures, particularly in Daniel's prophecies; they throw light on each other's predictions. It is not necessary, as some would have us believe, to have a course on Church History to understand the Revelation, the key is in the Word of God. The book of Revelation is intended to give us light on, and in, a dark future, and the glorious hope beyond it; not a muddled commentary on the past that many have made it. 1Pet.1v10-12. 2Pet.1v19-21.*

Those who say that Revelation cannot be understood and serves no useful purpose, have in reality charged God with folly. God has written Revelation for our welfare and profit, He

intended ordinary people to read His Word and understand it, He has not written a book which no one, or only the intellectual, can understand. Indeed, Jesus said that God often bypasses the intellectual, wise and prudent, and gives revelations of His power, plans, and purposes to “babes and sucklings,” and this is “good in His sight.” Mt. 11v25-27. Lk. 10v20-24. The spiritual “babe and suckling” has a far better chance of understanding the Word of God, than the “wise and prudent” unspiritual intellectual. Is.35v8. 2Pet. 1v9,19. 3v16. Mt. 13v10-17. This does not mean that we should be lazy in our study of the Scriptures; those “who labour in the word and doctrine,” and are “labouring fervently in prayers,” will be given the light they seek. In 1Tim.5v17., “labour” is “kopiontes,” the present active participle of “kopiao,” to labour, to work until one is exhausted.” In Col.4v12., “labouring” is “agonizomenos,” the present middle participle of “agonizomai,” to struggle, to agonise. Obtaining divine truth and a God-blessed ministry is costly and demands a consecrated heart and mind, and real effort in study and prayer. Acts.17v11. Heb.5v11-14. 1Pet.1v10-13. Prov.16v3.

We must study God’s Word with an open mind, for it is folly to twist the Scriptures to make them fit our theories. We recognise that God uses parables, figurative language, symbols, or heavenly cartoons in the prophetic truth that He has given to us in His Word, and that great truth is given by these means. However, it is important to recognise that prophetic truth should be interpreted, like any other Scriptural truth, the literal being interpreted as literal, and the symbolic as symbolic, otherwise the result will be a prophetic delusion. 2 Pet.3v16-18.’

‘How long, O Lord, holy and true?’ Revelation 6:10

The cry ‘how long’ has gone up before the God of the heavens many times through history. The Bible records this cry many times. Psalm 6:3 reads ‘My soul is deeply distressed. How long, O LORD, how long?’ BSB

In the commissioning of the prophet Isaiah, we read of the long-sighted vision given to him by God for Isaiah 6:11-13 reads ‘Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof’ KJV.

As Isaiah found, to those who seek the God of the Hebrews, then He may be found. Isaiah 55:6 reads ‘Seek the LORD while He may be found; call on Him while He is near’. BSB

‘For the eyes of the LORD roam to and fro over all the earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him’ 2 Chronicles 16:9 BSB

The character of the Truine God is revealed in His Names. Genesis 16:3 reads ‘So Hagar gave this name to the LORD who had spoken to her: “You are the God who sees me, for she said, “Here I have seen the One who sees me!”’ That name in the Hebrew is ‘Yahweh Roi’, the God who sees.

Within the divine creation God has made a rich diversity of beings. John saw in vision the living creatures recorded in Rev 4:8 ‘And each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around and within. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”’ These angelic beings

are the servants of God who see, provide for, give strength to, and report the events on earth to the Triune God.

Benson's Commentary reads *'And they were full of eyes within — Bengelius reads κυκλοθεν και εσωθεν γεμουσιν οφθαλμων, round about and within they are full of eyes: round about signifying their attention to and knowledge of the state of the world and church in general; or rather, perhaps, their vigilance and circumspection, their attention to their duty to God and man, and their watchful observance of the designs, wiles, devices, and various motions and snares of their spiritual enemies; and they are said to be full of eyes within, to signify their self-knowledge, their diligent attention to the state of their own hearts, and the various workings of their passions and appetites, their affections and thoughts.'* Similar reference is included in Is. 6:2-3 and Ezekiel 1:4-21, 10:12 where reference is again made to these living creatures *'their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes round about.'*

Our hearts cry 'how long?' and in reply comes an assurance of the absolute wisdom of God in all his doings. Ellicott's Commentary reads *'In the corresponding vision in the Apocalypse the four living creatures are represented as "full of eyes within" (Revelation 4:8). In both places alike the symbolism sets forth God's perfect knowledge of all His works: here as showing the absolute wisdom of all His doings (comp. 2Chronicles 16:9), there as resulting in perfect and harmonious praise from all His works. The Hebrew seers ever looked through all secondary causes directly to the ultimate force which originates and controls all nature, and which they represent as intelligent and self-conscious. To do this the more effectively, they often use in their visions such concrete imagery as this before us.'*

And so, it is that the eyes of the God and the angelic messengers of God who see his works and creation and act accordingly therein.

What does God see on the earth? The lowest of human de-basement, injustice, pain, sorrow; yet he also sees the highest of human aspirations, joy and gladness. Today he is looking for those whose hearts are for him, for those who seek his face, and for those who wish to understand and be his advocates.

The call to rightly divide the word of truth

It is recorded in Acts 17:11 *'Now the Bereans were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if these teachings were true.'* KJV Likewise, we today need more than ever to study the scriptures, to discern the prophesies and pray for the anointing of the holy Spirit to understand them so that we too are ready and prepared for these times.

2 Peter 1:19-21 reads *'We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.'* KJV

2 Tim. 2:15 reads *'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'* KJV

Checks and Balances

The scriptures make clear the need for right interpretation of God's revealed truth by those who make claims to understand it. For example, in 1 Cor. 14:29-33 we read *'Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is seated, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace— as in all the churches of the saints.'* BSB. In this way the whole church of God can equally weigh in the balance the evidence and witness in their spirits that the Spirit of truth is speaking to them. John 16:13-14 reads *'However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and He will declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me by taking from what is Mine and disclosing it to you'*. BSB

The same democratisation of truth is revealed in the Old Testament too. Num. 11:24-25 reads *'So Moses went out and relayed to the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered seventy of the elders of the people and had them stand around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and He took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and placed that Spirit on the seventy elders. As the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied — but they never did so again'*. The story is that of the 70 all but two never prophesied again, though it is clear that God wanted them to continue to prophesy for Moses goes on to say in Num. 11:29 *'But Moses replied, "Are you jealous on my account? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would place His Spirit on them!"'* BSB

Paul writes in 1 Cor. 14:3 *'he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification, encouragement, and comfort'* and 1 Cor. 14:4-6 reads *'The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. I wish that all of you could speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets so that the church may be edified. Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?' and in 1 Cor 14:22 'Prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers'*.

Paul continues to write in 1 Co. 14:29-33 *'Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is seated, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace— as in all the churches of the saints'...* and in 1 Cor. 39-40 *'So, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything must be done in a proper and orderly manner'*.

Paul therefore makes it clear in his writings concerning the New Testament church of which we are part that prophesy should be sought after and that it will guard and keep the minds and hearts of the people safe. He also writes of the close relationship between prophesy and speaking in tongues and the importance and use of both in *'rightly dividing the word of truth'* (2 Tim. 2:15).

In Acts 2 we read first of the impartation of the Holy Spirit to the people and then Peter's address to the crowds where he quotes the prophesy of Joel 2:28-32 given some 750yrs earlier, a prophesy which is still significant for our age too: *'But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on*

my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved' KJV. He then goes on to address the crowds by relaying to them the prophetic writings of David and then he spoke concerning Jesus (Acts 2:26) and of how the people accepted Jesus and his prophecies (Acts 2:30); yet more than a prophet, now revealed as the Son of God.

So, it was made clear that the blueprint for church organisation was and still is a co-operation with Jesus who is the head and His people who are described as the body of Christ, see Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor.12:12-27 where v.27 reads '*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.'* KJV

Jesus is The Word of God

Jesus is the eternal Word of God John 11:1 '*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'*

And it was Jesus who spoke through the prophets of old for it reads in John 8:38: '*Truly, truly, I tell you,*' Jesus declared, '*before Abraham was born, I am!*' BSB.

It is the Jesus who inspires, and it will be Jesus who speaks through true prophets:

Rev. 1:1-3 reads '*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.'* KJV

Rev. 22:16: '*And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done'* KJV.

Rev. 22:16: '*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book'* KJV It is those who hear the words of the prophets and who heed the call of Jesus, those who are thirsty, they are the ones who are able to take of the water of life freely.

It is Jesus the Word of God who has spoken through both the Old Testament and New Testament prophets. Yet when Jesus was born on earth as a baby as the 'Son of Man' he emptied Himself for we read in Phil. 2:5-8 reads '*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.'*

So, when on earth as the 'Son of Man' Jesus did not get his revelations 'as a matter of fact'. He did not receive them automatically.

He was born a baby and had to grow in his knowledge and understanding for we read in Luke 2:40 *'And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.'* KJV Jesus learned of Father's heart towards him. At the age of 12 He was found in the temple asking questions about His 'Father's business' and we read in Luke 2:52 *'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man'.* KJV. Jesus had the obedience of a servant Is. 50:4-11, esp. v.4 *'The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.'* KJV Jesus had 'the tongue of the learned'. Strong's commentary on the Greek interprets the word tongue as the tongue of men and learned as 1) taught, learned, disciplined 1a) taught 1b) accustomed to (something).

The full text of this key prophesy from Isaiah is cross-referred to in all the gospels concerning Jesus and his fulfilment of prophesy on the cross; see Matt. 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20; Luke 22:63-65; John 19:1-15. Likewise, morning by morning we can be awakened to hear His voice. Jesus encourages us today to likewise understand and not be ignorant. He always wants to encourage us and to inform us so that we might know his heart and yearnings for us and all mankind.

We can follow his example to become more like Him and in so doing we will learn much from the Father.

The prophesies of both testaments co-relate. The prophets of the New Testament knew the importance of the Old Testament prophesies and were often quoted by them. Jesus knew these prophesies; he began his ministry by quoting and fulfilling Isaiah 61:1-2, see Luke 4:16-21 and he quoted scripture to tear down fabricated lies of Satan in the temptations which he received. Yet the prophesies of old sustained him as he was rejected by many, and he fulfilled them.

Woman clothed with the sun

New Testament prophets knew the importance of standing on the Old Testament prophesies and not only their importance but also their fulfilment. John records in Rev. 12:1 *'And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet'.* At the time of the great tribulation there shall be a great sign, it is a sign that will be seen. Ellicott writes *'something which has a meaning; it is not "a surprise ending with itself," but a signal to arrest attention, and possessing significance; there is "an idea concealed behind it."*

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown write:

'great—in size and significance.

wonder—Greek, "sign": significant of momentous truths.

in heaven—not merely the sky, but the heaven beyond just mentioned, Re 11:19; compare Re 12:7-9.'

Ellicott goes on to say *'It is the picture of the bride, the Church. The beams of the divine glory clothe her; she has caught—like Moses—the radiance of her Lord, whose countenance was as the sun (Revelation 1:16); the moon is beneath her feet; she rises superior to all change, and lays all lesser lights of knowledge under tribute; she is crowned with a crown of twelve stars: the illustrious members of the Church (twelve being the representative number*

in Old Testament as well as New Testament times) form her crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ.' So, the bride of Christ, His people, his church is finally ready at this set time to come.

Yet more is implicated in the vision for other commentators consider it to be specifically the Jewish Christian Church which is referred to here for the Cambridge Commentary reads *'the ideal Israel, "the daughter of Zion."* See especially Micah 4:10; Micah 5:3: *where it is her travail from which He is to be born Who is born in Bethlehem.... the appearance in her glory of the Sun, Moon, and stars of Song of Solomon 6:10, and the mention of "the remnant of her seed" in Revelation 12:17'*

After all these years since Messiah's first coming there will be a clear and manifest sign that He who came is of truth the Son who is also coming to reign - and soon - and this greatly disturbs the spiritual forces in the heavenly places. Eph.6:12 reads *'for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities; against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places'*. The appearance of this sign is such that the dragon knows that his time his short and so is determined to kill the child then born. The dragon, Satan, then is determined to kill again. He has tried this before and knows how it might be effective it might be to thwart prophesy and the One who is to come, for he had tried with murderous intent to kill the child Jesus after his incarnate birth when he operated through his vasaal at the time who was Herod the Great.

The woman in the vision is clothed in the sun, being the spirit and prophesy of Jesus. This vision then refers to a Jewish Christian Church in the time of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7:14). These people are clothed with the light of the gospel of New Testament, the risen Christ being their theme, and yet know too the importance of having the moon under their feet, the moon being the old testament prophesies which light up they reflect the Sun's rays. They stand upon the Old Testament prophesies yet rely on Jesus who is the light of the world, the one who shines his light throughout history, the One who spoke through the prophets of both testaments, the One who shines to speak through those whose hearts and minds love and seek him and the One who makes a clear sign at this time in the Great Tribulation.

So, what is this sign, the sign when these Jewish Christians are to flee? Jesus prophesies in Matt 24:15-23 *'So when you see standing in the holy place "the abomination of desolation," described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve anything from his house. And let no one in the field return for his cloak. How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath. For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. At that time, if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There He is!" do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible. See, I have told you in advance'*. BSB

However, before this event takes place the Christians there WILL BE WARNED, for the woman in the vision is described as in birth pains for Rev. 12:2 reads *'She was pregnant and crying out in the pain and agony of giving birth'* The vision clearly this wholesome Church of Christ, at the time of the Great Tribulation giving birth to a child that will be in great danger because it is born in the region which will be directly under the control the Antichrist. All this is described in John's vision as another important and clear sign that will occur for, he writes in Rev. 12:3-6 *'Then another sign appeared in heaven: a huge red dragon with seven heads,*

ten horns, and seven royal crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars from the sky, tossing them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, ready to devour her child as soon as she gave birth. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place for her to be nourished for 1,260 days'. BSB

Today there are Jewish Christians who are also known as Messianic Jews, Messianic Judaism is a movement of Jews who believe that Jesus (called by them with his Hebrew name Yeshua) is the Jewish Messiah, and who perform this belief in a Jewish way (observing the regulations of the Torah etc.). They are called Messianic Jews. The main branches of Judaism do not consider Messianic Judaism to be Judaism, but rather a form of Christianity, because Judaism rejects Jesus/Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah. As of 2018 it is estimated that there are only some 20,000 Messianic Jews in Israel (0.3% of Israel's Jews). Others claim this number is closer to 30,000 and rapidly rising [Prayer for Israel, 2018]. Source: <https://www.factsaboutisrael.uk/messianic-jews/> This source goes on to state: *'Today's Messianic Jews are the forerunners of a larger turning to Yeshua at the end of the age. Israel's blindness will be removed as Jews under great stress (war) finally acknowledge Yeshua as their true Messiah: And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn (Zechariah 12.10)'*

The Sealing of the Christians

The prophecies appear to describe be a definite time of 'sealing' of the Christians who are kept by the power of God, whilst at the same time living and operating with Holy Spirit anointing through the last few years of the End Times, for we read in Rev. 7:1-8 esp. v.2-4 *'And I saw another angel ascending from the east, with the seal of the living God. And he called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or sea or trees until we have sealed the foreheads of the servants of our God"'. The prophecy then goes on to number those who are sealed from the tribes of Israel for it reads in v. 4 'And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel...'*

It appears to read here that these numbered people were Christians who believed the Word of Truth but were yet to be sealed with *'the seal of the living God'*. This seal is referred to as being necessary for them to stand through those days of persecution and before the opening of the seventh seal. It is an angel that is the messenger from God for it carries this seal, and it operates in harmony with the four angels who carried out the judgements of God.

Strong's Concordance comments on the word 'seal' used here which is taken from the Greek word 'sphragízō (from 4973 /sphragís, "a seal") – *'properly, to seal (affix) with a signet ring or other instrument to stamp (a roller or seal), i.e. to attest ownership, authorizing (validating) what is sealed'*. Strong also comments on the word seal when used as a verb as follows: *'to seal (affix) with a signet ring or other instrument to stamp (a roller or seal), i.e. to attest ownership, authorizing (validating) what is sealed. Sealing" in the ancient world served as a "legal signature" which guaranteed the promise (contents) of what was sealed'*.

Vincent's Word Studies writes: *'Seal (σφραγίστης) Rev., seal up. This word occurs eighteen times in Revelation and twice in the Gospel, and only five times elsewhere in the New Testament. It means to confirm or attest (John 3:33); to close up for security (Matthew 27:66;*

Revelation 20:3); to hide or keep secret (Revelation 10:4; Revelation 22:10); to mark a person or thing (Revelation 7:3; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30)'

Paul includes the same Greek word for 'seal' in Eph. 1:13 which reads *'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed'* (Strong's: Gr. *pisteúō* (from 4102 /*pístis*, "faith," derived from 3982 /*peithō*, "persuade, be persuaded... the believing that leads to/proceeds from God's inbirthing of faith), 'ye were sealed' (this is the same Greek word (*sphragízō*) as used in Rev. 7:2-4 referred to above) *'with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest'* (deposit i.e. advance-payment that guarantees the rest will be given) *'of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory'*. KJV

So, it reads that after a Christian believes then the Holy Spirit of promise comes to empower (authorise and inspire) and seal these people of God. This act of sealing comes after Christians have been persuaded and proceeds from God's in-birthing of faith. After the in-birth comes the attestation of ownership, the authorising of ownership with a seal. This seal for service came upon the early church at Pentecost. Jesus specifically told his followers to wait for it, for without it they will not stand. The cry from Christians throughout the ages has been for God by His Spirit to seal and equip his people for service. This cry has been met by Jesus who promised to send us His Spirit. The receipt of the Spirit and the occasion of it is distinct from the in-birthing of faith and has been variously termed, for example it was termed by Fletcher after the Wesley Revivals as the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Paul the apostle met Christians who had not heard of nor received the seal when on his travels for we read in Acts 19:1-7 *'And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid [his] hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve'*. KJV

The mark of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is especially evident in the public place, where opposition to the gospel becomes overt, see Acts 2:1-41 (the Day of Pentecost and 3,000 converts); Acts 3:1-26 (A lame man healed and Peter addresses the crowds in Solomon's Colonnade) Acts 4:1-11 (Peter and John before the Sanhedrin) etc. However, the seal and its mark especially strengthen a Christian's private life too, through the gifts of the Spirit; wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and their interpretation (1 Cor.12:7-10).

The power of the seal

After the Christians who flee from the Dragon are sealed (Rev.7:2-4) then they are miraculously hidden and kept by God. The moon under their feet was all that they previously relied on i.e., the Old testament prophecies and promises. These will come no doubt come back to them now in a forceful manner. They no doubt will come alive for them. For the redemptive prophecies contained therein were meant for their time too. So often the Old Testament prophets saw the distant horizon, the time of the end after which came redemption and the kingdom to come. For example, the musician prophets of the Psalms

continually include strong cries for deliverance: Ps. 124 the flight of the Jewish church; Ps.137 to 'remember' Ps.138 stretch out your arm, your Holy Spirit to help us, You shield my head in the day of battle Ps.140 Rescue me from evil men, protect me, guard me, hear O Lord, my cry for help, the proud make traps and snares for me and lures are set out for me.

The prayers of these Christians as they flee into the desert of Moab and Edom (Matt.24:15-18) and indeed all of the Christians across the globe as they see these events take place are powerful and precipitative both of the near coming Messiah and that their flight be not in winter, for Matt.24:19-22 reads *'How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath. For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short. At that time, if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There He is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible. See, I have told you in advance. So if they tell you, 'There He is in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it'*. It is so important that this time of fleeing is acknowledged by Christians across the globe for they can through prayer change events so that Father's will in heaven is done on earth. They can pray that the flight be not in winter, so through prayer can withhold the powers of darkness for at least six months. They can pray against deception, they must not be deceived themselves by false prophets, and through intervening prayer they can uncover the plots made against the people groups and nations.

These people have through faith learnt how to intervene in prayer (Heb.7:25; Rom 8:26 1Tim 2:1-3) to change the course of events and nations. Our prayers and those of many of the world's Christians will know the intervening nature of prayer at this time.

A key part of the events will be that Christians with the seal of God upon them will be able to do signs and wonders, they will see their God do miraculous things.

The two witnesses of who live through the Great Tribulation will be empowered to do great things and it will inspire and encourage many Christians across the globe. As the darkness increases so does the power of the Light. These two witnesses will know that God is answering their prayers and they will be a witness not only to the powers of darkness who operate in the region controlled by the Antichrist but also to the Christian church across the globe at that time. For these Christians, must do as Jesus did for John 12:26 reads *'Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be...'* John 10:27 reads *'My sheep listen to my voice ... I know them, and they follow me'* KJV. John 14:11-13 reads *'Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me—or at least believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I am doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son'* BSB

Paul knew the importance of imitating Christ and those who follow Him for 1Cor.11:1 reads *'You are to imitate me, just as I imitate Christ'*. See also 1Cor.4:16; Phil.3:17; 1Thes.1:6.

And if you do imitate Christ then *'the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits'* (Dan.11:32), such that through the Body of Christ, His people, 'greater works' i.e., many more works of 'signs and wonders' shall be done than during the time of Christ's ministry on earth in Judea. For Christ, he could do no more at that time, instead he knew that

time was short as he had to complete his calling, accomplish the great sacrifice of Atonement on the cross, break the gates of Hades, and 'go to the Father'.

'Do not seal up the words of prophecy in this book, because the time is near' (Rev. 22:10)

Jesus told the original twelve disciples that (like Daniel) it was not given for them to understand the times and the seasons (Acts 1:7), to them these prophecies were still a mystery, they were sealed and un-interpreted to them at that time.

However, it is also written that, at the time of the end, the wise will understand the times (Daniel 12:5-13). They will seek to view the times and seasons from God's perspective, and they will understand. Daniel 12:9-10 reads: *'And he said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand''* KJV.

Those at the time of the end who serve in that work in a way that is pleasing to God can expect to understand the answer to the question of the holy men of old. *'How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?'* (Dan.12:6 KJV). The end is upon us now. The words are no longer closed and sealed (Revelation 22:10). It is our responsibility to seek God while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6).

The full text of Rev.22:10-21 reads: *'Then he (Jesus) told me, 'Do not seal up the words of prophecy in this book, because the time is near. Let the unrighteous continue to be unrighteous, and the vile continue to be vile; let the righteous continue to practice righteousness, and the holy continue to be holy.' 'Behold, I am coming soon, and My reward is with Me, to give to each one according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.' Blessed are those who wash their robes, (do His commandments) so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by its gates. But outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. 'I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star.' The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' Let the one who hears say, 'Come!' And let the one who is thirsty come, and the one who desires the water of life drink freely. I testify to everyone who hears the words of prophecy in this book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints Amen'* BSB

From the time of the writings of John the prophecies were to be unsealed, for the Christians became a persecuted group of people and they needed the prophecies and words of Jesus to stand in their days of trials. After Christ's first coming the people of God became a target, the focus of hatred and scorn, and the seal of God was not put upon the prophecies written by John, they were released, the reason being that from that time on there was set in train the events which would culminate with the return of the Messiah.

The sealed ones became the repository of the unsealed prophecies, and the power contained in these prophecies would be available to Christians at the end of the 'times and seasons' that would culminate in the return of their author, Yahweh-Jehoshua.

The provision of these prophecies consoles Christians, though ungodly people will not understand them, instead, to them they are warnings. In the time of the end, it is only those who are thirsty for the God of revelation will hear the prophecies of the book and understand them, with nothing added or removed. The anointing of the Spirit on these scriptures both protects them and reveals them. It protects them from misuse and from the stony hearts of callous men and women who will not change, yet at the same time the anointing can reveal them to innocent of hearts, as simple truths can be revealed unto babes Matt.11:25 reads: *'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes'* KJV.

The two witnesses

For Rev. 11:3-6 reads *'... "And I will empower my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." These witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouths and devours their enemies. In this way, anyone who wants to harm them must be killed. These witnesses have power to shut the sky so that no rain will fall during the days of their prophecy, and power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish'*. BSB

The two witnesses (Rev.11:1-14) begin their public ministry at the same time as the 'abomination of desolation appears in the holy place'. See Matt.24:15; Mark13:14; Dan.9:27; Dan.12:11.

Dan.11:30-31 describes the actions of the Antichrist at this time for: *'Then he will turn back and rage against the holy covenant and do damage. So he will return and show favour to those who forsake the holy covenant. His forces will rise up and desecrate the temple fortress. They will abolish the daily sacrifice and set up the abomination of desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him'* BSB

This public display of corrupt intent occurs at the same time as the two witnesses begin their ministry. When evil is most manifest, then the Spirit of God rises up in his servants to defend the people. It is reminiscent of Jesus's ministry who, when he saw corruption in the Temple, in righteous anger, drove out the moneychangers from that place; Matt.21:11-13 reads *'The crowds replied, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.' Then Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves. And He declared to them, "It is written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer.' But you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"* BSB

The length of time of the two witnesses' public ministry is 1260 days, this is the same length of time that the woman, i.e., the Christ Church fled into the wilderness to escape the wrath of the Antichrist for Rev.12:6 reads: *'And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place for her to be nourished for 1,260 days'*. The 1,260 days are three and a half years and is the length of time of the Great Tribulation, the last three and a half years of this age.

At the end of this time the two witness–prophets are killed, yet after three and a half days the breath of God enters their bodies, and they are resurrected and are called up to heaven in a cloud. This is reminiscent of Jesus ascension and speaks of the nearness of Jesus' return

on the Day of the Seventh Trumpet. Rev. 11:7-13 reads *'When the two witnesses have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will wage war with them, and will overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city— figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where their Lord was also crucified. For three and a half days all peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will view their bodies and will not permit them to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will gloat over them, and will celebrate and send one another gifts, because these two prophets had tormented them. But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered the two witnesses, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell upon those who saw them. And the witnesses heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand were killed in the quake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven'* BSB.

The Spirit of the Lord cannot be quenched. The prophets of old also knew it. As an example, we read of Elisha's final prophesy in 2Kings13:20-21: *'And Elisha died and was buried. Now the Moabite raiders used to come into the land every spring. Once, as the Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders, so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. And as soon as his body touched the bones of Elisha, the man was revived and stood up on his feet'*. It is clear from this and other scriptures that the Spirit of God will not be stopped or compromised, and this will be particularly manifest before the Day of the Lord.

'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8)

Acts 1:6-8 reads: *'Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth'* KJV.

In Acts 1:7, according to Strong's Concordance the Greek word for 'time' is 'xrónos' or 'chronos' means *'time (in general), especially viewed in sequence (a 'succession of moments'); time in duration in the physical-space world, sovereignly apportioned by God to each person'*. This means the exact time, or time when expressed quantitatively, a measure of its duration time i.e., time when expressed in chronological order. However Jesus also refers to the time of his coming as being a 'season'. According to Strong's Concordance the Greek word for 'season' is *'kairós – time as opportunity. 2540 /kairós ("opportune time") is derived from kara ("head") referring to things "coming to a head" to take full-advantage of. 2540 (kairós) is "the suitable time, the right moment (e.g. Soph., El. 1292), a favorable moment" (DNTT, 3, 833)'*.

So, at the time when the prophesy given by the risen Christ in Acts 1:8 then He, the 'Son of Man', knew when He would return. This would be both after a 'measure of time' and at the 'opportune time' i.e., when the events of the age 'come to a head'. The passage of both chronos and kairos time precede the coming Day of the coming of Son of Man.

Furthermore, it is especially at this time when Christians must wait for *'power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth'* (Acts 1:8).

This promise is not only made not only to the Christians who saw a partial fulfilment on the day of Pentecost, but it is made to all Christians throughout time. This includes the two witnesses of whom we read operate out of Jerusalem in the last 3.5 years of this age. This will be the time of the complete fulfilment of this prophesy, and this will occur in the appointed 'time and season'.

It is crucial for Christians to understand that in the Great Tribulation, Yahweh will equip his people to be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Furthermore, this equipping must needs be 'in power' to combat the spiritual darkness that will be rampant at that will prevail at that time.

These are the last words of Christ spoken on the earth before his ascension. It was given to the assembly that were gathered with Him. They had asked Him the specific question as to when he would come to restore Israel. They had not understood the global significance of His coming again and so He explained to them in a broader context of its global significance and of the time and events that must necessarily occur prior to His return.

Earlier in the prophesy Jesus had explained to them that this will be when the greatest persecution will occur. At this time, great persecution will be unleashed. This will be the time when they will need to flee the city of Jerusalem and the towns of Judea for they will be mercilessly pursued by the secret police of the Antichrist and His armies. This will be the time when one will be taken and one left. Such will be the discrimination against the Christians in that part of the world. Some will be working in fields, some will be in factories, some will be women and some men. In preparation for these events Jesus intended them to be informed and not oblivious to the persecution that would come upon them (Matt.24:36-50). Matt.24:15-25 also makes clear that at this time they were to '*pray ye that your flight (from Jerusalem and Judea) be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day*' (Matt.24:20).

The scriptures make it clear that the fervent prayers of righteous men and women are effective and able to change events in time. At end of this age Christ prophesied that prayer could change and delay events by at least 3 months i.e., that their flight be not in winter.

So, we know from this that the prayers of Christians who are living at the beginning of the great tribulation can be so effective as to change the onset of the final 7 years of Daniel's prophesy of 'weeks' i.e., the time when Israel enters into a covenant agreement with the Antichrist; for this event then determines the time, which occurs 3.5 years later, when the Antichrist becomes apparent in the temple of Jerusalem. This will be the exact time when Christians will need to flee from the onslaught of Antichrist, and the lethal persecution of his secret police.

This means that the prayers of the saints of God are so anointed and powerful at this time as to determine both the start and the end of Daniel's prophecy of the 70th and final week i.e., the seven years prior to His returning in glory accompanied by his host and from the clouds. What an honour and privilege it is to be part of the plan of the ages whereby we can, through prayer, affect the very fabric of time and events at the end of this age.

False prophets say that the Holy Spirit will be lifted off the earth during these tragic years. This is contrary to scripture for the Holy Spirit is promised in greater measure at this time to counter the wickedness which is released 3.5 years before His arrival in glory. This is evidence by the beginning of the ministry of the two witnesses which starts at this time and continues until immediately prior to the return of the Son of Man.

The means and magnitude of enduement with power that was prophesied by Christ in Acts 1:6-8 initially came at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-39), was a fore taste of the heavenly power that

will be poured out in the last days of this age. This is the power which is the provision to Christians to especially strengthen them in the time of the tribulation, great one. Rev.7:13-14 reads of these Christians: *'Then one of the elders addressed me: 'These in white robes,' he asked, 'who are they, and where have they come from?' 14'Sir,' I answered, 'you know.'* So he replied, *'These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb...'* BSB

Many commentators write of the provision of power from on high given to the people of God in the closing years of the age of grace. Dakes for example writes of Acts 1:8 being *'fulfilled in Acts 2:1-39 and to be completely fulfilled in the tribulation and Millennium'* He goes on to define the Greek word for 'power' as 'dunamis' as this will be the type of power which will be received by the Christians for it will be *'inherent power capable of reproducing itself like a dynamo'* (2Peter1:3). For this time will be the time when great miracles will be wrought by Christians across the globe. They that know their God shall be strong and do exploits. . It will be the time of the great commissions closing years when the *'gospel benefits were to be world-wide and not for the Jews only in the first century'*.

Of this time Dan.11:32 reads of this time that the Christians *'who know their God will be strong and will resist him'* that is resist the king of the north, i.e., the Antichrist and his wickedness.

This commission and the promises that come with it, come in great measure at that time; and they come not only to the two witnesses, but to all Christians who need to be equipped and ready not only for the impending darkness, but for His imminent return. The five wise virgins carried a lit oil lamp through the dark hours until midnight, for they knew that the bridegroom was coming in dark times (Matt.25:2).

The prophesy of Joel 2:28, though tasted and received at the time of Peter's message and referred to by him on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21), also has clear reference to the time of the armies of the Antichrist who will descend like locusts upon the land of Israel in the closing 'chronos' and 'kairos' time before the return of the 'Son of Man' (Joel 1).

This will be the time when the prophesy comes to its full completion for Joel's prophesy records in some detail the events that take place at that time.

Acts 2:17-21 (Joel 2:28-32) reads: *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved'* KJV.

The events vividly described by Joel as being *'wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood'* did not occur on the day of Pentecost, they remain unfulfilled, for the prophesy explains that they occur *'before that great and notable day of the Lord come'*.

These events occur before the resurrection of our bodies on that Day of the return of the Son of Man. Romans 8:22-27 reads: *'We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until the present time. Not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved; but hope that is seen is no*

hope at all. Who hopes for what he can already see? But if we hope for what we do not yet see, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God' BSB. It is the hope of the arrival of that Day that propelled the early Christians and will propel us too as we await with yearning its arrival.

'Your kingdom come' (Luke 11:2)

The Lord's Prayer can be seen in sharper focus when we see it in the context of a pre-Millennial Payer. It was given by Jesus as being resilient and productive right up to the time of His return in glory on that Day. 'Thy kingdom come' is the coming of the kingdom on that Day of the return of the Son of Man; the prophesy and the promise is there, though it is not fulfilled until that Day comes. Like Acts 1:8, the prayer and prophesy recorded in Luke 11:2-4 is partially complete prophesy which has been, is and will be to come. It can only be complete the Day on which the Son of Man comes to take His rightful place as head of a kingdom, and this is the Millennial kingdom which is still to come. It is certainly not complete at the present time for many rulers lead many nations, none of which are the Christ, the living One come from Yahweh God.

So, the Millennium kingdom is yet to come, of which we have a fore taste now in our day-to-day activity as Christians. Paul likens our time on earth when compared to the time to come in this way in 1 Cor.13:11-12: *'When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I set aside childish ways. Now we see but a dim reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known'* BSB.

So, now we have a taste of the kingdom yet to come and know in part, but it is not a call to Christians who, by their own efforts, can deal with, judge and complete it's coming; rather, we are told to pray for its coming and pray for His power to do it, a total reliance on the Father is called for, for the prayer reads: *'thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'*.

The Lord's Prayer as recorded in Luke 11:1-4 and when taken in the context of Luke 11:1-13 is also clear teaching on the exercising of the Christian's faith in relation to Holy Spirit baptism. The Lord's prayer (Luke 11:1-4) describes the cause and effect of persecution and the Spirit baptism (Luke 11:5-13) is how we are anointed for service to do the works in those times.

After telling the disciples how to pray the Lord's Prayer as recorded in Luke 11:2-4 Jesus immediately goes on to give clear teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for Spirit baptism is necessary to activate Christians in the times of trials, persecution, and temptation. This passage records the importance of persistent asking, seeking, and knocking at the door of heaven and ends with *'how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!'* (Luke 11:13b BSB).

And what is the '*kingdom*' as recorded in Luke 11:2? The word for 'kingdom' here recorded is the original Greek word 'basileía' of which Strong's concordance comments: *'932 basileia (from 935 /basileús, "king") – properly, kingdom; the realm in which a king sovereignly rules. A kingdom (932 /basileía) always requires a king – as the kingdom (932 /basileía) of God does with King Jesus! 932 (basileía) especially refers to the rule of Christ in believers' hearts – which is a rule that 'one day will be universal on the physical earth in the Millennium' (G.*

Archer)'. That rule is not yet universal on the earth and can only be so when the Son of Man has returned, judgements have been made and Satan is confined to the Abyss.

So, *'thy kingdom come'* is the second coming of the Christ. The Lord's Prayer is not a call to Christians to set up this kingdom on the earth, for that can only be done by the Son of Man, and that takes place with the manifestation of great power on that Day. This power is far beyond human ability for on that Day the heavens are shaken and the elements on the earth melt.

'The elements shall melt with fervent heat' (2 Peter 3:10)

Of that Day, and of the energy and power needed to set up the kingdom 2 Peter 3:10-13 (see also Zephaniah 1:7-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11) records: *'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness'* KJV.

Peter goes on to record how important it is to have a mindset that looks for the hastening of the coming of the Day for 2 Peter 3:14-15 reads: *'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless'* KJV.

Peter then adds a strict warning against false prophets and the cause and effect of false teachers that lead people to be unlearned and unstable. The warning is so severe as without proper teaching on these matters then people will be devastated, they will be destroyed in their minds, for great wars will come upon the nations and the precepts upon which they had built their own steadfastness will fail them. 2 Peter 3:16-18 reads: *'As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness'* KJV.

When Satan and his wicked fallen angels are thrown out of heaven by Michael, an event which occurs 3.5 years before the close of the age (Rev.12:7-9), then and especially then we shall overtly fight temptation and know deliverance from evil. This will be the time when the wicked fallen angels will be in the same realm as the earth-bound demons which so often cause great anguish and plague mankind on the earth. *'Thy will be done on the earth, as in heaven'* will be our cry. For the kingdom of heaven will be close by, even at the door and very much 'at hand'. Only spiritual protection will keep people, and many more people will need food and provision as the famines spread through the lands.

Though Satanic angelic powers will roam the spirit realm of the earth, (Rev.12:7-9), our hope and power will still come from heaven, and in that place, there will be great relief at the silence for the conflict there will have been won by Michael and the good angels. There will, of necessity, be a new order in the heavenly places at that time and in this new order we can pray to Yahweh that they might be released act on behalf of the people of God.

The activity of angels at that time is powerful and recorded many times throughout the books of Daniel, Revelation and elsewhere. These angels are of one accord and Christians operate in unison with them when they call upon the name of the Lord. In this way great wonders occur on the earth.

The name of Yahweh-Sabaoth is recorded 281 times in scripture and often are recorded as riding on the clouds or intervening on behalf of Sovereign God or defending against armies on the earth. 2 Kings 6:16-17 records: *“Do not be afraid,” Elisha answered, “for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw that the hills were full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha*’ BSB.

These same angels are they who will come with the Son of Man in Shekinah glory (the clouds) on that Day to gather the elect and to set up His kingdom on the earth. This pure oxygen from the heavenly places will give the two witnesses and the Christian assemblies, of whom they are part, great powers to perform miracles in his Name. Hebrews 11:1 reads: *‘Now faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see’* BSB and this will be the means and mode of operation as the events of the last days unfold, and faith of Christians will be rewarded.

Satan, our real enemy, will be openly aggressive in the earthly realm at this time and will bring devastation and conflict on the earth for he knows that he only has a short time before punishment. He knows the prophecies of scripture, and he knows that he hates the Father and the Son and the Spirit. In the light of Yahweh’s great love, he still will not repent.

Yet the time of the Great Tribulation is also the time when there is rejoicing in the heavens, for as stated, at that time Satan will have been removed from that realm. Rev.12:12 reads: *‘Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea; with great fury the devil has come down to you, knowing he has only a short time’* BSB

‘The days of the Son of Man’ (Luke 17:22)

The days preceding the return of the Son of Man (Matt.24:30) will not be marked by observable signs on any one day but by many days of gradual and imperceptible decay in the cosmos i.e., world systems. The adage that comes to mind is that of a frog being slowly boiled alive.

The premise is that if a frog is put suddenly into boiling water, it will jump out, but if the frog is put in tepid water which is then brought to a boil slowly, it will not perceive the danger and will be cooked to death. The story is often used as a metaphor for the inability or unwillingness of people to react to or be aware of sinister threats that arise gradually rather than suddenly. The metaphor is used to describe the failure to act against a problematic situation which will increase in severity until reaching catastrophic proportions. The analogy can also be cited of how humankind does not learn from its mistakes but rather history will repeat itself.

It reads in the scriptures that this will be the case prior to the second coming of the Messiah, when there will be a general malaise against actions that could stop the advance of the evil one, but instead, inaction causes the precipitation of a final catastrophic event.

I quote below the key scriptures shown to us in this respect. Notice in the passage the reference to the days preceding the coming of the Son of Man will be as they were in the days of Noah or in the days of Lot. As in the story of Lot, these final days will be marked by

the urgency of the prophecies to flee the lands due to extreme persecution. This will be the time when the secret police of the Antichrist come to kill those who do not follow him, lives will be lost and people selected and arrested, a time when 'one will be taken and the other left'. This will be the time when the vultures gather over the carcasses of the bodies of the dead who die in the final conflict known as Armageddon. As a source reading for subject matter see video 'Teaching on the Book of Revelation (Edited).divx' by Bill Turner.

Then, suddenly, will come singularly 'the day of the Son of Man'. The parable that follows these key verses relates to the Christians who need to pray at all times through these days and not loose heart for they cry out to the Judge of the whole earth '*appealing to him, 'Give me justice against my adversary'*' (Luke 18:3 BSB). It will be the time when the kingdom of heaven will become imminent such that it will be 'within your grasp' (Lu.17:21).

The full text of Luke 17:20-18:8 reads as follows:

The Coming of the Kingdom

'When asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The kingdom of God will not come with observable signs. Nor will people say, 'Look, here it is,' or 'There it is.' For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst. (or 'within you' or 'within your grasp')'

Then He said to the disciples, 'The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, 'Look, there He is!' or 'Look, here He is!' Do not go out or chase after them. For just as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so will be the Son of Man in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man: People were eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

It was the same in the days of Lot: People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But on the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

It will be just like that on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve his possessions. Likewise, let no one in the field return for anything he has left behind. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed: One will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together: One will be taken and the other left'.

'Where, Lord?' they asked.

Jesus answered, 'Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.'

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

'Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray at all times and not lose heart: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected men. And there was a widow in that town who kept appealing to him, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'

For a while he refused, but later he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect men, yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice. Then she will stop wearing me out with her perpetual requests.'

And the Lord said, 'Listen to the words of the unjust judge. Will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry out to Him day and night? Will He continue to defer their help? I tell you, He will promptly carry out justice on their behalf. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?' BSB

'Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand' (Joel 1:15)

The anointing of God rested upon the prophets and caused them to focus on the key event being Messiah's second advent on that day. For example, the concluding prophesy contained in the book of Zechariah Ch.12 alone contains the term 'in that day' 16 times. It is a term so often used to describe this event. The term is also often used by Isaiah to describe not only that day but events which will take place beyond that day and in the Millennium i.e., the epoch or era of time following that day. This is referred to by John as the new heaven and the new earth and the holy city, the new Jerusalem. This will be the time when the One seated on the throne says to John *'Behold, I (Jesus) make all things new'* (Rev.21:5).

Much of scripture, and much of Old Testament prophesy, has a sharp focus on the Millennium. We might read these prophecies and consider them to be fine words of platitude but in fact they relate to the Millennium. The Holy Spirit inspired these prophecies of this forth coming time because from that perspective the preceding events fall into sharp focus.

The prophets were inspired to see events through the prism of heaven and in their gaze saw profound things, sometimes so profound as to overwhelm them (Isaiah 6:5; Rev.1:17) and at other times it caused them much grief and alarm (Daniel 7:15,28), yet they were faithful to their office and recorded the visions and dreams for the benefit of subsequent generations.

The clarity of sight from the perspective of heaven's realm on that day is because on that day the evil one is removed, Satan is cast into the Abyss, and his veil of evil intent and deception, called the hidden power of the 'mystery of lawlessness' (2 Thes.2:7) will have been removed.

'Prepared for this hour and day and month and year' Rev.9:15

The preparations made in heaven for the glorious return of Christ are precise to the moment. At the seventh trumpet Christ returns before which the sixth angel sounds his trumpet and a voice is heard from the four horns of the golden altar before God *'saying to the sixth angel with the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' So the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. And the number of mounted troops was two hundred million; I heard their number'*.

The references to both the day and the hour of His return are many, see Luke 12:46; Matt.24:50. Matt.24:36 and Luke 13:32 which read *'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father'* and Matt.25:13 (The Parable of the Ten Virgins) reads *'Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. For it is just like a man going on a journey'* BSB.

The Father, Son and Spirit certainly know the year, month, day, hour, moment of His return, for the prophecies reflect the events which are planned though yet to take place. Matt.5:17,18 reads *'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have*

not come to abolish them, but to fulfil them. For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished' BSB.

'In that hour' Rev.11:13

In the very hour after the ascension of the two witnesses in reads in Rev.11:13 as follows: *'And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand were killed in the quake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven'*

Here and elsewhere earthquakes are prophecies to take place both before and on the day of His return. Jesus forth-told this in Matt.24:7-8: *'For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers (many) places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.'* KJV

The prophecies of the End Times forthtell of the nations and armies of the Antichrist coming from two directions against Judah, that being from the direction of the north i.e., Syria, and from the direction of the east i.e., across the Euphrates. Joel 1:6-7 reads: *'For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white'* KJV.

It will be a time of much lamentation and mourning, a time when *'joy is withered away from the sons of men'* (Joel 1:12). Joel 1:8-12 reads *'Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men'* KJV.

It is a time of great regret, for the priests and prophets of God are largely unprepared. It is a time when national renewal can only come when mankind *'cry unto the LORD'* (Joel 1:14). Joel 1:13-14 reads *'Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD'* KJV

Joel 1:15 reads *'Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come'* KJV. The destruction comes from the Almighty which in the Hebrew reads 'Shaddai' Ellicott comments: *'The Hebrew preserves the alliteration, Shod Mishaddai, destruction from the destroyer'*.

The natural world suffers great pain at this time, for the destruction caused by the Antichrist is great and widespread and this is the cause of famine as spoken of by Jesus in Matt.24. Joel 1:17-20 reads *'The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry*

also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness. It will be a time when even the beasts of the field i.e., the very animal kingdom itself echoes the cry of humankind and looks up to God, for as Ellicott comments on Joel 1:20 *'The prophet has cried to God; the very beasts echo that cry, 'looking up' to Him. As yet, man seems dumb'*.

As Joel saw these events in vision, so did Jesus, for his comments are recorded in Matt.24:7 where it reads: *'For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places'* KJV.

This is a day of great noise; it will be the cusp of the ages for Joel 2:1-2 reads: *'Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations'* KJV.

Joel prophesied that this Day would be at the time of greatest trials for as Ellicott comments: *'he (Joel) sees on the horizon a mustering of the nations hostile to his people, bent on destroying them. Let the priests stir up the people for a fast, and for the defence of their land by the trumpet. The locusts have done their symbolical work (Joel 1), they have left their mark on the country. Now the day of Jehovah, the manifestation of His power, is approaching—it is imminent'*.

Joel sees the *'mustering of nations hostile to his people, bent on destroying them'*, though *'Now the day of Jehovah, the manifestation of His power, is approaching—it is imminent'*. Joel also sees it as a time of great wonders in the heavens and on the earth *'before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come'* KJV. Of this Day the BSB translation records the adjectives *'great and awesome (dreadful, glorious) Day of the LORD'*.

The full text of Joel 2:28-32 (KJV) reads *'And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call'*.

The death, resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses occurs just before the point in time of the seventh and last trumpet, referred to the third woe in Rev.11:15 *'The second woe has passed. Behold, the third woe is coming shortly'*.

The seventh and last trumpet occurs on the last day of this age, this is referred to by the prophet Joel in the previous reading as the Day of the Lord. The prophesy of John goes on to read in Rev11:16-19: *'Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and loud voices called out in heaven: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.'* And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: *'We give thanks to You, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were enraged, and Your wrath has come. The time has come to judge the dead and to reward Your servants the prophets, as well as the saints and those who fear Your name, both small and great— and to destroy those who*

destroy the earth.' Then the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple. And there were flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and peals of thunder, and an earthquake, and a great hailstorm' BSB.

A day of tremendous noise and glory, a blaze of light, accompanied by a rocking heaven and earth

When Jesus the Messiah comes, it is described as a global event which is accompanied by 1. It will be accompanied with tremendous noise (1Thes.4:13-18; Is.27:13; Mt.24:31; Rev.19:6, 11:15) 2. It will be accompanied with tremendous glory and a blaze of light (Mt.24:27; Lk.17:24; Is.24:23; Rev.19:11-16) 3. It will be accompanied by a rocking heaven and earth. There will be great earthquakes (Is.24:18-20; Joel.2:30-32; Zech.14 all; Mt.24:29; 2Pet.3:10-13; Rev.6:12-17; 11:13,19; 16:18,20,21). These scriptures do not point to a secret rapture, rather the Messiah coming as a global cataclysmic event. See more at www.prophetbillturner.com / Study #38 'Beware! Don't let anyone fool you, and lead you astray'.

The Psalmist forth told this day in Psalm 46. It begins with the defence of God's people and because He will be their defence then He tells them not to fear of the events that they see happening around them, including the dawn of the Millennium. These events include earthquakes and the upheaval of the natural world leading up to and on the Day of the Lord when the New Jerusalem is established (v.4). The final event of His coming occurs early morning on that Day (v.5). As He rose early morning on the Day of Ascension after His first coming (, so He will come 'right early' on this Day too. John 20:1 reads ' *Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark...* ' BSB

The full Psalm 46 reads: '*{To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth. } God [is] our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; [Though] the waters thereof roar [and] be troubled, [though] the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. [There is] a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy [place] of the tabernacles of the most High. God [is] in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, [and that] right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts [is] with us; the God of Jacob [is] our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I [am] God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts [is] with us; the God of Jacob [is] our refuge. Selah' KJV.*

He is now manifested among His people, they see Him, He comes, the long-awaited Messiah, comes back to reign! He is in the midst of the city. Though all the kingdoms of the earth are moved and made desolate, God the Messiah is not moved. Instead, He makes the war to cease, he destroys the military weaponry of mankind that has been brought against both that place and God's people, He knows His own to who He gives refuge and strength.

'... there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matt.8:12)

Yet on this Day, the Day of His coming when every eye shall Him, the heathen still do not repent, instead they gnash their teeth i.e., express hatred and rage against the Lord and

against His anointed. This has been forth-told for our insight and to strengthen us in these times of great adversary before the coming dawn.

As well as the glorious appearing, we read of the open hatred of God's people is palpable by the Antichrist and his followers. The open throat of Slanderer roars out against the Holy One, yet without cause, or right and even though his day has come, he will not change. The persecution of God's people continues to the End.

It will be the time when the prophesies and promises of old come most alive for the people who hold on to them:

Ps.35:1-5,15a-16 reads *'Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them... Assailants I did not know slandered me without ceasing. Like godless jesters at a feast, they gnashed their teeth at me. How long, O Lord, will You look on? Rescue my soul from their ravages, my precious life from these lions'* BSB.

Job 16:9 reads *'His anger has torn me and opposed me; He gnashes His teeth at me. My adversary pierces me with His eyes'* BSB.

Ps.37:12 reads *'The wicked scheme against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them'* BSB.

Ps.112:10 reads *'The wicked man will see and be grieved; he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the desires of the wicked will perish'* BSB.

Lam.2:16 reads *'All your enemies open their mouths against you. They hiss and gnash their teeth, saying, "We have swallowed her up. This is the day for which we have waited. We have lived to see it!'"* BSB.

Jesus knew of this Day and forth-told the events thereof. He explains that even the Gentiles, i.e., people from all lands and nations, from the east and from the west of the land of His return will be gathered to Him on that Day, yet the wicked with 'gnash their teeth' in rage and incessant anger against Him. The narrative reads that upon entering Capernaum, a Roman centurion came to Jesus to ask Him to heal his servant. In this man Jesus found great faith for it goes on to read in Matt8:10b-12: *'Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth'* KJV.

The parallel passage to this one is in Luke 13:28-30 specifically refers to peoples from all of the nations, including the north and south too, are gathered to Him on that Day for it reads: *'There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves are thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And indeed, some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last'* BSB.

So, the harvest of the earth comes from the whole earth, yet there is a division between those who enter the glorious light of the kingdom of God and those who are excluded from want of the kingdom of darkness.

This is the glorious fulfilment and answer given to the saints who cry from the altar ‘

It is the Day when all called shall enter into a time of banquet and celebration upon seeing the Messiah who has come to reign. They shall sit down, literally ‘*shall recline*’ (Matt8:11) at the table of a feast, they shall know experientially the blessedness of the kingdom of God and receive their true inheritance from Him.

Of those who reject Him then in the most startling way their self-exclusion and self-imposed anguish is forth told.

‘For the harvest of the earth is ripe’ (Rev.14:15)

On this Day, when Jesus comes in a cloud of glory (Acts 1:9-11), there will be a heightened sense of great judgement in the heavens, on the earth, and amongst the people. With the glory cloud comes conviction, awe, and judgement upon the people.

Matt.24:29-31 reads: *‘Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other’.*

Rev.1:17-20 reads: *‘And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I [am] he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks’* KJV.

Rev.14:14-15 reads *‘And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped’* BSB.

Of Rev.14:15 Ellicott writes: *‘There can be little doubt that Christ Himself is here intended: the ‘cloud’ (Matthew 24:30; Acts 1:9), the expression ‘Son of man’ (comp. John 5:27 and Daniel 7:13), the ‘crown,’ the general resemblance to the vision in Revelation 1 (see Revelation 1:7-13), indicate as much. The ‘crown’ is the crown of victory; the hour of conquest is at hand. The sickle shows that the harvest has come. (Comp. Joel 3:12-14 and Mark 4:26-29.)’*. It is on and from the glory cloud that the Jesus thrusts in his sickle on the earth and the earth is reaped.

The time of harvest is a time of great angelic activity, involving many angels:

Rev. 5:11 reads of John's revelation of the numbers: *'And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands'* KJV. Ten thousand times ten thousand is 100 million. John saw a myriad of angels. Bill Turner comments in the video 'The Book of Revelation' that humankind could be outnumbered by angels by 100 million to one.

Rev.14:6: *'And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters'*.

Rev.14:8: *'And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication'*.

Rev.14:9: *'And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand (he also himself shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled pure (in full strength, undiluted, e.g., "He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy," James 2:13) in the cup of his indignation, and shall be tormented in fire)'*.

Rev.14:15: *'And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe'*.

Rev.14:18: *'And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God'*.

The angels take their power and the weapons of their warfare from heavenly places, and they cry out instructions to the Son of Man, for they know that they cannot go ahead of his actions; they can only wait for Him to act before they too can proceed. Even in this final act of judgement there is perfect harmony in the work of these heavenly beings of God. The angels call out to each other with loud shouts. This is a time of tremendous noise, awesome light and manifest heavenly power.

This is now the fulness of time *'for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe'*. It is the time pre-determined. The angels have been prepared and ready. They know this is the time. The angels operate in unison with the Son of Man whose sickle must first be thrust on the earth before they too can use their sickles, they have power over fire and participate in the Plan of the Ages *'and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God'* (Re.14:19).

What harvest is this? The harvest of the Just and the harvest of the Vintage

Harvests occur in the autumn after a sowing of the grain and a maturing of the crop through the heat of summer.

Jesus makes it clear that a harvest will take place for Mark 4:26-28 He prophesied: *'And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should*

sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come' KJV.

Christ Jesus is the reaper in the sense that He sends forth the angels to reap the harvest. Matt.24v30-31 reads: *'At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other' BSB.*

Yet Jesus makes it clear that at the time of harvest then a division takes place. Christ is waiting the command of the Father to reap, but when it is given, He will divide the light from the darkness, and the silver, gold and precious stones from the wood, hay and stubble. (Heb.4:12,13. Rev.2:12. Mal.3:1-4. 1Cor.3:11-15).

At this time of harvest, He will divide the crop, the crop of the good seed and the crop of the tares. He was questioned on this, as should the crop of tares be pulled from the growing crop beforehand i.e., as soon as they became evident then should they not be pulled from the crop to make it clean, yet he explained that this can only be done when all is ready, that is together in the final day of harvest.

Matt.13:24-30 reads: *'Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn' KJV.*

From this parable we can clearly see that there are not two days of harvest but one, there is no secret cleaning of the crop to take place in advance of the Day of Harvest, no early intervention by the reaper. There is one harvest, and it occurs on one Day. On this Day, the wheat and tares are separated. At this time the tares are burnt and the wheat is gathered *'into my barn'*.

Jesus is the only one who will reap the harvest for He holds the sickle and reaps. The going forth of the command to reap occurs at a set time, the fulness of time, which only the Godhead know. Yet on that Day of his appearance in glory Jesus gives two sets of instructions to two different sets of angels who are told to go to reap two different harvests. He delegates the power to reap with the sickle to these two different sets of angels. We read of two angels emerging from the temple in in heaven and one from the altar in heaven.

Ellicott comments: *'It has been asked, 'What harvest is this?' It is the gathering of the good seed, the full corn in the ear, into the celestial garner (Mark 4:26-29). The angel who announces that the harvest is ready comes forth from the Temple, the inner shrine, the holy place which was measured off in the sanctuary of the faithful (Revelation 11:1); whereas the angel who calls for the vintage comes forth from the altar (Revelation 14:18)'.*

The angels from the temple (Rev.14:15-17)

The angels from the temple harvest the fully ripe grapes the just, also referred to as the good seed. Rev.14:15-17 reads: *'Then another angel came out of the temple, crying out in a loud voice to the One seated on the cloud, 'Swing Your sickle and reap, because the time has come to harvest; for the crop of the earth is ripe.'* So the One seated on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle' BSB.

The angel who announces that this harvest is ready comes forth from the temple, the inner shrine, the holy place which was measured off in the sanctuary of the faithful (Rev.11:1).

The angel from the altar (Rev.14:18-20)

The angel from the altar harvests the grapes for the great winepress of God, also called the harvest of the wicked, or the harvest of the tares. Rev.14:18-20 reads: *'Still another angel, with authority over the fire, came from the altar and called out in a loud voice to the angel with the sharp sickle, 'Swing your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the vine of the earth, because its grapes are ripe.'* So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the grapes of the earth, and he threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and the blood that flowed from it rose as high as the bridles of the horses for a distance of 1,600 stadia' BSB.

The angel from the altar has power (Gr. 'exousian') 'over the fire'. The two scenes—one in Revelation 6:9-10 (the souls crying beneath the altar), the other in Revelation 8:5 (the angel mingling incense with the prayers of the saints)—must be remembered. The angel who had charge of the altar fire, and flung the ashes betokening judgments towards the earth, is the same one who calls with a loud cry, *'Send thy sharp sickle, and gather the bunches of the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe'*.

These are undoubtedly mighty and powerful angels. The reference to another, and yet another angel refers to a number of them being involved in the tasks at hand in each case. There may be a plurality of angels who are sent forth and who operate under the role of the one key angel from the temple comes 'another angel' (Rev.14:15) and 'another' (Rev.14:17). Bill Turner (www.prophetbillturner.com Study #23 'The Book of Revelation P.60) writes: *'The angel with the sickle is probably in charge of the angels that destroy the wicked, even as the archangel Michael will lead the angels against Satan and his angels and cast them out of the heavenlies (Rev. 12:7-9)'*.

These angels are given the specific instruments to accomplish their deeds.

The first angel that emerges from the temple cries out with *'a loud voice to the One seated on the cloud'* (Rev.14:15) yet we read from Rev.14:17 that *'another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle'*. So it reads that both of these angels carry a sharp sickle, though only the first cries to the One on the cloud, and this cry must happen before both can proceed with their sickles.

These two angels that come out of the temple in heaven thrust carefully over the earth and the earth is harvested of its grape clusters (Rev.14:15-17). In comparison to Rev.14:18-20 these verses speak of the hand-picking of grapes where each cluster is removed from the vine with secateurs in one hand whilst the other hand caresses and holds the cluster from being bruised as it is harvested; these clusters are those chosen for the banqueting house of God.

However, the image of the second angel from the altar is of one who harvests using the altar fire, as it flings the burning ashes betokening judgments towards the earth. This is the harvest of the vintage (Rev.14:18-20)

Of the harvest of the vintage i.e., the tares, Ellicott writes: *'There must be some difference between the vintage and the harvest. There is an autumn gladness about the harvest: there are tokens of judgment in the vintage. It is not the sharp sickle alone which is required: the winepress, the winepress of God's wrath, is called into use. An angel from the Temple calls to the Son of man to reap the harvest: an angel from the altar calls to an angel from the Temple to gather in the vintage. The vintage symbolises a harvest of judgment; do not the words respecting Babylon (the wine of the wrath of her fornication, Revelation 14:8) come to the mind and confirm this? The angel rises from the altar, beneath which the murdered saints had cried, "How long?" and proclaims, "The vintage, the hour of vengeance, has come!" And it is not without significance that the angel to whom this cry is addressed comes forth out of the Temple, the safe sanctuary of God's faithful ones, as one who has witnessed their secret sorrows and their sufferings, and is fitted "to recompense tribulation to the troublers of Israel" (2Thessalonians 1:6).'*

'The great winepress of the wrath of God' (Rev.14:19)

This is the time when the grapes of vintage of God's wrath are fully ripe. In Rev.14:18 we read that the angel from the Altar is told to *'Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe'*.

At this time of the winepress, we note that God's anger mixed in full strength. Rev.14:10-11 reads: *'And another angel, a third, followed them, saying in a loud voice, If any man worship the wild beast and his image, and a mark upon his forehead or upon his hand, he also himself shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled pure (in full strength, undiluted, e.g., 'He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy,' James 2:13) in the cup of his indignation, and shall be tormented in fire, And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name'. KJV*

The crop of the vintage grapes of wrath is filled with 'all things vile' for Rev.17:4-6 reads: *'And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead [was] a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus' KJV*

Bill Turner (www.prophetbillturner.com Study #23 'The Book of Revelation P.60) writes: *'We read in Rev.14v18., that 'another angel came out from the altar,' and that this angel has 'power,' 'exousian,' 'over fire'. We know that Jesus will burn up the wicked with unquenchable fire, and will with flaming fire take vengeance ('ekdikesis') on them that do not know not God, and that do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Chris (Lk.3:17,18; 2Thes.1:7-9). This is the great winepress of the wrath of God (Rev.14:19; 19:15; Is.42:13-17; 63:1-6). Those who fight Jesus when He returns need no trial, they are destroyed, the others who are wicked but do not fight Christ at His coming are executed after trial (Matt.13:41-43,47-50; 25:31-46). The wrath of God is as real as His love, and springs from His love. The only way that God can establish a happy kingdom is by executing the wicked, if the wicked*

were allowed to live in God's kingdom, happiness would be impossible (Joel 3:11-17; Ps.75:8; Is.51:17-23; Jer.25:15-29; 49:12,13)'.

See also Bill Turner's website referred to above and Studies #22a, 22b: 'The Issues of Death and Judgement'.

Under the great pressures of temptation put upon peoples then some of choice agree with the tempter to destroy the right of access to the Father in return for personal gain.

It is of interest to note that when temptation came in the heavenly places then Satan, the Accuser also called the red dragon, drew other angels with him and this caused them to also go his way. Rev.12:3-4 reads *'Then another sign appeared in heaven: a huge red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven royal crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars from the sky, tossing them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, ready to devour her child as soon as she gave birth'* BSB.

These angels persecute the inhabitants of the earth, they have the same determination as the red dragon to subdue the peoples of the earth, and to dominate them, and where given licence through the corruption of those who give themselves over to him to wreak havoc and death upon the earth and its inhabitants.

Rev.12:3-4 refers to one third of the angels being drawn from the heaven to the earth by the red dragon. In the same way, though it is a matter of pure conjecture, is it the case that one third of mankind fall under the judgement of the wicked and two thirds are garnered in the harvest of the just? If the numbers garnered in the harvest of the two crops that grow side by side differ i.e., if say two thirds of the harvest comprises of the good harvest and one third the bad harvest then does that mean that twice the numbers of angels are needed to reap this harvest on the behalf of the Saviour when compared to the harvest of the wicked as we read of two angels coming from the temple, though only one emerging from the altar?

'On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem' (Joel 2:32)

This global event is centred on Jerusalem for as we have previously read in Joel 2:32 it occurs *'on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem'* and is an event which will witnessed and seen by all on the earth.

Rev.11:8 reads *'When the two witnesses have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will wage war with them, and will overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city—figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where their Lord was also crucified'* BSB. So Jerusalem is the centre of attention for the Antichrist who is empowered in full measure from the Abyss, where evil reigns.

Jesus foresaw this day taking place in that city for we read that even as he was led away to carry his cross to Golgotha he prophesied to the women of Jerusalem as follows: *'And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?'* (Luke 23:27-31) KJV.

We then read that it was at the place called Calvary, outside the city walls of Jerusalem, that he was crucified and this is recorded in Matt.27:32-44; Mark 15:21-32; John 19:16-27, and in Luke 23:38 we read *'And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS'* KJV. It was at this centre of Judaism that he was crucified.

And it is to Jerusalem, where He was crowned King, that He will return. His title was acknowledged then, even by Pilate, and it has not been rescinded or taken away. At that time He will come *'who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom'* (2Tim.4:1 KJV).

'At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory' Mark 13:26

Jesus' return was prophesied as being *'with the clouds of heaven'* with *'dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him'* for Dan.7:13-14 reads: *'Daniel 7:13: 'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, [one] like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom [that] which shall not be destroyed'* KJV.

Matthew 25:31: *'When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne'*

And then on the day of Jesus' ascension, we read of the manner of his return for in Acts 1:2,9-11 we read: *'Until the day in which he was taken up... while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven'* KJV.

The word cloud is the Greek word 'nephos'; Strong's Concordance reads: *'properly, cloudiness, i.e. (concretely) a cloud – cloud'*. It signifies a manifest presence, a presence of such intensity, a precipitation of His divine presence, like clouds that form as the morning sun rises in the sky. Angels accompany His arrival, and as at the first (Luke 2:9-14), are there to accompany Him.

The word 'glory' (Strong's Concordance transliterates the Greek word for glory as follows: *'dóksa (from dokeō, 'exercising personal opinion which determines value') – glory. 1391 /dóksa ('glory') corresponds to the OT word, kabo (OT 3519, 'to be heavy'). Both terms convey God's infinite, intrinsic worth (substance, essence)'. The word speaks of a manifestation God and the intensity of His closeness and presence for when glory is manifested then He is close by, and with the glory of the Father comes the Son of Man (Matt.16:27)'. As with the formation of clouds, the glory denotes his manifestation, closeness, and presence.*

The Investiture of the Son of Man 'coming in the clouds' Matt. 26:64

The KJV records the title of the returning King as 'Son of man' whereas the BSB records His title 'Son of Man'. I record each according to the translation used.

Let us first consider when Jesus was invested with the title 'Son of Man'. When was He coronated the rightful heir of the kingdom of heaven? Of the title 'Son of man' (KJV) let us consider the prophesy of Daniel 7:13 which reads: *'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him'* KJV.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown comment: *'This title is always associated with His coming again, because the kingdom that then awaits Him is that which belongs to Him as the Saviour of man, the Restorer of the lost inheritance. 'Son of Man' expresses His VISIBLE state formerly in his humiliation hereafter in His exaltation. He 'comes to the Ancient of days' to be invested with the kingdom. Compare Ps 110:2: 'The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength (Messiah) out of Zion'. This investiture was at His ascension 'with the clouds of heaven' (Acts 1:9; 2:33, 34; Ps. 2:6-9; Matt. 28:18), which is a pledge of His return 'in like manner' 'in the clouds' (Acts 1:11; Matt. 26:64), and 'with clouds' (Rev.1:7). The kingdom then was given to Him in title and invisible exercise; at His second coming it shall be in visible administration. He will vindicate it from the misrule of those who received it to hold for and under God, but who ignored His supremacy. The Father will assert His right by the Son, the heir, who will hold it for Him (Eze 1:27; Heb 1:2; Re 19:13-16). Tregelles thinks the investiture here immediately precedes Christ's coming forth; because He sits at God's right hand until His enemies are made His footstool, then the kingdom is given to the Son in actual investiture, and He comes to crush His so prepared footstool under His feet. But the words, 'with the clouds,' and the universal power actually, though invisibly, given Him then (Eph 1:20-22), agree best with His investiture at the ascension, which, in the prophetic view that overleaps the interval of ages, is the precursor of His coming visibly to reign; no event of equal moment taking place in the interval.*

The heavenly places were created by Yahweh long ago. There Yahweh has firmly established its structures, it cannot be moved. Here Yahweh reigns. There is a thorn in heaven, and this principle was established long ago, even from eternity, the ageless past. The investiture and coronation of the rightful King upon his throne in heaven took place after the Son of Man had accomplished the Cross, defeated death, and ransacked Hades.

Psalm 91:1 reads: *'The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting'* KJV.

The time of the ascension of the 'Son of Man' was the time of His coronation and investiture and the time when He became fully and rightfully qualified to take the throne there. No one, not even the Accuser Satan could deny His rightful place there. So it was that the Son of Man inherited His kingdom after His resurrection and on the day of His ascension. If so then His kingdom, though invisible to our human eyes, pre-exists His promised return, and the victorious Son of Man rules there. Not only that but it is a place of activity and is growing as the number of saints there grows. These are the saints who have gone to glory are now there in that kingdom. In that kingdom preparations are well in hand, for the Day approaches of the imminent return of its qualified and appointed Redeemer and Ruler. He, that is the Son of Man, is qualified and appointed in the heavens and He is qualified and appointed to rule on earth too. His qualifications come from active service as the Son of Man when He was a man, born of a woman, who lived and died and rose again in the first century AD.

The parables of the kingdom of heaven (Matt.13) relate to growth, and discovery, of treasure and findings, of protection and provision, until the time of harvest. This tells of the wonderful, rich diverseness of that place.

The parable of the mustard seed relates to the time of small beginnings but then the size of that tree at maturity. Matt.13:31-32 reads: *'He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man planted in his field. Although it is the smallest of all seeds, yet it grows into the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."* BSB.

We might consider the Son of Man waiting in the wings until the Day arrives, however, the prophecies relate to His kingdom constantly growing from the time of His first coming until now. He rules that kingdom now, with love and justice. Jesus is continually active now in the heavenly places as preparations take place prior to the appointed time of His visible appearance. He understands and knows of the events of this world, He sees, He grieves, He waits with patience, He knows, as does the Father, that the time is short before His return.

Like preparations for a wedding, the bride prepares herself for the day and time of her wedding. The bridegroom also makes every preparation, ready to receive his bride. The preparations will be complete in the 'fulness of time' (Matt.25:10).

This is so with the time leading up to the coming manifestation of the kingdom. It will be the time of its maturity when many will come to 'nest in its branches'. When will this be, and when will we see the visible manifestation of the King and His kingdom? This will happen when all the prophecies have been fulfilled, when all the events of our age are aligned. This is referred to in Eph.1:10: *'as a plan for the fullness of time, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ'* BSB.

John 18:36 reads: *'Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence'* KJV.

Jesus gave clear teaching as to the imminency of and provisions available from heaven. Matt.6:10 reads: *'Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'* BSB. Smith Wigglesworth, the great British preacher of the twentieth century, noted from his prayer life and ministry that when things change in the heavenly places, then things always change on earth too. When Jesus and the prophets saw things in vision, then they knew that they were given by Father for a reason either to warn, to direct or to encourage, either way they would come to pass. John the Baptist, Jesus and the prophets had revelation concerning the closeness of the kingdom. They spoke of how the *'kingdom of heaven is at hand'* (Matt.3:2; 4:17; 10:7).

Jesus had the revelation of this kingdom and of the Son of Man who would come from the kingdom and with the authority of having been fully man, yet its redeemer, now enthroned as its King.

He also had the revelation of the Day of His return. He saw it in vision, for Matt.26:64 reads: *'Jesus saith unto him (that is the high priest), Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven'* KJV. The high priest would have been aware of the significance of the claims of the Son of Man.

This will be the time of the coming of the *'Son of Man'*, a title which Jesus acknowledged (Mark 14:21) for Matt.24:29-31 reads: *'Immediately after the tribulation of those days: 'The*

sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.’ At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other’ BSB.

The reference to the arrival of the Son of Man is the reference to the arrival of a judge who acts with great authority. John 5:26-28 reads: *‘For as the Father has life in Himself, so also He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice’ BSB.*

Jesus also saw in vision the power released at the coming of the Son of Man who would arrive to claim His rightful inheritance. This power would be manifest and was best described by the prophets who saw it in vision as looking like ‘clouds’ or ‘cloudiness’.

This will be the time of the visible manifestation of the pre-existing kingdom, which is already growing in preparation for that Day of its manifestation to those on the earth.

Matthew 24:30 reads: *‘At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory’ BSB.*

For those who wait earnestly with their lamps trimmed and supply of prophetic oil in place then with assurance they will be prepared and ready. 1Cor.13:12 reads: *‘For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known’ KJV.* It is both our commission and privilege to be able see and fore see as Yahweh’s gift of prophesy to His people is both tested and made known. He will not fail us, for His word is sure and He will be made known to us. Some of these prophesies may seem obtuse. It is like an archaeologist that finds remnants of pottery in the ground, yet it tells of civilisations and cultures that have gone before. The prophesies of old fore-tell of the coming kingdom of the Son of Man.

The appearance of the Son of Man coming in the clouds is not for the sake of a romantic image. Whenever Yahweh appeared as a cloud, then He comes with great energy and strength. This is because He comes riding with great authority against the foreign gods who try to usurp His place, and this will be so upon his visible appearance.

Isaiah 19:1 reads: *‘This is the burden against Egypt: Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud; He is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt will tremble before Him, and the hearts of the Egyptians will melt within them’ BSB.*

The fate of the serpent is sealed upon the arrival of the King who comes with great authority to end his reign. This is the time when the prophesy of Genesis 3:15 comes to pass, the time when *‘He (Messiah Jesus) will crush your head, and you will strike his heel’ BSB.* Though Satan has bruised His heel, Yahweh Jehoshua will crush his head.

This is the time of judgement, for Matthew 16:27 reads: *‘For the Son of Man will come in His Father’s glory with His angels, and then He will repay each one according to what he has done’ BSB.*

This will be the time of His dominion, glory, and kingdom, for Dan.7:14 reads: *‘And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages,*

should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed' KJV.

'Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him— even those who pierced Him' Rev.1:7

The scriptures read as follows:

Zechariah 12:10: 'Then I will pour out on the house of David and on the people of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look on Me, the One they have pierced. They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son' BSB

John 19:37: 'And, as another Scripture says: 'They will look on the One they have pierced' BSB

Rev.1:7: 'Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him— even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, who is and was and is to come—the Almighty' BSB

1 Thessalonians 4:17: 'After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord' BSB

'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be done' Mark 13:30

Luke 21:25-28: 'And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh' KJV

Matthew 16:28: 'Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom' BSB.

Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right? Gen.18:25

The whole earth will see the coming of the Son of Man for Matt.24:30 reads that when He appears in heaven and the tribes (nations) of the earth see Him coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

This is the visible appearance of the great 'I am'. John 14:6-7 reads: *'Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him' BSB.*

With His appearance will come all of His character and attributes including the intensity of the His love for each and all. At this time mankind will mourn when they see the One whom they put to death. They will look upon Him and see the intensity with which He loves them,

and the extent which He has gone to redeem them, yet still there will be those who reject Him.

To those who hold fast He will write on them the name of 'My God' and the 'name of the city of My God (the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from My God)'. Rev..3:11-12 reads: *'I am coming soon. Hold fast to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will never again leave it. Upon him I will write the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God (the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from My God), and My new name'* BSB. The eternal principle is here determined, the importance of putting His Name upon His people. Moses learnt this lesson when he told Aaron to bless the people for it reads in Num.6:22,23,27: *'And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them... And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them'* KJV

When He comes, He will write the name of 'My God' upon them. Each will personally receive a name; each are welcomed as individuals into the banqueting house. This is the name given by Yahweh-Elohim; the Lord God, the Creator and owner of all things (Jn 1:3; Gen 1 - 3), the self-existent or Eternal-Creator, He who was and is and is to come (Gen.21:33; Ex.3:13-14; 6:3; Ps.83:18; Is.12:2; 26:4).

The scriptures reveal much concerning the Names of God, for with each revelation given to mankind through Moses, Abraham, Jesus, and the prophets came a revelation of a facet, character, or attribute of Him, for example Jesus said: "I am"... the way, the truth, the life, the shepherd, the doorway to the sheepfold' etc. At the time of His manifestation on the last Day is revealed his character of love mingled with righteous justice. As Abraham begged of God concerning the righteous and un-righteous inhabitants of Sodom in Gen.18:25: *'Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?'*

The 'I am' will be with us on that Day, and He will call us by name, for as it reads in Is.41:9-11: *'I brought you from the ends of the earth and called you from its farthest corners. I said, 'You are My servant.' I have chosen and not rejected you. Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will surely help you; I will uphold you with My right hand of righteousness. Behold, all who rage against you will be ashamed and disgraced; those who contend with you will be reduced to nothing and will perish'* BSB.

Yahweh-Saboath – 'The Lord of Hosts is with us'

Rev. 5:11 records the numbers of angels which were revealed to John in his vision of heaven. This is what he saw: *'And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands'* KJV. Ten thousand times ten thousand is 100 million. John saw a myriad of angels. Bill Turner comments that humankind might be outnumbered by angels by 100 million to one (Bill Turner, 'The Book of Revelation' video).

And of these hosts? Strong's Concordance comments on the word 'angel' as it appears in different contexts in the scriptures as follows: *'áγγελος – properly, a messenger or delegate – either human (Mt 11:10; Lk 7:24, 9:52; Gal 4:14; Js 2:25) or heavenly (a celestial angel); someone sent (by God) to proclaim His message.*

(áγγελος) is used 176 times in the NT (usually of heavenly angels), but only the context determines whether a human or celestial messenger is intended. For example, 32 (áγγελος)

in Rev 1:20 can refer to heavenly angels or key leaders (perhaps pastors) of the seven churches.

(*ággelos*) can refer to "a human messenger" (cf. John the Baptist, Mt 11:10, quoting Mal 3:1; see also Lk 7:24, 9:52). 32 *ággelos* (plural, *angeloi*) refers to heavenly angels over 150 times in the NT, i.e. spiritual beings created by God to serve His plan.

In Rev 2, 3, "angels" seems to refer to heavenly angels that serve God in conjunction with these seven local churches.

(Rev 2:1) – "Probably 'the angels of the churches' (Rev 1:20, 2:1, etc.) – i.e. really angels, and not pastors" (DNTT, Vol 1, 103).]

So, the messengers to the seven churches could angels or they could refer to human messengers, either way these messengers, of which there were many, brought word direct from the Word, Jesus, to the people.

However, elsewhere it is clear that in the scriptures the angels are referred as being the heavenly angels of God and in the coming times of tribulation they will be both numerous and active as they intervene on behalf of God and action His will. These angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve His plan and read so in the prophesies of His Coming.

It is notable that angels perform many works during the tribulation of the first 3.5 years and especially so in the final 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation. Once Satan is removed from the heavenly realm; see Rev. 12:3,7-12 esp. v9 '*And the great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him*', then it appears that the heavenly angels can operate more freely from the heavenly realm. At this point the devil and his fallen angels, operate more freely on the earth to bring v.12 '*But woe to the earth and the sea; with great fury the devil has come down to you, knowing he has only a short time*' BSB.

Scripture records how fallen angels operating with malice and conflict would challenge the angels of God in the heavenly places. The importance of the End Time visions and prophesies were to encourage and inform the peoples of the earth and strengthen these people so that they might know how to pray against and wrestle '*against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*' Eph. 6:12 BSB.

Satan knew that these instructions for the Ends Times were directly targeted at him and against his works, and this resulted in great conflict in the heavenly realm when the messages were delivered to the seers who received them. These angels have great courage as they operate to deliver the people for it reads in Dan 10:21 '*But first I will tell you what is inscribed in the Book of Truth. Yet no one has the courage to support me against these, except Michael your prince*'. BSB

And this is what the archangel Michael said to Daniel when he delivered the prophesies to him for it reads in Dan 10:12-14 "*Do not be afraid, Daniel,*" he said, "*for from the first day that you purposed to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. 13However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision concerns those days.*" BSB

In the End-times the archangels and angels stay on course to fulfil the tasks and missions given to them some 2,500 years earlier for we read that it this same archangel Michael who

will be one of the key archangels to stand watch over the people of God and he will rise up at the End Times to again operate, cover, protect and deliver the people of God; for it reads in Rev. 12:1-3 *'At that time Michael, the great prince who stands watch over your people, will rise up. There will be a time of distress, the likes of which will not have occurred from the beginning of nations until that time. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. And many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, but others to shame and everlasting contempt. Then the wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever'*

If we further consider the role of the archangel Michael in the End-times, then we also need to read his involvement in casting Satan out of the heavenly places for we read of the war in heaven which takes place immediately after the woman fled in the wilderness. It reads that Satan so hounded and persecuted the people of God that this prompts a war in heaven between the Godly angels and Satan and the angels who had gone bad with him for we read in Rev. 12:6-8 *'And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place for her to be nourished for 1,260 days. Then a war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But the dragon was not strong enough, and no longer was any place found in heaven for him and his angels'*.
BSB

Satan is so enraged at being cast out of the heavens that he then vents his fury on the people of the earth for we read in Rev. 12:13-17 *'And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle to fly from the presence of the serpent to her place in the wilderness, where she was nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. Then from the mouth of the serpent spewed water like a river to overtake the woman and sweep her away in the torrent. But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth to swallow up the river that had poured from the dragon's mouth. And the dragon was enraged at the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea'*.

It is notable that angels are recorded as playing a significant role during the last seven years of this age, particularly in the last 3.5yrs. Their conflicts must be great both in the heavenlies and then after Satan is cast down to the earth (Rev. 12:12) when we read of their increased presence upon the earth, and always they act to protect, guide and guard God's people and to overrule Satan's works in the affairs of men.

They carry forth the commands of Father with much heavenly activity throughout. It reads from Revelation that once Satan is *'cast down to the earth'* that the angels then appear not only to operate with more freedom in the heavenlies to bring protection to God's peoples on earth but need also to address the rampant evil that then occurs on the earth. It is notable that seals one to three occur during the first 3.5yrs but when Satan is cast out of the heavenlies at the time of the fourth seal then not only do the remaining seals ensue but all the seven vials (Rev. 15 & 16) and all the seven trumpets (Rev. 8:2; 11:15,18; 20:4-6) then occur.

These angels operate with precision and in a distinct, orderly, and timely manner and they operate in harmony e.g., the angel that carries the seal for the people of God operates along-side four other angels as it is recorded in Rev. 12:2-4 *'And I saw another angel ascending from the east, with the seal of the living God. And he called out in a loud voice to*

the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or sea or trees until we have sealed the foreheads of the servants of our God".

In the angelic realm it is noticeable that the angels are deeply entwined with God's purposes and our keeping and protection. Often, we read how angels appear before men and women to impart prophesy. E.g., at the time of the birth of Jesus when it happened to Zacharias concerning the birth of John the Baptist (Lu. 1:11), to Mary when the angel Gabriel appeared to her to announce the birth of Jesus (Lu. 1:26-38), to Joseph before the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:20; 2:13) when an angel appeared to him in a dream, and it also happened to the shepherds (Lu. 2:8-14). It is most likely that these and other angels will be most evident and active at the time of His Second Coming too.

The angels of God do not open the seals but action the commands and judgements so released. They do not pass moral judgement on their actions as they bring the judgements of God upon the Antichrist and his followers, though it is recorded that after the destruction brought about by Satan on the earth through his vassals then the angels and the other beings in heaven were so awestruck at the destruction of the earth caused by the evil that there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, Rev.8:1-5 reads *'When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and they were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, rose up before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; and there were peals of thunder, and rumblings, and flashes of lightning, and an earthquake'* BSB.

The opening of the Seventh Seal occurs on the last Day, the Great Day of the Lord. On this day Antichrist and his followers have been conquered and Jesus has caused wars to cease unto the ends of the earth (Ps.46:9; Is.2:4 etc). The whole of heaven looks down in shocked silence for half an hour at the shattered and ruined earth. Death and destruction lie everywhere; the dead and dying lie amongst the chaos and ruin. Here the angels and beings of heaven see before them living proof of the folly of following sin and Satan. They see and know that there can never be a happy world without God and His laws. This is when the work of restoration begins, it is a work in which the angels will also play a part.

This will be the time of the two judgements: the judgement seat of Christ (Matt.25:19-30; Rom.14:10-12; 2Cor.5:10; 1Cor.3:11-15; Ps.50:3-5) and the judgement of the living nations when the 'sheep are separated from the goats' (Matt.25:31-46; Is.2:4; Micah 4:3; Is.66:18). During this period there will be many people to be looked after, sick, injured, dying, starving, homeless and so the angels maybe along with the along with the 144,000 who were redeemed and marked with the seal of God (Rev.7:4; 14:1; 14:3) will be active and operate *'with the powers of the age to come'* (Heb.6:5) and will begin to restore the earth. It will also be the time which heralds in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and no doubt the angels will be engaged there too. (Source: Frank Pritchard's drawings and comments).

On the last and Great Day of this Age, it is an angel that dispenses Satan to the Abyss. Rev.20:1-3a reads: *'Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the Abyss, holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he threw him into the Abyss, shut it, and sealed it over him, so that he could not deceive the nations until the thousand years were complete'* BSB.

The scriptures, especially through John's Revelation, give us glimpses of the different structures, life and activities that make up the heavenly places and the role of the angels there. They begin and are active throughout the Great Tribulation, only mindful to complete the tasks set for them for mankind. They also question the events which they see, yet without wavering they stand their ground to action the commands given to them. Rev.5:1-2 reads: *'Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the One seated on the throne. It had writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?''* BSB.

The wicked and fallen angels who follow Satan know that with the onset of these events that their time is short, and they make every effort to take fallen mankind with them.

Rev.9:4-10 writes of the torment and destruction that wicked angelic activity can wreak upon those *'which have not the seal of God upon their foreheads'* (Rev9:4). Whilst those with the mark of God's Spirit upon them are protected, the verses describe the wickedness that is manifest through the leaders and in the armies of the Antichrist and the passage describes the military hardware used against the peoples in the conflict.

Rev.9:11 then describes the source and ruler over this wickedness for it reads *'They have over them as king (not 'the angel,' as in English version) an angel of the abyss; his name (is) in Hebrew Abaddon, and in the Greek he has a name, Apollyon'* KJV.

Ellicott writes of this verse: *'The king of these locust hordes is named in Hebrew Abaddon, or Perdition, a name sometimes given to the place or abode of destruction (Job 26:6). 'Destruction (Abaddon) hath no covering'—i.e., before God. (Comp. Proverbs 15:11). In Greek his name is Apollyon, or Destroyer: The spirit of the destroyer is the spirit that inspires these hosts. It is a great movement, but its end is destruction, as its inspiring genius is from beneath, from an angel of the nether world'.*

Alford writes: *'It is a question who this angel of the abyss is. Perhaps, for accurate distinction's sake, we must not identify him with Satan himself (cf. ch. Revelation 12:3; Revelation 12:9), but must regard him as one of the principal of the bad angels.'* Weiss (Bib. Theol. of N. T., ii. 270 sq.): *'He [sc., Satan] seduced a portion of the angels, who are also (Revelation 1:20) symbolized by stars, to fall away from God, so that they are now designated as his angels. It is such a Satan-angel who is the star fallen from heaven (Revelation 9:1), who lets loose the plague of locusts from the abyss over the inhabitants of the earth, and is expressly designated (Revelation 9:11) as the angel of the abyss, Abaddon or Apollyon'.*

The angel of the Abyss named Abaddon in the Hebrew and Apollyon in the Greek is named by other commentators as Satan himself. The gross wickedness that emanates from the Abyss is very real for it pollutes men's minds and draws them to destruction. This has always been so yet at this point in time and history causes exceptional stresses upon mankind, both mentally and physically, and its effect appears to be more global. It will be a time of deluding influences, mankind will be seduced to believe what is false and not the truth, and as each choose their path it will cause an open division between those who will take pleasure in wickedness which will lead to their destruction, and those who *'receive the love of the truth so as to be saved'* (2Thes.2:10).

This wicked angel and demons under the control of this angel from the Abyss bind the human mind to their own and other's destruction. In the End Times political and religious leaders will sell their soul to these wicked spirits i.e., they become demonised, which means that they will not only be influenced by but will be possessed by demons, or more accurately, they will sit within the demon(s) and their actions will be actions which are thrust forth by

demon(s). Of the actions of such people Paul writes in Romans 3:12-18 *'There is none that doeth good; no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; the poison of asps is upon their lips; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes'* KJV. These men and women become fortified by evil spirits. They choose to become active antagonists of good, and they take on the mantle of their wicked master(s), which causes them to hate and obscure the light of truth, and determined to ruin others, they target to wound both physically and spiritually the bodies, spirits and consciences of men, women, and children, *'they are the enemies of the cross of Christ'* (the emblem of salvation), *'and whose end is destruction'* (Philippians 3:18-19).

From these scriptures in the book of Revelation, we learn that in the End Times and specifically at the time of the fifth trumpet we read of the engagement of this wicked angel Apollyon who draws evil spiritual powers with him to take part in the conflict.

The spirit that drives Apollyon the Destroyer is in the world today and he will determine to embed himself in ruling men and women to fulfil one purpose, to destroy mankind, for as his name is, so is he. For the Christians who have discernment then the people who are controlled by Apollyon can be recognised, and so they are able to walk with prudence and armed so as to ask for God's intervention to protect, keep, guard, and guide them and those who resist the evil one.

Apollyon works with the Antichrist, whose spirit is also active in the world today (1John 4:3). It is at the End Times that the lawless one and his followers are destroyed for 2 Thes.28-12 reads: *'And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness'* KJV.

Robert Oppenheimer was the wartime head of the Los Alamos Laboratory, the birthplace of the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb in the US in WW2. He is rightly seen as the 'father' of the atomic bomb. As he witnessed the first detonation of a nuclear weapon on July 16, 1945, a piece of Hindu scripture ran through his mind: 'Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds'. 'We knew the world would not be the same,' he later recalled. 'A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent'. Such ferocity and power as unleashed by an atomic bomb, 75 years on from its first unveiling, is now much more democratised in the world as eight sovereign states have officially announced successful detonation of nuclear weapons and others who are not party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have conducted overt tests. Like Oppenheimer, many people today still grapple to try to understand good and evil and how to make sense of their actions. Oppenheimer like others, reflected on the contentions, the struggles, and the source of this conflict. Writers the world over have tried to understand and articulate these imponderables. The scriptures give us untold of clarity when we use them, and the prophesies contained therein as our guide.

Discernment and deliverance ministries are vital in the End-times

Yet the Christians are armed by God's Holy Spirit to test and know both those who are demonised through the wicked angels and the demons and those who are not. 1 John 4:2-6

reads: *'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error'* KJV.

Against the forces of evil, Christians are weaponised as they learn to operate in the heavenly realm and take on the mantle of God's Holy Spirit. See Ex.17:15 'Yahweh Nissi 'The Lord our Banner'. When Satan attacked Job then Job knew the reason for his successful defence for Job 1:9-10 reads: *'Satan answered the LORD, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not placed a hedge on every side around him and his household and all that he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land...'* BSB.

The Christians in these times too can be strong and do exploits. Dan.11:32 reads *'And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits'* KJV.

Great exploits can be done this way. Through the centuries those who have found this truth have done so. We read in the 'Breastplate' Prayer of St Patrick: *'I bind unto myself today the strong Name of the Trinity, by invocation of the same, the Three in One and One in Three. I bind this day to me for ever by power of faith, Christ's incarnation; His baptism in the Jordan river; His death on Cross for my salvation; His bursting from the spiced tomb; His riding up the heavenly way; His coming at the day of doom*'; I bind unto myself today'*. * Note: 'day of doom' is an Old English term meaning 'Day of Judgment'. With this mindset and with this breastplate to protect him, St Patrick witnessed great victories won. In these perilous days then we too can know the protection and strength to *'be strong and do exploits'*. To read a full copy of the 'Breastplate' Prayer of St Patrick see Appendix 7.

The powers of Christians in the face of evil causes Satan to know that the Christians armour as given by and through Christ, can cause great havoc against the powers of darkness. The enemy of our souls cannot destroy the spirits of anointed ones. Rev.12:10-12 reads *'And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down—he who accuses them day and night before our God. They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives so as to shy away from death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea; with great fury the devil has come down to you, knowing he has only a short time....'* BSB.

Just as there are different structures in heavenly places there are different spiritual weaponry given to the Christians, Eph.4.11-12 reads *'And it was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for works of ministry and to build up the body of Christ'* and Eph.6.11-13 reads *'Put on the full armour of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore take up the full armour of God, so that when the day*

of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand'.
BSB

As the Father has equipped angels to complete tasks so Christians too are equipped to such a level that with the application of faith combined with the Holy Spirit's power then they can operate effectively against spiritual strongholds. In 2Cor.10:4 we read that *'the weapons of our warfare are not the weapons of the world. Instead, they have divine power to demolish strongholds'* BSB.

As such then Christians can combat spiritually wicked beings, indeed they are at great risk when they meet Christians. The testimony of others confirms that in the deliverance ministry then Christians can take the Names of God (Num.6:22-27), and His authority and power such that with the cloak of the Holy Spirit then we can bind spiritually wicked beings and to commit them into the Abyss.

In this ministry the Christians, along with the angels have learnt that it is not in their natural strength that they are able to operate with such powers. Instead, they must rely on and have unwavering faith in the authority that has been delegated to them to wield the power of God.

Zech.3:2 reads: *'Then the angel showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, with Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan: "The LORD rebukes you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebukes you! Is not this man a firebrand snatched from the fire?"* BSB. And Jude 1:9 reads: *'But even the archangel Michael, when he disputed with the devil over the body of Moses, did not presume to bring a slanderous charge against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'* BSB. They do not do as the unlearned and the foolish do in Jude 1:8,10 which reads of *'these dreamers (who) defile their bodies, reject authority, and slander glorious beings... These men, however, slander what they do not understand, and like irrational animals, they will be destroyed by the things they do instinctively'* BSB.

In the same way we read of the realm of angels and how they are specifically tasked according to the delegated authority given to them. They do not operate either alone or in isolation. They do not act in their own strength. The levels of authority which are given them are mighty, requiring great strength and fortitude of character on their behalf. They carry out their actions which are specifically referred to as seals, vials, trumpets, thunders etc. This use of language is not random, each task, along with the specific judgement released, needs each angel to be equipped and ready to do the work. Each task is unique. The visions and prophetic language given to John is powerful as it best describes the heavenly structures and weaponry used to fulfil each of the events yet to take place. Like the Christians on earth, these angels are trained equipped and ready for the task. Each action is unique. Their ministry cannot be replicated. As with the Christian ministry of healing, there gifts of healings, not one gift replicated, but many gifts, each is unique and applicable in different and unique circumstances and settings.

Likewise, the scriptures do offer some distinctions between the evil entities that oppose the kingdom of God. Satan is the fallen angel of the morning and there are other fallen angels who are described as principalities, rulers for Eph.6:12 reads *'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms'* BSB Other evil entities are referred to as demons and evil spirits and these must be reckoned with and dealt with by Christians who can have victory in this uneasy fight.

A Christian's knowledge of foundational truths is vital in this conflict. Debilitating and false doctrines kill the power of the Spirit in the faith life of a Christian; such compromise causes

the gentle dove of the Spirit to depart. To be equipped for the End Times, Christian teachers need to move the people on from the milk to the meat of the word (Heb.5:12-6:3). See <https://prophetbillturner.com/> and the following studies by C L Parker: #34a Foundation Truths, #34b, Cover, #35a Original Sin and Eternal Punishment, #35b Cover, #35c Sweet Harmonies, 36a Covet Earnestly, #36b The Mystery of God #36c According to Plan. See also the studies by Bill Turner: #33b The Disastrous Effects of the Doctrine of Original Sin #26a Is the Exorcism of Christians of God? This study makes it clear that it is false to presume on Christians the disastrous thought that they can be demon possessed when with the power of God upon them Christians have the right to deal with such wickedness, indeed when demons try to attack Christians then the demons are the ones who are in great danger of eternal confinement. #26b Exorcism #27 An Extended Study in Demon Possession #25a Baptism in Water. See also Bill Turner's excellent studies #02, #03, #04, #11, #12a, #12b, #13a on the Baptism and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and #05 How Can I Resist Evil? #08 Early Church Organisation. This last study is necessary because it is vitally important that during these times of tribulation that the church is properly organised and prepared,

These and other key subjects are further studied by Alister Hamilton and can be found on his website <https://truthforthelastdays.com/>. In particular see: 1. Our Lord's True Humanity versus the destructive heresy of Docetic Gnosticism 2. The unscriptural doctrine of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture 3. The rejection of the Holy Spirit and His Spiritual Gifts, without which Christians are unable to meet the needs of the suffering people of either the Church or the world. This website carries a Complete Catalogue of Studies specifically designed to prepare both Christians and the Church before and during the Great Tribulation and includes: #7 The Great Tribulation Overcomer #11 The Heavenly Places In Christ During The Great Tribulation #12 The Use Of The Gift Of Tongues During The Great Tribulation #14 The Great Necessity For Informal Fellowship Meetings During The Great Tribulation.

In these times Christians learn to use the prophecies and scriptures as spiritual weaponry to spiritually frustrate the conspiracy of the confederate states ranged against Israel. Asaph and the prophets of old knew the armour to use in such circumstances for as Psalm 83 reads:

{A Song or Psalm of Asaph.} Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah. Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: Which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth' KJV.

This is not a Psalm of easy and plenty, it is a song of deliverance from a wicked foe.

As with the actions of the two witnesses (Rev.11:3-6) so it is our prerogative (definition: 'a right or privilege exclusive to a particular individual or class') to declare a defence and by invocation to frustrate the powers of darkness.

Angels and God's people

The structures in the kingdom of the Father and the Son are very real and the prophecies open our eyes to see the rich diversity of heavenly beings therein: angels, seraphim, cherubim, and heavenly creatures. These creatures may be shrouded to the eyes of the visionaries, for there is much light there, but even-so we are given heavenly glimpses which are both profound and humbling at the same time.

Angels do God's bidding and were appointed to help people on many occasions, especially at times of deliverance. There are many examples of this happening in the scriptures: Hagar (Gen 16:7; 21:17); Lot (Gen 19.1) etc. Elisha captures an army with the help of angels for we read in 2 Kings 6:15-17 'When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early in the morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. So he asked Elisha, 'Oh, my master, what are we to do?' 'Do not be afraid,' Elisha answered, 'for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed, 'O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.' And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw that the hills were full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha' BSB.

Angels were at work in the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt but so too were Moses and Aaron who operated skilfully with both the word and the rod of God. They acted as they knew that authority had been delegated to them to dispense judgement and deliverance for the people.

Likewise, today angels are work as commanded by the King who is Yahweh Saboath (the Lord of hosts), and they work with and on behalf of men and women who like Moses and Aaron must act with delegated authority and be skilled in the dispensation of God's word to bring deliverance from the oppressors and lead them through the wilderness (Gen.23:20-26).

As at the time of the flight from Egypt, the Holy Spirit's gifts of discernment and deliverance are particularly important as we approach the End Time deliverance of the people. An understanding of the work of angels is paramount to the Christian's understanding of the Last Days. See www.prophetbillturner.com and listen to audio #68 'Angels in the Prayer Life and the Last Days' by Bill Turner.

At the End Time both angels and God's people are overcomers for Rev.12:9-11 reads: 'And the great dragon was hurled down (by the archangel Michael and the angels that work with him) —that ancient serpent called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down— he who accuses them day and night before our God. They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives so as to shy away from death' BSB.

The usurper is usurped

The harmony of purpose in heaven and the peace that comes to God's people through God's help is not recorded as being so in the kingdom of darkness where envy greed and hate replace love and divine instructions. Instead, the fallen angels, and demons and their cohorts operate with spiritual wickedness (Eph. 6:10-20) and are motivated to kill and destroy mankind by whatever means. They take pleasure in it. The man called legion knew this (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30) as did the boy recorded in the gospels (Mark 9:22); they knew how these spiritually wicked beings tried to harm and kill them.

There are some indications that the kingdom of darkness operates with different levels of Satanic authority. Those who follow Satan look to increase their powers in the dark arts. Spiritual wickedness appears to be governed by constant greed and unrest. The powers of darkness appear to be echeloned i.e., principalities and rulers in dark places, yet there is no rest there as each entity would climb on the back of another to gain mastery and control. The man called 'Legion' had many demons who would convulse him to cause pain and injury. Luke 8:29-31 reads: *'For Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was bound with chains and shackles, he had broken the chains and been driven by the demon into solitary places. "What is your name?" Jesus asked. "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And the demons kept begging Jesus not to order them to go into the Abyss'* BSB It is Jesus who usurps the usurper.

Paul writes of the principalities and powers that rule in the darkness of their hidden spaces in Ephesians 6:10-20.

It is notable that Jesus received three separate and distinct temptations in the wilderness, each to tempt on different levels of spiritual authority; one to deceive individuals, one to gain power of the towns and cities and one to rule the nations (Matt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12; Lu. 4:1). Satan knows that 'ultimate power corrupts ultimately' for through his rebellion and fall he became fully and totally corrupt. In this way he tempted the Messiah whom he recognised as being the anointed One sent by Yahweh and so he gained access to tempt and corrupt him, with a view to protecting his place on the earth. Satan's claim to rival and equal Jesus was because his dominion over the kingdoms on the earth was being challenged. Satan considered Jesus as a usurper of his throne and dominion, no-one else had challenged his position before. However, this time Satan the great deceiver and usurper was being usurped and the truth is that at the Second Coming of Christ this will happen in its fulness. After this event it was confirmed to us that Satan had lost his right to deceive and destroy.

In the End Time, Satan will be cast out of the heavenlies (Rev. 12:8,13), for he will not be strong enough to fight against the archangel Michael and the angels that are delegated to work with him, and then after the utter carnage and destruction brought about on the earth wrought by Satan and his evil followers, will Jesus come again and command his imprisonment, so that he will no longer be able to deceive and destroy the peoples of the earth.

Who then throws the Dragon, that Great Deceiver into prison? Answer, an angel for it reads in Rev.20:1-3a: *'Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the Abyss, holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he threw him into the Abyss, shut it, and sealed it over him, so that he could not deceive the nations until the thousand years were complete'* BSB.

This event will then transition to a new age which will herald in a 1,000year reign of Jesus.

These prophecies and the many others that co-relate to them, give us the knowledge to experientially know the help that can be given to us through the work of angels, and the knowledge of His coming are all revealed to us to empower and equip God's people for these days.

The structures in place in the kingdom of darkness are assailable by those who wear the heavenly armour; though Satanic powers may be structures that reign against the kingdoms of this world and act as a defence against the kingdom of God, they cannot emulate the power that flows from the very breath of God and through the structures of His kingdom.

It may be that Satan seeks out the seats of power amongst the nations to corrupt and sow lawlessness. Satan sees yet hates the light that flows from the kingdom of God and the purposes of the Godhead, constantly tempting mankind to fail (Job 1:6-12).

The kingdom of darkness may deceive many, it may try to mimic or copy the heavenly pattern and design with the intention of gaining some dark spiritual powers, but it cannot replicate the uncreated self-generating power that flows only from God the Holy Spirit. The power that flows from and through the true structures of God in the heavenly places cannot be replicated by any being whether that be a man or woman or even Satan himself. Though Satan may try to mimic, his operations result in shadows of deceit.

Paul wrote of the ability of Christians to be able to stand against these onslaughts of persecution in 1 Peter 5:8-10 which reads: *'Be sober, be vigilant (now); because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, (always) walketh about, seeking whom (which) he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world (or, knowing that the very same things in the way of sufferings are being inflicted upon your brotherhood which is in the world). But the God of all grace, who hath called us (you) unto his eternal glory by (by virtue of our union with) Christ Jesus, after that ye have (by virtue of the fact that you have) suffered a (little) while, (shall or will) make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you'* KJV.

The enemy of souls acts like a roaring lion, but against the terror, hunger, and determination of our accuser we as Christians call upon the Lion of the Tribe of Judah to prevail on our behalf for He is our prevailer in that what no other can do, He can. It reads in Rev. 5:5: *'And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof'* KJV. No-one can emulate the actions or cause of Christ the King. He alone operates with sole rights in His kingdom.

Check email 07.01.21

The Fall of Satan: 'The King of Babylon' (Is.14:3-23)

The great prophecy of Isaiah 14:3-23 confirms that on THAT day, then the peoples of the earth will break out with joy and singing; and that this will take place upon the defeat of Satan and him being cast into chains upon the return of the Lord Jesus (v.3-8). Sheol is eager to meet Satan as he is imprisoned on his arrival there where the spirits of the wicked dead greet him – all the rulers of the earth. There the fallen kings of the earth rise from their thrones rise to meet him saying *'How the oppressor has ceased and how his fury is ended... you have become like us!... Sheol is eager beneath is eager to meet you upon your arrival... all the kings of the nations rise from their thrones. They will all respond to you, saying, 'You too have become weak, as we are...' How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn... But you will be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit!'* (v.3

reading on to v.23)'. The kings of the earth have followed him and in so doing have been committed to Sheol, now those who followed him see him, Satan, join them there.

The full text of the great prophesy of Isaiah 14:3-23 is worth reading for it speaks of the fall of Babylon, yet with true prophetic insight speaks more clearly of the fall of Satan at the close of the End-times for it is he who is the author and propeller of those who are the kings on the earth and it is he who flaunt and stand against the Lord and his anointed. It clearly describes the inner motives, greed and corruption of Satan and his ultimate demise as the destroyer of nations, he who ascended on high and challenged the Most High, he who was given the title by the Most High of 'morning star, son of the dawn' yet through pomp and pride at the position given him tried to raise himself above the other angels and in so doing drew a third of them with him in the deceit that caused their fall. It goes on to read how the nations of the earth then ponder and stare at the demise of the Antichrist, that man of iniquity and lawlessness, the one with the fullness of evil to whom all the nations of the earth gave their authority, it refers to him as being *'the man who shook the earth and made the kingdoms tremble, who turned the world into a desert and destroyed its cities, who refused to let the captives return to their homes'*.

'The Fall of the King of Babylon' Isaiah 14:3-23 (verse nos. left for reference purposes) reads:

3'On the day that the LORD gives you rest from your pain and torment, and from the hard labour into which you were forced, 4 you will sing this song of contempt against the king of Babylon

*How the oppressor has ceased,
and how his fury has ended!*

(footnote on the scripture *'and how his fury'*. The BSB footnote reads: *'DSS, LXX, and Syriac; MT the golden city'* The Hebrew word here is 'dhab' which Strong's Concordance translates *'golden city - Perhaps from the equivalent of dhab; goldmaking, i.e. Exactness -- golden city'*. Author's notes: 1. Here is a reference to the golden city that *'has ended'* at this point in the prophesy. 2. Jerusalem is also referred to by some as being the Golden City. So, the location of these events is at or near Jerusalem and not the Babylon of ancient times.

*5The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,
the sceptre of the rulers.*

*6It struck the peoples in anger
with unceasing blows;
it subdued the nations in rage
with relentless persecution.*

*7All the earth is at peace and at rest;
they break out in song.*

*8Even the cypresses (BSB footnote 'Or pines or junipers or firs') and cedars of Lebanon
exult over you:*

*"Since you have been laid low,
no woodcutter comes against us."*

*9Sheol beneath is eager
to meet you upon your arrival.*

*It stirs the spirits of the dead to greet you—
all the rulers of the earth.
It makes all the kings of the nations
rise from their thrones.*

*10 They will all respond to you, saying,
“You too have become weak, as we are;
you have become like us!”*

*11 Your pomp has been brought down to Sheol,
along with the music of your harps.
Maggots are your bed
and worms your blanket.*

*12 How you have fallen from heaven,
O morning star (BSB footnote ‘Or Day Star or shining one or Lucifer’), son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the ground,
O destroyer of nations.*

*13 You said in your heart:
“I will ascend to the heavens;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God.
I will sit on the mount of assembly,
in the far reaches of the north.*

(Where is this place of Satan’s high esteem? Where are ‘*the far reaches of the north*’? Well, the BSB footnote reads ‘*Or in the remote parts of Zaphon or on the heights of Zaphon*’.
Author’s question: then where is Zaphon? – If this prophesy is to be taken literally then at the time of the end when Satan is thrown out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-9) then Zaphon is the place where it will happen i.e., the time when with great anger and wrath he directs the Antichrist and his followers, who is filled with the wrath of Satan, pursue the Christians into the desert of Edom,. This is where the Antichrist or indeed the seat of Satan will be at this time of the End. Zaphon is NOT in or near modern day Babylon but in the times of Joshua and according to the source <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/zaphon/> was a city on the East of the Jordan in the territory of Gad (Joshua 13:27). It is named again in Judges 12:1 as the place where the elders of Gilead gathered to meet with Jephthah (*tsaphonah should be translated "to Zaphon," not "northward"*). It must have lain well to the North of Gad. According to the Talmud Amathus represented Zaphon (Neubauer, Geog. du Talmud, 249). Here sat one of the Synedria created by Gabinius (Ant., XIV, v, 4). It was a position of great strength (B J, I, iv, 2). Eusebius, Onomasticon places it 21 Roman miles S. of Pella. This is the modern Tell 'Amateh, on the south bank of Wady er-Rujeib, 15 miles South of Pella, and nearly 5 miles North of the Jabbok. Buhl (GAP, 259) objects to the identification that Tell 'Amateh corresponds to the Asophon of Josephus (Ant., XIII, xii, 5). But this objection does not seem well founded’. Author’s comment: So, its location can be identified today.

Zaphon is east of the Jordan, and we note too that it is from this direction that the armies of the nations who have given their power to the Antichrist approach Israel before the final battle. This is corroborated by other prophesies whereby the Euphrates ‘dries up’ and the kings of the east cross to approach the ‘Golden City’ i.e., Jerusalem, to do battle.

Isaiah's prophesy then goes on to tell of Satan's pride to ascend and be as a god, yet the prophesy clearly marks that against his will he is brought down to the prison prepared for him by the Most High, a place called Sheol, indeed the lowest part of Sheol called 'the Pit', for we read on from:

*'14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.'*

*15 But you will be brought down to Sheol,
to the lowest depths of the Pit.*

*16 Those who see you will stare;
they will ponder your fate:
"Is this the man who shook the earth
and made the kingdoms tremble,*

*17 who turned the world into a desert
and destroyed its cities,
who refused to let the captives
return to their homes?"*

*18 All the kings of the nations lie in state,
each in his own tomb. (BSB footnote Hebrew 'house')*

*19 But you are cast out of your grave like a rejected branch,
covered by those slain with the sword,
and dumped into a rocky pit
like a carcass trampled underfoot.*

*20 You will not join them in burial,
since you have destroyed your land
and slaughtered your own people.
The offspring of the wicked
will never again be mentioned.*

*21 Prepare a place to slaughter his sons
for the iniquities of their forefathers.
They will never rise up to possess a land
or cover the earth with their cities.*

*22 "I will rise up against them,"
declares the LORD of Hosts.
"I will cut off from Babylon
her name and her remnant,
her offspring and her posterity,"
declares the LORD.*

*23 "I will make her a place
for owls and for swamplands;
I will sweep her away
with the broom of destruction,"*

declares the LORD of Hosts'. BSB

So, from this prophesy (Is. 14:13-14) we read that Satan raises his throne to the east of the Jordan river, yet at this point because of his arrogance and pride then there is war in the heavenlies, from where he is thrown out of the heavenlies by the archangel Michael and his angels.

After he is flung out of the heavenlies and is cast down to the earth, having been defeated by the archangel Michael and his angels, we read that he persecutes the *'woman clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and crying out in the pain and agony of giving birth'* (Rev.12:1). As referred to above this is woman is the 'Christ-Church' and their will be a man-child to be born or emerge from it.

The full prophesy of this persecution is given in Rev. 12:13-17 which reads *'And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle to fly from the presence of the serpent to her place in the wilderness, where she was nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.*

Then from the mouth of the serpent spewed water like a river to overtake the woman and sweep her away in the torrent. But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth to swallow up the river that had poured from the dragon's mouth. And the dragon was enraged at the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea' BSB

The woman flees into the wilderness where she is miraculously protected by Yahweh God *'for a times, times, and half a time'* i.e., for the three and a half years of the Great Tribulation. So, Satan is thrown out of the heavenlies halfway through the 70th week of Daniel's prophesy i.e., three and a half years after Antichrist's covenant agreement.

From *'the mouth of the serpent spewed water like a river'* i.e., upon the instructions of the dragon flow armies in pursuit of the woman / Christ-Church and Man-Child to come. The dragon knows how important it is to kill this Church because from it a Man-Child will be delivered and through whom will come his ultimate downfall. Yet, the woman is miraculously kept, and the child to come. This is the same lethal intent brought against Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus when he was born and this is why Satan used his vassals to kill the babies of Bethlehem. Matt. 2:18 reads *'Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."* BSB

Rev. 12:1-5,13-17 clearly refers to a Christ-Church because these are those of *'her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus'*.

The prophesy of Rev. 12:13-17 consists of two parts:

'A huge red dragon... ready to devour'

The first part of the prophesy is Rev. 12:3a,4b which reads *'a huge red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven royal crowns on his heads'....' stood before the woman who was about to give birth, ready to devour her child as soon as she gave birth'*

First, the wrath of the dragon after he is thrown out of heaven; this is likely to occur to the east of the Jordan according to Isaiah 14 prophesy. This event precipitates the persecution of the woman as referred to above, at this point the prophesy of Jesus is tells these people to flee, do not wait to pack their bags because there will be no time to do it, just flee. See Mark 13:14–23; Luke 21:20–24 and Matt. 24:15-25 which reads *‘So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination of desolation,’ described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve anything from his house. And let no one in the field return for his cloak.*

How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath. For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short.

At that time, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There He is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible. See, I have told you in advance’. BSB

According to the prophesy of Rev. 12:1-5,13-17 this is when armies are sent like a flood or like a river against these Christians. The analogy of a river describes how fast this event will take place and the need for speed to avoid certain death at this time. The flight of these Christians is into the wilderness. The wilderness in Israel is situate to the south east of the country i.e., the Negev, and outside of country it is located either in the Sinai, or in the south of the country of Jordan.

It is three and a half years after the flight of these Christians that we read of vast armies arriving from the east (Joel 2) and that will take place at the close of the age, but this is not the event which is spoken of here; rather here we read of the beginning of the persecution of the people of God which is set in time 3.5-years before His coming.

The last conflict will be the last and greatest conflict will be at the end of the Great Tribulation when there will come the final place of battle at Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). That location is known for it is also known as the valley of Megiddo, also called Plain of Esdraelon or Plain of Jezreel (Vale of Jezreel). It is the area immediately north of the ancient biblical city of Jezreel. Plain of Esdraelon, or Plain of Jezreel, is in northern Israel, between the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias) and the Jordan River on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the west.

‘And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea’ Revelation 12:17b

The second part of the prophecy is of Rev. 12:17b reads *‘And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea’*. Here it is interesting to note the footnotes of the BSB Bible which read *‘Literally And he stood on the sand of the sea. BYZ and TR And I stood on the sand of the sea. Some texts number this sentence as verse 18; others include it with Revelation 13:1’*.

And Rev. 13:1 reads *‘Then I saw a beast with ten horns and seven heads rising out of the sea’* which in the BSB is cross referenced with Daniel 7:1-8.

So, we read that the dragon i.e., the beast being the power and manifestation of the Antichrist standing on a sandy seashore. But which sea?

The only seas with sand to which this prophecy could refer is the Mediterranean or possibly the Gulf of Aqaba, for the Dead Sea though east of Jerusalem, has no natural sandy beaches, especially as its water level is falling by approximately one meter per year due to the reduced flow of the River Jordan, its waters being taken more and more for irrigation purposes, and due to evaporation. Then there is the Sea of Galilee to the north east of Jerusalem but that too has no sandy beaches. So, that leaves the Gulf of Aqaba in the south or the Mediterranean Sea to the west of Jerusalem. However, the prophesy of Daniel given to him in a dream by Jesus in Dan.7:1a-3 *'told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another'*. KJV This beast is the same as that described by John and Daniel's vision of Ch.7 fully concurs with it, including reference to the great beast being made up of four beasts with ten horns, this beast has *'a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom'* (Dan. 7:20-22).

The truth is that this great beast spoke 'great' things and was overwhelming such that only the coming of the 'Ancient of days' Messiah Jesus will stop it destroying mankind. The detail of what was spoken by the beast against the most High is recorded in Rev.13:5-7 where *'The beast was given a mouth to speak arrogant and blasphemous words, and authority to act for 42 months. And the beast opened its mouth to speak blasphemies against God and to slander His name and His tabernacle— those who dwell in heaven. Then the beast was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.'* BSB The beast being the Antichrist and his system of government also taught his followers to blaspheme the God of heaven for it reads in Rev.16:11 that they *'blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds'*, Rev.16:9 *'blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory'* and in Rev.16:21 *'And the men blasphemed God on account of the plague of the hail'*. So, despite their utter need and depravity they not only blamed God but blasphemed Him rather than call upon Him for help.

The Greek word here for blasphemy reads in Strong's Concordance:
*'Cognate: 988 blasphemía (from blax, "sluggish/slow," and 5345 /phémē, "reputation, fame") – blasphemy – literally, slow (sluggish) to call something good (that really is good) – and slow to identify what is truly bad (that really is evil).
Blasphemy (988 /blasphemía) "switches" right for wrong (wrong for right), i.e. calls what God disapproves, "right" which "exchanges the truth of God for a lie" (Ro 1:25).*

Such distortion of truth took place by the serpent from the very beginning of the present age for it reads in Gen.3:1-7 esp. v. 1 *'Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast... Did God really say...?'* His character never changes, he constantly challenges those who are receptacles of the Truth and he does it with deception and half-truths as happened in the wilderness temptations of Jesus (Matt.4:1-11; Mk.1:12-13; Lu.4:1-13). We go on to read that in the End Times in Rev.12:9 *'And the great dragon was hurled down— that ancient serpent called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him'*. This is his sole intent, to teach his ways, and to take as many with him as possible, both angels and mankind; this is his wilful and purposeful deceit. Satan has learnt that power can be provided to his followers if they use blasphemy, dark sayings, and curses, otherwise he would use different tactics.

The beast who blasphemes God does so with dark and occultic sayings, curses that come from the Abyss from which he came. This is referred to by Daniel in Dan.11:31; 12:11 and in 9:27 it reads *'And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him'*. Jesus thought it so important to tell this to his followers that he cross refers them to Daniel's prophesies when He said in Matt.24:15 *'So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains'*. Jesus was telling his followers even without the knowledge of what we are privileged to know as New Testament prophesy, that there is enough information contained in the Old Testament prophesies, particularly in the writings of Daniel concerning the End Times, for them to know the full picture, and the truth of the matter. So, Jesus fully endorsed Daniel's prophesies and we would be wise to do so too.

Likewise, Christians today need also to be receptacles of Jesus' truth, we need to be trained by Him to understand the prophesies, and alongside this to be equipped by Jesus with the Holy Spirit's gifts of discernment, spiritual warfare, and the deliverance ministry. This is what He did on the earth and we would do well to emulate him. In this way we can break down dark spiritual barriers and break dark spiritual curses which so often go un-detected and unbroken. In all these things we are trained by the risen Jesus, who also teaches us how to put the protection of God around both ourselves, fellow Christians, and the people. See Aaron's blessing Num.6:22-27 esp. v.27 which ends with *'So they shall put My name on the Israelites, and I will bless them'*.

Daniel explains that these 'great' words of blasphemy were spoken against the most High until after three and a half years i.e., 'a time and times and the dividing of time' (the period of the Great Tribulation) 'the judgement (the Trinity Godhead) shall sit and shall take away his dominion. According to the vision, only His Coming will stop it, no government or army on earth can stop it. The full text of Dan. 7:23b-27 reads that the beast *'shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him'*.

So, the great and terrible beast will arise out of the Great Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and it is on the sands of this shore that the beast will stand. So, from the perspective of Jerusalem and the Hebrew Nation then there are four perspectives:

- 1) From the east come a ten-king alliance, this will cross the Euphrates upon 'it drying up'
- 2) From the west, the emergence of the Antichrist beast from the Mediterranean Sea
- 3) From the south and from the north. Dan. 11:35-45

Here I shall briefly consider the prophesies concerning the intervention of the kings of the south and the north, before considering the return and intervention of the Messiah.

The Antichrist beast arises out of the Mediterranean Sea yet is also manifest from the north; and it is so that the prophesies elsewhere in Daniel indicate that the Antichrist will also arise

in Syria to the north, and yet again this beast has authority ceded to it from a ten-king alliance that will emanate from the east. So, the prophecies refer to aggressors who approach the land (of Israel) from all four quarters.

The coming appointed time (Dan.11:5-45)

The commentators regard the prophecies of Daniel 11:1-45 as relating to either or both of the following events. One is historical and has passed, the other is to come.

The first (Dan.11:1-4) concerns the overthrow of Persia by Greece; the four divisions of Alexander's Kingdom: conflicts between the Kings of the South and of the North, the Ptolemies and Seleucids; and Antiochus Epiphanes. However, when we read from Dan.11:5 then the events of that time in history do not fit well with the prophecies and this has created a divide regarding Biblical commentators.

So, there are a second set of commentators like Ellicott who take a more objective viewpoint in that the prophecies could more likely refer to the End Times. Indeed, it is notable that Daniel in all his prophecies always had visions for the last days. In addition, the prophecies of the beast in the books of Daniel and Revelation both describe the final kingdom of the Antichrist arising out of the historic land areas of the four previous empires of Alexander's Kingdom, so that from Daniel's viewpoint the prophecies were seen of events in the far distant future. So, there could likely be a division in the time periods between Dan. 11:4 and Dan.11:5 which equates to the division between the 69th week and the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy of Dan.9:25-26.

The prophecies of Dan.11:1-34 may have divided the opinions of commentators, though many do agree that Dan.11:35-45 specifically refers to the latter days, for Dan.11:35b clearly reads '*... even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed*'.

The prophecies might seem to be obtuse to us, but they are not when seen from the point of view of the Author, so we cannot discount them as they also bear remarkable similarities to the formation of alliances and alignment of nation states in our generation. We would discount them at our peril. It does not matter what we think, for as the commentator Matthew Henry wrote regarding Dan.11 '*All changes and revolutions of states and kingdoms, and every event, are plainly and perfectly foreseen by God. No word of God shall fall to the ground; but what he has designed, what he has declared, shall infallibly come to pass. While the potsherd of the earth strive with each other, they prevail and are prevailed against, deceive and are deceived; but those who know God will trust in him, and he will enable them to stand their ground, bear their cross, and maintain their conflict*'.

We cannot discount prophecy simply because it does not rest easy on our ears or suit our circumstances. We cannot say to them that prophecy, 'prophecy ye not... for it leads us to shame' for as we read in Micah 2:6 reads '*Prophecy ye not, [say they to them that] prophecy: they shall not prophesy to them, [that] they shall not take shame*' KJV.

So, let us explore these prophecies in the light of current events.

Leagues and conflicts between the kings of the south and the north (Dan.11:5-20)

Concerning the coming kings of the south and north the prophecies of Daniel 11 are most revealing. Many early commentators tried to make these prophecies shoehorn into the historic events that occurred at the time of the fall of the Greek Empire. However, Ellicott in

his commentary addresses the problem which faces all who would attempt to understand the prophesies of Daniel where he writes concerning Dan.11:2 as follows: *'The mere similarity which exists between certain things predicted here and what actually occurred in the times of the Ptolemies is not sufficient to limit the fulfilment of the prophecy to those times, still less to justify the assumption that the section before us is a history of what occurred from the disruption of the Greek Empire to the death of Antiochus. "History repeats itself;" and just as Antiochus (Daniel 8:23-25) is a type of Antichrist (Daniel 7:21), so the events and political combinations which preceded Antiochus may be regarded as typical of what will occur before the coming of the Messiah and the general resurrection, with a prediction of which (Daniel 12:2-3) this revelation concludes'*. In other words, these prophesies are still alive today, they have legs to run further! When the word of God is alive in this way then whatever it touches then it will stick, and at some point, when fully complete, it will become apparent to all, not just to those who would prefer it to either go away or to explain it in some other way.

In receipt of this prophesy, Daniel was strengthened by an angel who stood to confirm to him the message and told him *'now I will shew you the truth'*. The prophecy refers to four kings arising out of Persia, and though the prophecy might in part relate to the Greek Empire after the death of Alexander the Great it by no means fits all of those circumstances. Instead, the message is more likely given to Daniel to correlate with the later chapters received and written of the End Times. No clue is given to show over what nation(s) these kings reign and they might well refer to the four key building blocks or kingdom - empires past upon which sits the End Times and the Antichrist. These four key elements of Daniel's prophesies are recorded elsewhere in the visions of Daniel; first in Daniel 2 -The Statue of the Man where the fifth part of that vision, representing the End Times show that the feet are made of iron and clay: this part represents the Antichrist and the ten nation alliance; and the second key vision of Daniel which also relates to four kingdom – empires followed by a fifth being in Daniel 7 where four beasts are followed in the End Times the ten horns. These ten horns are ten kings that shall arise, and another being the little horn of the Antichrist (Dan 7:3;8:9) shall rise after them. He shall subdue three kings (Dan.7:24) and all ten then submit and give their power and strength to him, cross-referencing with Rev.17:12-13. All these things occur *'at the time of the end'* (Dan.8:17,19)

In Dan.11:3 it reads *'And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will'*. Elliccott writes *'Some autocrat may arise "in the latter times" to whom it will apply with greater force than it did to Alexander'* but his large empire comes to a sudden and unexpected end; the ruins of it are not to benefit his posterity.

This prophesy directly cross-refers to the great prophesy of Daniel 2 where in the second year of the reign of the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar the king *'dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled'* (Dan.2:1). Daniel was the only one who could interpret the dream and so was called in to the king. Daniel answered *'But there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that reveals secrets makes known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou might know the thoughts of thy heart'*. Daniel interprets the vision to Nebuchadnezzar and ends with: *'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay,*

the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure'. KJV

The heathen kings of Persia took notice when the prophecies were rightly divided and interpreted to them; Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes Longimanus, as did the Pharaohs of Egypt who had gone before, and Herod the Great of Palestine who followed. God can speak through the powerful, rich, and famous or through the lowly and poor... even through a donkey, if people will listen. Note the story of Balaam and his donkey, when the angel who stood in the road with a drawn sword in his hand then even the donkey spoke! Yet what followed from Balaam was a prophesy concerning the protection God put over the people of Jacob and Israel. God also told Balaam that his prophecies never fail for we read in Num.22,23 esp. 32:19 *'God is not a man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and not act?'* BSB

Daniel knew that there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and he knew that if he wrote down the prophecies that he had received then one day, at the time of the end, then they will be made known to the people of those days to strengthen them for their trials which were to come, and for the hope of their promises too, for assuredly he knew that they would come to pass.

The final destruction of Antichrist's kingdom

Dan.11:3 records that a *'a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will'* yet Dan.11:4 reads that the Antichrist's kingdom will only be for a short time *'for his kingdom shall be plucked up'* and left with no descendants. So, in spite of all of Antichrist's ambitions his kingdom and rule is prophesied as ending without a successor. Why, because this final reign ends with the coming of the Messiah. The shortness of his rule is cross-referred to by Jesus in Matt.24:21,22 where He states *'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened'* KJV

'The king's daughter of the south' (Daniel 11:6)

It is at this time that there is specific reference to the king of the south who shall rule with great dominion (Dan.5:5) and to the king of the north (Dan.11:6) who between them make an agreement, but this shall be an unevenly matched agreement, in terms of what is offered for it reads *'And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times'*. BSB So, it is clear that in the end times a kingdom to the south and a kingdom to the north of Israel will find some common ground to make an agreement, but that it will fail as *'it shall not retain the power of the arm'* i.e., one party fails to match the power of the other and loses its advantage i.e., the marriage will not accomplish its intended purpose and the king of the south becomes independent of its northern rival. The play for power in the Middle East specifically between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Sunni Turkey as they vie for power and dominance is a reminder here of how nations with a common purpose can agree on one thing i.e., Sunni Islam, but not on another. For example, Turkey and Saudi Arabia vie to dominate each other to be the leading Sunni Islam nation in the Middle East, a role

previously been played by Saudi Arabia, but now the claim is now being made more so by Turkey. Each are willing to support many Sunni militia groups in the region, yet there is also a fundamental divergence in the nations as one is Arab being Saudi Arabia and the other, Turkey, being non-Arab in its origins and governance. Indeed, apart from Israel, the only two non-Arab countries of the Middle East are Turkey and Iran, and as we reflect on the prophesy of Daniel it may be that this marriage, as between Saudi Arabia and Turkey, is between different nationalities and it may not succeed.

The daughter of the king of the south, *'they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times'* may indeed be the doctrines of Islam for it is from Arabia that Islam was sourced and since has been offered to the world. It is Islam that strengthens these nations in the Middle East, in these times, and this may be the common ground for the agreement referred to in this prophesy of Daniel too.

'Let the reader understand' (Matt.24:15)

This event is one of many spoken of in the prophesies. The prophets found difficulty in determining exact timelines and describing what they saw yet they were faithful in writing down what they had received, and they did it as best they could in the language and imagery of their day. However, Daniel was told, and made it clear to us too that the prophesies which Nebuchadnezzar, he and others received were specifically for the times of the end. The God who sits outside time, had to reveal information which came from that transcended place in the heavenlies, yet had to be imparted to his people.

So it is that the time timeline might seem obscure to us, and the prophesies might repeat on the events disclosed, yet we are given enough information to understand them. If they are good enough for Jesus, to understand them, and for his disciples, then they are good enough for us too; for Matt.24:15 reads that this information is to hand and can be understood, one source being *'described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand)'*.

One of the keys to understanding the prophesies of Daniel and John and others is that they were often replayed and repeated, each prophesy overlapping with, yet taking a different view of the same event. In this way some of their obscurity is dispelled. Therefore, we can confidently consider much of the End Times before-hand; we are not left guessing. Another key to understanding the prophesies in relation to present day events is to note that the motives of conquerors and conquests were based as much on the conflicts of different religions and their practices as upon military victories and land grabs. The domination of one religion over another was often seen as being central to the strategies of kings. This is clear in the prophesies of Daniel, John, Jesus, and others, where the conflicts were seen as being between evil empires and their rulers who conflicted with those who acquiesced to follow Yahweh. It is clear too when we consider the language used in these prophesies, with the emergence of the 'beast' to vividly describe the actions of nations. The importance of having the Arc of the Covenant with the nation at all times was seen to be paramount through the writings of Moses, David and the Old Testament scriptures, and this continued down through subsequent generations.

A collage of events

When we read Daniel 11, we realise that these prophesies are pieces of a picture which is formed by a collage of events, each will fit in with the whole to form the full picture Though

each piece of the collage is cut from separate pictures, when glued onto the main picture it forms a separate, unique, yet cohesive part of the whole. The separate pieces are put from the pictures painted by all these prophets, and it only then that the main picture, which is the main event, begins to unfold. Another analogy would be the pieces of a jigsaw. Each piece is unique and only when it is fitted into the right place will the picture become clear. As they say, 'if the cap fits, wear it'!

So it is with the words of prophecy, only when placed in its own unique setting does it illuminate the whole picture. When we get that assurance from the Spirit of the Father might we say assuredly that these are the words of the Son of God and they apply to us today. Like the centurion who witnessed the death of Jesus on the cross we might also witness that *'truly this man was the Son of God'* (Mk.15:39). At that point he knew the truth, the penny had dropped, it all suddenly made sense.

As with the prophecies of the first coming, the dealings of Herod, the flight into Egypt of Joseph and his young family, out of old testament prophecies came a verse, even half a verse of prophecy, yet it was so profound when copied and pasted onto the events and world stage at that time as to speak of greater things, things that were from a time past yet it spoke of things present, and in the case of unfulfilled prophecy speaks of things to come.

'Out of the branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate'

Dan.11:7 reads *'But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail.'* There is commonality between Saudi Arabia and Turkey as they both subscribe to Sunni Islam. However, this verse is prophecy and refers to the southern kingdom and 'her roots' or as some commentators add concerning 'her parents' or 'her family', and it is notable that the estate or direct descendants of Mohammed the Prophet now inherit this land. These are the branches which have come from the roots and they are prophesied as coming to 'stand up in his estate' and to bring armies from the south and from the north against each other and in so doing entering into a 'fortress'.

It is notable that both the heritage of Islam and the descendants of the founders of Islam come from the southern kingdom from which 'shall one stand up in his estate' who shall 'come with an army to enter into the fortress of the king of the north to deal against them and shall prevail'. It is probable that the word 'fortress' is used collectively for fortified cities and so where is the fortress of the king of the north and who might it represent?

Daniel, a captive prince from Judah, was given visions and prophecies of the world's kingdoms that would oppress Israel from his time through to *'what shall come to pass hereafter'* (Dan.2:45), *'the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be'* (Dan.8:19), *'Now I come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days'* (Dan.10:14), *'for the words are closed up and sealed till the end of time'* (Dan.12:9)... *'but the wise shall understand'* (Dan.12:10)

So, the entire focus of all of God's understanding with his people is focused upon 'thy people in the latter days' i.e., the Hebrew people and those Gentiles who, though Christ, become grafted to that vine and the land which he had given them through the Abrahamic Covenant for Genesis 17:7-8 reads *'And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land*

wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God'.

If God intended to show the destiny of other nations without reference to Israel, then the prophecies would become far too complex and unintelligible. The key must always be Israel, this is the only way that the prophecies come into focus.

The fortified city (Dan.11:7)

The prophecy of Dan.11:7 refers to armies entering a fortress, which is situated between and in the conflict zone of two competing kings. These two kings and the fortress where their armies meet is referred to as being on a south – north axis.

So, what and where is the 'fortress' referred to therein? What is meant by the 'fortress'? Strong's Concordance definition of the Greek word referred to here is: '*a place or means of safety, protection*'. In the writings of Moses, we read that the term 'fortress' implies a walled city as opposed to other type of fortifications or unprotected camps. In the writings of Moses, we read of Canaan as being a land where '*the cities are fortified and very large*' (Nu 13:28) and '*great cities fortified to heaven*' (Dt 9:1). Both before and after the time of Daniel, Jerusalem certainly had defensive walls, and though pulled down and re-built many times (note for example their re-building at the time of Nehemiah 446-430BC), still retains them today.

The terminus of trade, and the envy of kings

At the time of Daniel's writings (606 or 616 to 536BC) the Assyrian Empire had fallen to a coalition led by Babylonians and Medes in 612 BC and, afterwards, Judah was attacked by the Babylonians who sacked their capital city of Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. Further military incursions by the Babylonians between 589-582 BC destroyed the rest of the southern kingdom. However, Judah had been a nation, and though taken into captivity still had a capital city with walls.

The region of Israel as we know it today has always prospered through trade because of its location. It was the terminus, at Gaza, for the Incense Routes which wound up from the Kingdom of Saba in Arabia to then divide into diverse courses upwards throughout Mesopotamia and down through Egypt. It was also a nexus of trade between Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Libya.

The coincidence between history, current events and prophecy is far from establishing the truth of the explanation, but the prophecy does direct our attention to countries which could fulfil these roles.

If we consider present day alliances, then it is notable that in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has received considerable military hardware from both the US and the UK. It too shows that it is willing to engage in proxy conflicts, particularly in the Yemen, and would be able to 'stand up in his estate' should the nation decide to conflict with other nations that might rise to threaten it. Islam has seen great splits in its history, today the bitter divide between Sunni and Shia is prevalent, likewise Sunni nations too think they can dominate and prevail against each other.

Saudi Arabia and Turkey relationship have always fluctuated between cooperation and alliance to enmity and distrust. Since the 19th century, the two nations have always had a

complicated relationship. While Turkey and Saudi Arabia are major economic partners, the two have a tense political relationship, deemed from the historic enmity. Differences in the practice of Islam between the two countries often cause frictions; despite both being Sunni countries, Saudi Arabia follows a strict, fundamentalist form of Islam called Wahhabism. Through the later part of the 20th and early 21st Century, Turkey followed the principles of a secular state when it worked to prevent the rise of Islamism in its government. However, it must be noted that since the 2016 attempted coup against President Erdogan, Turkey has pursued a much more open Islamist and nationalist agenda. It has also shown increasing violence and intolerance directed towards Christian minorities. The rise in persecution of the Christian community in that country is such that between 2020 and 2021 alone it rose 11 places to number 25 on the Open Doors World Watch List 2021. See <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/> . See Appendix 5.

The two countries could certainly fulfil the role of two competing factions, two members of one family with historic enmity. And between them is a 'fortified city' placed to the north of Saudi Arabia. Though a northern kingdom with an uneasy truce between them is certainly referred to, by the time the armies engage or meet then it seems that the conflict zone is at the place of a fortified and walled city for their *'shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail'*.

In the prophecies in Dan.11:5 onwards the vagueness of the language prevents us from asserting the exact reference to either the locations of these respective kings of the north and the south, or to the location where they meet, i.e., the fortress then occupied by the king of the north. So, it may be that from his country the king of the north proceeds to and occupies the fortress before himself being attacked by the armies of the southern king. So, the fortress becomes the place of conflict, as does the Valley of Megiddo in the End times, it is the place where the armies meet for the conflict.

In summary, the prophecies of Daniel and John include many separate references to armies coming against the land of present-day Israel and the directions from which they come; from the north, the south, the east as the beast arises out of the Mediterranean Sea (Rev.13:1), and from the west too. This would be an overwhelmingly difficult position from which to mount a defence, except of course unless there is the intervention of the King of kings who not only intervenes, but also comes to rule and to reign.

The epicentre of global persecution

The map of the Middle East shows a dramatic picture when seen in the light of the persecution of Christians in the 21st Century. This persecution is defined by Open Doors as being *'any hostility experienced as a result of one's identification with Christ'*. The history of Christianity shows that in many countries it has never been safe to follow Christ. The International Society for Human Rights has found that Christians are the victims of 80% of all acts of religious persecution.

The map showing the persecution of Christians shows Israel as being the epicentre of that persecution. The best representation of the geographic spread and the intensity of that persecution is seen by looking at the Open Doors World Watch List 2021. To the north, south, east, and west of Israel are belligerents who do not acknowledge the rights of Israel to exist as a nation state. From these countries it is notable that by the 21st Century the Jewish populations have long since fled.

Commentators such as Michael Horowitz (Senior Advisor for the Religious Action Centre of Reform Judaism) has argued that vulnerable Christians are like canaries in a coalmine, serving as an early warning of *'whether freedom exists not only for them – but for all others in society'*.

In 2019 the then UK Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, commissioned a Report on the international persecution of Christians. In response to this Report the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Marie van der Zyl, said Jews had often been the targets of persecution and felt for Christians who were discriminated against on the basis of their faith. *"Whether it is in authoritarian regimes, or bigotry masked in the mistaken guise of religion, reports like the one launched today remind us that there are many places in which Christians face appalling levels of violence, abuse and harassment,"* she said.

And French Chief Rabbi Haim Korsia made an urgent plea to Europe and the West to defend non-Muslims in the Middle East, whom he likened to Holocaust victims. *"As our parents wore the yellow star, Christians are made to wear the scarlet letter of nun"* Korsia said. The scarlet letter of nun being the derogatory sign used against Christians in the Levant when IS came into that land, giving the Christians there the stark choice to either 'flee, convert (to Islam) or die'. The Arabic letter nun is the letter N, and it was used to mark out those who were 'followers of the Nazarene'.

The World Watch List highlights the intensity of global persecution by ranking countries using benchmarks of the religious freedoms allowed to their citizens in the different aspects of their daily lives, e.g., access to education, family freedoms, national life and religious legislation which might target them.

The countries that surround Israel show the marked decline in the numbers of Christians and in their Christian Communities there. The reason for this decline is often being the threats of lethal persecution. The UK's FCO Independent Review into the Persecution of Christians in 2019, chaired by the Bishop of Truro, the Rev. Philip Mounstephen, had two clear findings: 1) *'Evidence shows not only the geographic spread of anti-Christian persecution, but also its increasing severity'* and 2) *'In some regions, the level and nature of persecution is arguably coming close to meeting the International Definition of Genocide, according to that adopted by the UN'*. This is particularly so when we consider the near collapse in the Christian communities in Iraq and Syria in the first two decades of the 21st Century.

Israel in the crosshairs

From a global perspective, Israel is not only at the epicentre of global conflict, but also from a religious point of view it is in the crosshairs of many different religions, three of which centre upon Jerusalem; Jewish, Christian and Islam. The global population by religion amounts to 7.167bn (2021); of which 2.4bn (33%) identify with Christianity, 1.8bn (24.1%) identify with Islam and 14.4m (0.20%) identify with Judaism (source: The Pew Research Study). Yet the effect of Judaism on global politics far outweighs the percentage of Jews on the planet. Israel truly is a vortex of faiths. Globally, 55.3% of faiths declare an interest in the land of Israel, and more particularly, Jerusalem. It has the potential to unite or to divide the nations. Yahweh God has foreseen both blessing and tragedy there Matt.23:37 reads *'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!'* KJV John sees the city as being a whore, an harlot to the nations Rev.17:1-5 esp. v.1b,2 and 5b *"Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. The kings of the earth were immoral with*

her, and those who dwell on the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her immorality.”... BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH’. BSB It is a place where the potent mix of faiths and political interests combine to make it a tinderbox, a barrel of gunpowder, which has the potential to implode, bringing in many world powers who would fight its cause and war to attain it.

The crosshairs of nations and the dominant cause of persecution against Christians and previously the Jews in those countries along the crosshairs emanating from the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel is best summarised in the Open Doors World Watch List 2021 (WWL2021) See Appendix 5. This List best shows two things: 1) the south–north and east-west alignment of countries in relation to Israel 2) the significant and sometimes lethal opposition to Christians along these same axes. A third intriguing pattern emerges when the Open Doors World Watch List is superimposed upon the countries where there is the most rapid growth in the Christian church, and the two markedly equate i.e., where there is the most significant opposition to the Christian gospel then there is also a move to the Christian faith too. See <https://operationworld.org/country-lists> .

Jesus did not prophesy ease to those who followed him, but He did prophesy to be with them through the trials (Ps.23).

I name first the direction of the country in relation to the state of Israel, then its ranking on that List, the higher the number being the worse the persecution, then I include the percentage of Christians there, and then the dominant cause of oppression and persecution of the Christians there.

South of Israel

Saudi Arabia (14): Under 3.5% Christian. Islamic oppression (Sunni), Clan, and ethnic antagonism. Whether Saudi or expatriate, Christians living in Saudi Arabia – where the official religion and law is Islamic – can expect to encounter severe opposition to their faith. The few Saudi Christians from a Muslim background face enormous pressure, especially from families. Leaving Islam is one of the biggest sins a Muslim can commit. Men could face physical and emotional abuse, and public shaming. To get them to recant, material incentives are offered – but refusing could entail death. Meanwhile, women could face a range of consequences, including forced marriage, divorce, sexual abuse and house-arrest. The submissive position of women in Saudi society can make it treacherously difficult to escape. Whether male or female, it is little wonder many believers choose to keep their new faith secret.

Egypt (16): 15.8% Christian. Ethno-religious hostility, Islamic oppression (Sunni). Persecution against Christians happens mostly at the community level, especially in Upper Egypt where Salafist movements exert a strong influence on the rural communities due to high levels of illiteracy and poverty. Incidents include false accusations, community ostracism, mob violence, and the abduction of Christian women (causing many to feel unsafe leaving the house alone). Although Egypt’s government speaks positively about Egypt’s Christian community, the lack of serious law enforcement and the unwillingness of local authorities to protect Christians leave them vulnerable to all kinds of attacks. Furthermore, in contrast to how mosques and Islamic organisations are dealt with, churches and Christian non-governmental organisations are restricted in their ability to build new churches or run social services. Opposition also arises through communal hostility and mob

violence. Christians from a Muslim background often have great difficulty in living out their faith since they face enormous pressure from their families to return to Islam. The state also makes it impossible for them to get any official recognition of their conversion.

Libya (4): 0.5% Christian. Islamic oppression (Sunni), Clan oppression. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of religion, and no possibility of public church life in Libya. The tiny number of Libyan Christians from a Muslim background face violent and intense pressure from their family and the wider community to renounce their faith. They are also vulnerable to abduction, murder or sexual assault by Islamic militant groups and organised crime groups. Sharing your faith publicly is illegal in Libya, and those who try to share their Christian faith with others risk violent opposition and arrest. Without a central government, the country is effectively in a state of lawless anarchy. There is little chance of legal justice when Christians are attacked or killed. Christians migrating from sub-Saharan Africa are also vulnerable to being held in detention centres or handed over to persecutors by those trafficking them. Believers are often then forced into intense labour or prostitution. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of religion, and no possibility of public church life in Libya. The tiny number of Libyan Christians from a Muslim background face violent and intense pressure from their family and the wider community to renounce their faith. They are also vulnerable to abduction, murder or sexual assault by Islamic militant groups and organised crime groups. Sharing your faith publicly is illegal in Libya, and those who try to share their Christian faith with others risk violent opposition and arrest. Without a central government, the country is effectively in a state of lawless anarchy. There is little chance of legal justice when Christians are attacked or killed. Christians migrating from sub-Saharan Africa are also vulnerable to being held in detention centres or handed over to persecutors by those trafficking them. Believers are often then forced into intense labour or prostitution.

North of Israel

Lebanon (not ranked in the top 50): Proportionally, Lebanon has the highest rate of Christians in the Middle East with estimates of 40% Christian and 60% Muslims (30% Sunni, 30% Shia). Christianity in Lebanon has a long and continuous history. Biblical Scriptures purport that Peter and Paul evangelized the Phoenicians, whom they affiliated to the ancient patriarchate of Antioch. The spread of Christianity in Lebanon was very slow where paganism persisted especially in the mountaintop strongholds of Mount Lebanon. A 2015 study estimates some 2,500 Lebanese Christians have Muslim ancestry, whereas the majority of Lebanese Christians are direct descendants of the original early Christians.

Syria (8): In 1967, 30% of the population of Syria were Christian, which by the outbreak of the Civil War there in 2011 had fallen to 9%, however by 2021 this had fallen to just 3.6% of the population. Islamic oppression (74% Sunni, 10% Alawites i.e., non-Sunni, Shia 3%). The number of Christians in the country has dramatically decreased since the Civil War began in 2011 as many have fled conflict and persecution. Persecution remains extreme in public and private life for Christians there. Christians from a Muslim background are vulnerable to pressure from their family and communities, who perceive conversion from Islam as bringing dishonour. Sometimes these families even request that local officials covertly monitor Christian converts. In areas controlled by Islamic extremist groups, public expressions of Christianity are banned, and most churches have been seized or destroyed. In government-controlled areas, this threat is less – but there are still numerous abductions of church leaders, and Islamic dissidents are still active. Violent attacks continue, while Covid-19 has exacerbated many existing vulnerabilities in the past year.

Turkey (25): 0.2% Christian. Growing Islamic oppression (Sunni Islam), religious nationalism. It is becoming harder to be a Christian in Turkey. Turkey has jumped nine places since last year's OD World Watch List, reflecting the increasing and stifling impact of religious nationalism on Christianity and a clear increase in reported violence. The repurposing of two historic churches from museums to mosques in the summer of 2020 – including the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul – reinforced growing nervousness among Christians over the Islamic and nationalistic direction in which the country is moving.

Russian Federation (46 on WWL2020): 82% Christian. Police State. The rise of persecution in many countries on the WWL means that on the WWL2021 it falls outside the top 50. However, 2021 sees a significant rise of authoritarian actions taken to oppress its population, and in effect it is run as a Police State. In Russian, Christians can be viewed as Western spies and, in the Caucasus region, converting to Christianity is considered a betrayal of national identity. Apart from the Russian Orthodox Church, the government have imposed greater restrictions against Christian denominations.

Historically the church in Russia has had little freedom. The idea of combining the social and political power of secular government with religious power, or of making secular authority superior to the spiritual authority of the Church; especially concerning the connection of the Church with government, known as Caesaropapism, has been most notorious in Russian history. An example being the Tsardom of Russia when Ivan IV the Terrible assumed the title Czar in 1547 and subordinated the Russian Orthodox Church to the state. This level of caesaropapism far exceeded that of the Byzantine Empire and was taken to a new level in 1721, when Peter the Great replaced the patriarchate with a Holy Synod, making the church a department of his government. The patriarchate was not restored until November 10 (October 28 O.S.), 1917, 3 days after the Bolshevik Revolution. What then followed throughout the history of the Soviet Union (1917–1991), were periods when Soviet authorities brutally suppressed and persecuted various forms of Christianity to different extents depending on State interests. Soviet Marxist-Leninist policy consistently advocated the control, suppression, and ultimately, the elimination of religious beliefs. The state advocated the destruction of religion, and to achieve this goal, it officially denounced religious beliefs as superstitious and backward. The Communist Party destroyed churches, synagogues, and mosques, ridiculed, harassed, incarcerated, and executed religious leaders, flooded the schools and media with anti-religious teachings, and it introduced a belief system called "scientific atheism," with its own rituals, promises and proselytizers. According to some sources, the total number of Christian victims under the Soviet regime has been estimated to range around 12 to 20 million. In present-day Russia, Christians can be viewed as Western spies, and in the Caucasus converting to Christianity is considered a betrayal of national identity.

East of Israel

Jordan (the ancient lands of Edom and Moab) (38): 1.8% Christian. Islamic oppression (95% Sunni). However, compared to Christians living in other Middle Eastern countries, most Christians in Jordan live a safe and stable life and enjoy a relatively high level of religious freedom. King Abdallah and his government appear to tolerate and, to a certain degree, support recognised churches, and Jordan fell five places to 38 on the WWL2021. The prophecies of Rev.12 and elsewhere refer to the Christ Church of the Middle East fleeing to the wilderness lands of Edom and Moab in the End Times.

Iraq (11): 0.4% Christian. Islamic oppression (65% Shia, 35% Sunni). Christians from a Muslim background often keep their faith secret, because of the pressure and threats they are likely to receive from extended family members, clan leaders and wider society. Christian converts risk losing inheritance rights or the right to marry – and they are not allowed to marry Christians, as the law still considers them Muslim. Islamic extremists remain active in Iraq, attacking and kidnapping Christians. So-called Islamic State (IS) are notorious for their appalling use of women, particularly the sexual enslavement of women from religious minorities. While IS no longer have a stranglehold over the country, the legacy of their attitudes lingers, and many women are traumatised from their experiences. The government also discriminates against Christians in various contexts, from the workplace to check points. Blasphemy laws can also be used against those who try to spread the gospel.

Iran (8): under 1%. Islamic oppression. It is notable that according to the 2011 Iranian census around 95% of Iranian Muslims identify themselves with Shia Islam, though a much smaller number of Iranians abroad are so identified (32% Shia, 5% Sunni, 3% Sufi). Despite the extreme levels of persecution brought to bear against Christians in Iran, as of 2021 the country has the fastest growing Christian church in world with some 800K members, a key factor being their house churches of which 55% of them are led by women. The Iranian government sees the conversion of Muslims to Christianity as an attempt by Western countries to undermine the Islamic rule of Iran. Christians from a Muslim background are persecuted the most, primarily by the government, but also by their families and communities. Secret churches are often raided, and their leaders and members have been arrested and given long prison sentences for 'crimes against national security'.

Afghanistan (2): under 1%. Islamic oppression (90% Sunni, 7% Shia, 3% Non-denominational Muslims). It is impossible to live openly as a Christian in Afghanistan. Leaving Islam is considered shameful, and Christian converts face dire consequences if their new faith is discovered. Either they have to flee the country, or they will be killed. If a Christian's family discovers they have converted, their family, clan or tribe has to save its 'honour' by disowning the believer, or even killing them. Christians from a Muslim background can also be sectioned in a psychiatric hospital, because leaving Islam is considered a sign of insanity.

Pakistan (5): 1.9%. Islamic oppression (80% Sunni, 20% Shia). Christians in Pakistan face extreme persecution in every area of their lives. Believers who have converted from Islam face the greatest levels of persecution, but all Christians are considered second-class citizens in this strongly Islamic country. Christians, particularly Christian men, are given jobs perceived as low, dirty and dishonourable, and can be victims of bonded labour. There are some Christians among the middle classes, but they are still considered inferior to their Muslim counterparts and often face severe workplace discrimination. Christian girls are at risk of abduction and rape and are often forced to marry their attackers and coerced into converting to Islam. Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws are used to target Christians, and Islamic extremist groups vehemently 'defend' these laws, including attacking or killing those believed to have contravened them. Often these are used to target Christians after a dispute relating to work or tenancy, rather than genuine cases. Christian churches do exist, but those that are active in outreach face severe persecution from society.

China (17): 6.8%. Communist and post-Communist oppression. From the 1980's through to 2021 the church in China has seen extraordinary growth of some 8%pa, yet life for Christians there is not straightforward, and recent years has seen a marked increase in

persecution. To keep their identity, many Chinese Christians practice in informal networks and unregistered congregations, often described as house churches or underground churches, the proliferation of which began in the 1950s when many Chinese Protestants and Catholics began to reject state-controlled structures purported to represent them. Members of such groups are said to represent the "silent majority" of Chinese Christians and represent many diverse theological traditions. Antireligious campaigns in the People's Republic of China refer to the Chinese Communist Party's official promotion of state atheism, coupled with its persecution of people with spiritual or religious beliefs. During the Cultural Revolution 1966 to 1976, the expression of religious life in China was effectively banned, including even the Three-Self Church, and through this time Christians, along with many people groups, were persecuted, incarcerated, or killed. The Cultural Revolution damaged China's economy and traditional culture, and it resulted in an estimated death toll ranging up to 20 million. State campaigns against religion have escalated since Xi Jinping became General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012. For Christians, government decrees have mandated the destruction of houses of worship, such as Christian churches. The Communist Party looks with distrust on organizations with international ties; it tends to associate Christianity with it deems to be subversive Western values and has closed churches and schools. The policy of 'sinicising' the church (to make Chinese) is implemented across the country as the Communist Party relies strongly on Chinese cultural identity to stay in power, and limits whatever could threaten its control on society. New restrictions on the internet, social media, and non-governmental organisations – along with a revision of religious regulation in 2018 which was enhanced again last year – are strictly applied and seriously limit freedom. Churches are being monitored and closed, be they independent or affiliated to the state (e.g., Three-Self Patriotic Movement). On a more local level, converts from Islam or Buddhism whose new faith is discovered by family and the community are likely to face threats and physical harm to lure them back.

North Korea (1) 1.5%. Dictatorial paranoia. Being discovered as a Christian is a death sentence in North Korea. You will be taken to a labour camp as a political criminal, if you aren't killed instantly. These inhumane prisons have horrific conditions, and few believers make it out alive. And everyone in your family will share the same punishment. Kim Jong-un is reported to have expanded the system of prison camps, in which an estimated 50-70,000 Christians are currently imprisoned. Many Christians are unable to meet with other believers and have to keep their faith entirely hidden. There are even stories of husbands and wives not knowing, for many years, that their spouse was also a Christian. Secret police carry out raids to identify Christians, and children are encouraged to tell their teachers about any sign of faith in their parents' home. A Christian is never safe.

Israel

Israel is in the middle of the crosshairs of the telescopic sites of a gun. It is in the geo-political and religious epicentre of current and End Time events. The nearer to the epicentre, the more the persecution of Christians, who are identified as being subversive to the beliefs of Islam, or in the case of authoritarian states like China and North Korea, are identified as being subversive to the authority of the state. In addition, these countries show an abhorrence of the Jews and their claim to Statehood. The many proxy wars which occur both near to, and towards the outer edges of the epicentre, co-relate to the same fundamentals identified here. The prophet Simeon, upon seeing the baby Jesus declared to his mother '*Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against*' Lu.2:34 KJV.

The Messiah, also called the Prince of Peace, is not the cause of this conflict, but the conflicting belief systems of humanity is the consequence of it, as each contend to explain faith-based dilemmas and to 'square the circle'. This arrival of Light in dark places was always going to lead to enmity from those who consider their positions threatened by it. From Jewish writings we read of a prophesy in Psalm 2, part of which was later remembered and repeated by the early Christians in Acts 4:25,26. Ps.2 reads *'Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him'*. KJV Though the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take council together against the Lord and against his anointed, the Lord makes a tally and speaks to them in his sore displeasure, his wrath. He is angry, yet He sins not. Dan.9:16 reads *'O Lord, in keeping with all Your righteous acts, I pray that Your anger and wrath may turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all around us'* BSB. He who speaks is the Word of God, the Messiah who is the One who is coming to rule and to reign.

The re-founding of the nation of Israel on 14 May 1948, after nearly 2,000 years of the Jewish people's diaspora, followed on from the British Mandate of Palestine 1920-1948 and before that the Ottoman period 1516-1917. The prophet Isaiah forthtold of this event when he wrote in Is.66:8 *'Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children'* KJV. Yet in the bringing forth, many eyes turned to the land and many countries re-considered their positions. A rival Arab nationalism also claimed rights over the former Ottoman territories and sought to prevent Jewish migration into Palestine. This led to growing Arab-Jewish tensions. Israeli independence in 1948 was also accompanied by an exodus of Arabs from Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict and a subsequent Jewish exodus from Arab and Muslim countries to Israel. About 43% of the world's Jews live in Israel today, the largest Jewish community in the world.

The gods of Egypt

Dan.11:7 speaks of Israel and its capital city being in the crosshairs of human history, and Dan.11:8 speaks of the continuance of alliances, and absence of hostilities for a number of years between the kings of the south and the north, and Egypt. The reference to their 'gods' is a reminder that Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt are all Sunni Islamic nation states.

Dan.11:9 speaks of the movements to and from the kingdom of the south. *'So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land'*. Then Dan.11:10 reads *'But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress'*. It is certainly true that Saudi Arabia can covet allies who have great forces. Indeed, in the First Gulf War 1990-91, coalition forces from 35 nations led by the United States used the kingdom from which to 'overflow and pass through' as they invaded Kuwait and Iraq. The prophesy in this verse states that at the time of the northern and

southern kings' actions in the End Times, such a multitude will 'certainly come'. Ellicott comments *'The words "overflow," "pass through" "return," all refer to the ebbing and flowing of the tide of war'*.

As the southern king can covet allies, so can the northern king too. Similarly, today Turkey is a member of NATO yet it also has both a sometimes-strained relationship with Russia, for example in 2019 it bought their ground to air missile defence system; and at the same time its air force is equipped with US fighter jets.

As we consider reading on from Daniel 11:11 (KJV) there is much ambiguity of language such that we do not clearly understand which king is referred to nor the multitude of forces at their disposal. For example in verse 11 *'He' may refer to either king for it reads 'And the king of the south shall be moved with choler (rage), and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand'* And verse 12 reads *'And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it'* which might mean, *'And the multitude is lifted up—i.e., takes courage—and its heart is exalted,'* or, *'when the multitude takes courage the king's heart is exalted'* but the point is that the victory of the southern king after he has taken the "multitude" of the northern king has not proved so successful as he had hoped. His aim was to gain complete supremacy over his rival, but for reasons which are about to be stated he was unable to gain his object.

The ebb and flow of the northern and southern armies is clear from v.13 *'For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches'*. The revenge of the northern army comes after it acquires significant extra resources.

Dan.11:14 reads *'And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall'*. Ellicott writes of this verse *'It must be noticed that at this verse—the earliest in which there is any reference to Daniel's people and to the vision (Daniel 10:1; Daniel 10:7-8)—we appear to be approaching the great crisis. We appear to be within "a very few days" (see Daniel 11:20) of the vile-person who corresponds to the little horn of the fourth beast. At this period the king of the south suffers from many hostile opponents, while certain others, more closely connected with the Jews, become prominent for a while, but then fail'. The 'robbers of thy people... can only refer to certain Jews who committed various violent breaches of the Law, and on this occasion revolted against the king of the south... The significant part of the verse is the 'falling' of the robbers. It seems to mean that the conduct of these men shall bring them just the reverse of what they had expected'*. So, it is apparent that the Jews, likely to be their lawgivers, do act to establish 'their vision', i.e., likely to be a covenant or agreement with the coming 'vile one', though they fail and are called robbers of the people. But it is too late, the agreement has been signed such that many are compromised and robbed of their rights.

Dan.11:15 reads of the continuing conflict between these two kings and the involvement of the fortified cities: *'So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand'*.

Dan.11:16 *'But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed (literally: destruction being in his hand)'*. Ellicott reads: *'We now hear of further*

proceedings of the northern king. He follows up the vision mentioned in the last verse, enters the glorious land (i.e., Palestine), and commits great ravages in it. The king is described in language which reminds us of Daniel 11:3. He acts just as he pleases after his entrance to the southern kingdom'.

Dan.11:17 'He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him'.

The language remains ambiguous. Ellicott comments: *'The northern king has further planned for subduing the dominions of the southern king. He brings together all the forces he can amass, and then attempts by means of a political marriage to establish peace; but this also proves a failure... The reference to the upright ones could refer to the Jews taking the part of the northern king in the contest'.* The Turkey and Israel relationship is again to be considered here.

Dan.11:18 'After this shall he turn his face unto the isles (coast or region), and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him'. The coast or region being Asia Minor. The verse states that in the first instance the northern king will be successful, but in the end the princes will repay him the reproach which he inflicted upon them.

Dan.11:19 'Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found'. Again, we read of the fort. The king of the north is forced to take refuge in his fortresses, and here meets with his end.

Dan.11:20 reads 'Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle'. Ellicott writes of the raiser of taxes the word 'exactor', or 'oppressor' is better. The new king of the north causes or allows the 'oppressor' to pass through 'the majesty of the kingdom', or it could mean to pass through the richest part of his kingdom'. But as Ellicott writes 'The effect of this policy was that the king fell a victim to a conspiracy in a few days.' In the geo-politics of current events, its as though a strong oppressor with guile passes through Syria or maybe Turkey, though his passing through is not in anger or battle. The outcome though was that in a short time that nation falls victim to the conspiracy.

The writer has spent much time on Daniel 11:5-20 because within its grainy pithy contents are expressions which can lead us to understand a modern context. I quote in full from the commentator Ellicott and then add my final remarks below.

Ellicott writes: 'With this verse the first part of the prophecy concludes. It is to be observed that thus far (1) notes of time are very scanty; we only meet with indefinite expressions, such as "in the end of years" (Daniel 11:6), "certain years" (Daniel 11:13), "within few days" (Daniel 11:20), and vague terms expressing sequence of time. (2) There is nothing in the text which implies any change of sovereigns, except in Daniel 11:7; Daniel 11:19. It follows from a careful study of these verses that according to their natural and literal sense they speak of only two southern kings and only one northern king. The southern king of whom we read most is apparently the offspring of the daughter of the first southern king, mentioned in Daniel 11:5, and it is he who engages in conflict with the first northern king, and with his sons (Daniel 11:10). The whole prophecy is eschatological, and refers to two opposing earthly powers which will affect the destiny of God's people in the last times. It relates a series of wars and political intrigues between these two powers, all of which prove futile, and it concludes with the account of the death of the first northern king. Daniel 11:20 is a transition verse, in which another character is introduced, who will mark the approach of the

end; while Daniel 11:21 introduces the most prominent object of the prophecy—a person who remains before the reader till the end of the chapter, while the southern king gradually disappears (Daniel 11:25; Daniel 11:27; Daniel 11:40), and what is apparently his country is mentioned without its sovereign in Daniel 11:43.

The key conclusions here are that the events do relate to the End Times and that the whole prophecy is eschatological. Furthermore, it does make sense if we superimpose the conflict and tension which is apparent in Sunni Islam between the nation states of Saudi Arabia, the first southern king, from which a daughter i.e. Sunni Islam i.e. the second southern king, is offered to the northern king and his sons i.e. Syria, a Syrian – Turkish Agreement, or Turkey. As Ellicott comments, 'all of these conflicts prove futile', but what it does is to allow the oppressor to come through the lands of the northern kingdom towards the 'Beautiful Land' to a city with fortified walls. Then we read of the demise of the northern king, or one of his sons, and this may indeed relate to the demise of Syria. Either way, it marks the introduction of another character who will mark the approach of the end.

The above events are key signs and that will take place before the arrival of the vile person (Dan.11:21), the Antichrist, a person who remains until the end of the chapter, while the southern kingdom gradually disappears. As Daniel says, and Jesus warns us 'let the reader understand'.

The exploits of the 'vile person' (Da,11:21-29)

It is clear from Dan.11:21 that the vile person shall not give honour to the kingdom i.e., the nation through which he passes. Instead with guile, intrigue, and conspiracy he will come; purporting to be a man of peace yet he will come with flatteries and with cunning hypocritical conduct will deceive the nation through which he passes. Dan.11:21 reads '*And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries*'.

The character of the Antichrist is described elsewhere in this study. He Daniel picks up on the same subject. Ellicott writes of 'the vile person' as follows: 'The meaning of the language will be plainer after a reference to Psalm 119:141 (despised and contemptible); Jeremiah 22:28. The moral character of the man is especially described. The words that follow explain more fully that he was not worthy of receiving royal majesty.

Dan.11:22 reads '*And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant*'. Ellicott writes '*the overwhelming forces of invading armies are swept away by the troops of this terrible king. But besides the enemy, the 'prince of the covenant' is to be destroyed also. This expression is most readily explained by observing that it stands in contrast with the hostile armies mentioned in the first clause. It means... 'those who were at peace with him', with the word 'prince' being used as a collective noun*'. So, the Antichrist breaks his agreement with other nations or sectarian groups.

Dan.11:23 reads '*And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people*' of which Ellicott writes '*this verse explains more fully the means by which the king succeeds in maintaining his influence. He has already destroyed those who are at peace with him. From the time that he first becomes their confederate, he works deceitfully, coming up with hostile intent, accompanied only by a few people, and in this way throwing off their guard those whom he would destroy*'.

Dan.11:24 then reads *'He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time'*. This intruder 'king' comes with bribes and apparent friendship, but he is really planning attacks against the fortresses of the district, endeavouring to reduce them into his power. And when shall this be? Answer: 'for a time', that is, the end of the time decreed by God.

Dan.11:25 reads *'And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him'*. As Ellicott comments *'for the first time in the second portion of the prophecy, mention is made of the southern king. It is highly probable that the deceit mentioned in the last three verses had this king and his provinces for its object.'* From v.21 onwards we specifically read of the actions of the Antichrist, and so know that he is moving towards a nationhood to his south, which is his object or goal.

Dan.11:26 reads *'Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain'*. As Ellicott writes: *'The context points to treachery. The false companions of the southern king betray him to the enemy; he is broken, the hostile army pours in, and many are slain'*. This so reminds the writer of the devastation caused in the nation of Syria since the civil war broke out there in 2011.

Dan.11:27 reads *'And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed'*. Ellicott comments: *'The two rival kings are here described as living upon terms of outward friendship, while each is inwardly trying to outwit the other'*.

Crucially *'for yet the end shall be at the time appointed'* i.e., these events occur specifically at the time appointed or as Ellicott comments *'the end of each will come only at the time definitely ordained by God for the consummation of His kingdom (Daniel 11:35). Man cannot hasten the events decreed by God's providence'*.

Dan.11:28 reads *'Then shall he return into his land with great riches (Strong's: 'property, goods'); and his heart ('inner man, mind') shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land'*. It is whilst exploits are being made that the Antichrist builds his strength which causes his inner motives to rise against the previously made agreement i.e., envy wealth and greed mixed with success in obtaining his desires emboldens him to rise against a previous agreement, now with the ambition in his heart of overcoming it to his own benefit.

Dan.11:29 reads *'At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter'*. All of the previous exploits of the kings of the north and south and the 'vile man' are in preparation for the following events. This time, the last time, i.e., at God's appointed time the to-and-fro of the kings of the south and the north and the exploits of 'the vile (despised) man' are stopped. No such success attended him at the latter as at the former invasion.

Naval powers cause the Antichrist to turn his fury against the Holy Land (Da.11:30-35)

Dan.11:30 reads *'For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved (shall loose heart), and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so*

shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant'.

So, a new military force now intervenes, this time one with significant naval power, and this comes against the Antichrist. When this happens, the Antichrist becomes disheartened. This is the first time that opposition occurs such that he is stopped in his exploits. This is the turning point at which time the Antichrist returns to his original intent to claim his prize, to return his focus to, and indulge his anger against Palestine. The final exploit of the northern king appears to facilitate the entry of the Antichrist into Palestine, for at this point he is moving from north to south. The Antichrist appears to work with or through this land to the north of Palestine. Also at this point, alliances broken, and the timing of events is made clear.

It is upon the appearance of this naval force, described as the ships of Chittim, that determines the timing and the open appearance of the Antichrist in the holy place. This is when the covenant agreement with Palestine will be broken (see v.32) and this is what precipitates the timing and appearance of the 'abomination of desolations' i.e., the Antichrist, standing in the holy place.

So, what naval forces are situated in the Mediterranean Sea? The key naval power there is that of the United States, though further north in the Black Sea is stationed the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Though the Bosphorus Straits significantly restrict its access into the Mediterranean Sea, it still has ambitions in that region.

The British Mediterranean Fleet ended in 1967 however the United States Sixth Fleet operates as part of United States Naval Forces Europe. The Sixth Fleet is headquartered at Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy. The officially stated mission of the Sixth Fleet in 2011 is that it 'conducts the full range of Maritime Operations and Theater Security Cooperation missions, in concert with coalition, joint, interagency, and other parties, in order to advance security and stability in Europe and Africa'. Its task forces integrate land sea and air assets.

Counterpoised to the American Fleet is the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The Russian seizure of Crimea in 2014 changed the situation and role of the Black Sea Fleet significantly. Russia's expanded military footprint in Crimea allows it to carry out a range of operations that it was not capable of prior to 2014. The Black Sea Fleet's capabilities continue to expand in the 2020s. In response, in the Black Sea the United States, the United Kingdom and Turkey have entered into contracts to supply new corvettes, missile-armed fast attack craft, patrol boats and unmanned air vehicles to the Ukrainian Navy.

So, what or whose are the 'ships of Chittim'? Strong's Exhaustive Concordance reads '*Chittim, Kittim: Or Kittiyiy {kit-tee-ee}; patrial from an unused name denoting Cyprus (only in the plural); a Kittite or Cypriote; hence, an islander in general, i.e. The Greeks or Romans on the shores opposite Palestine -- Chittim, Kittim*'. So, the American Fleet based in Italy is the only direct correlation to this description. Cyprus is an island just some 60 miles off the coast of Israel and has long standing ties with the British presence in the Mediterranean.

Dan.11:31-32a reads '*And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries...*'. So, it is apparent that the Antichrist and his followers use flatteries (smooth words and fine promises). The word corrupt literally means 'make profane' the people to become like the heathen i.e., they become godless. This is what happens when the Antichrist pollutes the 'sanctuary of strength' i.e., instead it becomes a place of abomination, a detestable place. The things of God have been corrupted with the intention of making them

worthless and godless. The Antichrist at all times knows the self-generating power that comes from God and makes every attempt to neutralise it and remove its power. Satan stands before God to corrupt, condemn, and accuse the things and the people of God (Job1:6-7;2:1-2). Yet God, who is a jealous God, is jealous of this space, his sanctuary, for it is reflective of the eternal Sanctuary in heaven, and it will not go un-noticed. In prophesy it has already been marked by Him. His eyes are discerning of these events, and the abuse of the free-will He has imparted to mankind who follow good or evil.

This prophesy directly correlates to and identifies with the timing referred to by Jesus in Matt.24:15 *'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)'* KJV. Ellicott comments that this verse refers to the arms being military assistance given to the aggressor whereas the next verse refers to the help given to the aggressor by apostates. Both aid the *'abomination (outrage or disgrace) that makes desolate'* (see also Dan.8:13) in what should otherwise be the place of 'sanctuary of strength' for God's people. The Hebrew word for Temple can also mean 'a very powerful fortress' so the spoiling of the sanctuary is akin to the occult practice of taking possession of the things of God and making them profane, and this is done in two ways, both through physical violence and spiritual deceit and the corruption and misuse of spiritual powers.

The place of the Sanctuary

The place of sanctuary to the people of God should be holy and separated from spiritual pollution, a holy place sanctified to and by Yahweh. The Temple of God was originally designed to be a dwelling place of God's glory and power, a place of hearing and seeing Yahweh, a special place of his abode i.e., his tabernacle (Ex.40:34,35); covered by the cloud of God's glory (Num.9:18,22); planned by God (Ex.25:9;26:30). In the time of the dedication of Solomon's Temple it became a place where the glory of God came down for in 2Chr.7:1-3 we read *'Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever'* KJV.

However, upon the completion of the building of hen Solomon's Temple, God gave a number of conditional promises and warnings to him and to the people (2Chr.7:11-19). God told him of that place I *'have chosen this place to myself'* (v.12) and God's covenant agreement will be actioned there... *'If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land'* (v.13,14). God tells us that he is both attentive and jealous for us in that place for it reads in v.15,16 *'Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually'* KJV. So, in that place God sees and the desires of His heart shall be longed for there perpetually. However, it is also a place of high stakes, for God also says in v.19-22 that he will if the people *'turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land*

which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house? And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them’.

God is perpetually jealous of that place and to those who contravene its original use and purpose do so at their peril, for there are consequences. God is particularly jealous of holiness in that place and he burns against spiritual pollution there. Jesus’ heart too caught the vision of God’s burning anger in that place when he saw it spiritually polluted, for we read in Matt.21:12 and then in Mk.11:15-18a *‘When they arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began to drive out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. Then Jesus began to teach them, and He declared, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations’ (Is.56:7)? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers’ (Jer.7:11) When the chief priests and scribes heard this, they looked for a way to kill Him’* BSB. Jesus then foretold the Temple’s destruction in Mk.13:1-2 *‘As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, look at the magnificent stones and buildings!” “Do you see all these great buildings?” Jesus replied. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down”’.* An event which took place in 70AD during the Roman siege of Jerusalem.

The prophesies of old are unbroken. Moses prophesied of God being a jealous God, and His commandments have not changed. The character of God does not change for Exodus 34:14-20 reads *‘ For you must not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God’* BSB. In the End Times there are prophesies concerning those who play the spiritual harlot, whether kings or people, for they do so at their own peril. Moses prophesied in Deut.31:16-17 *‘Behold... this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant’.* KJV. Deut.32:21a reads *‘They have moved me to jealousy with [that which is] not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities... ‘. It is the jealousy of God’s profound love that causes him to anger for Deut.32:22 reads ‘For a fire is kindled in mine anger... ‘. In the End Times we read of God’s anger against those who play the harlot, and against the woman who plays the harlot **‘MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH’.***

We read that in the End Times there is gross spiritual pollution for we read in Rev.18:2,3 *‘And he (an angel) cried out in a mighty voice: “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a lair for demons and a haunt for every unclean spirit, every unclean bird, and every*

detestable beast. All the nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her immorality. The kings of the earth were immoral with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown wealthy from the extravagance of her luxury”

In the End Times God’s jealousy for his land and his people must not be under-estimated for Joel 2:18 reads *‘Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people’*.

Psalm 82:1,8 reads *‘God presides in the divine assembly; He renders judgment among the gods... Arise, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are Your inheritance’*. He will divide between peoples, nations, and their gods.

Today, upon the site of Solomon’s the Temple stand two Islamic shrines, one is the Al-Aqsa Mosque (dating from 705AD) and the other is the Dome on the Rock (dating from 691-692AD). The mosques are near historical sites significant in Judaism and Christianity, most notably they are built on the site of the Second Temple, the holiest site in Judaism. As a result, the area is extremely sensitive, and has been a flashpoint in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Both mosques have a religious significance in Islam. In Islam, the term "al-Aqsa Mosque" refers to the entire Noble Sanctuary. Islamic scripts as well as modern-day political tracts tend to classify al-Aqsa Mosque as the third holiest site in Islam, after Mecca and Medina. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation refers to the al-Aqsa Mosque as the third holiest site in Islam and calls for Arab sovereignty over it. There are different Islamic narrations concerning this Mosque, one of which refers to Mohammed in vision meeting what it terms as the prophets Abraham Moses and Jesus at this site.

On the walls of the Dome of the Rock is an inscription in a mosaic frieze that includes an explicit rejection of the divinity of Christ, from Quran (19:33–35). The formula *la sharika lahu* (‘God has no companion’) is repeated five times there, whilst the Qur’anic doctrine that Jesus was a true prophet is included there too. According to Goitein, the inscriptions decorating the interior of the Dome clearly display a spirit of rivalry against Christianity.

The Temple Mount is the holiest site in Judaism, which regards it as the place where God's divine presence is manifested more than in any other place and is the place Jews turn towards during prayer. Due to its extreme sanctity, many Jews will not walk on the Mount itself, to avoid unintentionally entering the area where the Holy of Holies stood, since according to Rabbinical law, some aspect of the divine presence is still present at the site.

In the light of the dual claims of both Judaism and Islam, it is one of the most contested religious sites in the world. Judeo-Christian traditions also maintain its significance. Since the Crusades, the Muslim community of Jerusalem has managed the site as a Waqf, which is an Islamic religious trust.

In an attempt to keep the status quo, the Israeli government enforces a controversial ban on prayer by non-Muslims.

The mystical significance of the Temple Mount causes consternation for many. It has been fought over many times and integrated into many belief systems, each claiming that its influence gains them power and control. Fourteen sieges of the site have been recorded throughout history dating between 701BC to 1948AD.

What is represented and contained there is a heady mix of truth and half-truth, of religions and their claims and counterclaims.

The kings of the earth too are intrigued by the place, and by what it represents, and they have fought many wars to gain control of it. Over 50% of the world's population adhere to belief systems which find a focus on this place i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

In the End Times Rev.17:18 reads *'And the woman whom thou sawest is (not "that," but) the great city, which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth'*. Rev.17:15 records that the woman sits *'over peoples, and multitudes, and nations and tongues'*. The woman is therefore supra-national, she represents something that crosses borders and nations, whereas the kings of the earth represent the nations themselves; so, the woman sits over them, or as related in John's revelation, she sits on the back of an alliance of many kings or nations.

But the ten-king alliance referred to in Rev.17:16 hates the whore for it reads *'And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire'* So in the days of the seventh head i.e., the first three and a half years of the Tribulation Period, the beast turns with the ten horns of his power upon the woman. They desert her, strip her of her adornments and consume the spoil. They no longer have use for her.

The kings of the earth do not care for truth, but only what its acquisition can do for them, does it allow them to maintain their power?

John 18:33-39 records the meeting between Jesus and Pilate, the Roman procurator of the province. He was the governor of the subject race of Jews. He cared little for the subtleties and distinctions of Jewish law, only what it meant in relation to Rome.

John 18:37-38 reads *'Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all'*. KJV

The actions of Pilate show the action of a political leader who through expediency dispels with the problem at hand. To him the question of truth is wholly irrelevant to the question at issue. He appears to have neither time nor will deal with it, and at once goes from the palace again to the Jews who demand Jesus' death. Pilate found no fault or ground for legal charge against Jesus. The opportunity arises again in John 19:4-5 to deal truthfully with his findings for it reads *'Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!'* Instead, we read that in spite of his findings, he still hands Jesus over to be crucified for John 19:6 reads *'When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him'*. KJV

Like Pilate, the ten-king alliance of the End Times will not care for truth but will act with expediency to maintain their cause.

The spoiling of the Sanctuary

The place of the Sanctuary is intended by Yahweh to be a place of spiritual power, yet Satan corrupts those near to its centre and so weakens its purpose.

Jesus knew the importance of a clean and wholesome temple to His father for even at the age of 12 the boy Jesus was found at the Temple in Jerusalem for Luke 2:49 reads "Why were you looking for Me?" He asked. 'Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?' But they did not understand the statement He was making to them' BSB

Then in Matt. 21:12-14 we read: 'Then Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves. And He declared to them, 'It is written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer.' But you are making it 'a den of robbers'" The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them. But the chief priests and scribes were indignant when they saw the wonders He performed and the children shouting in the temple courts, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'" BSB

It was there that Judas went to betray the Christ for we read in Luke 22:2-4 reads 'and the chief priests and scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death; for they feared the people. Then Satan entered Judas Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve. And Judas went to discuss with the chief priests and temple officers how he might betray Jesus to them' BSB.

It was in the courtyard of the high priest, a place which should have been a place of solace and strength, instead it became of place of loss for we read that it was here where Peter denied Jesus (Matt. 26:57-75).

As with Judas, it will be in the temple where again Satan will have entered the heart of the Antichrist to spoil and pollute that space with spiritual wickedness, Satan's tactics are the same, first prior to trial and crucifixion of Christ of the cross and at the close of the age when his plan will be to claim the highest place of spiritual power in the land and that will be in the Temple in Jerusalem where he will again pollute the space to corrupt spiritual power and manifest evil intent.

However, Satan's understanding in the spiritual realm is bounded and limited. Satan's understanding does not reach into the highest of the heavenlies and it is from there that Jesus receives directly from the Father the knowledge of future events and so He informed his followers of them and they then recorded them to inform us of the last days. In this way we gain fore-knowledge of the exact timings of Matt. 24:15 which *reads* 'So when you see standing in the holy place *'the abomination of desolation'* then those who are in Judea need to flee to the mountains'. This will be one of the key events in history, for it will signal the ending of the first three and a half years of Daniel's prophesy, the time when the covenant between Antichrist and the nations is broken and the beginning of the last three and a half years of this age known as the *'tribulation, the great one'* (Rev.7:14).

Yahweh is a jealous God and should not be tested when a sacred place is determined and then becomes spiritually tainted or polluted. If churches are built as earthly structures, then those who do so also need to maintain their sanctity. The presence of the Holy Spirit in such places is likened to a dove. It is hard to engender His presence, yet the dove quickly leaves when disturbed. 1 Kings 8:27-30 reads *'But will God indeed dwell upon the earth? Even heaven, the highest heaven, cannot contain You, much less this temple I have built. Yet regard the prayer and plea of Your servant, O LORD my God, so that You may hear the cry and the prayer that Your servant is praying before You today. May Your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My Name shall be there,' so that You may hear the prayer that Your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of Your servant and of Your people Israel when they pray toward this place. May You hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. May You hear and forgive'* BSB.

'But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits' (Dan.11:32b)

While the large mass of people is deceived by and so become obedient to the persecutor, there is a party of true believers remaining, who are 'strong' or rather, confirm the covenant, and 'do' (or 'make') i.e., succeed in their exploits. In times of persecution there will be a remnant, though it may be small which will remain firm in their covenant with God. Today, the persecution of Christians occurs in many countries and for those who do not succumb to it then their faith grows strong (1Peter1:7) and they shall do exploits. This is a time when our God makes preparation to divide the nations (Matt.25:33).

It is at the time of the appearance of the 'abomination of desolation; standing in the holy place' that the two witnesses begin their ministry too. These Christians, and others too who know their God are the ones who are strong and do exploits for it reads in Rev.11:3-5 "... *And I will empower my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.*' *These witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouths and devours their enemies. In this way, anyone who wants to harm them must be killed. These witnesses have power to shut the sky so that no rain will fall during the days of their prophecy, and power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish'* BSB.

Zechariah had the same prophesy when he saw in vision the re-building of the Second Temple at the time of Zerubbabel in vision for Zech.4:1-14 reads: *'Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and woke me, as a man is awakened from his sleep. 'What do you see?' he asked. 'I see a solid gold lampstand,' I replied, 'with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven spouts to the lamps. There are also two olive trees beside it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left.'* *'What are these, my lord?' I asked the angel who was speaking with me. 'Do you not know what they are?' replied the angel. 'No, my lord,' I answered. So he said to me, 'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of Hosts. 7What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain. Then he will bring forth the capstone accompanied by shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'' Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of Hosts has sent me to you. For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven eyes (facets, likely to mean angels) of the LORD, which scan the whole earth, will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.'* Then I asked the angel, *'What are the two olive trees on the right and left of the lampstand?' And I questioned him further, 'What are the two olive branches beside the two gold pipes from which the golden oil (from which the gold) pours?' 'Do you not know what these are?' he inquired. 'No, my lord,' I replied. So he said, 'These are the two anointed ones (the two sons of new oil) who are standing beside the Lord of all the earth.'* BSB

These are those who know their God. They know Him through the prophetic Word written here and they also know Him through the Godly power (self-generated 'dunamis' power) that flows as golden oil from Him and through his Spirit anointed prophesy, and that this Word will never fail them during these times. For the Spirit of prophesy is the Spirit of Jesus - as we read in Rev.19:10 *'For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'* and in John 3:33-35a *'Whoever accepts His testimony has certified that God is truthful. For the One whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in His hands...'* BSB. Jesus is coming soon, yet

ahead of that time He stands with them here to supply by His Spirit to Christians and the two witnesses.

The battle for truth

It is Jesus who certifies by His words that God is truthful. Much deceit in the End Times is caused by half-truths which perplex the peoples and the leaders of nations. When the disciples asked Jesus concerning the signs of the End Times, the first thing that Jesus spoke of was to beware of deceit caused by false prophets for in Matt.24:3a-5 it reads *'and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many'* KJV.

Yet there will be those who do discern between good and evil for in Dan.11:33 it reads *'And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days'*. Jesus said: *'let the reader (of these prophecies) understand'* (Mk.13:14; Matt.24:15; Lu.21:22). Here too in Daniel it reads that it is *'They that understand'* who are addressed at this time. This is the name and title by which those are called who were also spoken of in the last verse as *'knowing their God'*. So, it is better to call these people by these titles i.e., 'they that understand' or 'they who know their God' rather than any broader religious label. The use of such language is important. It is likely that there will be those who align themselves with Christianity for example, yet they will not understand these events or be able to explain them in the broader context of prophecy or answer the question 'why'.

It is a reminder too that in the 21st Century converts to Christ in many countries do not call themselves Christian for fear of being identified with Western countries and culture, instead they quietly carry another name such as 'followers of the Nazarene', 'Muslim Background Believers' (MBBs), 'followers of Isa (Jesus in Arabic)' etc.

This is the specific time in history when the powers of evil become open in their power and greed and also the time when the Antichrist is known and recognised openly to the world for this is the time when he stands in the holy place to make profane. It is the time when the conveyors of wickedness are no longer clandestine in their actions. Satan inspires then to think that they are invincible, to act like him and to stand against God.

The consequences of the breakout of evil at this point in time is mapped out elsewhere as too is the need for knowledge of the prophecies, and the true prophets who carry the message, for we read in Dan.12:10 *'Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand'*. Psalm 111:110 reads *'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts gain rich understanding'*.

It is specifically when the flatteries and deceit of the Antichrist takes place that the discerning ones who understand the truth and the prophecies will be able to 'instruct many'. In times of persecution there is a great need to give answers to those who call 'why, why, why' and to show them answers.

This prophesy also refers to the martyrdom of 'those who understand' and 'those who are instructed' for 'yet they shall fall'. These deaths are typical of the sufferings of the Church in the End Times. In 2020 some 4,750 Christians across the globe were recorded as being killed for the reason of their faith, though many more suffer discrimination and violence, and

many incidents go unrecorded. This persecution takes place in families, in communities and at national levels. It is recorded that some 340 million Christians live in countries where there are high or extreme levels of persecution that takes place against them, that is an average of 1 in 8 of all Christians on the planet (source www.opendoorsuk.org).

Dan.11:34 reads *'Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries (meaning 'smoothness', though sometimes interpreted as intrigue, slippery, slippery paths)'. Ellicott comments that those who suffer the persecution, irrespective of their nationality or place on the globe, 'these will not be entirely without help, but there will be some small assistance given them. It will be small, either compared with their present needs, or contrasted with the great help which will be given them when the tribulation attains its greatest severity'. These people's testimony 'will cause some to declare themselves upon the side of 'those that understand'. This is a feature which will be noticed in religious persecutions; according as one party or the other gains in power, as its prospects brighten, it gains fresh adherents'.*

Dan.11:35 reads *'Some of the wise will fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time'. The persecution continues and its open aggression causes some to follow Christ, whilst others who are called 'flatterers' become open apostates. This occurs at the 'time of the end... the appointed time'.*

The character of the Antichrist and the time of the impious tyranny

At the time of the end an impious tyranny is set up for it reads in Dan.11:36-39 *'Then the king will do as he pleases and will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and he will speak monstrous things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been decreed must be accomplished. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers, nor for the one desired by women, nor for any other god, because he will magnify himself above them all. And in their place, he will honour a god of fortresses— a god his fathers did not know— with gold, silver, precious stones, and riches. He will attack the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honour those who acknowledge him, making them rulers over many and distributing the land for a price'.*

War between the kings of the north and south

Dan.11:40 reads *'And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over'* KJV

In the final conflict events will take place extremely fast, too fast for diplomacy or mediation, for the conflict will come like a 'whirlwind' (KJV) 'like a flood' (BSB). It will involve speed and armour and will involve many ships to overwhelm the 'Beautiful Land' for Dan.11:41-43 reads *'He will also invade the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall. But these will be delivered from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the leaders of the Ammonites. He will extend his power over many countries, and not even the land of Egypt will escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and over all the riches of Egypt, and the Libyans and Cushites will also submit to him'* BSB.

This land is either situated between the lands of the southern and northern kings or is a conflict between southern and northern kings which centres upon the 'Beautiful Land'. The king of the north has much military hardware and has access to the land with 'many ships'. This reference to many ships refers to super-powers who have a great military presence and as could be envisaged by the military intervention of Russia and the Russian Fleet based in the Crimea and the Black Sea. The possibility of this scenario is a consideration in this study.

This 'Beautiful Land' is also known as the 'Rose of Sharon' or as a land 'flowing with milk and honey' i.e., a place where, through technology and agriculture, the prophesy of Isaiah is coming true for Is.35:1-2 reads *'the wilderness and the land will be glad; the desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose. It will bloom profusely and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the LORD, the splendour of our God'* i.e., the land of Israel.

Events that shall take place in the latter times (Dan.11:40-45)

Dan.11:41 specifically refers to the speed at which the king of the north storms south like a whirlwind, he and his armies sweep through many lands including the 'Beautiful Land'. However, the Christian peoples there who are specifically targeted by the Dragon at this time flee to the land of Edom, Moab and the leaders of the Ammonites, where they are delivered from the conflict. These lands stretched from east of the River Jordan to the north east of present-day Israel to the areas to the east and south of the Dead Sea and includes the ancient city of Petra in the south. Today these lands are part of Jordan and south east Israel; see Appendix 2. This prophesy cross-references with the prophesy of Rev.12:14 where the Christians escape, specifically *'were given two wings as of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent'*. KJV

The king of the north has access to substantial sea powers i.e., 'many ships', as is clear from v.40. These can access the 'Beautiful Land' via the 'Great Sea' i.e., the Mediterranean Sea.

The intervention of the kings from the east just before the Second Coming of Christ

Dan11:44-45 reads *'But news from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will go out with great fury to destroy many and devote them to destruction. He will pitch his royal tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain, but he will meet his end with no one to help him'*.

At this point in the conflict, news from the east and the north shall trouble the king from the north - Dan. 11:44. This news is likely to include the news that vast armies have crossed the Euphrates from the east, see references to Euphrates in this study. The Antichrist works with the ten-king alliance who have given their power to the headship of the Antichrist, yet they too come in like a flood. The combined effect of these events and the opportunistic nature of the movement of these armies is of concern to the king of the north. In all events the lands of present-day Israel are overwhelmed from all sides. It is notable today that Israel has no settled peace with any of its neighbours; north, south, east, or west of it.

The prophesies of Daniel 11 give us insight as to the key traits which have been embedded in the governance of these north – south regional powers through history. From the prophesy of Daniel 11 there is reference to their kings acting deceitfully, alliances and

agreements being made and broken, the extension of powers over many lands, of kings seeking wealth, of flattery being used to tempt leaders, of kings whose hearts are set against the holy covenants of God and of kings resorting to war to gain by plunder, looting and to plot against strongholds. This describes their line of weakness, the temptation which overcomes them.

It is therefore likely that the fallen angels that are specifically tasked in the kingdom of darkness to deceive the nations and to cover these kingdoms use deceit and intrigue to corrupt power and to cause the rise and fall of many. Such fallen angels are tasked to interfere with mankind (Dan.10:13; Eph.6:12) and in respect of the nations, target them with specific temptations; Luke 4:5-8 reads *'Then the devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him [Jesus] in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. "I will give You authority over all these kingdoms and all their glory," he said. "For it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish. So if You worship me, it will all be Yours" But Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'"* BSB

The east-west axis countries from the focal point of Israel, particularly Iraq and Iran, have been dealt with elsewhere in this study so in respect of the prophecies of Daniel 11 we now turn to the north–south axis.

Present day south – north nations, alliances, and conflicts

As already noted, the prophecies are seen from the focal point of the Hebrew nation i.e., Israel and its capital Jerusalem. These prophecies point to both north – south aggressors and east – west aggressors.

The key divide between present day north – south and east west regional powers in the Middle East is the Sunni – Shia divide. See Appendix 3. The north – south axis is Sunni Islam, with Saudi Arabia and Egypt to the south and Syria and Turkey to the north. The east - west axis is Shia Islam with Iraq and Iran being the key countries. The division between Sunnis and Shi'as is the largest and oldest in the history of Islam and goes back nearly 1,400 years. They both agree on the fundamentals of Islam and share the same Holy Book (The Qur'an) but there is a bitter split between them which is not resolved. This split primarily concerns their respective claims to the leadership of Islam and their sectarian divides has led to much conflict. Today this split is becoming worse as these regional powers gain more military might and attempt to extend their spheres of influence.

The key axis north – south of from the point of view of Israel are the Sunni dominated nations of Saudi Arabia and Egypt to the south and to the north, Syria and Turkey. It is notable that north of Turkey is Russia which though non-Muslim has increasingly involved itself in the regional affairs of the Middle East and all these powers are heavily implicated in the power struggles of that region.

The key axis east – west is the Shia dominated Islamic nations of Iraq and Iran and I have covered these countries and their alliances in more detail under the heading of the Euphrates in other parts of this study.

So, the key nations south to north are:

Saudi Arabia - The country's main concerns in recent years have been relations with the US, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Iraq, the perceived threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the first Gulf War 1990 – 1991 the US deployed forces into Saudi Arabia to launch an attack on the Iraqi forces occupying Kuwait. However, during the Iraq War, also called the Second

Persian Gulf War 2003 - 2011 there was no broad coalition and the US invasion of Iraq was seen by many as both anti-Arab and anti-Islam. In the past the kingdom has been heavily armed by the US and the UK though in recent years Saudi Arabia and China have become major allies. China is Saudi Arabia's key trading partner and is signed up to China's Belt and Road Initiative. It is also a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Muslim World League, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and the Islamic Development Bank—all of which are headquartered in Saudi. According to government-associated paper Ain Al-Yaqeen article in 2002, Saudi government-sponsored projects were active in many non-Muslim countries in Europe, North and South America, Africa, Australia and Asia. At that time, though the numbers have increased since, they encompassed 210 Islamic centres which were completely or partly funded by the Saudi kingdom, 1500 mosques, 202 colleges and almost 2000 schools. The House of Saud has inaugurated 1359 mosques in Europe.

Egypt - Egypt has generally followed a policy of non-alignment. The U.S. has generally funded Egypt's military efforts to date and it is considered to be an ally of the West as well as the Middle Eastern countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. It also considers its key allies to be Russia, China, Greece, Armenia, Serbia, Pakistan whilst its main enemies are Qatar, Turkey, Syria, Quds Force, Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Isis, Al-Qaeda, and African Union. Qatar is an enemy of Egypt because of Qatar's funding into the Muslim Brotherhood. Almost the entirety of Egypt's Muslims are Sunnis, with a small minority of Shia and Ahmadi Muslims. The latter, however, are not recognized by Egypt. Islam has been recognized as the state religion since 1980.

Libya – The current humanitarian crisis and political-military instability that occurs in Libya began with the Arab Spring protests of 2011. What followed was a civil war, foreign military intervention, and the ousting and death of Muammar Gaddafi. The civil war's aftermath and proliferation of armed groups led to violence and instability across the country, which erupted into renewed civil war in 2014. This has left an impoverished population and a collapse in much of its infra-structure and governance. Libyans adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam.

Israel – Israel has few alliances in the region. The Sunni and Shia dominated nations in the region are adversarial to Israel whom they see as a common enemy. The post-1979 Iranian authorities avoid referring to Israel by its name, and instead use the terms "the Zionist regime" or "occupied Palestine" and tensions between these countries has risen dramatically in the 21st Century. Iran, Iraq and many other Islamic nations do not have diplomatic relations with Israel. Syria's relations with Israel are very poor, due to Syria's close ties with the anti-Israel militant group Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has taken a more benign viewpoint concerning the validity of negotiating with Israel though in the Arab-Israeli conflict it supports the full rights of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel. In the Lebanon there have been many wars with Hezbollah, and so in many respects Israel treats Lebanon as an enemy state. With regards to Turkey, the countries have in the past had military, strategic and diplomatic cooperation though these relations have been strained since the turn of the 21st century. The country has good relations with the US and EU though has a troubled relationship with Russia. Israel has become an advanced first world nation state and though it has a relatively small geographic area it has developed an advanced economy. It has developed its agriculture through the application of technology and in some respects could indeed be called the 'Beautiful Land'. Christians find an identity in Israel whereas in countries where there is an Islamic majority, they are often considered to be agents of foreign Western powers. Political Islam identifies Islam with nationhood and that is one reason why minority groups in countries with an Islamic majority, such as Christians, are so often persecuted. Jews who previously lived in other nations in the Middle West have already fled from them, either back to Israel or have been dispersed to

countries who were more accepting of them e.g., US, UK, EU, Russia. Israel found an ally in the Trump administration in the US though this will be under scrutiny under a Biden administration.

Syria – The nation of Syria is covered elsewhere in this study, in particular with regards to Iraq and Iran and the persecution and collapse of the Christian and other minority religious populations there. In summary, the Syrian civil war began in 2011 as part of the wider Arab Spring and this grew to become a significant regional war involving global super-powers. Initially, the Government opposition consisted of several splinter groups though out of this came the attacks of the Sunni backed militia group self-called Islam State (IS or ISIL) which has operated primarily in Syria and Iraq throughout this war. The war has resulted in hundreds of thousands non-Sunnis, Christians and Yazidis fleeing to Turkey and Europe. In the beginning of 2015, refugees began to cross the Greece–Turkey border, escaping to European countries in massive numbers. In total approximately 6.6 million refugees are seeking safety in neighbouring countries or in Europe. By 2021 it is estimated that the death toll in the country to be between 387,000 and 593,000. Throughout the war more than half the country's population has been forced to flee their homes, with 6.2 million people, including 2.65 million children displaced within Syria, the biggest internally displaced people in the world <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/internally-displaced-people>. This is an humanitarian crisis there. The implosion of the civil government caused by the war has created a vacuum of power in which there is opportunity for many internal and external militias and military interventions to take place, and the country is ripe for power-brokers to intervene. The overwhelming goal of the Syrian government is self-preservation at all costs. Its regime would likely have collapsed except for the aid and military intervention given to it from outside regional powers, Turkey and the Gulf regimes have armed rebel groups fighting against the Syrian regime whilst both Russia and Iran support the Syrian government. Many proxy wars are being played out there including those between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Sunni and Shia Islam, Russia and the United States, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Hezbollah supported by Iran and the Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis etc. In addition, the regional powers of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran are all hoping to leave their national imprint on the political Islamist movement in the region.

Lebanon – This country is not a major player in the region though strategically it is situated to the north of Israel. It has seen much political and military instability and conflict with a civil war 1975-90, then more recently regarding its border with Israel which led to the 2006 Lebanon War, also called the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah War. The increasing involvement of Lebanon in the conflicts of other countries in the Middle East is also evident as the country has become destabilised because of the Syrian conflict. Many Sunni refugees have fled to Lebanon and this has disturbed the Shia population there. However, there is still a substantial minority Christian population there too and they have maintained a balance of power, though this is coming under increasing strain. Iran supports proxy militia groups in this country. Lebanon is the only country in the Middle East left with a significant minority of Christians. Israel notably is the only other country in the region to offer a safe haven for Christians at this time.

Turkey – The Ottoman Empire, centred on Turkey ran from the 14th to the early 20th Century. At the time of World War 1, the Ottoman government was accused of the mass slaughter and deportation of the Christians living in its territories, specifically referred to as the Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian genocides. The empire was defeated after WW1 when the Republic of Turkey took a more secular stance both internally and on the world stage. Turkey's economy has grown rapidly, and the country's influence has grown in the Middle East. In the West, there is a divide between those who are worried about Turkey's perceived

movement away from the West toward a less democratic, more Islamic, or more pro-Russian and pro-Chinese orientation and those who do not see Turkey's changing political structure, growing regional power and relations with Russia as a threat. Turkey has increasingly followed a pro-Islam anti-Christian stance and has reached out to the two historic rivals of Russia and Iran to increase its power base.

The Turkish Occupation of Syria - Turkish armed forces and its ally the Syrian National Army have occupied areas of northern Syria since August 2016, with further interventions in 2018 and then on October 7, 2019 when the Trump administration in the United States ordered the withdrawal of US military troops stationed on the Syria–Turkey border altogether. The US president ordered the withdrawal of these troops under the premise that Turkey would not invade the region being held by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF); however, Turkey attacked the SDF within 24 hours of US military withdrawal from the region. The Kurds in that region had previously been allies of the US and the act was described as a serious betrayal of the Kurds. It was also seen as an opportunity for Sunni backed militias to reconstitute there. This one act alone is arguably one of the worst US foreign policy disasters since the Iraq War in 2003. The Turkish occupied areas of Syria nominally acknowledge a government affiliated with the Syrian opposition, though factually they constitute a separate proto state under the dual authority of decentralized native local councils and Turkish military administration. Turkish-controlled areas of Syria consists of a 8,835-square-kilometre (3,411-sq-mile) area which encompasses over 1000 settlements. These areas are referred to as 'safe zones' by Turkish authorities though in reality the Turkish-led forces have built military bases there and implemented a resettlement policy by moving their mostly Arab fighters and refugees from southern Syria into the empty homes that belonged to displaced local Kurds and Yazidis who were prevented from returning to their homes. It is reported that more than 200,000 people fled from Afrin District during the Turkish intervention by March 2018, while 458,000 displaced persons from other parts of Syria were settled in Afrin. The displaced people suffered human rights abuses including kidnapping and ethnic cleansing to discourage the return of Yazidi and Kurdish refugees as reported to the UN. The 2019 Turkish military operation in Syria which was stopped by Syrian and Russian forces after which a ceasefire was negotiated by the Russian government.

Turkey-Israel relations have soured in recent years though in 2021 there are reports of a new agreement being put in place between the two countries. Turkey and Russia have starkly divergent aims in Syria and this has led to them engaging in a strategic struggle and a proxy war there as each take advantage of the power vacuum there and back opposing sides e.g., Turkey backs the rebel Sunni militia forces in Syria whereas there is unwavering Russian support for both the Syrian Government and the armed Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Turkey has considerable influence in the eastern Mediterranean and has longstanding disputes with Greece and Cyprus. In recent years, the country has seen a marked shift away from secular Kemalist ideology and the corresponding rise of the Justice and Development Party (AK party) of prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In 2020 Turkey has increasingly demonstrated its ambitions to show that it wishes to reclaim the leadership of Sunni Islam from Saudi Arabia.

Russia – Russia is a member of the Quartet on the Middle East which is a foursome of nations and international and supranational entities involved in mediating the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, the others being the UN, the US, and the EU. Russia has influence in Israel and for many years was a sanctuary for Russian Jews. Russian is the third most widely spoken first language in Israel after Hebrew and Arabic and has the third largest number of Russian speakers outside former Soviet countries, and the highest as a

proportion of the total population. Russia's improvement of relations with Israel coincided at the same time with growing Russian and Israeli alliances with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, both have common opposition toward neo-Ottomanism initiated by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, There have been proxy conflicts between Russia and Turkey though at the same time it tries to develop economic and political relations with both Turkey and Iran. The military incursion of the Turkish Armed forces into Syria in February and March 2020 was stopped when they met with Russian forces there. Russia continues to be sceptical about Israel's special relations with the United States. Russia sees itself as a power broker in the Middle East and continues to seek multilateral relations with both Israel's allies and rivals. Russia maintains a strong naval fleet in the Crimea on the Black Sea, and this gives it naval power to reach into the eastern Mediterranean Sea, it also has airbases in Syria.

The Iran–Saudi Arabia proxy conflict

The Iran–Saudi Arabia proxy conflict is sometimes also referred to as the Middle Eastern Cold War. This started with the Iranian Revolution, the deposing of the Shah and the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 11 February 1979 and has continued to date.

It is the ongoing struggle for influence in the Middle East and surrounding regions between Iran situate to the east of Israel and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia situate to the south of Israel. This conflict is waged on multiple levels over geopolitical, economic, sectarian influence and religious differences in pursuit of regional hegemony i.e. political, economic, or military predominance, control or influence of one independently powerful state, over other neighbouring countries. These two countries provide varying degrees of support to opposing sides in nearby conflicts, including the civil wars in Syria and Yemen. The rivalry also extends to disputes in Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Morocco, as well as broader competition in the Muslim areas of North and East Africa (mainly Nigeria), parts of South Asia, Central Asia (Afghanistan and Pakistan), Southeast Asia, the Balkans and the Caucasus. See Appendix 4.

The two key belligerents are Iran with support from its allies Russia and China and Saudi Arabia with support from the United States though there are many proxies on both sides.

Although both Iran and Saudi Arabia signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1970 and 1988 respectively, a potential nuclear arms race has been a concern for years. Both governments claim that their programs are for peaceful purposes, but foreign governments and organizations have accused both of taking steps to obtain nuclear weapons capabilities.

Superimposed onto this conflict is the long-running Russia–Turkey proxy conflict. This was a strategic struggle between Turkey and initially the Syrian government though from 2015 turned more into a military conflict between Turkey and Russia. Increased Russian military aggression in Syria and hostile Turkish territorial responses have all contributed to increasing escalation. Turkey and Russia have accused each other of various violations such as maintaining illegal economic ties with terrorist groups and interventions in Syria and Libya. Turkey and Russia maintain an uneasy relationship, from open aggression to co-operation, recently pledging further military co-operation.

A Scenario?

If we consider possible scenarios of events, prophecy must drive our thoughts. The conundrum offered to us through these prophecies show a complex intertwining of events and circumstances. They are influenced by a religious divide, have catastrophic economic consequences, include the military presence of the global super-powers, with the description of the political and military makeup of the northern king's powerbase as being like feet made up of iron and clay. Also, to include reference to the arrival of the kings from the east who are motivated by protection of their oil and trade assets. In these scenarios we centre upon Israel and in particular Jerusalem, and we finally consider the arrival of a powerbroker in the mix of these events.

So, let us consider each of these scenarios in turn, and list them as follows:

The religious divide

First let us consider the likeliest implications of the prophecy of Daniel 11 in terms of religious divides and superimpose them onto the present-day nations. In this respect we see what might be called stark and uncanny alignments, particularly when we superimpose the Sunni–Shia divide across the region. From the focal point of Israel this accurately follows a north-south, east-west alignment, see Appendix 3.

It is worthy of note that the prophecies point to an antichrist, indeed the archetypal Antichrist of the End times will come out of Syria. Out of the region of Syria will come two consecutive mountains or empires, these will be the seventh and eighth heads of the beast, or Antichrist. The first mountain to arise will form the seventh empire of the first three and a half years of the tribulation and this will be followed by the eight and last empire of the Antichrist, who is also called the man of lawlessness, and this will happen in the last three and a half years of this age, known as the Great Tribulation.

If we read the prophecies and the likely scenarios which might in the nations surrounding Israel today then initial aggressor(s) will come from the north i.e., present-day Syria or Turkey, maybe through Lebanon, and this conflict will be driven with speed to overwhelm the 'Beautiful Land'. At that time, the king of the south, Saudi Arabia, receives the news from the north, likely Russia, and from the east, likely Iraq, Iran, and the armies of the east, and this troubles him. These are the armies prophesied in both Daniel 11 and Joel 2. Hitherto the king from the south has remained antagonistic to both Israel and the kings from the east, but now it seems that he decides to act.

This is one scenario, though there might be others, that would fit with the geo-political map and events of our age, and the proxy wars and regional hegemony of the key players north and south and east and east of present-day Israel. If this scenario, or similar events do occur, and they fulfil the prophecies of old then we could expect their coming to be more and more evident as the time approaches i.e., signs of the times to come, and we could then expect to follow the final and last days of this age and the Great Tribulation to follow too.

It is easy to see how these events might unfold as each major regional power i.e., Russia, Turkey, Iran, China, and Saudi Arabia look to promote their own interests. The catalyst for these events being the war in Syria and the pressures being brought to bear upon Israel to promote a peace or defence agreement, or non-aggression pact with one or more of the major regional powers e.g., Russia, historically Turkey, and more recently, China.

The US, UK, EU, and other western powers do not directly translate from these prophecies however, the US and the West do have alliances in the region, particularly NATO with

Turkey, and the US with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. There appears to be no direct reference to their involvement in the above scenario. Each appear reticent to involve themselves in such complexity and because of this they tend to stay away.

And when might these events take place? When a covenant agreement or alliance is made, and it will include Israel. This is likely to be a peace or defence agreement and may be comprehensive enough to quell the troubles in the region. Yet it will deceive many people and will signal the opening of the first seal (Rev.5:1) and the beginning of the final seven-year period. After three and a half years the covenant will be broken and this heralds in the Great Tribulation i.e., the last three and a half years of the age. This is the time when the song in heaven is sung and when Jesus will set in motion the final events to claim those whom He has purchased from *'every tribe and tongue and people and nation'*.

Like the workings of an old-time clock at a certain point in time not only does the clock strike the hour but also the cuckoo comes out. Like the perfect storm, only at the confluence of many separate and distinct events will the tribulation, the Great One, occur. It is the law of unintended consequences. A butterfly spreads its wings in one State and a tornado occurs in another.

The Syrian conflict could not get any more complex, yet it is the clue to unravelling the signs of our times. You might ask, why are the prophecies so complex, so obtuse? The answer is simply that how else can God convey such complex and important End-time information and at the same time use prophets who spoke between 2,600 and 1,900 years ago? Each prophet saw in vision different aspects of what amounts to the same period at the end of the age. In this way the Lord God can communicate such events to us and the fact that many prophets received them over such long periods of time, through to today, means that we not only get insight but also have the confidence to know that they corroborate and verify each other's prophecies. We do now see in part, yet as events unfold then we see more of the whole.

Economic consequences

In addition to the potent mix of religious divide in the lands in the Middle East we cannot ignore three further distinct elements in the conundrum leading up to the battle of Armageddon, all of which are inextricably intertwined in the picture painted by the prophets.

First is the economic devastation caused by the ensuing conflict, second is the motivation for the conflict and third is the size of the substantial armies that arrive from both the north and east of Israel and which take part in the final conflict.

Firstly let us consider the loss of economic wealth generated in that region and in particular, the wealth that is generated because of *'the great city'* (Rev.18:19) for this is recorded as being devastated in the End Time; see Re,18:1-19:5. For *'the merchants of the earth have grown wealthy from the extravagance of her luxury'* (Rev.18:3), *'the kings of the earth who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her will weep and wail at the sight of the smoke rising from the fire that consumes her'* (Rev.18:9), *'the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, because there is no one left to buy their cargo'* (Rev.18:11). *'The merchants who sold these things and grew their wealth from her will stand at a distance, in fear of her torment. They will weep and mourn'*(Rev.18:15). *'Every shipmaster, passenger, and sailor, and all who make their living from the sea, will stand at a distance and cry out at the sight of the smoke rising from the fire that consumes her. "What city was ever like this great city?" they will exclaim. Then they will throw dust on their heads as they weep and*

mourn and cry out (Rev.18:17-19). *'For your merchants were the great ones of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery'* (Rev.18:23).

This system, though initially it might have had good intentions, has become polluted and *'immoral'* (Rev.18:3), spiritually unclean and *'a lair for demons and a haunt for every unclean spirit, every unclean bird, and every detestable beast'* (Rev.18:2). Religion, when mixed with politics and economic gain becomes unstable. Its motives become tarnished and unclear, and it opens the door to *'every unclean spirit'*.

John saw in vision how judgement comes, for *'with such violence the great city of Babylon will be cast down'* (Rev.18:21). In it *'there was found in her the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who had been slain on the earth'* (Rev.18:24). This system of trade looks to have *'glorified herself and lived in luxury'* (Rev.18:7) as might a *'queen'* (Rev.18:7), yet it is unpinned with cruelty towards God's people.

This judgement is swift *'for in a single hour your judgment has come'* (Rev.18:9).

This mantle of this system of wealth is not covering the leader kings of the nations but they do rue its loss, for with its loss they lose their luxury lifestyles. As with all economic dearth, the poor and marginalised will most suffer the consequences and food shortages and famine are a likely result.

The demise of this economic wealth is preceded by, and precipitated by, the arrival of two distinct armies, one from the north and one from the east.

The arrival of military might from the north

In considering the military powers which lie to the north of Israel we might first consider Syria for we know that out of the demise of that land will come the Antichrist (Dan.2:1-45; Dan.7:1-14,23-27; Rev.13:1-18;17:12-17). The prophecies stand foursquare as emanating from the seat of the ancient Assyrian Empire which stretches from the time of Daniel the prophet some 2,600 years ago through to today. The prophecy is re-enforced when we include the prophecies of John. From the kings of Assyria until now the sequence is as follows: the first kingdom, an organic unity; the second, divided into Median and Persian; the third branches off into four; the fourth, into ten. This is the interpretation of Daniel 2. Then from within the ten, one king, described as a little horn at first, arises to quell the others and dominate.

Prior to the civil war which began in 2011, Syria was certainly a nation state with considerable military presence. It also had the motive and means to inflict military defeats on its neighbouring states, including Israel. However, today it is a broken state and has five armies of occupation there. As of 2020 -2021, in addition to military formations within the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Syrian government-backed points, there are Turkish, Russian, and American military forces in that country as well as many militias. So let us consider those who have a key military presence there today.

There are two leaders or kings of countries to the north of Israel who have significant military reach in Syria, that being both Turkey and Russia; though both are no doubt significant, the real super-power who might ultimately dominate the region and quell the others is likely to be Russia. The prophecies of Daniel 11 relate to a king from the north who rivals a king from the south, however a second more aggressive king from the north comes to control the events of the last days.

Turkey, along with Syria, are Islamic Nations, Russia is not. All three countries are ruled by autocratic leaders. The prophecies relate of how one king involves himself in the region first, and after meddling there is replaced by another, a crueller ruthless king who is described in scripture as the Antichrist (Dan.11:18-21).

In the End Time, the prophecies speak of the demise of one king from the north which is soon followed by another more terrible king. The first king is spoken of in Daniel 11 as having an alliance with a king from the south. Dan.11:6 reads *'After some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to seal the agreement. But his daughter will not retain her position of power, nor will his strength endure'*. It might be that the daughter of the king of the south has a religious significance in which case it might draw together Turkey and / or Syria with Saudi Arabia, for these are Sunni Islam nations. Islam grew out of Saudi Arabia and has since embedded itself as a heritage in rival countries such as Turkey and Syria.

Alternatively, it could be that before the final conflict an army from the north meets with armies from who come from the south, who come into the region to defend the 'Beautiful Land' of Israel (Dan.11:41).

If the nations of Turkey and / or Syria are embroiled in this conflict then from the reading of Dan.11:18-21 they will be replaced by a *'tax collector'* who within a few days will fall, and on the back of this arrives *'the despicable person'* the Antichrist, who comes with deceit and intrigue, offering a false peace before arriving with a final flood of military force.

The full text from Daniel 11:18-21 reads: *'Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many of them. But a commander will put an end to his reproach and will turn it back upon him. After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be no more. In his place one will arise who will send out a tax collector for the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he will be destroyed, though not in anger or in battle. In his place a despicable person will arise; royal honours will not be given to him, but he will come in a time of peace and seize the kingdom by intrigue. Then a flood of forces will be swept away before him and destroyed, along with a prince of the covenant'* BSB.

The arrival of this second army from the north causes great devastation for Daniel 11:29-31 reads: *'At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time will not be like the first. Ships of Kittim will come against him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and rage against the holy covenant and do damage. So he will return and show favour to those who forsake the holy covenant. His forces will rise up and desecrate the temple fortress. They will abolish the daily sacrifice and set up the abomination of desolation'* BSB

This king of the North now reveals his true character and strength, yet he is perturbed by the arrival of a naval presence which emanates from off the coast of the eastern Mediterranean which causes him to both loose heart and at the same time propel him to devastate the place of the holy covenant and temple fortress, likely to be Israel and more specifically Jerusalem and towards a long low-lying valley of Megiddo, a place ideal for tank warfare. This is situated inland from the coastal region of northern Israel.

It is likely that this military presence in the form of a naval blockade is there because of an invitation from Israel for military assistance. This military presence from the west causes the Antichrist to lose heart with his original plans of regional domination instead causes him to turn in a rage against the people of the holy covenant and to move easterly towards Jerusalem, where he inflicts damage and desolation.

Many of the regional powers surrounding the Mediterranean Sea have a naval presence in there. In addition, at least ten other countries including Russia, the US, Italy, and the UK also have a naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The likeliest source of a strong naval presence off the coast of Israel which is sufficient to counter or at least perturb a super-power that might be operating in the lands of the Eastern Mediterranean would be that offered by the United States Sixth Fleet which is headquartered at Naval Support Activity Naples, Italy. The officially stated mission of the Sixth Fleet in 2011 is that it *'conducts the full range of Maritime Operations and Theater Security Cooperation missions, in concert with coalition, joint, interagency, and other parties'*.

The appearance of the Antichrist in the End Time is first recorded half-way through the tribulation period and triggers the beginning of the last three and a half years, known as the Great Tribulation. This is the time *'when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' described by the prophet Daniel'* (Dan.9:27; Matt.24:15-25; Mark13:14-23; Luke21:20-24).

Throughout the Great Tribulation the actions of the Antichrist, and their consequences, are recorded in detail as we read of the opening of the seals, vials, and trumpets in the book of Revelation.

In the unfolding nature of the End Time, the Antichrist who is the ultimate and final conqueror before the coming of the Messiah, will undoubtedly have exceptional military reach and military power.

When we consider the nations to the north of Israel, we might consider Syria, though this nation is now militarily shattered. Then we might consider the nations Turkey and Russia; though both are no doubt significant, the real super-power who might ultimately dominate the region and quell the other is likely to be Russia.

Indeed, in the unfolding prophecies one of the ten toes emerging from the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's statue ultimately quells two others. This is clear in the prophecy of Daniel 7:1-8 whereby a military force arises out of Syria for it describes the empires who have conquered and ruled that land as four beasts, the first like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard and the fourth with iron teeth that devoured and broke into pieces.

The arrival of this last beast is like the arrival of a little horn and though it was in allegiance with the other powers around it in its motivation its arrival, though seemingly relatively insignificant at first, grows to dominate the region. Furthermore, it is clear from prophecy that the leader of this horn is the Antichrist whose soul is barren of normal human emotion. It is said that the eyes are the window to the soul, yet this leader has eyes like, though not the same as normal men, and whose mouth speaks *'great things'*, these are things which he speaks with deception and wonders which flatter and trick the nations around him. Jamison, Fawcett and Brown comment *'eyes express intelligence (Eze 1:18); so (Ge 3:5) the serpent's promise was, man's 'eyes should be opened,' if he would but rebel against God' ... The 'mouth' and 'eyes' are those of a man, while the symbol is otherwise brutish, that is, it will assume man's true dignity, namely, wear the guise of the kingdom of God (which comes as the 'Son of man' from above), while it is really bestial, namely, severed from God. Antichrist promises the same things as Christ, but in an opposite way: a caricature of Christ, offering a regenerated world without the cross'*.

The full text of Dan.7:7-8 reads *'After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all*

the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things' KJV

Dan.7:23-28 reads: 'Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart' KJV.

Rev.13:1-16 esp.1-7 reads: 'And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations' KJV.

Rev.17:12-18 reads: 'And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth' KJV.

Dan.8:9-12 reads: 'From one of these horns a little horn emerged and grew extensively toward the south and the east and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew as high as the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the earth, and trampled them. It magnified itself, even to the Prince of the host; it removed His daily sacrifice and overthrew the place of His sanctuary. And in the rebellion, a the host and the daily sacrifice were given over to the horn, and it flung truth to the ground and prospered in whatever it did' KJV.

When does this 'little horn' appear? It is the view of several commentators (see Tregelles and others on Dan.7:7) that this occurs upon the rising of the Antichrist, an event which they refer to takes place three and a half years before Christ's second advent, having first overthrown three of the ten contemporaneous kingdoms. If this is so then it corresponds to the time *'when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' described by the prophet Daniel'* (Dan.9:27; Matt.24:15-25; Mark13:14-23; Luke21:20-24).

It is this little horn, whose arrival was tentative, yet ultimately comes to dominate the region by both stealth and force and this force is backed by overwhelming military superiority. This army is led by greed and avarice and its leader is motivated by the need to dominate other nations and lands.

To dominate whole regions and many nations then we need to turn to and consider the super-powers who are active in the region of the Middle East and who have both the methods and the motives to fulfil this role.

In consideration of global and military super-powers, the United States ranks first and second ranks the Russian Armed Forces (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Armed_Forces and see the source material there-in). Russia has the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world. The military budget of the Russian Federation was \$65.1 billion in 2019, the fifth highest in the world. It possesses the second-largest fleet of ballistic missile submarines and is one of the only three nations operating strategic bombers, with the world's most numerous tank force, the second-most numerous air force and the third-most numerous naval fleet.

'His feet part of iron and part of clay' (Dan. 2:33 KJV)

However, it is Russia under Vladimir Putin that has filled the vacuum in the power struggle in Syria and firmly placed its feet with ten toes there. In this respect *'his feet part of iron and part of clay'* (Dan.2:33) comprise of the iron of Russian military strength compared with the clay of the broken nation of Syria. The ten toes alliance is likely to soon follow, being the ending of Nebuchadnezzar's vision. Russia, as with other super-powers and their alliances, constantly looks to counter the NATO alliance, the G7 nations and their guest nations (excluding Russia and China), and other alliances, with their own. This has happened before under the guise of the USSR when it formed the Soviet Bloc and when the time is judged to be right then the Supreme Ruler of Russia, currently Vladimir Putin, will make no doubt be the one to make the announcement of this alliance.

This is the time when Daniel saw in vision the coming of the King whose kingdom would destroy the alliances of nations and filled the whole earth for Dan.2:31-35 reads: *'Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth'* KJV.

The UK and the US failed to impose either a no-fly zone or implement humanitarian protection over the state of Syria in 2011 and this has led to the Russian Federation taking

an irreversible step into the politics of the region from that time on. It is unlikely that Russia will wish to see its goal of domination in the region diminish and should China rival it in terms of political, economic, and military gain there then it is unlikely to stand idly by.

In addition, Israel, and particularly Jerusalem, is seen by its surrounding nations as both a prize and a goal for along with its developed wealth comes the never-ending festering wound of the Palestine-Israeli conflict and a genuine hatred of their religion and their God.

Russia would see an alliance with Israel to be of strategic importance. However, Iran and its strategic supporter China, would wish to see its destruction. As a scenario it is feasible that should China make its military presence known in the region that Russia would not stand idly by.

Nor is Russia likely to stand by should the western super-powers of the US and the EU become involved. The prophecies of old add one significant point in this respect. Before the final military conflict their arrives a fleet of ships off the Western Mediterranean coast. In the consideration of possible scenarios, let us consider this option too for the US has a significant naval presence in terms of sea power there, and the US has maintained a long-standing commitment to protect and support Israel with economic, strategic, and military hardware.

The arrival of armies from the east

In addition to the arrival of the king of the north, prophecy describes the arrival of other kings onto the scene of End Time events. These kings are leaders of nations, those who rule with the powers of a king. These prophecies describe another army arriving from the east for we also have distinct references to the kings of the east who approach the 'beautiful land', having first crossed the river and regions of the Euphrates. This army comes with overwhelming military might and is drawn to the region to protect its interests there.

'Hurt not the oil (energy supplies) and the wine (trade)' (Rev.6:6 KJV)

The comprehensive oil for trade agreement signed 27 March 2021 between Iran and China exchanges a steady supply of oil to fuel China's growing economy in return for a sweeping economic and security agreement whereby China in effect offers protection to its interests in Iran and the regime there. The deal is seen as part of the 'new world order' being forged by China in the third decade of the C21. Inclusive in the reach of China are aspirations to meddle and tamper with the balance of power in the Middle East, even to the 'resolution' of the Palestine-Israeli conflict, if that too would serve its purpose. Yet China has no religious agenda in resolving this dispute, but rather see it as a furtherance of its global power in the region of the Middle East. In this respect it has an un-easy relationship with Iran which is ruled by Islamic ideology, yet it has common ground in terms of its trade there.

And indeed, the scriptures make clear the importance of such alliances in the build up to the last seven years of this age, though instead of leading to the cry of peace leads to awful conflict and to the coming of the Great Tribulation. The furtherance of such deliberations leads to conflict, for as spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah with regard to Jerusalem's final warning see Jer. 6:13-15 which reads: *'For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had*

committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD' KJV.

The key verse regarding the protection of the oil and trade deal by military means is found at the time of the opening of the third seal. This is recorded in Rev.6:5-6 which reads *'And when the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come!' Then I looked and saw a black horse, and its rider held in his hand a pair of scales. And I heard what sounded like a voice from among the four living creatures, saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine'" BSB*

For a clearer understanding of the importance of oil and trade in the Middle East see Appendix 8.

It is notable that China has initially intruded into the politics in the Middle East through trade and this has allowed it to develop a foreign policy which quells dissent through economic muscle power. As an example, note its dealings with Turkey which has silenced its dissent over China's dealings of the Uigur people. President Ergodan of Turkey initially called this treatment 'genocide' yet that changed when China signed lucrative trade deals with that country.

Iran's ambitions may be oil and trade to boost its infra-structure, but China has no ambitions to invest in a country and then to back off when their interests are threatened. The global reach of China and its military and economic goals are becoming clearer as the pace of change now rapidly increases. The events of the past have been termed a Cold War, whereby nations have been fixed in their strategic alliances and the balance of power has been counter-manded. Yet that is described by commentators as the old-world order, and a new world order is emerging. The old-world order has served as a balance for peace and arose after the Second World War as nation states aligned themselves, with democracy being the overarching principle. The formation of the United Nations being an example in this respect. Yet a new world-order is now coming to the for. It is being offered by countries such as China which operate a system of political rule based on State control and autocratic rule.

So, the axis is changing as we see the 'kings of the east' arise. Before the coming of that great Day of his return we read of the sixth angel pouring out the sixth bowl of wrath in the region of the Euphrates. Rev.16:12 reads *'And the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East' BSB.*

The times of preparation for this event is now at hand, the events are forth told for our warning, and as a watchman who is placed on the walls of the city is tasked to blow the trumpet as warning sign when trouble approaches, so too these signs give us time to blow the trumpet on the walls of the city so that others can prepare for the events to come. Is.62:6 reads: *'I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence' KJV.* The command to us is to watch Jerusalem in these days for from it will come the clues to and the fulfilment of the End Time prophesies.

The times of the Gentiles is soon to be fulfilled. As it reads in Luke 21:24 *'And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled' KJV.* Who are these Gentiles, and from where do they come? Who are these kings who are so determined to lead by the edge of the sword and tread down Jerusalem?

**‘And the number of mounted troops was two hundred million; I heard their number’
(Rev.9:16 BSB)**

Let us further consider the ‘kings of the east. China is more than capable of securing its trade deals with strategic and military alliances. This accomplished by the flexing of China’s military might.

Reference is made in scripture regarding the size of the army which crosses the Euphrates in an east to west direction. Who might this army be and at what time does it emerge?

The army comes into the Middle East heading towards Jerusalem at the time of the sixth trumpet for Rev.9:13-20 reads *‘Then the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God saying to the sixth angel with the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ So the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. And the number of mounted troops was two hundred million; I heard their number. Now the horses and riders in my vision looked like this: The riders had breastplates the colours of fire, sapphire, and sulphur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions, and out of their mouths proceeded fire, smoke, and sulphur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke, and sulphur that proceeded from their mouths. For the power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; indeed, their tails were like snakes, having heads with which to inflict harm. Now the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the works of their hands. They did not stop worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. Furthermore, they did not repent of their murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and theft’* BSB.

It is pertinent to understanding this prophecy that in the vision John clearly heard the number of ‘mounted troops’ in the army as being 200 million. Which country has this size of military personnel?

The numbers below are from the International Institute for Strategic Studies in their 2019 report which records that the Chinese People's Liberation Army is currently the largest standing army in the world and is one of the best trained. The latest estimates about the size of this army shows it to be at 2,035,000 personnel. Is this mere co-incidence or is it relevant to the End-time prophecies?

The above conflict is so central to the End Times that John precedes the vision of the army in action, which he describes as the second woe, with a description of its gathering and menace which he describes as the first woe.

He begins by describing the evil that drove it and describes the source of the evil as coming from ‘the pit of the Abyss’. He describes their overwhelming numbers as being like ‘locusts descending on the earth, and they were given power like that of the scorpions of the earth’. He goes on to describe ‘the locusts looked like horses prepared for battle’ with ‘breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the roar of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails with stingers like scorpions, which had the power to injure people’. John was living in the age of few iron implements or weapons, yet he was determined to relate to us every detail as he saw it. John’s prophecy, though received by him 2000 years ago, best describes modern armed warfare. He described what he saw and related it in the language of his time as riders with ‘breastplates’ and heads like ‘lions’ with ‘fire, smoke and sulphur proceeding from their mouths’. This best describes modern military combat involving

tanks and missiles. He then goes on to describe again the source of this woe for 'They were ruled by a king, the angel of the Abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek it is Apollyon'.

The full text from Rev.9:1-11 is as follows: *'Then the fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from heaven to earth, and it was given the key to the pit of the Abyss. The star opened the pit of the Abyss, and smoke rose out of it like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke from the pit. And out of the smoke, locusts descended on the earth, and they were given power like that of the scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. The locusts were not given power to kill them, but only to torment them for five months, and their torment was like the stinging of a scorpion. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, but death will escape them. And the locusts looked like horses prepared for battle, with something like crowns of gold on their heads, and faces like the faces of men. They had hair like that of women, and teeth like those of lions. They also had thoraxes like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the roar of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails with stingers like scorpions, which had the power to injure people for five months. They were ruled by a king, the angel of the Abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek it is Apollyon. The first woe has passed. Behold, two woes are still to follow'* BSB.

The overwhelming numbers of this army are described as being like locusts and they are seen by an earlier prophet too. Joel, writing some 2,800 years ago writes this in Joel 2:1-11 where he specifically refers to the arrival of this army close to and just before the time when 'the Day of The Lord is coming' (v.1).

The full text of Joel 2 reads *'Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for [it is] nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, [even] to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land [is] as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them [is] as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and [when] they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp [is] very great: for [he is] strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD [is] great and very terrible; and who can abide it?'* KJV.

Locusts, aptly describe the major movements of vast armies as they prepare to devastate all before them. locusts, locust. For a very full and condensed statement of the devastations caused by locusts, and their peculiarities, in which some of the features here detailed appear, see Pusey on Joel 2. The significance of the individual features is briefly interpreted

by Luthardt who writes: *'At the basis of the description, there lies, for the most part, reality; but it is increased to what is monstrous and terrible. 'On their heads, as it were crowns of gold;' i.e., they are mighty powers. 'Their faces were as the faces of men;' i.e., they are intellectual beings, intelligences. 'They had hair as the hair of women;' i.e., they are seductive powers. 'Their teeth were as the teeth of lions;' i.e., back of their seductive appearance is inevitable destruction. Cf. Joel 1:6. 'They had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron;' i.e., they are unassailable. 'The sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle;' i.e., they rush like military squadrons irresistibly. Cf. Joel 2:5. 'Tails like unto scorpions;' i.e., malicious force inflicting injury backwards'*.

So, the arrival of a vast army, which is well equipped with military might and supplied by oil and dependent upon trade is clearly forth told. This army is fuelled by evil from the Abyss.

The battle of Armageddon is fought between two vast armies and has over-whelming consequences in terms of the dead, for scriptures record that it takes five months to bury the dead after the battle.

The Messiah's arrival is not on the day of the battle but three and a half days later (source video 'Teaching on the Book of Revelation' by Bill Turner). Antichrist i.e., the king of the north, wins the battle, but has no time to consolidate his victory, and three and a half days later the Messiah comes in judgement and glory, and the Day of the Lord will have finally arrived.

The powerbroker and a Comprehensive Agreement?

The war in Syria and the humanitarian crisis there has created a scenario which is ripe for the intervention of a powerbroker, someone who might laud themselves as a saviour to quell the problems there. Few would take on this challenge, especially whilst each faction might still see advantage in military action there. However, Syria has become a significant mountain from which might emerge a guardian, overseer or powerbroker purporting to rule with a benign interest.

The western powers generally see the problems there as too complex and have withdrawn from rather than engage there. Instead, Russia increasingly positions itself to include within its sphere of influence Syria and the region generally and with the increasing reluctance of the US post 2016, the UK post 2011, and the EU with its divided loyalties, to act there, then in that vacuum of power Russia sees itself as increasingly fulfilling the role of powerbroker. It continues to balance the power of the Assad Regime against its opponents and has shown itself as a mediator in the Turkish Occupation of Northern Syria. In the wings remain other superpowers with increasingly vested interests there too, particularly Iran backed by China.

It is notable too that Iran and Russia are strategic allies and form an axis in the Caucasus alongside Armenia. Iran and Russia are also military allies in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq and partners in Afghanistan and post-Soviet Central Asia. In turn, Iran has helped Russia with its drone technology and other military technology.

So, Russia has already brokered deals with both the Sunni and the Shia Islamic nations in the region.

In the US in 2021 the Biden Administration stated its wish to re-engage with previous international alliances; one of the most pressing of these being the Iran Nuclear Deal. However, Israel sees the move with a great deal of consternation. Iran for its part is

entrenched in a Cold War with Saudi Arabia and continues to sponsor militia groups in proxy conflicts. It also maintains axis links with both China and North Korea.

Simon Sebag Montefiore, in his book 'Jerusalem – The Biography' written in 2011 (Orion Books), after an excellent treatise on the history of the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel writes of the real challenges facing any agreement on the Palestine – Israel issue. On page 620 he writes that finance and land deals alone will not resolve the problem as only an agreement on the Old City itself will do that... and in so doing to somehow distinguish between sovereignty and religion. He further writes: *'The Arabs might not accept America, the Israelis distrust the UN and the EU, so perhaps the job could be done by NATO with Russia, which is once again keen to play a role in Jerusalem'* and then adds the footnote: *'The Russian reverence for Jerusalem has been modernised to suit the authoritarian nationalism fostered by Vladimir Putin who in 2007 oversaw the reunion of the Soviet Moscow Patriarchate and the White Russian Orthodox Church'*. On pages 621,622 he writes: *'For 1,000 years, Jerusalem was exclusively Jewish; for about 400 years, Christian; for 1,300 years, Islamic; and not one of the three faiths ever gained Jerusalem without the sword, the mangonel or the howitzer. Their nationalistic histories tell a rigid story of inevitable progressions to heroic triumphs and abrupt disasters, but in this history I have tried to show that nothing was inevitable, there were always choices'*. We stand by and ponder as these decisions are made and their consequences follow.

Unfortunately, because of the complex nature of the prophecies and indeed the complexity of the events in the Middle East, then Christians, like the western powers generally, tend to stay away from involvement in these events. In the US, the Biden administration have stepped back from involvement and as happened in Syria it is likely that less benign players will take centre stage there.

Christians too have tended to step back from the End Time prophecies and their interpretation, many taking either a 'we'll be out of here any time soon' attitude or 'it's too complex to understand the prophecies, anyway, it will happen when it will happen' mentality. This too is an abdication of responsibilities, for the world longs for direction and guidance in these perilous times.

The key player on the stage backing Israel is the US, who provided 3.8bn dollars in 2020 in Foreign Aid to that country. The single key financial backer of Palestinians is the EU, though they are reluctant participants in the conflict. For the Europeans, the events of WW2 have cast a long shadow. Yet money is not enough, the US, the EU, as well as Christians, are urged to engage, for according to prophecy, we are in the perilous last days of this age.

In May 2021 military conflict has broken out in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. The appearance of a powerbroker in the region draws close. I quote:

The Times, May 13, 2021, p.27 *'America and its allies seek coexistence between a sovereign Palestine and a secure Israel'*, p.28 *'The Russian foreign ministry reported that Hamas officials had approached it, offering a ceasefire'*.

The New York Post May 12, 2021, 7:01pm reports *'Russia pushes for international effort to diffuse Israel-Hamas Gaza'* and goes on to report *'Russian officials on Wednesday called for 'a quartet' of international mediators to intervene and diffuse escalating fighting between Israel and Hamas-led Palestinian militants. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, speaking after meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said the meeting is 'the most acute task now' to resolve the growing conflict that has killed dozens over the past three days, according to reports. The four mediators consist of Russia, the US, the European Union and the United Nations'*. A joint statement issued by Russian and UN officials reads

'Today I think we have reached the common denominator that the most pressing issue is to convene the international mediators' quartet... at the earliest opportunity'. 'Today I think we have reached the common denominator that the most pressing issue is to convene the international mediators' quartet... at the earliest opportunity,' Lavrov said in a joint statement with Guterres' (Antonio Guterres is the 9th Secretary-General of the UN, 2017 to date).

Russia has previously offered to mediate in the Palestinian, Hamas, Fatah- Israeli conflict. This happened in 2018, 2019, 2020, and in May 2021, as hostilities continue between Israel and the factions in Palestine.

Hamas is sponsored by Iran, who provides them with military technology and rockets. It is thought that they have up to 30,000 rockets in Gaza alone. In the May 2021 conflict, up to 16 May, some 1,500 have been fired on Israel, with their 'Iron Dome' technology intercepting 90% of them.

In the May 2021 conflict, the warring parties turned again to the US, Egypt and Qatar (this country is a sponsor of Hamas), to mediate and broker a ceasefire.

The BBC's Middle East Correspondent, Jeremy Bowen said that there have been 'four wars 2008 to May 2021 between Israel and Hamas, unless things change, there will be another one' (BBC 10.00pm news 20.5.21 ceasefire 21.5.21).

The elusive peace has never been found, and there is overwhelming global pressure for a peace agreement. Any overarching agreement is most likely to be mediated through the super-powers, the 'quartet' as referred to by the Russian Foreign Ministry, or by Russia itself. Russia prides itself as being allies with both sides in the conflict, whereas the US is seen as a sponsor of one side only, that being Israel. So, the US is unlikely to be the ultimate powerbroker, instead, as of May 2021, the ultimate powerbroker is more likely to be Russia. Any agreement at this time is pure conjecture, yet the scriptures do refer to a forthcoming agreement, an agreement which will be dupe many nations and people.

Today, the kings of the north speak to each other in this way: They plot and position themselves for their place on the final stage. The New York Times May 13, 2021, 1:21 pm reported under the heading: *'Turkey's Erdogan tells Putin Israel needs to be taught 'deterrent lesson''* as follows: *'The Turkish strongman told Russian President Vladimir Putin that he wanted 'the international community to give Israel a strong and deterrent lesson,' adding that the UN Security Council should intervene with 'determined and clear messages' to Israel'.*

Christians, Jews, and others may ask why the prophecies of old refer to Jerusalem being judged at the last, double for her sins? Isaiah 40:2 reads: *'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins'* (KJV). The answer is because it signs a treaty with the Antichrist. The message to the Christians, as the day approaches, is to speak the love and comfort of God, and to seek clarity on these matters, for if the prophecies are true then a dark shadow is soon to fall over the land of Israel, and this will impact all the nations of the earth.

The hatred of the Jews and its occupation of the land of Israel is irrational, yet credible whenever there is Satanic input, for from the Jews has come a Saviour who has usurped Satan and stripped him of his authority to rule the nations.

Tim Marshall, in his book 'Prisoners of Geography' (2016, Elliot and Thompson, ISBN 978-1-78396-243-3) in his chapter on the Middle East page 181 says:

'The routine expression of hatred for others is so common in the Arab world that it barely draws comment other than from the region's often Western-educated liberal minority who have limited access to the platform of mass media. Anti-Semitic cartoons which echo the Nazi 'Der Sturmer' propaganda newspaper are common. Week in, week out, shock-jock imams are given prime-time TV shows.

Western apologists for this sort of behaviour are sometimes hamstrung by fear of being described as one of Edward Said's 'Orientalists'. They betray their own liberal values by denying their universality. Others, in their naivety, say that these incitements to murder are not widespread and must be seen in the context of the Arab language, which can be given to flights of rhetoric. This signals their lack of understanding of the 'Arab street', the role of the mainstream Arab media and a refusal to understand that when people are full of hatred say something, they mean it'.

Anti-Semitism has led to much violence and inhuman acts. Adolf Hitler use the phrase in his rally's *'Die Juden sind unser Unglück'* meaning *'The Jews are our misfortune'*. Today, the slogan is still alive in the lands of those who hate Israel.

The time of the End

The time of the conflicts which engulf Israel both from east and west and north and south is also the time when the Christ-Church or Jewish-Christian Church flee from the wrath of the Dragon Antichrist (Rev.12:6). This happens at the beginning of the Great Tribulation (last three and a half years), when they flee from the Beautiful Land to find a place of refuge in 'Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon' (Dan.11:41) which is part of present-day Jordan. This is a cross reference to Rev. 12:1-5,13-17 when armies are sent like a flood or like a river against the followers of Christ and they are told to flee. The analogy of a river in the prophesy of Rev,12 also describes how fast this event will take place and the need for speed to avoid certain death at this time.

From the very beginning of the Great Tribulation Jesus' prophecy is also clear on the need for his followers not only to flee but to do it with utmost speed; see Matt.24:15-18 *'So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve anything from his house. And let no one in the field return for his cloak'.* No-one on earth will know exactly when the armies will come but when they do they come with speed. However, the military build-up in the Middle East continues apace and this, along with the alliances forming there emboldens the kings of the earth to act accordingly. The signs of the times are pregnant before us, and as if about to give birth.

Only the risen Lord knows of these times, for it is He who opens the seals of the last seven years of this age. Rev.5:1-5 reads *'Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the One seated on the throne. It had writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look inside it. And I began to weep bitterly, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look inside it. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed to open the scroll and its seven seals"'. BSB*

Jesus also knows when this imminent return shall be and of the events leading up to it and He was us to take some comfort in knowing His mind and fore thought in our preparation for these events.

When they occur then Christians are told by Jesus to be most watchful. It is the time just before the battle of Armageddon (Rev.16:16), a time when the enemy will come so fast that he will come like a thief in the night (1Thes.5:2-4). It is the time directly before the Seventh Vial of Rev 16v17-21. This vial occurs at the same time as the sixth and seventh seal and the seventh trumpet. It is the time immediately before the coming of the Lord.

Peter prophesies of this time and the speed of their occurrence when he says that when the Lord comes, 'as a thief', the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt with fervent heat, and the earth and its works will be burnt up i.e., this is certainly not a secret rapture or prequel to the main event. 2Peter 3:10 reads *'But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and its works will be laid bare'*. See also Luke 12:39; Rom.13:11-14; 1Cor.3:15; 2Cor.7:1, Eph4:20-24; 6:10-20; Col.3:8-14, James 1:27, 1Peter 1:13, 1John 2:28, Jude v23, Rev.3:3-5, 7:14, 19:7,8. See www.truthforthelastdays.com The Visions of Daniel P.53.

Likewise, so will be the coming of the son of man, Matt.24:30-31 reads *'At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other'*. This is the time of the seventh trumpet spoken of in Rev. 16:17-21.

The seventh trumpet occurs on the last day, when there shall be no more delay. Then the kingdom of God will be set up, and the prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus, and the establishing of His kingdom are fulfilled. At this time, we read of 'voices', Rev.11:19;4:5; 10:3,4; and 'thunders' Rev 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 14:2, 7:10, 19:6; and 'lightnings' Rev 4:5, 8:5, 11:19. There must be great storms and tremendous winds to keep hailstones in the air which are a talent in weight, i.e., from 45 to 130 pounds in weight, it is no wonder that God says in Rev.11:19 that the plague is exceeding great.

The coming wrath of God

This is the time of the judgement of God upon the wicked. Rev. 6:12,16-17 reads *'12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; [...] 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath [Gr. 'orge'] is come; and who shall be able to stand?'* KJV

And Rev.11:15,18 reads *'15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. [...] 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath [Gr. 'orge'] is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth'*. KJV

It is important to note that the Greek word for 'wrath' in these verses is 'orge' meaning God's longstanding wrath against the wicked, who He will punish with lasting consequences. This final judgement upon the earth comes only after the seven years of destruction by the Red Dragon, Satan, through the Antichrist and his followers. It is only at this time that we finally see God's anger ripe and his indignation full. The Vials are poured out because they are full, not empty. They are full of the judgement in direct proportion to the wickedness which it deals with, so each Vial is specific to counter and overcome the wickedness of mankind. It is as though God has restrained Himself for so long, hoping that the morality of man would in itself counter-mand the evil one, but self-will prevails and dark intentions of the wicked overrule through the powers conferred upon them such that iniquity increases across the whole earth. This was the case before the coming of the flood of Noah, and will come again (Matt.24:). The nature of this wrath is different from elsewhere in the scriptures where the Greek word 'thumos' is used. Thayer's Commentary defines 'thumos' as 'passion, angry heat, [...] anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again' and 'orge' as "indignation which has arisen gradually and become more settled...'

This wrath is great in its coming, it is as though the Vials have increasingly become fuller such that at a certain time they will finally boil over. God's love has continually been slow to anger and quick to bless but man's iniquity has ever increased such that God has marked time and weighed mankind in the balance. Yet these Vials inevitably become fuller to the point of overflowing. Each Vial is poured in turn, yet none cause the Antichrist and his followers to change their minds or hearts. God's forgiveness is always there yet is not asked for by the perpetrators of the crimes against humanity that we see in these last days. After the six Vials there could still be repentance, but none recorded, none sought. Then, by the time of Seventh Vial there begins the final judgement. This is the exact time when the Vial is full and ready to overflow, to burst out. The event is so pregnant with God's wrath that both mankind and nature are affected.

There are examples of the effects of this wrath overflowing affecting nature for at the time of the Sixth Seal Rev. 6:12,16-17 reads '*12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood*'. Also, the seven vials that are carried by the seven angels particularly affect nature (Rev. 16:1-20) for '*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out on the earth the seven bowls of God's wrath"; vial one – sores upon the followers of the beast , vial two – sea, vial three - rivers and springs, vial four - sun, vial five - darkness, vial six – the river Euphrates, vial seven – air, earthquake, islands, mountains.*

At the time of the Seventh Vial. This is the time of God's final judgement 'Gr. orge' and it begins with the fulfilment of Joel's prophesy which tells us that the sun and the moon's appearance will change just before the coming of the Day of the Lord: '*The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come*' (Joel 2:30). Then Christ and Revelation describe the appearance of these signs. Christ tells us that these signs will appear after the end of the great tribulation: '*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken*' (Matthew 24:29).

These all speak of the point of overspill or overflow, the vials being full, and the overwhelming consequences to follow. It is the time when God pulls back the garment, the shroud or covering, and we see both the loathsomeness and carnage brought about by mankind, God's judgement, and the glorious coming of the Messiah.

It might be asked, are the Christians at that time also subject to this wrath? The word 'orge' also appears in 1Thes.5:9-10, Rom.5:8-10, and 1Thes.1:9-10, yet in each case it refers to the type of wrath which those whose hearts are to love God are not subject to, as this wrath is specifically God's deliberate, long-standing wrath against the wicked. A further study of the Greek words for wrath are covered elsewhere in this study.

This is the time when Satan will have taught his followers well. Irrespective of God's overwhelming love for the people, hatred and hardness of heart will ever grow stronger; the judgements do not result in repentance but instead men curse God, they are trucebreakers and false accusers, and like Jannes and Jambres, where the traditions are that they through occultic powers wished death upon the Hebrew children in Egypt at the time of Moses, they have corrupted minds and are reprobate concerning the truth. It will be no use trying to convert these people with the gospel message, for neither God's love nor his judgements will bring repentance to Antichrist and his followers. 2 Tim.3:1-9 reads *'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was'.* KJV

The vials of wrath will be filling up quickly during these last and perilous days.

This will be the time of His return. Jesus came as a lamb to be slain, as the Messiah who broke the gates of hell in his death and reaped a harvest in his resurrection, yet on his return he will come with fire in his eyes (Rev.5:6). This is when he sees the fulness of iniquity and acts to open the seven seals (Rev.5; Dan.12:4,9).

It is the level of iniquity and injustice that finally causes the triumph of his return. As happened when Jesus saw the iniquity in the temple of God prior to his death and resurrection, so he will act on his return. Matt.21:12-17; Mk.11:15-19; Lu.19:45-48; John 2:12-25 all record Jesus entering the temple courts to drive out the abomination there. *'He declared to them, "It is written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer.' But you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"* BSB

Again, it will be the actions that take place in the temple that will mark his acts. At his first coming the Temple incident marked the final chapter before his death and resurrection, the second time it will mark his judgements for it is at the appearance of the *'abomination of desolation'* standing in the holy place (Matt.24:15) that he will act against the wicked one. It is at this time that Jesus sees the fullness of the abuse of spiritual power that has cascaded to the earth when Satan, the *'great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads'*, as described in Rev.12:1-6, is cast out of the heavenlies along with the fallen one third of the angels whom he drags from there to follow him onto the earth. Rev.12:4 reads *'And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth'*. Their arrival on the earth puts great pressure upon the peoples and nations, an anguish not seen across the globe ever before. This conflict, which began in the heavenlies, marks the final dispelling of Satan and his angels from the heavenlies, following which he and his followers have the one intent to corrupt the nations and to bring apocalypse

onto the earth. Satan knows his time is short before he is incarcerated, and he intends to take as many of his followers, both angelic and human, with him.

The corruption of spiritual power leads to the abuse of authority on a global scale. This is the direct cause of 'the tribulation, the great one' (Rev.7:14). Those who see it will need to decide whether to follow the Antichrist or not, and to accept the mark of this corruption or to refuse it. This open display of the Antichrist will starkly define between good and evil and allow people to choose between them. 'Ultimate power corrupts ultimately' and this is what now takes place as the Antichrist begins his career of destruction.

The dragon gives the beast his power and his throne and great authority (Dan.7:6)

In the End Times it is Satan the dragon who is able to dispense Satanic power to the Antichrist and the beast(s) i.e., global power-blocks, also called empires. The high ideals of human endeavour become corrupted by Satanic means and the abuse of spiritual power and spiritual authority which then embeds itself into the powers and authorities of human leaders and their governments. The books of Daniel and John both refer to these abuses and its impact on the nations, who in turn rule like wild beasts.

In the book of Daniel, we read Dan.7:3 *'Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. ... each different from the other. when suddenly four powerful beasts came out of the sea. Each ...'* Dan.7:6 *'... I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. ... animal also had four heads. It was given power to rule'* Dan.7:7 *'Then ... was a fourth beast- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth'* Dan.7:17 *'The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth. 'These four ... great animals are four kings who will rise to power from the earth. These large beasts, ...'* Dan.7:23 *'This fourth beast is the fourth world power that will rule the earth.'* Dan.8:4 *'No beast could stand before him, and there was ... against it, and none could rescue from its power. It did as it pleased and became ...'*

In the book of John, we read in Rev.13:2-18 of the abuse of power and authority as follows: Rev.13:2 *'The beast I saw was like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority'*, Rev.13:12 *'It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf'*, Rev.13:4 *'They worshiped the dragon who had given authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can wage war against it?"'* Rev.13:14,15 *'Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast' ... "The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast'. And in Rev.17:13 the corruption of power is again referred to, this time it is the kings of the earth who 'have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast'.*

Satan's vassal is the Antichrist who operates by dark means and deceit. In this way the Antichrist is given power from the spirit realm, yet on the earth he is given power by nation states too and because these powers are so heavily armed then he can operate with brutal force and cunning. The two beasts of Rev.13:1-2 and Rev.13:11-12 are each propelled by Satanic power and each harness substantial world powers that operate at the bidding of Satan and through his vassal. Each of these two beasts represent separate world power-blocks, the one is distinguished by more brutal, the other by more subtle power, each rise at the bidding of the dragon to carry out his plan of war. The wild beast is always the figure of the kingdoms of this world—i.e., the kingdoms which are founded on fear, self-willfulness, and selfishness. (Ellicott's Commentary). In these prophecies, each world power-block, structure, or empire has the aim of ruling by threats and subrogation, and each can only

carry out rampant destruction because they have the military means of war and operate cohesion by the subrogation of rights from the constituent parts of its kingdom. The heads of the beast(s) carry the names of blasphemy and this is transposed onto the heads and body of world systems. In this way the evil spirit of corruption which emanated from the kingdom of darkness is transferred into the earthly realms of mankind. This is an abuse of world-power as God intended it to be and is likened to the prostitution of power. In the End Times political power is corrupted, but so too is spiritual power.

'MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH' (Rev.17:5)

See Rev.17:1-7,18 v.2-5 which reads *"Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."* So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of [b]her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH'** and v.18 *'And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth'*. Who is that woman of Rev.17? She oppresses or rides upon the peoples of the region who are controlled and dominated by the Antichrist. She does not sit upon the heads of the ten-king alliance but on the rump and back of the people. She too dominates but not with military strength, instead with intrigue and seduction. These religious systems flatter, pollute and excuse the actions of the Antichrist.

The Antichrist wields power and control through an alliance of kings or nations, and the religious system embodied in the Great Harlot is likewise a religious system which is supra-national. This system of world government is a great attraction to the Antichrist who aligns with it to further his ambitions.

Dakes Commentary p.309 records 13 proofs the whore referred to Rev.17:1-7 is a religious system. The language used in the book of Revelation is symbolic of religious uncleanness which causes many nations to indulge in her religious practices. She is not one of the 'kings of the earth', she does not lead a nation, but instead sits over many nations and upon many waters or peoples to pollute them with her 'mysteries'. The harlot refers to many branches of her religion that are produced by her apostasy. Her religion is the result of idolatry. It is akin to paganism and this is seen and recorded in prophesy as being an abomination in the sight of God. Its doctrine includes that of lethal intent against Christians, her 'drunkenness' being drunken of the martyrs of Jesus.

The angelic explanation of the great whore proves her to be a religious system reigning over kings spiritually. The Greek reads *'And the woman whom thou sawest is the city the great, which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth'* (Rev.17:18). She has a kingdom within the kingdoms and over them. Dake goes on to say she is a religious system, one that has headquarters in a great city; and one that has a religious kingdom or reign over the kings of the earth. The great whore holds power over her loyal subjects, not through superior military forces, but by deceptions of her spiritual harlotry and abominations.

However, the prophecies record too the hatred and destruction of the great whore by ten kings for the great whore's religious system dominates over them until they tire of her at

which time, if not before, they give their power to the Antichrist instead. At this time the ten kings turn on the great whore and destroy her (Rev.17:12-17).

In the Middle East in the 21st Century when the choice has to be made then the real power in these lands is the military. An example of this was in 2011 when Hosni Mubarak was ousted as president of Egypt. People power toppled him because of their hatred of his cronyism, his corrupt leadership and his security forces' cruel treatment of the Egyptian populace which galvanised a generation (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/25/hosni-mubarak-egyptian-president-ousted-during-arab-spring-dies-at-91>), but behind the scenes the military had been waiting for years to be rid of him. However, when the Muslim Brotherhood called its supporters out then it was a straight contest between Mubarak's National Democratic Party, the military, and the Brotherhood. Initially the latter two destroyed the former but when the Brotherhood won an election and began to turn Egypt into an Islamic state then it paid the price and was overthrown by the real power in the land – the military. The reign of the Brotherhood and its leader Mohammed Morsi was short and in July 2013 Egypt's current leader, the former general Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, came to power. However, the Islamists remain the second power in the country, albeit now underground. In his book Prisoners of Geography published in 2016 Tim Marshall further makes the point (P.182) that in impoverished societies with few accountable institutions, where bread and security is offered to the people, then power rests with 'gangs' disguised as 'militia' and 'political parties'. In this respect he cites the countries of Libya, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and possibly others too, for years to come.

The great city

It is asked of many who and where is the great city which reigns over the people groups of the earth? Where is the city from which she, the great whore, 'mystery Babylon' emanates? That city, when considered along with all aspects of the prophecies can only be Jerusalem, the city from which emanates all of the prophecies of the Great Tribulation, like the spokes of a wheel, they all point to that one place (Rev.17;17:18).

Gal.4:24-26 reads *'These things serve as illustrations (or as we read in the KJV: "Which things are an allegory"), for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children into slavery: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present-day Jerusalem, because she is in slavery (the KJV reads 'bondage') with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother'* BSB. The prophesy here in Paul's epistle relates to a system of religion which is a corruption of God's intended. Such religion(s) bring people into It brings people into spiritual slavery to a system, and not to freedom and promise (Gal.4:28). Gal.4:29 goes on to read *'At that time, however, the son born by the flesh persecuted the son born by the Spirit. It is the same now'* BSB. The conflict spoken of here by Paul is a conflict between these two systems of religion which emanate from Jerusalem. This conflict causes *'the son born by the flesh persecuted the son born by the Spirit. It is the same now... however, the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son'* (Gal.4:28-29).

Paul's prophesy recorded in Galatians also gives hope and promise for it includes the prophesy from Isaiah which records that the children of faith are those who look to the heavenly city of Jerusalem for their inheritance and they will outnumber the children of bondage. It reads in Is.54:1 *'For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband'* KJV. In the first instance this prophesy has reference to the

restoration of the exiled Jews to Jerusalem at the time of Zerubbabel, and to the coming greatness of the newly-settled city. However, Paul, in taking the prophesy of Isaiah, goes further by speaking of a type of the final theocratic reign of the Messiah which is likened to a marriage with the heavenly bridegroom who is the coming King. The form of religion which had emanated from Jerusalem before the coming of the Messiah Jesus had proved to be desolate, and for a long time no children had been born. Indeed, when through Christ people were again being born into the kingdom of God then they were despised and persecuted by the traditional religious system seated in Jerusalem. However, the message of the Messiah at both His first and second comings will cause people to 'break forth' into praise and singing. The application of this prophesy, as with many, has a layer yet to come. In the typical application, Sarah, who had long been barren is compared with Hagar, whose marriage had been fruitful; in the anti-typical application, the new dispensation, Sarah's children are children of faith i.e., Christianity, which from small beginnings propagates the most fruitful harvest of souls, and this compares with the children of Hagar who represent an incompatible system of religion which cannot and will not inherit by faith an eternal possession. Instead, it relies on a flawed dispensation, with its material possessions and privileges, restraints and restrictions. Instead of being tied and wedded to such an 'husband' we are to '*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*' (Gal.5:1). It is vital as we approach the End Times for Christians to not be entangled with religious compromises which rob us of the inheritance which has been promised us. These compromises are typified in Jerusalem in the times of Zerubbabel, Paul and the Early Church, and today.

Gal.4:26 reads '*But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all*'. KJV Of this verse Ellicott writes: '*The ideal or heavenly Jerusalem. (Comp. Hebrews 12:22, 'Ye are come to . . . the heavenly Jerusalem;,' Revelation 21:2, 'the holy city, new Jerusalem'. This 'new' or 'heavenly' Jerusalem is (or is to be) the seat or centre of the glorified Messianic kingdom, just as the old Jerusalem had been the centre of the earthly theocracy*'.

It is from Jerusalem that the great whore, also known as the scarlet woman, emanates for she has influence over many peoples and sits or rides on the on the seventh mountain, also referred to the seven headed beast. These seven heads represent the seven kingdoms ruling over her and hence supporting her – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Egypt, Syria, Rome, and finally Antichrist.

The prophesies relate to her as 'I sit a queen' (Rev.18:7) and the 'scarlet woman (Rev.17:3-6) and in Rev.11:8 the prophesy describes the place where the two witnesses are killed for we read: '*Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city—figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where their Lord was also crucified*' BSB. So, these events take place in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is that city for throughout its history we read of it being synonymous with a mix of religious practices. The scriptures refer to this heady mix of truth and falsehood, like smoke in clean air, as a harlot which deceives many; and this brings many people into 'bondage' (KJV) or 'slavery' (BSB). The key to understanding much of scriptural prophesy is the need to discern between truth and falsehood, and only the mind and character of God can and must be our judge and guide on these matters.

Simon Sebag Montefiore, in his book 'Jerusalem – The Biography' makes it clear that the Old City of Jerusalem creates an eternal problem for the nations of the region who are captivated by its lure. They desire the city only because of its religion. Where other wars are started over oil, agriculture, resources, and political grievances, the next war is likely to be justified by religion and Jerusalem will be at its centre. On reading this book it is clear that from ancient times it has seen a mix of religious practices there: the pagan rites of the

Philistine tribes, the call of Yahweh to the Hebrews, the gods of the Roman Empire, the Christ who fulfilled prophesy there, and the night journey of Mohammed all centre on the city. Today three major religions focus on it: Jewish, Christian and Islam. The population of the planet in 2021 is 7.8bn of which 2.3bn are from countries who are identified with Christianity, 1.8bn from countries that identify themselves with Islam. The only nation to identify with Judaism is Israel with a population of just 8.6m. Islam is most prevalent in countries where there is a higher birth rate which at its current rate of growth is expected to increase to 2.3bn by 2050. Together these religions represent some 53% of the peoples on the planet. If a conflict ensues which is fuelled by religion, then the consequences could be catastrophic. In the book referred to above Simon Sebag Montefiore writes (pages 621,622): *'For 1,000 years, Jerusalem was exclusively Jewish; for about 400 years, Christian; for 1,300 years, Islamic; and not one of the three faiths ever gained Jerusalem without the sword, the mangonel or the howitzer. Their nationalistic histories tell a rigid story of inevitable progressions to heroic triumphs and abrupt disasters'*. These religions are not easy bedfellows; each consider their god to be right and that he will defend them. Each are also expectant of a coming Messiah and each expect him to come to the city, which is why the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim graves are so close to the mount, each want to be there when he comes. The call to the Jews is best referred to in the Pentateuch, and other Jewish holy writings, the Christian call is embedded in the New Testament of the Bible, and for Islam it is the El Aqsa Mosque (situate next to the Dome on the Rock, both are built on the old Temple mount of Solomon's Temple); this mosque is the third most holy site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. The conflict between these religions is unreconcilable because each attach their religion to the ownership and control of their respective religious sites.

In Genesis 16:11,12 we read of the angel of the Lord who told Hagar *"Behold, you have conceived and will bear a son. And you shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard your cry of affliction. He will be a wild donkey of a man, and his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."*

We then read from the apostle Paul in Galatians 4:21-31 where he writes of Jerusalem as being a place of heavy religious practices and in so doing writes in allegorical terms of the story of Hagar the bondwoman, her son the wild man Ishmael, and their descendants who will be against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and who will live in hostility toward all his brothers. He then compares Hagar and his descendants to the children of the free woman; the free woman being the children of faith.

Gal.4:21-31 reads *'Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are (the) two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labour! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband."* Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? *"Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."* So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free' BSB.

Christians tend to consider this passage only in relation to the law of Moses which emanated from the tablets given to him at Mt. Sinai and compare this to the age of grace which emanated from Christ Jesus. However, it is also prophetic concerning the city of Jerusalem because it states that there is influence upon it from Arabia. Furthermore, it states that the children of the free woman, those not bound by the traditions of religion, will outnumber those of a religion which is bondage to them. The heavenly Jerusalem, also referred to as the New Jerusalem in the New Testament, is free from the pollution of man's religious practices, and in this state we as Christians find that perfect liberty so often referred to in the writings of grace being the Words of the Risen Christ. This prophesy of Paul clearly marks the conflict between two covenants and the persecution brought upon the children of the free woman from the children of the bond woman. The persecution of the Christians who are receptacles of the Light, is of major concern as we consider the genocidal intent of religious nationalism in many countries today.

The marks of the woman in Rev.17 are that she is a 'mystery' i.e., based on a knowledge of spiritual matters; she is 'Babylon the Great' i.e., the mother of a system of many religions; an 'harlot' i.e., the systems of religion have been used and abused by many world leaders to justify their actions, this is especially so as we approach the End Times when and where there are many references to false prophets; an 'abomination' i.e., the justification for personal gain by reference to that religion; and to include 'the earth' i.e., it is not just personal gain but it involves nation states too. In each case the people groups who are attracted to the seduction, flattery, dress, and jewels of the 'Scarlet Woman' of Rev.17 compromise themselves for they covenant themselves to her through her ideologies and belief systems. This is what pollutes them. The alternative call to the Christians is that they are the clean, pure bride of Christ who is coming for them very soon. He calls them to his marriage supper. 2Cor.6:17 reads *"Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."* BSB. On the matter of the persecution of the Christians by other religious groups or through religious nationalism see other parts of this study.

It is when these earthly power structures who justify their actions with religious intent become apparent and of full strength that Jesus marks the Antichrist's career with its final chapter, the final 3.5years of the Great Tribulation.

It is specifically the ultimate spiritual abuse of power and authority of the Antichrist who is seen '*standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand)*' (Matt.24:15), that triggers the final End Times events. This action occurs in God's most holy place, it is if this is 'the last straw' i.e., the final act of iniquity that fills the vials of judgement to follow. It is the tipping point that triggers these judgements.

For the first 3.5 years of the covenant set up by Antichrist has been marked by the false peace, the rule of an autocratic and evil dictator. This is the time which began when the first seal was opened, followed by seals two and three (Rev.6:1-6).

However, now, halfway through the 70th week of Daniel's prophesy, the covenant is suddenly broken. It is of this time that Jesus spoke the prophesy of Matt. 24:15-23. It is at this time when the people of Judea should without hesitation flee to the mountains, any delay would risk their lives, for they are being pursued by the armies of the Antichrist. This also marks the time of the coming of God's judgements upon the wicked, and with each judgement comes yet more vehement persecution of the Christians and the onset of the Great Tribulation (Dan.12:2; Jer.30:7; Rev.7:14; Matt.24:15,29). This is exactly the time which marks the opening of the following sets of judgements upon the wicked ones: the

opening of the fourth Seal, the first of seven Trumpets, the first of seven Vials. It is also the time which marks the fleeing of the Christians (Rev.12:1-17), the beginning of the ministries of the two witnesses (Rev.11:1-14). For this is the time of the open anarchic reign of the Antichrist and the False Prophet (Rev.13:1-18) and we see the scarlet woman, and the abuse of Jerusalem by the Antichrist and his followers (Rev.17:1-18-18:24). See Appendix 1 for details.

It is at this time that Jesus will with forethought deal with the abusers and murderers of those whom he loves. This is the time of his controlled wrath upon the earth, a judgement upon the wicked which is directly proportional to their acts. This will be his execution of justice prior to his appearance on the earth.

Jesus keeps the book of life (Rev.20:15) and also a dossier of the evils committed and he maintains the cause so that when the time is ripe, then he will act.

The coming Messiah

After the rise and fall of the alliances of the Middle East and the conflagration that ensues, the prophecies turn to the coming of the Messiah. This is referred to by Daniel as the 'appointed time'.

The final conflagration will encompass many for it reads in Isaiah 63:1-6 *'Who [is] this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this [that is] glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore [art thou] red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people [there was] none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance [is] in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and [there was] none to help; and I wondered that [there was] none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth'* KJV.

We read in Isaiah 5 that the winepress should have produced good wine but many of the peoples of earth have gone bad and soured the wine.

Yet even this prophesy of the final conflict and God's vengeance upon the nations is tempered by God recalling his everlasting mercies for it will be at this time that many will question and remember his love for them and his deliverance of old for Is.62:11-13 reads *'Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, [and] his people, [saying], Where [is] he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where [is] he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led [them] by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, [that] they should not stumble?*

To Edom the people flee from the Antichrist, and from Edom He will come in vengeance against the Antichrist.

Mark 16:19-20 refers to the ascension but does not refer to the exact place, whereas Luke 24:50-53 refers to the ascension of Christ taking place at Bethany which is situated near to the mount of Olives. Acts 1:6-11 reads *'When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put*

in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven' KJV.

The disciples were told of the nature of Jesus' return but would not 'know' the times and seasons of His return. Strong's Concordance comments on the Greek the word for 'know' as 'ginosko' which means 'properly, to know, especially through personal experience i.e., by first-hand acquaintance, or to 'experientially know'. Jesus told the disciples that they would not experientially know His return in their days, but they were to experientially know the presence and teaching of the Holy Spirit on these and other matters and He tells them that their first mission was to wait for the 'endowment from on high' (Acts 2:1-4).

In these same verses Jesus states that His return is not random, instead the Father has determined the times and seasons by his own authority. The resurrected Christ certainly knows the times and seasons and it is He who has clearly spoken through the Old and New Testament prophets of these events. At the time of Jesus' ascension, the disciples had the expectation of Jesus' return and that the Holy Spirit would give revelation to them when needed.

'Before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come' Joel 2:31

Tradition has it that Christ will return upon the Mount of Olives, near to Bethany where He ascended. Yet the prophecy given by the angels in Acts 2 describes the manner of his return, though not necessarily the place.

The prophecy of Isaiah 63:1-6 has the Deliverer coming from Edom. The prophecy of Rev 12:1-6 especially v.5 refers to the man-child which is the Christ Church being hid in the wilderness of Edom and Moab, away from the persecutions of the Antichrist for the last 3.5yrs of the Great Tribulation. At times of deliverance scripture records how the Lord is manifest to lead the people. For example, in the time of deliverance of the Hebrew people Exodus 12:21 reads *'And the LORD went before them in a pillar of cloud to guide their way by day, and in a pillar of fire to give them light by night, so that they could travel by day or night'* BSB. The arrival of the Deliverer from Edom (Is.63:1-6) is also the time of Joel 2:18-20 and the final defeat of the armies of the north (Dan.11).

This time of restoration is promised, and it shall not fail. Joel 2:18-20 reads *'Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people... I will remove far off from you the northern [army], and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things...'*

Joel 2:28-32 reads *'And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it*

shall come to pass, [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things'. KJV

The prophesy of Joel makes it clear how crucial it will be for the people of God to be fully endowed with the promise and power of the Holy Spirit at these End Times.

This is the time of great expectation. The psalmists often received prophesy concerning the coming kingdom, the Millennium, for example Psalm 24:8 reads '*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah*'.

Then comes 'the day of the Lord', the final moment, not a moment later or sooner, Christ will come with great noise, with fire and glory. Every eye shall see His return. This is not a silent or secret event, nor is it a secret rapture of Christians before the tribulation, the great one. It is the closure of the End Time and the last day of the Age of Grace, and the beginning of the Millennium.

Luke 21:26-28 reads: '*And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh*' KJV.

For an in-depth study of the Day of the Coming King, go to [https://prophetbillturner.com/Eschatology / Study 38 / N.B. 3&4](https://prophetbillturner.com/Eschatology/Study%2038/N.B.%203&4). In summary, many events occur on the last day of this age. It shall be a time of great joy and gladness for the people of God, though a time of great change too. It will be the last day of five things: 1. The Mystery of God 2. The Mystery of Satan 3. The Times of the Gentiles 4. The Fullness of the Gentiles 5. The Age of Grace

It will also be the day of the last trumpet (1Cor.15:32) and it will be the day of the resurrection of the Christians and will occur just before the Saints begin to reign: John.6:39,40,44,54;11:24;12:48.

This is the day of the first resurrection, and it is certainly not a secret resurrection.

Three key signs are recorded on the earth on this day:

1. It will be accompanied with tremendous noise: 1Thes.4:13-18; Is.27:13; Mt.24:31; Rev.19:6. 11:15.
2. It will be accompanied with tremendous glory and a blaze of light: Mt.24:27; Lk.17:24; Is.24:23; Rev.19:11-16.
3. It will be accompanied by a rocking heaven and earth. There will be great earthquakes: Is.24:18-20; Joel.2:30-32; Zech.14 all; Mt.24:29; 2Pet.3:10-13; Rev.6:12-17; 11:13,19; 16:18,20,21.

As Bill Turner records in his Preface '*A secret rapture? Never! Never! Never!*'.

Signs and wonders done by those Christians who are 'her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus' Rev. 12:17

At the time of the prophesy referred to in Rev. 12 there are other prophesies such as in Joel 2 that speak of many signs and wonders being done by the Christians of these times. The Christian Church will be of full stature in terms of the operation of spiritual gifts and this will be why the numbers of Christians in that region will markedly increase; such that the present-day number to Jewish Christians in Israel could very quickly increase.

The strength of the Christians through the darkness of those days will be their supply of oil. Oil is a figurative word to mean *'indwelt by the Holy Spirit (the fulfilment/antitype of oil in Scripture) an olive tree (collectively, the Mount of Olives); (figuratively) the people of God'* to quote Strong's Concordance on Rev.11:4. The full passage of Rev 11:1-14 describes the time before the seventh and last trumpet of the Tribulation when these two witnesses operate for 1,260 days i.e., 12months or 3.5yrs. All Christians who operate with this anointing will be able to see them through to the midnight hour of his coming, note the parable of the ten virgins in Matt. 25:1-13; having this oil in their lamps has the figurative meaning of a supply of the uncreated power of God the Holy Spirit to propel and empower them; Greek: 'dunamis'. This oil is empowering the two witnesses to prophesy; Rev 11:3-6 *'... And I will empower my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.'* *These witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouths and devours their enemies. In this way, anyone who wants to harm them must be killed. These witnesses have power to shut the sky so that no rain will fall during the days of their prophecy, and power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish'* BSB. This is the type of anointing that we read of at the time of Elijah and Elisha the prophets in the books of 1 & 2 Kings. Note Elijah's prayer on mount Carmel; 1Kings 18:36-39 reads *'At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet approached the altar and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and have done all these things at Your command. 37Answer me, O LORD! Answer me, so that this people will know that You, the LORD, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back again."* *Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell facedown and said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"'* BSB

These witnesses testified and prophesied against the Antichrist for we read in Rev. 11:7 *'then the two witnesses have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will wage war with them, and will overpower and kill them'* where the Antichrist and his followers gloats over them. *'But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered the two witnesses, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell upon those who saw them. And the witnesses heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Come up here."* *And they went up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched them'. (Rev.11:11-12 BSB)*

God, through his unbounded love has offered the anointing of His Holy Spirit to all who call upon Him and this can be to such a degree that many will see God's signs, wonders and miracles working through them. This is what is prophesied in Rev.11:1-14 where these two witnesses who are part of the Christian people at that time; they operate in the knowledge of both the Old and New Testament truths as per the vision of the woman in Rev.12:1 and they apprehend the significance and need for an anointing and supply of power from God's Holy Spirit to see them through those dark days.

The prophecies of the Revelation 12 are still to come but will come at the fulness of time and will come at the appointed time when the signs will not only be self-apparent to those knowledgeable of the prophecies but will be clear in terms of the revelation of heavenly truth and manifest to all in those days.

Prophecy is alive

Prophecy is alive in its meanings as it is imparted from the Father and spoken by Jesus the Word of God. As such it can often be relevant and applicable to different circumstances. For example, Psalm 23 is prophetic as it is relevant to the shepherds of old, telling them to rely on Father God as they rely on their staff, also to remember that when bereavement comes then he is always with us, like a faithful shepherd to see us through a dark valley, and it also foretells the day when we shall meet him at his 'banqueting table'. In this way the prophecies are set down in layers, as we might read sedimentary rocks. We see through a glass darkly 1Cor.13:12, but in due course, after the fulfilment of the prophecy it becomes plain. Such insight through the prophetic word is a privilege which we cannot fully comprehend. It is as if we look through different layers of glass, some of the layers are coloured different and sometimes beautiful colours, sometimes they are clear layers of glass, sometimes they show darker colours, but they can be seen and are there. However, it is paramount that we have the eyes of faith to see them. They are there to speak to and equip many generations and many peoples.

The prophets recorded in the scriptures, as do prophets today, foretold as they received the divine revelations. To our C21 mind we might expect to read of such events in history and those to come as a timeline, however we often read of events as they were revealed to the prophets in an order of magnitude and importance as seen in the realm of heaven rather than as a timeline or a linear event. In this way the prophet Isaiah and others often foretold of events as if they were viewing a different mountain ranges set one behind others; it is difficult to see which mountain range is set before another, so the scene is often described in a two-dimensional format. Similarly, it is not easy for people to comprehend every aspect of the heavenly realm and this is certainly the case in prophecy. Jesus did receive revelations from the Father on matters of time, sometimes it was clear, sometimes veiled. Upon receiving prophecy, some of the prophets did enquire of God concerning the times and seasons of that prophecy. For example the prophet Daniel who was told to '*shut up these words and seal the book until the time of the end*' Dan. 12:3,4, and this is why Jesus was so careful to explain the prophecies and the signs that will accompany the times of the end (Mt. 24). God loves intimacy and friendship in his relationship with us, he wants to be our partner so that we might understand his words to us and help others understand too. If it is possible then the Father will give up the knowledge of these times, though on occasions he will veil it from us. Mark 13:28-32 (also see Mt. 24:32-51; Luke 12:29-48) reads '*Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things happening, know that He is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on your guard and stay alert! For you do not know when the appointed time will come.*' During his earthly ministry the Son of Man was not told concerning the 'day or the hour' of his coming, yet he was certainly told the times and seasons that would be present to the generation that would see these signs. As the risen exalted Son of God Jesus would certainly be aware of the 'day and the hour' of His Coming.

However, on some occasions during His earthly ministry Jesus was told times, specific even to the hour and moment. John 12:23 reads *'But Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a seed; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'* Jesus knew the very hour he should die; the moment had been set in the prophetic calendar. It was to fulfil prophecy to the letter. He died at the time of the evening sacrifice, 483 years after the going forth of the command to re-build Jerusalem. See further reference to this prophesy below. This and many other prophesies were fulfilled by Jesus the hour when the son of man was glorified.

On other occasions Jesus held back prophetic information concerning future events from his disciples until he knew they could bear it. In this way Jesus tempered his overwhelming manifest love for the people with guardianship. Jesus knew that in the earlier part of his ministry that his testimony would be rejected by many. John 3:23 reads *'He (Jesus) testifies to what He has seen and heard, yet no one accepts His testimony'* and that it would bring hardship and persecution to his followers. John 16:1-4 reads *"I have told you these things so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do these things because they have not known the Father or Me. But I have told you these things so that when their hour comes, you will remember that I told you about them. I did not tell you these things from the beginning, because I was with you.'* BSB Jesus knew that only mature Christians, those fully equipped with an understanding of the events, and full of the Holy Spirit would stand in the times of persecution. Acts 7:54-57 reads *'On hearing this, the members of the Sanhedrin were enraged, and they gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears, cried out in a loud voice, and rushed together at him. They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.'* BSB

On yet other occasions Jesus told them in advance to comfort, inform and strengthen his followers. John 14:2 reads *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe in Me as well. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and welcome you into My presence, so that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."* BSB

The foretelling of prophesy is sometimes clear, sometimes veiled. If, after asking of the times and seasons we are still not told then they are veiled by the Father for a reason so that our eyes of faith are exercised. This is how He engages with us today regarding the second coming of Jesus; it is always to attract our character to grow in grace and faith. When veiled these truths are hidden in a certain type of mystery which is illogical to the kingdom of darkness; yet it gives strength to the Christian who is then able to draw upon the hidden mysteries of God and so deal in the currencies of heaven. In this way Mt. 6:10 *'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.'* From His bountiful resource we then know that He alone is our strength.

It is a mystery not because it is unknown but because it is hidden from the common view, its currency is the currency of faith and so we can view these mysteries, but only with the eyes of faith in and through Jesus. Such mysteries confound Satanic powers. In the same way the gift of tongues as recorded in the New Testament is given to Christians to confound the powers of darkness and to wreak havoc as we engage in spiritual warfare against the kingdom of darkness. Equipped with His graces and His anointing then we can be mighty for

God, 2Cor. 10:4 reads *'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds'*.

It is notable that the translators of scripture remark when Christ spoke a language which addressed and broke dark powers. Mark 5:41 reads *'Taking her by the hand, Jesus said, 'Talitha koum!' which means, Little girl, I say to you, get up!'* Matt.27:46,47 reads *'About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'* When some of those standing there heard this, they said, *'He is calling Elijah'* (BSB). Jesus spoke a different language on the cross and likewise will speak so when giving commands from heaven, yet through vision and dreams and the prophetic word He tenderly leads us, He does not confuse us and because of His quiet promptings we can know His heart and follow His leadings.

It is said by scientists that time is just an inconvenience to stop everything happening all at once, and similarly it seems so when we try to comprehend our Father God and his dealings with us. Sometimes, it seems that the prophets did not get the timeframe of events simply because they did not ask for it in order of time, at other times God's currency of developing our faith through these difficulties is of more paramount importance. If prophecies spoke of only of dates and times, then they would lead to much laziness and spiritual apathy in the people and churches who would simply sleep to the midnight hour when the bridegroom came or slumber unto beyond the third watch when the thief came see reference to these respective parables referred to below. Instead of apathy and laziness the prophecies should engender prayer and yearning, a seeking of the believer to find the truths contained therein. In this way we can be prepared so that each generation and / or the generation(s) to follow are prepared and ready through each event in history. Without this preparation, as with any war then lives can be needlessly wasted and lost. Our enemy is both deceptive and aggressive in pursuing our demise, how important it is to be fully prepared and armed Eph. 6:10-20

Dates and times may be unclear to us, and we might see much in vision and prophesy which can be a puzzle to us. 1 Cor. 13:12 *'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known'* KJV

We read in Matt. 24:2 that Jesus prophesied concerning the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem *'And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'* Jesus knew that in this time to come would be perilous for the early Christians and that it would occur in their lifetimes, yet Jesus did not give the date or time of these events the disciples. However, this warning given by Jesus was remembered by both Peter and the later apostle Paul as it gave strength and meaning to them during the persecution that came upon them. In fact, both of these men and many other men, women and children who had faith in and identified with Christ lost their lives at this forthtold time of the Romano-Jewish wars 66-70AD.

Jesus therefore does not lead us to stray nor allow us to be un-prepared. Times and dates and their accuracy in the order of events are not random, they occur with pinpoint accuracy. Jesus fulfilled to the letter the prophecies concerning the Suffering Messiah. An example being the time *'from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks'* Dan 9:25 was exactly 483 years. From the moment the command to restore Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes Longimanus to Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem to re-build the walls and restore the city, to the moment of Jesus's death on the cross at 3.00pm on the day of preparation for 'an high day', a special sabbath of the feast, not the ordinary weekly sabbath, which was two

days later (John 19:30-31; Lev. 23:6-11). This event took place 483 years after the setting in motion of the great prophesy of Daniel when the heathen king gave command to Nehemiah to go and re-build the walls of Jerusalem. The death of Jesus occurred not a moment more nor a moment less than at the time forth told in this prophesy. See below for further reference to Bill Turner, Alister Hamilton and others who have done this study.

Three of the gospel writers were specific about the time of Jesus' death; Mark 15:33-41; Luke 23:44-49 and Matt. 27:45-54 where we read *'Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard [that], said, This [man] calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled [it] with vinegar, and put [it] on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.'*

Jesus died on the day of preparation before a special sabbath of the feast. This was the day of butchering of the lambs. Ex. 12:5 reads *'Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening'*. KJV

This day of preparation was Tuesday sunset to Wednesday sunset for John 19:31 records that the next day was *'an high day'*, a special sabbath of the feast, not the ordinary weekly sabbath, which was two days later (Lev. 23:6-11)..

It is specifically recorded that Jesus died at the ninth hour. The ninth hour is 3.00pm when the Passover lambs and other sacrifices were offered (see Dake's Commentary on Mk. 15:34 (b): Matt. 12:40 (r): Matt. 27:50 (s) and John 19:31 (p)). Jesus died after being on the cross six hours. At the last *'Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost'* (Matt. 27:50) which indicates that he had normal strength until the end and that He volunteered the time of His death (John 10:18). Jesus *'gave up the ghost'*, he knew when his time was complete and this is when he voluntarily cried out with a loud voice *'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?'* and died.

Bodies were not to hang all night (Dt. 21:22-23) and it was for this reason that the Jews wanted the bodies on the crosses removed before the next day, which was a sabbath day.

It was un-usual for those crucified to die so soon as it is recorded that the Jews wanted the bodies removed that day, so when the command went out to break the legs of those crucified it is recorded as being unusual to find that Jesus had already died.

John 19:30-36 reads: *'When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished." And bowing His head, He yielded up His spirit. It was the day of Preparation, and the next day was a High Sabbath. In order that the bodies would not remain on the cross during the Sabbath, the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies removed. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and*

immediately blood and water flowed out. The one who saw it has testified to this, and his testimony is true. He knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. Now these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of His bones will be broken." And, as another Scripture says: "They will look on the One they have pierced." (see Zechariah 12:10–14).

Jesus knew the prophecies and knew the times. Luke 9:22 records Jesus *'Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day'* and Matt. 12:40 reads *'For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth'*. KJV

So, Jesus was put in the grave just before sunset on that Wednesday and as He was dead for three full days and three full nights then it would follow on that He was resurrected just before sunset on Saturday. There is no reference to Jesus dying on a Friday and rising on a Sunday. Our Good Friday should be changed to Good Wednesday.

If prophesy is so specific in respect of time, then there is no reason to discount the notion that the command of Artaxerxes might have been given at this time too i.e., the time of the evening sacrifice. It is interesting to note that it was also at the time of the evening sacrifice when Daniel received the prophesy of the Seventy Weeks for we read in Dan.9:21 *'while I was still praying, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice'*.

The visions and prophecies of the Old Testament forth told of the death of Jesus on the cross and looked forward to the time of the Messiah's coming again and the following Millennium. The great prophecies that we find in the books of Isaiah, Psalms and elsewhere are exacting in their detail.

The following two studies provide much needed insight into these prophecies. Each study includes an excellent summary and diagrammatic understanding of the relation of these prophecies to the fulfilment of time when Jesus died on the cross follow on with the prophecies which relate to times yet to come. See www.prophetbillturner.com Study #23 P.99 Appendix 3 and www.truthforthelastdays.com 'The Visions of Daniel' pages 5-9. Appendix 1 of this study includes a chart which is extracted from each of the above studies and is entitled 'Daniel's 70 Weeks of Years'.

In the visions of Daniel, Jesus impresses upon Daniel the importance of 'the appointed time of the end'. This is made clear in Dan 8:19 *'and said, "Behold, I will make known to you what will happen in the latter time of wrath, because it concerns the appointed time of the end.'* Dan. 11:27 *'And the two kings (of the south and the north), with their hearts bent on evil, will speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for still the end will come at the appointed time'* Dan. 11:29 *'At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time will not be like the first.'* Dan. 11:35 *'Some of the wise will fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.'* BSB

So it is that *'at the appointed time he shall come'*. Jesus will come to defeat the Antichrist who will *'come in peaceably and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully'* Dan 11:21-22 KJV.

God's timing is not random or arbitrary, it is perfect! Jesus died exactly at the right time, to the hour, for it reads in John 17:1 *'When Jesus had spoken these things, He lifted up His*

eyes to heaven and said, *“Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You”* and in Matt. 26:45 *‘Then He returned to the disciples and said, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.’* BSB. Other references to the hour being at hand are found in Mk. 14:41; Lk. 22:14; Jn. 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1.

Satan tried to kill Jesus before His time had come. Several times we read of these events from infancy and the slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem through to His rejection at Nazareth and through to the cross. If Satan had done so, then he would have defeated God’s plan for redemption, however through all of those earlier times in His ministry Jesus was kept, garrisoned and guarded by God and His angels. Jesus had to get to the cross to spoil Satanic powers and triumphed over them and this was to occur at a pre-determined set time. The prophecies were clear, and Jesus fulfilled His ministry and the prophecies even to this very moment in time.

Likewise, we can expect pinpoint accuracy regarding the fulfilment of the last seven years of the prophecies and the fulfilling of this age.

This great prophecy of Daniel was received from Jesus via the messenger angel Gabriel and specified the timeframe in terms of what is referred to as ‘weeks’. The complex set of events contained in this prophecy are revealed in these terms to Daniel so that he can articulate them sufficiently well for its reading in the ensuing generations. The book of Daniel was written from Babylon and Shushan about 606 or 616 to 536BC i.e., some 2,600 years before the events of our time. Dan. 12:4 reads *‘But you, Daniel, shut up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will roam to and fro, and knowledge will increase.’* BSB

It is amazing to know that prophecy can ark across many generations and still be active and alive today. Heb. 4:12-13 reads *‘For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it pierces even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight; everything is uncovered and exposed before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account’.* BSB

The full text reads in Daniel 25-27 *‘Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.’* KJV

For a much fuller understanding of this great prophecy go to www.theseecretofeternallife.com by Bill Turner and www.truthforthelastdays.com by Bill Turner, Alister Hamilton and others.

These scriptures are also reference to the determined time span apparent at the of the end of the age for *‘he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.’* This is a specific number of days and is recorded as such in the Book of Revelation. It is not more nor less than those days. Mark 13:20, Matt. 24:21-22 reads *‘For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning*

of the world until now, and never to be seen again. If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short.' So, with pinpoint accuracy these days are specifically measured and set in accordance with the Father's will; See Matt. 6:10 and Luke 11:2 which reads *'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth'*.

The fulfilling of the prophecies of the 70th week is evidenced by numerous forthtold sign as referred to later. For example, one key event appears to be a full 'banqueting house' Matt. 22:11-14 and Luke 14:15-24 esp. v. 22,23 which read *'And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel [them] to come in, that my house may be filled'* At which time we are bidden to 'sup with him and he with us' for it is the time to *'to taste of my supper'* Luke 14:24, It is the time of the great banquet. Rev. 3:20 reads *'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me.'* Ps. 23:6b *'... and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever'* The parable of the banqueting house is referred to later in this study as it helps us to understand the signs and seasons prior to the end of the age and is referred to again later in this study. Other parables and teachings of Jesus also give us insight into the times and seasons of the last days of this age and told his disciples to watch for them.

Mark 13:28, Luke 21:29-33 and Matt. 24:32-35 all record how we are to understand the specific time and season to which he refers to prior to his appearing; *'Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.'*

Jesus makes it clear that his coming again will be *'Immediately after the tribulation of those days'* i.e., after the signs forthtold which will occur prior to those specific days. Matt. 24:27, 29-31 reads *'... 'For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man' ... 'Immediately after the tribulation of those days: 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.'* At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.'

He is not coming with a secret 'rapture', this is a word not found in the scriptures, but as the lightening *'lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west'* when... *'all the tribes of the earth will mourn'* all peoples and nations groups will see him. He is coming with *'a loud trumpet'*, and *'They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory'*, This is the fanfare at the arrival of the bridegroom as referred to in other scriptures too.

To whom is the call made?

All are called to understand the prophecies. They are not to be hidden or denied. The common people understood the messages of Jesus.

The prophets of old held many different professions. They were not necessarily the theologians of their day, but they saw in vision and faithfully recorded the words of truth

which they received from God. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were farmers, Moses was a shepherd as were Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king etc. Neither were Jesus's disciples' theologians nor were they trained at the school of the rabbis. Instead, Jesus knew that God wished to use new wineskins for what was to come was the new wine of the Spirit baptism. (Luke 5:38, Acts 2:1-4).

The times of waiting are times of preparing, not times of slackness and rest

When Jesus was born, few knew the signs and those who did were the least to expect it. Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah were surprised at his coming, there was no prior knowledge of the events to follow. However, Simeon and Anna who were acknowledged as prophets and who spent time in the temple were waiting for his coming. There is no reference in the scriptures to them having been theologians or rabbis, yet like the prophets of old who were often farmers or tradesmen, God used them. The name Simeon means 'God receiver' and this is what he did.

The shepherds and the Magi had received an invitation to the birth and responded, but it seems that the religious leaders of that day made no effort to follow up on the news or grasp its significance. They should have known and been extremely glad of the news and its overwhelming significance for them and their people.

Instead, we read that when Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem and Herod received their news, it was he who took the news seriously. He believed their report. He knew who would have and where he could find the repositories of the prophecies of old as we read that he enquired of his chief religious advisers, likely from the Temple elite of his day. Herod commanded them to study the scriptures concerning a king to be born and they not only found that information but because of the news received through the king and the Magi would have known that it was contemporary with their circumstances.

The prophecy which they found is profound as it relates to both the first and second coming of the Messiah. Micah:5:1-6 reads *'Now, O daughter of troops, mobilize your troops; for a siege is laid against us! With a rod they will strike the cheek of the judge of Israel. But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come forth for Me One to be ruler over Israel — One whose origins are of old, from the days of eternity. Therefore Israel will be abandoned until she who is in labour has given birth; then the rest of His brothers will return to the children of Israel. He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD His God. And they will dwell securely, for then His greatness will extend to the ends of the earth. And He will be our peace when Assyria invades our land and tramples our citadels. We will raise against it seven shepherds, even eight leaders of men. And they will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod with the blade drawn. So He will deliver us when Assyria invades our land and marches into our borders'*.

It is worth noting the strategic importance of this prophecy. From the birth of the coming King in Bethlehem to the tenderness of a Shepherd, to King Messiah who is the Man of Peace, to the Deliverer of the peoples from the Assyrian who will come into their land with the sword and treads within their borders. The second part of the prophecy is still to come. It cross-references to the seven headed beast followed by the eighth and last head which is the rule of the Antichrist, referred to in Micah as the Assyrian, it is he who invades Israel. This refers to the future time written of in Rev.13:1-10 where v.4b reads *"Who is like the beast, and who can wage war against it?"* BSB. Only Jesus is able to wage this war.

The prophesy in Micah 5:1-6 is referred to in Matt.2:4-6 which reads *'And when he had assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of My people Israel.'*" BSB.

The advisers who told Herod would also be the priests and scribes to the people, yet we read nothing more about the news being passed to the people. There is no reference to them preparing for the glorious arrival of the King. For 30 years they could have prepared the people for the days to come. Instead, we read that later the Pharisees and Scribes, in the main, rejected the ministry of Jesus.

Yet Herod was someone who took the prophesies seriously. He was cunning because he knew the importance of keeping the Jews on side, also that if he could uncover these prophesies and the chief priests and scribes would divulge them then he would act on them accordingly. He understood not only the smallness of the child but also the greatness of his destiny as a Ruler in Israel. He realised the significance of the prophesy and its threat to him, so he enquired when the star had first appeared. This had devastating consequences for it is recorded that later that when filled with rage at having been deceived by the Magi, Herod had killed all the boys of Bethlehem who were two years old and under. In this cruel event, though it is unlikely that he enquired of others on the matter, he had fulfilled the prophesy of Jeremiah 31:1-25 especially v.15 which reads *'This is what the LORD says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."*" BSB This prophesy is cited in Matt.2:18 and it is likely that after the event in Bethlehem the same religious leaders who had told Herod of the prophesy of Micah 5:1-6 also dug to find the prophesy in Jeremiah, which they would have been cognisant of so that it became part of the oral tradition at that time. However, by the beginning of Jesus' ministry some 30 years later there may have been a different set of ruling Pharisees as they did not recognise the ministry of Jesus as being the fulfilment of so many prophesies. However, Jesus taught his followers well so that by the time Matthew wrote his gospel in Judea traditionally around 37AD, he had been taught how to discern the prophesies of old. Though knowledgeable of them, the religious leaders often failed to realise their significance. It was only the application of the Holy Spirit to the words of old that brought them to life and much of this illumination came to Matthew and his contemporaries after the fire and anointing came upon them, first through the ministry of Jesus but then too in his stead when the Holy Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost. Luke 24:48,49 reads *'And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.'* KJV Those whose hearts were open, dug deep, found the answers, and realised their significance.

History records that Herod was known to contact the Temple elite on matters of destiny. Simon Sebag Montefiore in his book 'Jerusalem, The Biography' gives an excellent historical account of the man. The scriptures record that prophecy is for the unbeliever as well as believers. Paul records in 1Cor.14:24-25 *'But if an unbeliever or uninstructed person comes in while everyone is prophesying, he will be convicted and called to account by all, and the secrets of his heart will be made known. So he will fall facedown and worship God, proclaiming, "God is truly among you!"'* BSB

Like Herod the people also took the news of the prophets seriously, they recognised John the Baptist as a prophet and Jesus as the Messiah, and it was the common people who were both Jews and Gentiles who knew and understood him for in John 4:1-26 we read *'The*

woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us." Jesus answered, "I who speak to you am He." And in John 7:42 we read "Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" KJV

Yet in the case of Herod, as with Pharaoh, his heart had become so callous and hardened that he put in place a defence against the overrule of Yahweh God and His plans. He was corrupted in his vision and thought that he could overrule in the affairs of men. This was a seed of Satan which took root in his heart. However, God overrules in the affairs of both men and fallen angels and though there may be delay there is never denial in his ways and works.

Now is the time to seek to know the prophesies of old

Now is surely the right season to re-visit the prophesies of His coming. 2 Kings 23:2 reads 'And he went up to the house of the LORD with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as well as the priests and the prophets--all the people small and great--and in their hearing he read all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD.' As shared by prophets today, we stand on the shoulders of giants to know of those who have gone before, to proclaim the hidden truths of old for our hearing and to be heeded as a warning and for encouragement too as we face these distressing and uncertain times.

As an example, the writer is blessed to have known Bill Turner www.prophetbillturner.com who was both humble and gracious enough to have served fellow Christians by retrieving from the depths of the ocean of Father's heart hidden treasures and prophesies which have been there all along but now come alive under the anointing of His Spirit for us today.

1 Cor 14:1-4 Prophecy and Tongues '1Earnestly pursue love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. 2For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries in the Spirit. 3But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification, encouragement, and comfort. 4The one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.' BSB

2 Peter 1:19-21 'We also have the word of the prophets as confirmed beyond doubt. And you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation. For no such prophecy was ever brought forth by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.' BSB

The prophets keep on asking of Messiah's coming

Isaiah 63:1 *Who is this?* v.2 *Wherefore art thou?* v.11 *Where is he?* v. 17 *Why hast thou?*

Bill Turner's talk on 'Puzzles' notes the parables and dark sayings e.g., of Daniel, Revelation as key to equipping the saints and foiling the enemy who cannot comprehend the truth. This is one reason why the gift of tongues is so important to equip the saints in the last days, the mind may often be unfruitful, but the bastion of prayer is very great in the spirit realm in tongues and it batters the kingdom of darkness, who cannot comprehend either the depth and knowledge of tongues nor the dark sayings and puzzles of Jesus, but we His prophets know our God and his truth shines from above to overwhelm the enemy of souls.

In this way too prophets and saints are able to discern 'the signs of the times'

Prophecies simply frame the landscape. At one National Trust site is placed a frame but no picture, instead the frame overlooks a valley and by looking at the frame you see beyond it the valley and landscape which it frames.

I have seen many rainbows, many signs of promise and prophecies fulfilled and yet to be fulfilled.

The time is now at hand, nearby....

Whilst Jesus was with the people. He was able to work, Luke 13:12, Luke 24:29

John 9:4,5: *'While it is daytime, we must do the works of Him who sent Me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'*

1 Peter 4:7 *'The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear-minded and sober, so that you can pray'*

Today the bridegroom is waiting, our hope is to come, we are to 'leave father and mother' and gain much more and understanding of the kingdom to come. We are to move on from the milk of the word to the meat. 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Hebrews 5:11 – 6:11... *'We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain, because you are dull of hearing. Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to re-teach you the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food!*

For everyone who lives on milk is still an infant, inexperienced in the message of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained their senses to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore, let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.'

John 7:37-39, Hebrews 6:7-9,12 *'For land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is tended receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless, and its curse is imminent. In the end it will be burned. Even though we speak like this, beloved, we are convinced of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation... imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.'*

Persecution has dramatically increased against Christians in C21

There is empirical evidence to show that persecution has dramatically increased against Christians, particularly since 2021.

The Open Doors World Watch List shows a marked increase in persecution 2014-2019/20 such that countries now need 21% more points to be included in the top 50 countries on the list and there are now 11 countries in the Extreme Levels of Perception Category compared with just one in 2014. Furthermore, globally, three key areas are identified as sources of that persecution 1) Atheistic States e.g., North Korea, China, Vietnam 2) Religious Nationalism e.g., Islam in Iran, Pakistan; Hinduism in India 3) Extreme Islamic ideology.

The theologian and academic Ron Boyd-MacMillan has studied these trends for many years and comments that the level of persecution against Christians tended to stabilise in the late 20C through to 2012, though from that time on has dramatically increased year on year. Two events occurred at that time that may significant tailback consequences, though there are many more that have compounded since. The first of note is that the civil war in Syria began in 2011. This war built on the de-stabilisation that took place in the neighbouring country of Iraq following the Iraq War there in 2003-2008. This has released a significant new threat of Islamic Extremism against Christians. The second is the rise of autocratic ruler who operate under the guise of secular nationalism, examples being North Korea and China. It is notable that in China Xi Jin-Ping came to lead the Chinese Communist Party in 2012 and in many ways has turned the clock back 50 years to the time of Chairman Mao Zedong in terms of religious freedoms offered to Christians. He has continually increased his hold on political power and removed time limits on his term limits for the leadership of the CCP. Russia has also seen the rise of government by autocracy when on 06 April 2021 legislation there was passed allowing him to hold office for two additional six-year terms, opening the possibility for him to stay in power until 2036. The 68-year-old Russian leader, who has already been in power for more than two decades. As well as the rise of state nationalism there has been a rise of religious nationalism as seen in Turkey under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan who came to power in 2014, and in India since the BJP party came to power in 2014.

Many other factors hold sway in the mix of potency brought against Christians and as we approach the End-times, like the weather-vain sitting on the top of a house, the wind changes and all things suddenly point in a different direction. The other key factor which we see as the End-times approaching is in respect of the litmus paper of global events and that is with regards to the nation and state of Israel. As Bill Turner relates in his video 'Teaching on the Book of Revelation' (Edited).divx, as the End-times approach then Biblical prophesies relate to the coming together, the re-connecting of Christian teaching and purpose with the nation of Israel and its part in those prophesies. The two are inter-twinned, in-separable to the to the picture as we see the whole.

Note Satan's third temptation of Jesus was the temptation of national dominance, Luke 4:5-8 *'Then the devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. "I will give You authority over all these kingdoms and all their glory," he said. "For it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish. So if You worship me, it will all be Yours." But Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'"* Instead of compromise with the nations, Jesus is the One who brings judgement upon them. Satan knew that the Messiah would bring judgement on the nations, not compromise; hence this severe temptation for Jesus to succeed without going to the Cross or fulfilling the prophesies. However, Jesus knew the prophesies and this bread from the Father sustained him against the Slanderer's temptations.

God is speaking today through the mouths of the prophets (Acts 3:18)

The Coming of the Messiah was the key-note speech, the main-focus, the point of reference for all of the prophets See Acts 3:21 *'Heaven must take Him in until the time comes for the restoration of all things, which God announced long ago through His holy prophets.'* BSB

Patriarchs foretold his coming:

Jacob prophesied Jesus Gen 49:10 *'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.'*

Prophets spoke the signs Isaiah 7:14 *'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and she will call Him Immanuel.'*

Angels came as messengers with the news Luke 1:30-32 *'30So the angel (Gabriel) told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. 31 Behold, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David...'* BSB

Their accuracy is beyond human reasoning; even the advisers of Herod knew of the power of prophesy, they reasoned from the ancient scriptures that the Messiah king had been foretold and was to be born in Bethlehem

Men and women were foretold: Joseph: *'And having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, 23and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."*

Matthew wrote: *'17In all, then, there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.'* Matt 1:17 BSB His timing is perfect.

Crowds of people knew: Matt 21:11: *'The crowds replied, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

We stand on the shoulders of giants; as did Peter, in his address to the crowds in Acts 2:14-36 where referred to the patriarch David (Psalm 16:1-11), the prophecies of Joel before declaring in v.36 *'Therefore let all Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!'*

As of old, men and angels declare. Daniel sought God as a follow on from reading of the book of **Jeremiah** to know when the 70 years had passed for the release of the people from Babylon; and in seeking to know, received the revelation of a much more over-arching time frame, the coming of the Messiah, Him being 'cut off' and Him coming again at the end of the age. Yet another prophet, **Nehemiah**, became the mouthpiece through which the time clock of His coming was to come to pass. Note **Gabriel's** Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks:

Daniel 9:24-26

...24Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city to stop their transgression, to put an end to sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Place. 25Know and understand this: From the issuance of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until the Messiah, the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of distress.26Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and will have nothing. Then the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood, and until the end there will be war; desolations have been decreed....

It is as though the prophets of old engaged in an amazing 'dance' with the Spirit of the living God so that all kept in tune rhythm and motion. Together the true prophets added each to the whole. We too are invited in to join in this corporate dance 1 Cor 14:1-4. As with the maypole dance each prophet's ribbon adds to the beauty of the pattern down the pole. Together a story is told. Let us join in the maypole dance, he is glad to offer us a ribbon, we dance with our ribbon under and over the other ribbons to create together the patterns for

today. The tight patterns on the maypole represent the overlapping prophesies '*... so that you might understand that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*' Deut. 8:2, Matt 4:4, Lu 4:4.

We too can engage with the Spirit of the living God. We too can find the answers to these puzzles and 'dark sayings' for our day. John 1:5 '*And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*' No word shall ever fail. Neither shall his word fail for this age.

PART TWO: THE FULNESS OF TIME

Yahweh passes judgement by weight and measure, and in the fulness of time, for He always gives mankind opportunity to be reconciled to Him, when the bowl of iniquity is full, then it is weighed in His balances and when found light of substance it is finished by division.

Dan.5:24-28 reads: '*Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians*' KJV

The writing interpreted reads: 'NUMBERED, NUMBERED, WEIGHED, DIVIDED' for God had numbered or measured and had weighed the kingdom of Belshazzar and it was found wanting in necessary weight, i.e., deficient in moral worth, so He finished it by division and gave it to others. Yahweh sees the kingdoms of the nations, He numbers them, and weighs them in His balances, and, finding them being deficient, he judges them, and will divide them. Throughout history we see its effects. Today too, nations are reaching fruition for judgement or blessing. In His hands the nations will be numbered, weighed, and put in balances and when found deficient will be judged. In the fulness of time, the nations are found ripe for gathering. So, let us consider this time.

God is always on time for He moves in time and determines its completeness

Not before or after, not random or separate from our times...He engages with us as if we are in a beautiful dance, He so wants our fellowship to enjoy with us and us with Him... he is longing for us to know Him as we are known of Him 1 Cor 13:12 '*Now we see but a dim reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*'

A. Until the end of the age of grace, the end of the 'last days'

Gen 49:1 '*And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.*' Dakes reads' this is 'the first of 33 times in scripture'... The last days here could only refer to days before the 1st and 2nd advents of the Messiah'

B. Until the fullness of the time had come

God not only moves in time but also determines the completeness of time for Gal 4:4-7 reads: '*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, having been born of a woman, having been born under the Law, that He might redeem those under the Law, so that we might receive the divine adoption as sons. And because you are*

sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, also an heir through God.' BSB

Eph.1:10 reads: 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him' KJV

God's Judgments on the Nations

Isaiah 34:5 '**When My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens**, then it will come down upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction. BSB

Isaiah 63:4

For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and the year of My redemption had come.
BSB

2/10/20 A few days ago the Lord showed me that the Fullness of God's sword must be filled up in heaven BEFORE coming to bring judgement on the earth

THE FULNESS OF TIME THE FULNESS OF THE SWORD WILL BRING THE FULNESS OF THE END

Its as if:

1. THE FULNESS OF TIME IS NECESSARY BEFORE THE BLESSING OR JUDGEMENT

- 1.1 Q. How much longer do saints need to wait for God to bring judgement on the earth?
A. Until the full number of fellow servants and brethren were killed... should be fulfilled

The Fifth Seal: The Martyrs - Rev:9-11 BSB

9And when the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony they had upheld. 10And they cried out in a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true (the Holy and the True -YLT), until You avenge our blood and judge those who dwell upon the earth?"

*11Then each of them was given a white robe and told to rest a little while longer, **until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers, were killed**, just as they had been killed. Or as KJV reads: 'that should be killed as they were, **should be fulfilled.**'*

Its as though the banqueting house must be full before the last days are ushered in:

Matt 22:10 NKJV

*So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. **And the wedding hall was filled with guests.***

- 1.2 His SWORD must first be filled with WRATH before coming on the earth – the evils of our time are filling up God's SWORD. – Once FULL He will bring judgement on EDOM (Is. 34:6).

There is a sense that the fulness of God's wrath is directly correlated to the fulness of iniquity on the earth. As the time approaches, and the 'FULLNESS OF INIQUITY ABOUND' i.e. it becomes ripe and complete for the picking, like fruit from a tree of evil, the numbers will be complete, and HE WILL COME

Is.31:8-9 - Assyria will fall by no human SWORD. The SWORD OF GOD will strike them, and they will panic and flee

*“Then Assyria will fall,
but not by the sword of man;
a sword will devour them,
but not one made by mortals.
They will flee before the sword,
and their young men will be put to forced labor.
Their rock will pass away for fear,
and **their princes will panic at the sight of the battle standard,**”
declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion,
whose furnace is in Jerusalem.’ BSB*

But how long do we wait?

But see Gen 15:16 Where they had to wait 400 years for judgement to come on the Amorites: ‘

Gen. 15:13-16 *‘Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not their own, and **they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.** But I will judge the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will depart with many possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a ripe old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, **for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.**”’*

Note that it was only when ‘the iniquity of the Amorites was complete that the sword not made with human hands came upon them’

COMPARE THIS PASSAGE TO Rev. 6:9-11 and though we might ‘go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a ripe old age,’ LATER, AT THE RIGHT SEASON’ the time was complete to bring forth the judgement of God

THE FULNESS OF GOD’S WRATH COMES AT THE FULNESS OF THE AGE WHEN THE SWORD OF WRATH IS FULL See Rev. 6:9-11 v.10 ‘How long O Lord’ v.11 ‘should be fulfilled’

Rev. 7:9-17

9*After this I looked and saw a multitude too large to count, from every nation and tribe and people and tongue, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands...*

*....13*Then one of the elders addressed me: “These in white robes,” he asked, “who are they, and where have they come from?”

14“Sir,” I answered, “you know.” So he replied, “**These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation (Gr. THE TRIBULATION, THE GREAT ‘ONE’ – the last 31/2yrs of this age); they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**
15*For this reason, they are before the throne of God....*

*17*For the Lamb in the centre of the throne will be their shepherd.(Ps.23:1) **‘He will lead them to springs of living water,’**(Is.49:10) and **‘God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’**(Is.25:8)”

The living (everlasting) fountain of waters (not available to us on earth yet)

Rev. 15:2-4 *'those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name'*

Rev. 15:3 *and they sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb*

Note the song of Moses sung after the Red Sea crossing –

VICTORY AFTER TRIBULATION. Miriam's song and dance **which is also the song of the Lamb.**

Song of Moses, victory over Pharaoh Ex 15:1-21

1Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea....

20And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. 21And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Cp. Deut 3:2 2 *'And the LORD said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand;'*

Cp. VICTORY AFTER THE CROSS ... AND AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION:

Col: 2:15 15 *'And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.'*

NOW, IN THE FULNESS OF TIME THAT YOUR JUDGEMENTS WILL BE MADE MANIFEST:

Rev 15:4 *'for thy judgments are made manifest.'* BSB

THE SET TIME CAME FOR THE DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT, FOR CHRIST TO COME AT CALVARY, LIKEWISE THE SET TIME WILL COME FOR THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Only after the set time had come and the iniquity of Egypt had become fully filled up and ripe against the Hebrews, that the set time came for the people's release. God knew how long this would take and gave his word to his prophets to speak it out as an encouragement and proof that he was with them. Likewise, in preparation for the Coming of the Messiah and Calvary so in at the time of the Great Tribulation approaches very near, Jesus, the Lamb will give his word to his prophets to speak it out as an encouragement and proof that he was with them.

Rev 1:3

'Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear and obey what is written in it, because the time is near.' BSB

Rev 4:1

'After this I looked and saw a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had previously heard speak to me like a trumpet was saying, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after these things."

BUT NO ONE, NO MAN, NO ANGEL COULD OPEN THE SEAL AND INTERPRET THE BOOK, NO CHARLATAN COULD OPEN THE PROPHECIES, ONLY THE LAMB WHO WAS SLAIN, HE SHOWS JOHN AND THE PROPHETS THE REVELATION...

Rev 5:1-5

1Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the One seated on the throne. It had writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. 2And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

3But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look inside it. 4And I began to weep bitterly, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look inside it.

5Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed to open the scroll and its seven seals."

BEFORE TIME IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES, THE CUP AND SWORD OF HIS WRATH was not manifest, BUT THEY WERE FILLING UP with his wrath as the evils on mankind filled up. THE FILLING UP OF HIS WRATH IS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE FILLING UP OF INIQUITY...

NO PRAYER IS LOST, NO INIQUITY IS FORGOTTEN -

Rev 6:10 *'And they cried out in a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You avenge our blood and judge those who dwell upon the earth?"* BSB

Rev6:11 *'Then each of them was given a white robe and told to rest a little while longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers, were killed, just as they had been killed.'*

ONCE THE CUP IS FULL THEN IT BECOMES MANIFEST- SEEN AT THE END TIME OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION JUDGEMENT OF CHRIST AND HIS GLORIOUS COMING. It

cannot show before because it is not full, the multitudes of times of tribulation throughout history have all added to the filling up of the cup, but soon it will be full, then it will be manifest and then poured out in judgement on the earth

UNTIL THE APPOINTED TIME HAS COME:

The remembrance of the prophecies of old are paramount to the peoples of the earth for in the last days their remembrance will give a sure light of guidance a rudder to the ships as they navigate through the treacherous waters of the last days. For the set time has very nearly come. Ps. 102:12,13 *'But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations. You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favour her, Yes, the set time, has come.'* NKJV. Or as it reads in NIV, ESV, NASB and others *'For the appointed time has come.'*

The set time referred to is the Second Advent which is to come: Mt. 16:27, 24:29-31, 25:31-46, 2 Thes. 1:7-10, Jude 14, Rev. 19:11-21

PART THREE: KEY DETERMINATES OF THE 'APPOINTED TIME':

1) THE FILLING OF THE GOLDEN CENSER HOLDING THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS APPEARS TO BE A STRONG DETERMINATE IN THE COMING FORTH OF THE JUDGEMENTS IN THE LAST DAYS:

The Lamb is Worthy Rev. 5:7-9

And He came and took the scroll from the right hand of the One seated on the throne. 8 When He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song: "Worthy are You to take the scroll and open its seals, because You were slain, and by Your blood You purchased for God those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation

The Seventh Seal: Rev. 8:3-5

...Then another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, rose up before God from the hand of the angel. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; and there were peals of thunder, and rumblings, and flashes of lightning, and an earthquake'

2) THE GREAT BANQUET IS HAS A FULL NUMBER IN ATTENDANCE

The 'great banquet' has 'invited many guests' though cannot commence until there are enough guests there 'so that my house will be full'

Mt. 22:1-14, Lu. 14:15-23

The Parable of the Banquet: *'When one of those reclining with Him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is everyone who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."*

But Jesus replied, "A certain man prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. When it was time for the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

But one after another they all began to make excuses. The first one said, 'I have bought a field, and I need to go see it. Please excuse me.'

Another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out. Please excuse me.'

Still another said, 'I have married a wife, so I cannot come.'

The servant returned and reported all this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.'

'Sir,' the servant replied, 'what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.'

So the master told his servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. For I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will taste my banquet.'"

3) THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

As with the first Coming, there are signs that accompany the times Mt. 12:39, Lu. 11:29,30. Mt.16:3,4: *"When evening comes, you say, 'The weather will be fair, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but not the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation demands a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.'" Then He left them and went away.'* BSB

The sign of Noah

Mt. 24:37-41 *'As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark. 39And they were oblivious, until the flood came and swept them all away. So will it be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.'*

The lesson of the fig tree

Mt. 24:32-35 *'Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.'*

4) THE UNPREPAREDNESS OF MANY

Mt. 24:36 *'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.'* Mt. 24: 42-44 *'42Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day on which your Lord will come. 43But understand this: If the homeowner had known in which watch of the night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44For this reason, you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect.'*

5) THE NEED FOR 'FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANTS' I.E. TEACHERS TO GIVE 'OTHERS THEIR FOOD AT THE PROPER TIME'

Mt. 24: 45-47 *'Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household, to give the others their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge*

of all his possessions.’ As in the days of the Acts 6, there was a need for ‘wise’ leaders to oversee both material food and spiritual provisions for the people.

6) WATCH AND BE READY

There is an urgent need for clear peaching on the prophetic word today.

Mt.24: 42-44 *‘Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day on which your Lord will come. But understand this: If the homeowner had known in which watch of the night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. For this reason, you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect.’*

7) THE WARNING TO THE UN-PREPARED PEOPLES AND NATIONS

Some who are called servants of God are wicked through the reasonings of their heart i.e., false teaching to suit their own ends such that it results in them beating with malice other Christian servants and being placed with the hypocrites and excluded. These ‘wicked servants’ are hypocrites because of their self-indulgence at the expense of ‘fellow servants’.

Mt. 24:48-51 *‘But suppose that servant is wicked and says in his heart, ‘My master will be away a long time.’ And he begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not anticipate. Then he will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*

This same parable is included in Mark 13:32-37 and Luke 12:35-47 *‘Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning. Then you will be like servants waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds on watch when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve and will have them recline at the table, and he himself will come and wait on them. Even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night and finds them alert, those servants will be blessed.’*

Jesus prophesied that in the last days before his return there would be a real issue of un-preparedness. He goes on to say: *‘But understand this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect’*”

“Lord,” said Peter, “are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?” BSB

Jesus answers Peter by explaining that the faithful and wise managers are his appointed servants and they have been given the knowledge of his return. However, the delay caught out the un-prepared servants. It is important not to read the last verse only of this parable, i.e. that *‘The master of that servant will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not anticipate.’* But rather to consider context that some servants knew of the ‘proper time’ Verses 42-44 read *‘And the Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their portion at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.’*

This servant was aware that the Master might come at any time even after the second or third watch. It is notable that Jesus again and again refers to time periods in his prophecies, and this is seen so here.

For those un-prepared servants, then their house was broken into, they had not protection, the reason being that they were un-prepared for the delay in his coming. Verse 39-40 reads *'But understand this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect.'*

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record the parable of the un-prepared servants though John did not. However, in Rev. 3:1-6 the letter to the church in Sardis makes clear that here was a church which had resources but was neither watchful nor prepared for the last days for he writes in v. 1-3 *'I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.'* KJV Like the parables of Jesus, this passage makes the same reference to the supplies having been made available, yet them not being appropriated by the people such that they are un-prepared for the events of those times.

The reason for these warnings of un-preparedness was lack of understanding of prophetic teaching and a lack of understanding and appropriating the power sent by Jesus after his accession, the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

To be prepared we read in Luke 12:35 *'Let your loins be girded about, and [your] lights burning.'* KJV Strong's comments on this verse as those 'dressed in readiness' with their 'oil-fed portable 'lamp', usually set on a stand' burning. To be girded and protected around with correct prophetic teaching and supplied by the 'dunamis' the self-generating power of the Holy Spirit to stand firm in those days. Paul makes a similar reference in Eph. 6:14 *'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth'* and makes it clear that that without this truth to un-wrap then you will not have the 'full armour of God' to stand firm in those days Eph. 6:11 *'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.'*

The key cross reference to Luke 12:35 *'and [your] lights burning'* is Matt. 25:1-13 The parable of ten virgins where Matthew places this parable directly after the prophecies of Jesus following the specific request of the disciples in v. Mat. 24:3 *'And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?'* KJV

This parable likewise refers to the need to *'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.'* Matt 25:13 KJV

It also makes clear that there is a delay prior to his coming during which time the whole church slumbers and sleeps for it reads in Matt 25:3-5 *'They that [were] foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.'* KJV. The delay of his coming had stupefied them and nullified their contribution to the importance of those hours. In addition, 50% of the expected attendants at the arrival of the Bridegroom, an allegory of the Christian

church in the end times, are both un-prepared and unready for the coming Bridegroom and Jesus explains the reason. All had lamps, but there was a lack of the oil of prophetic understanding in those days. The extra necessary, the reserve which could have kept them through to the midnight hour was lacking.

The power of scripture becomes apparent when anointed with the Holy Spirit. This is paramount in the darkness. John 9:3 *'Night is coming, when no one can work'*. It is at this time when correct prophetic teaching anointed by the Holy Spirit is needed to supply the people of God; John 14:17,26, 1 John 2:20, 1 Cor. 2:12, 2 Cor. 1:21.

It is when the word of God and the Spirit of God come together that change is witnessed. This always happens, for the Holy Spirit is a creating Spirit.

It is recorded of Smith Wigglesworth, in the year of his death in 1947, that he gave a prophesy to the churches in Britain <https://ctntp.uk/smith-wigglesworths-prophecy/> which included these words *'When the word and the Spirit come together, there will be the biggest move of the Holy Spirit that the nations, and indeed, the world have ever seen.'*

It is this principle, the principle that the word of God with the anointing of the Holy Spirit that will supply the people of God in the latter days.

The need to be girded about with the word of truth and baptised and anointed by the Holy Spirit is always paramount, the more so as the day approaches.

The warnings to unprepared peoples and nations are mirrored in the parable of the Great Banquet referred to earlier in this study.

8) WARNING TO THE CHURCHES

Revelation 2-3 includes warnings to seven types of churches. Rev 2:2-4 *'I know your deeds, your labour and your perseverance... but I have this against you'*

Ephesus Rev 2:4,5 *'you have abandoned your first love'... 'Repent and perform the deeds you did at first.'* Pray for revival, your source is the oil of the *'lampstand'* and these are the words of Him who *'walks among the seven golden lampstands'*. *Seek Him, the source, otherwise 'if you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.'*

Smyrna Rev 2:10 *'do not fear what you are about to suffer'* The persecuted Church

Pergamon Rev 2:13 *'I know where you live, where the throne of Satan sits.'* As in the days of Daniel, wicked angels sit over territories. The Prince of Persia is the present-day Iran, Satan will sit wherever wicked servants will do his bidding. The warning is to turn from and not hold to false teachings e.g., Balaam who was influenced by the love of reward to become a deceiver and the Nicolaitans who likewise cast a stumbling block before the church of God because they condoned idol and sexual liberties which brought destruction on the people.

Thyatira Rev 2:20-24 Again warnings against false teaching and false prophets. How to operate in a deliverance ministry. *'You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads My servants'... 'But I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned the so-called deep things of Satan: I will place no further burden upon you'* There is a profound need in the end times to sift and call out the teaching of false prophets who have polluted society with error for the

past 2,000 years. Instead *'hold fast to what you have until I come. And to the one who overcomes and continues in My work until the end, I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron sceptre and shatter them like pottery— just as I have received authority from My Father. And I will give him the morning star.'* Those who rightly discern prophecy will be given spiritual authority such that they will be able to operate in the ministry of deliverance.

Sardis Rev 3:2 *'I know your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive, yet you are dead. Wake up and strengthen what remains, which was about to die; for I have found your deeds incomplete in the sight of My God. Remember, then, what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know the hour when I will come upon you.'*

This type of church has a wealth of resources which is like many churches today in wealthy nations; but their resources are buried and hidden. The church is a repository of treasures, both spiritual and material, but these resources are hidden from sight, being buried. Instead, Christians are called to be stewards of the truth, to exercise their faith and unlock their storehouses to feed and equip the people. In this prophesy Jesus sees that He has provided for the people and their understanding of events, yet he calls them to account and tells them that because they have kept hidden their bounty and buried their talents then their deeds are incomplete. Therefore they are told by the messenger to John to *'Wake up and strengthen what remains, which was about to die'*. The church might consider its heritage as lost and gone; but this is not so. Like the revivals of old, which have been buried by the sands of time, the message is that their strength is not lost. The call to them is to *'Remember, then, what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent.'*

It is imperative that the people of God now open the storehouses of scripture to feed the people with the grain of good prophesy given to them so that the people can be fed with good guidance and strong direction in the coming days. For, as in the days of Joseph when he was appointed by Pharaoh to oversee Egypt, so today. Pharaoh's dream was for his nation, likewise the message is for today. For as written in Genesis 41:28-32 this is what Joseph told Pharaoh: *'It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will devastate the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, since the famine that follows it will be so severe. Moreover, because the dream was given to Pharaoh in two versions, the matter has been decreed by God, and He will carry it out shortly'* BSB. Joseph knew the importance of storing up reserves in granaries ready for the appointed time, and that time fast approaches us too. We too must use the grain from the storehouse, for there are very needy people who would respond to a discourse on these matters, for the dearth of heavenly truth and spiritual knowledge will be sought but rarely found as these End-times rapidly fill up. Though we might read these words as a 'type' of the events soon to come, they are significant in that the principle contained herein is true and are written in scripture for our benefit too. Gen.41:25-27 reads: *'At this, Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven ripe heads of grain are seven years. The dreams have the same meaning. Moreover, the seven thin, ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind—they are seven years of famine''* BSB. The prophesy given to Pharaoh still has meaning and life today.

Likewise Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (Dan.2:1-12; Dan.4:4-18) were for the nations. Both he and Pharaoh are heathen leader kings who became part of the fabric of the history of End-time prophesy and the perspective given to them by Yahweh- Roi, the 'God who Sees', is valuable to an understanding of the overarching sovereignty of God in relation to the nations. See reference to the '*stone being cut out of the mountain without human hands*'. Dan.2:44-46 reads "*In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will shatter all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself stand forever. And just as you saw a stone being cut out of the mountain without human hands, and it shattered the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold, so the great God has told the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its interpretation is trustworthy.*' At this, King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, paid homage to Daniel, and ordered that an offering of incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, "*Your God is truly the God of gods and Lord of kings, the Revealer of Mysteries, since you were able to reveal this mystery*" BSB.

Then in Daniel 4:4-18 Nebuchadnezzar relates how '*As I lay on my bed, I also saw in the visions of my mind a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He called out in a loud voice...*'(v.13) and the watcher (angel) relayed to him the vision of the tree, which was cut down and branches chopped off. The fall of the king was followed by restoration for Dan.4:37 reads '*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for all His works are true and all His ways are just. And He is able to humble those who walk in pride*' BSB.

The point is that if God cannot use religious leaders, then he will use heathen kings, and even a donkey will do when all else fails (Num.22:28-30).

For we are the generation that see these signs. Mark 13:28-31 reads '*Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things happening, know that He is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away*' BSB. We are the generation who have the storehouses full and with plenty, yet soon will come the seven years of dearth when '*the abundance in the land will not be remembered*' (Gen.41:31) for yet to come are days spoken of by Jesus in Matt.24:21 '*For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again*' BSB and as spoken of by Daniel and John, seven years of trials upon the earth such that Matt.24:22 '*If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short*' BSB.

There are many signs today of a gathering storm. For example, on the Sky News program 'Into the Grey Zone' Sat 01 May 2021 7.30pm - 8.00pm, a former UK General was quoted as saying in relation to State sponsored threat of cyberwarfare from Russia: '*Enjoy the gathering storm, because bad news is coming*'. Today, in addition to considering the prophesies of old, we need to be aware of the 'signs of the times.

Ezekiel knew the profound nature of his calling as a watchman for the nation of Israel for Yahweh made clear to him the significance of 'blowing the trumpet' as a warning to the people. Ez.36:5-7 reads '*Since he (the person who hears the trumpet warning) heard the sound of the horn but failed to heed the warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had heeded the warning, he would have saved his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and fails to blow the horn to warn the people, and the sword comes and takes away*

a life, then that one will be taken away in his iniquity, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.' As for you, O son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word from My mouth and give them the warning from Me' BSB.

Also, let us too, remember our calling and our heritage. Remember for example the revivals of old, how they came about, and their impact upon those societies in those days. Each generation has received a call to 'blow the trumpet'.

Also, too, where revival once was then there are often some remains of this heritage. Like the reading of someone's Last Will and Testament the inheritance once received has with it certain responsibilities, and this responsibly falls on us, the people of God, who are repositories of this theme.

Therefore, it is up to the people of God to consider again their calling and to revisit the prophesies again with prayer and praise for there is still much water there yet to be released for the healing of the nations and as a supply to the people. Let us open again the wells from which the streams of living water flow and let us go on this adventure to hear what then Lord of all the earth has to say to us.

Let us not be content with blocked wells and mis-understood prophesies which help no-one. It is our responsibility to see that the wells are as clear as possible and to address wherever possible false prophesy and error which would block the flow of the Spirit and leave people without their rightful supply of water.

Genesis 26:15 reads 'For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.' Ellicott comments that 'In the East the digger of a well is regarded as a public benefactor; but the Philistines stopped those that Abraham had digged, probably because they regarded his possession of them... as an intrusion... and with envy.' Genesis 26:18 reads 'And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.' KJV

In this way the enemy tried to drive Abraham's son Isaac away, however we read forward from Genesis 26 that Isaac did not give up, instead he dug more wells. The prophetic word of God speaks to us today in the same terms. New springs of living waters need to rise again from the old wells for they bring refreshment, clarity of wisdom and thought, and as in times past, revival too.

It might be that where the kingdom of darkness holds sway then there might remain spiritual structures of old which need to be broken to bring forth the refreshing streams of God. Reinhard Bonke 1940 - 2019, founder of Christ for all nations and known as the 'Billy Graham of Africa', was a German Pentecostal evangelist with a particular ministry of healings. He records on one occasion when preaching to a large crowd of people in a remote part of Africa, where the gospel had to his knowledge never been preached before, discerned in his spirit and through the anointing of the Holy Spirit the crumbling of spiritual structures of darkness, structures which he discerned had been there since before the time of Calvary. How glorious that through the preaching of the Word and with the power of the Holy Spirit we can be mighty for God to the pulling down of strongholds! 2 Cor. 10:4 reads *'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds'. KJV*

However, the church of Sardis is recorded as not being awake, it was un-prepared and at ease. The church is not recorded as being either persecuted for their faith nor in need of resources.

They were like the slothful servant in Mt. 25:26 The Parable of the Talents: *'So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what belongs to you.'* *'You wicked, lazy servant! replied his master. 'You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed. Then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received it back with interest.'* Here too their self-interest and self-sufficiency causes them to sleep. They have *'a reputation for being alive, yet you are dead.'* They have the resources to strengthen their fellow-servants but do not do so. Their lack of spiritual exercise causes them sleep. The Western Church today in the main has resources of teaching materials and material wealth which is not being shared with the *'fellow-servants'* where there is a famine of resources. As in the days of Pharaoh, the seven years of plenty is only given to us to provide for the seven years of famine still to come Gen. 41:29 following *'It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will devastate the land'*. Like Joseph we too are called to *'Wake up and strengthen what remains, which was about to die'*. We are called upon to open up the storehouses, to release the provisions both materially and spiritually to support suffering *'fellow-servants'* John 4:34 *'So the disciples asked one another, "Could someone have brought Him food?" Jesus explained, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months until the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ripe for harvest.'* Jesus' eyes were always on the farther horizon. His gaze was that of a prophet. Like the patriarchs and prophets, who often viewed Millennial events e.g., Isaiah 65:17-25 The New Heaven and the New Earth. The ministry of Jesus is much evidenced by prophetic giftings as in John 5:19: *'So Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing by Himself, unless He sees the Father doing it. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does. The Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does. And to your amazement, He will show Him even greater works than these.'* Like the seers of old, such as Elijah on Carmel, Jesus saw the events in vision then operated in faith to put them into effect. In this way too Jesus has made known through the mighty angel, likely Gabriel, the visions of John as recorded in the Book of Revelation. The strength of the Western Church is to use the time and giftings wisely, to not slumber in a stupor, but to open the *'storehouses'* of heaven now for the people of God, both in their own country where they still have certain freedoms, and in other countries too where their *'fellow-servants'* are persecuted because of their identification with Christ.

It is to the churches and to the Christians who are also called his *'servants'* that Jesus directs his warnings of un-preparedness. The church at Sardis received this warning but Jesus foresaw in vision and received and delivered to us as recorded in the scriptures prophetic knowledge to help us understand those days. As the church of Sardis is un-prepared for His Coming so are others. As recorded in Matt. 24:42-44 these churches and people do not keep watch and the coming of the Son of Man surprised them. They are like homeowners; they have the wealth, but their house is broken into. Matt 24:42-44 *'Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day on which your Lord will come. But understand this: If the homeowner had known in which watch of the night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. For this reason, you also*

must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect' Jesus is not the thief, rather it is the un-preparedness of many servants who, even though they have available the repositories of the scriptures and the prophecies fore-told are un-prepared as the time passes both the second and third watches of the night.

The deceit of those days and lack of understanding combined to cause them to slumber. A lack of understanding of the great events of the last days too brings short-sightedness, and a myopic view of events. The church of Sardis was a repository of all the scriptures and teachings, yet they could not articulate them. Likewise, today many churches have the prophecies at their fingertips yet cannot understand them for lack of teaching. False teachers can severely disarm a church and people when they deny the fundamental prophecies and their relevance today. The doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture too has robbed the church of strength and guardianship. The prophecies are there to guard us, and warn the nations, yet they remain 'moth-balled' like an arsenal that is prevented from use. This arsenal of scripture was commissioned by Christ at His first Coming. He knew how important it would be to those facing those 'perilous times' (Matt. Dan 9:25, 2Tim 3:1), yet they remain to a large extent hidden, kept from the people. Jesus likewise saw the Jewish religious system as containing a repository of truth and prophetic insight yet the gatekeepers neither articulated these truths nor disseminated them to the people for their protection and fortification. Matt. 23:1-36 is an exposure of these errors of formal religion, v. 13 reads *'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let in those who wish to enter.'*

In the last days as in the days of the early church Paul gives warning that there will be those who 'having a form of godliness but denying its power', and to turn away from them. He writes in 2 Tim. 3:1-5 *'But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, without love of good, traitorous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Turn away from such as these!'*

Jesus considered the matter of un-preparedness of such importance that many of his parables recorded in the gospels refer to both this, the time frames involved and the wise use of the time prior to 'the midnight hour'. His parables also refer to how he has made supplies available for those days, yet they remain un-called for and un-appropriated by the people such that they are un-prepared for the events of those times.

The delay in his coming is not an excuse for laziness or excess personal gain but it is the that is the time that is given and necessary to prepare peoples and nations, for having received the prophecies we of all people on the earth know our God and have knowledge of the imminent return of Jesus.

The message today, as it was to the church at Sardis, is that we need to 1) dig out the old wells 2) not be deceived 3) speak the truth 4) prepare the armaments and 5) equip the saints.

Philadelphia Rev 3:7 following

Laodicea

PLACE HERE REMAINING CHURCHES (Rev.3)

9) THE GREAT DECEPTION

The Great Deception refers to the specific times of the end. Those who are practiced in this art have always done so. They learnt early that through sleight of hand they could make gain. Gen. 3:1 reads *'Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field that the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"* BSB

However, the Great Deception is referred to by Jesus as occurring along with the events at the end of the age and as being specifically part of the fabric of that time. Mt. 24:3-5 reads *'While Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?"*

Jesus answered, "See to it that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'

The Great Deception is the overarching principle which drives Satanic powers and their kind. It is a principle easily learnt by those who practice wickedness.

They operate in a clandestine manner, until they become fully able at which time their evil activities burst out onto the stage of mankind to cause much harm, hurt, and pain. Death and hell follow in their wake. This becomes overarching in the last days as Satan knows that his time is short. Rev. 12:12 reads *'Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea; with great fury the devil has come down to you, knowing he has only a short time.'* BSB The results are recorded in Matt.24 as wars and rumours of wars, famines and earthquakes, the abomination of desolation, and a great tribulation in those days.

The character of the Evil One was apparent to Jesus when first began His ministry in Galilee. The three temptations recorded in the gospels are all based on deceptions offered to Jesus by Satan. The first was to deceive individuals by turning stones to bread, the second was to deceive the towns and cities by public acts of display which might convince the people to follow him, and the last temptation was to have powers to control the nations. The three levels reflect the three key areas of attention given by Satan against humankind. As recorded on occasions in the scriptures with regard to the roles played by different angelic beings in the heavenly realm, so it is likely that the powers of darkness concentrate the wicked and fallen angels to different levels and tasks to tempt and destroy through envy, jealousy and power. Eph. 6:10-20 records *'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.'*

The deceitful One operates in any area where given sway and licence. Specifically referred to in Matthew 24 are the false prophets and the hidden mysteries.

When fully 'ripe' and fully able, then the evil One can operate through his evil servants who have as it were come of age, they have both the motive and the means to fulfil their ambitions. Today as never before national leaders can project their powers far beyond their

borders and the weaponry upon the earth is now far beyond that which was previously available. It is when we read of the 'intoxication' of these kings of the earth. Rev. 17:1a,2 reads *"Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. 2The kings of the earth were immoral with her, and those who dwell on the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her immorality."* i.e., they are intoxicated with her deception and with her abominations which includes a blood lust for the death of Christians. Rev. 17:6 reads *'I could see that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and witnesses for Jesus. And I was utterly amazed at the sight of her.'* It has always been the case that Christians have been persecuted for their faith, more is recorded below under the heading 'The Persecution of Christians', however at the times of the end of this age this iniquity becomes fully ripe, it is ready for the picking, and Jesus will come to avenge the death of his saints.

The term 'kings' referred to in this prophesy describes those who operate with power to control their nation states, those who operate as with the with sole power of a sovereign or monarch. They operate as autocrats; their power is king like; it means that they are answerable to no higher earthly authority. It is they who give their powers as leaders to satanic powers to destroy the earth and they who subject themselves to an overarching principle of evil, with the sole purpose to corrupt and to take advantage. They can act with impunity. The kings of the East could therefore be referring to nation states operating under 'kingly' authority in the Last Days.

Rev. 16:12-16 refers to the way of the kings being opened up; *'And the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East. These are demonic spirits that perform signs and go out to all the kings of the earth, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty'* According to the sequence of the bowls or vials then this event takes place when the sixth angel pours the sixth vial so takes place during the Great Tribulation and just before the final conflict. It is described as the time when the deceit of Satan so cloaks his evil that it deceives not only the kings of the ten-king alliance but *'all the kings of the earth'*. To do battle against Yahweh God and his anointed. After the final *'battle on the great day of God the Almighty'* the Lord's Messiah comes.

9.1 The hour, the day, the month, and the year

Yahweh God's timing is so precise, and Jesus through His Prophets reveals how important it is that the events of the End Times only come when the fulness of time has come. This scripture reveals to us that God does the counting. His prophesies shall not fail but shall come to pass at the appointed time for it reads that it angels have been instructed beforehand for this event. So, if they knew in advance of this event then surely Jesus and the hosts of heaven are knowledgeable too. We too can be assured that our times and seasons are in His hands and that the final seven years of this age will end at the appointed moment. As when Jesus died on the cross at the appointed moment in time, a time which was forthtold, then the time of the end will be with pinpoint accuracy; so much so that this event is then tracked back a full seven years and is triggered by the Trinity with prior knowledge of the fullness of this age and the fullness of heaven. At the time of the fifth seal John saw and heard the prayers of the saints of God in heaven yet it was still not the time of the fulness of heaven nor the time of the end. At the time of the fifth seal Rev. 6:9-11 reads *'And when the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony they had upheld. And they cried out in a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You avenge our blood and judge those*

who dwell upon the earth?" Then each of them was given a white robe and told to rest a little while longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers, were killed, just as they had been killed'. Yet by the time of the sixth seal the pre-set time had come. So, the timing of the seals are pre-set, allowing for the playing out of specific time periods during which mankind are given time to consider the devastation caused by rampant evil and change their minds. Though great miracles are recorded in the prophecies it appears that there is no longer a middle ground, the populous of those days are given time to consider, yet they openly choose good or evil as their strength.

The armies of the Antichrist have free-will but are ruthlessly controlled by him. The Satanic bearing upon these armies is immense. However, they still could repent of their actions if they chose too yet it is recorded that the judgements of God through the four angels actually hardens their resolve against the Lord and His anointed and they do not repent for Rev. 9:20-21 reads *'Now the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the works of their hands. They did not stop worshiping demons and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk. Furthermore, they did not repent of their murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and theft'. The hardening of resolve against Yahweh, even in the face of His mighty signs, wonders and miracles is recorded elsewhere in scripture too, most notable at the time of the release of the Hebrew people from 400 years of slavery in Egypt. It is most notable that following each judgement brought upon Egypt through the prophet Moses that Pharaoh 'hardened his heart yet more to impose yet more stringent requirements upon the Hebrews. He would not let them go.*

9.2 The River Euphrates

At the time of the sixth trumpet when the sixth angel sounds his trumpet then four angels are released to defend the Lord's anointed for it reads in Rev. 9:13-20 *'Then the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God saying to the sixth angel with the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." So the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. And the number of mounted troops was two hundred million; I heard their number'.*

The second reference to the River Euphrates can be found in Rev. 16:12. This prophecy has been explored by several commentators. Bengel, Barnes, Gill for example refer to the source of the River Euphrates as emerging from the modern-day nation state of Turkey. Barnes reads *'the symbol of the Euphrates as being the seat of the Turkish power'.* However, the Euphrates is 2,780 kms (1,730 miles) long and is the longest river in Western Asia which runs from its source in Turkey (28% of its drainage basin) through Syria (17% of its drainage basin) and Iraq (40% of its drainage basin) before emptying into the Persian Gulf. If the prophecy of Rev. 12:6 is an allegory then the drying up of the Euphrates could reasonably refer to the weakening of governance in the nation state powers through which runs the River Euphrates; specifically, the nation state(s) which are situate to the east of the focal point of the prophetic vision, Israel. Iraq has the largest drainage basin of the Euphrates and is situate east of this focal point, whereas Syria and Turkey are situated to the north.

In recent times it can be observed that both Iraq and Syria have been significantly degraded in their powers as nation states. For Iraq this first took place in the first Gulf War 1991 and then the Iraq War, also called the second Persian Gulf War, which took place 2003-11, with much political instability continuing from then to date (2021). Syria has likewise been devastated by its war, which has run 2011 to date. In both countries during these times there

has been a significant persecution the Christian populations there. Several contemporary commentators have referred to this persecution as the 'slow genocide' of Christians in these countries and the surrounding region of the Middle East. It is notable that Jewish populations have already fled from these countries and the only countries left in the Middle East with a significant minority of Christians is Lebanon, though Israel is also a safe haven for them. During the Great Tribulation it is most notable that the prophecies tell the Christians to flee to safe places for in Rev. 12:3-6, esp. v.6 reads *'Then the woman (this is reference to the Jewish Christians at the time of the Great Tribulation) fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days'*. KJV. The days of these refugees is still to come. For the more information on the current plight of Christians who suffer persecution because of the faith, see below under the heading 'The Persecution of Christians'.

The 'drying up' referred to in Rev. 16:12 takes place at the sixth trumpet i.e., during the Great Tribulation, so is still future tense. However, Jesus clearly warning us of the 'birth pains' that will occur before these times and referred to many of the signs of those times. These occur in preparation of His Coming. As leaves that appear on trees in spring is a sign that summer is coming, so these signs appear as leaves in springtime too. They burst forth, unwelcome though some of these signs are, they appear and remain.

The significance of the prophesy of Rev. 16:12 is that it opens the way for the *'kings of the East'* to cross through.

The purpose of this opening up of this way is so that the kings will yield their power to the 'beast'. Rev. 17:12 reads they *'will receive one hour of authority as kings, along with the beast. These kings have one purpose: to yield their power and authority to the beast.'*

9.2.2 The Assembly of The Kings

The opening of this way is also in preparation for a military conflict for Rev.16:14 reads *'to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who remains awake and clothed, so that he will not go naked and let his shame be exposed."* And they assembled the kings in the place that in Hebrew is called *Armageddon*.' BSB How important it is for the Christian people to be awake, prepared and alert and armed in these times.

The specific description of nation state leaders acting like kings is again emphasized by John. In Rev. 17:9 he first encourages his readers to seek God for wisdom and understanding on these for he states, *'This calls for a mind with wisdom.'* John then goes on to explain that at the time of the seventh king an eighth king arises 'who is going into destruction' This eighth king is the same as that referred to by Jesus in Mt. 24:15-22 *'So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand)'*

John then goes on to describe what he sees in vision. Rev. 17:9-11 reads: *'The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. The beast that was, and now is not, is an eighth king, who belongs to the other seven and is going into destruction.'*

The seven heads of the Beast of Rev. 17:3,8-11 as described by John are seven mountains which signify seven sequential kingdoms or empires, each run through history from the times of Daniel until the times of the end.

The first six heads of the Beast of Rev.17v3,8-11., are six kingdom empires that have conquered, ruled, and tyrannised Israel and Jerusalem during the 483 years of the prophecy of Dan.9v20-27. The 7th. And 8th. heads represent the last seven years of Daniels prophesy and the completion of the seven weeks of years i.e., 490 years. The seventh week is the time when the Antichrist will have rule and reign over Israel and Jerusalem. The Antichrist will deceive many people. This time is still to come.

These kingdom empires are described by John who saw them in the form of a Beast. So we read of the following Empires: Head #1 Babylon (lion-beast) Head #2 Medo-Persia (bear-beast), Head #3 Greece, Head #4 Egypt, Head #5 Syria (these three heads are kingdom empires and are described by John as the leopard-beast), Head #6 Rome (ten-horned beast), Heads #7 and #8 both represent the time of the Antichrist with Head #7 representing the first 3.5yrs of the tribulation of the end-times then head #8 is head #7 brought back to life again as and represents the second 3.5yrs of the tribulation, known as 'the tribulation, the great one' (Rev 7:14).

Frank Pritchard's Figurative Description of these prophesies and events is also particularly useful to gain more of an understanding on these matters, a separate paper copy is available from the writer of this study though a copy on the internet is yet to be found.

It is clear from Rev 17:9-11 all of the seven 'mountains' or Empires are run by what Daniel understands as kings. The seventh king is still to come and the eight is described as *'the beast that was, and now is not, is an eighth king, who belongs to the other seven and is going into destruction.'* So, at the time to come both the seventh king that will rule only for a little while and the eighth king who is described as the beast, both will rule with the authority of monarchs. However, the eighth king which is called the beast is different from the seven 'mountains' or kingdoms; six of which are past and the seventh being the first 3.5years of the Tribulation to come and different from the 10-king alliance for Rev. 17:7-8 reads *'Why are you so amazed?' said the angel. "I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that you saw—it was, and now is no more, but is about to come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. And those who dwell on the earth whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world will marvel when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet will be'.*

So, the eight is described as a king with a kingdom that last for the final 3.5years of the age yet it is also described as embodying all the previous seven mountains and the 10-king alliance too; hence the beast looks concocted with many heads. In addition, it ascends out of the Abyss (BSB version) also called the bottomless pit (in the KJV version of the Bible) which is destined to go to its destruction (BSB) also called 'perdition' (KJV). The beast then is a compendium of nation states which base themselves on the rump of previous empires, it is the embodiment of them, and it comes with great force and malice against the peoples of the earth. In addition, this empire of kingships i.e. the beast, is driven and propelled by forces which come directly from *'the abyss, unfathomable depth, an especially Jewish conception, the home of the dead and of evil spirits'* to quote Strong's Concordance which then goes on to quote other sources as describing this place as a very deep gulf or chasm in the lowest parts of the earth (Orcus), and is of the dragon, the common receptacle of the

dead and the abode of demons. It describes the beast as an Antichrist that operates the occultic powers.

9.3 The beast from the sea

Rev. 13:1-10 reads *'Then I saw a beast with ten horns and seven heads rising out of the sea. There were ten royal crowns on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. The beast I saw was like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast appeared to be mortally wounded. But the mortal wound was healed, and the whole world marvelled and followed the beast. They worshiped the dragon who had given authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can wage war against it?" The beast was given a mouth to speak arrogant and blasphemous words, and authority to act for 42 months. And the beast opened its mouth to speak blasphemies against God and to slander His name and His tabernacle—those who dwell in heaven. Then the beast was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life belonging to the Lamb who was slain.*

He who has an ear, let him hear:

*"If anyone is destined for captivity,
into captivity he will go;
if anyone is to die by the sword,
by the sword he must be killed."*

Here is a call for the perseverance and faith of the saints'. BSB

How important it is for the saints of God to be prepared and ready for the coming darkness, to have their spiritual weapons honed and their knowledge of the prophecies at the ready...for *'Here is a call for the perseverance and faith of the saints'*.

9.4 The beast from the earth, its deceptions, and its mark

Rev. 13:11-18 then reads *'Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. This beast had two horns like a lamb, but spoke like a dragon. And this beast exercised all the authority of the first beast and caused the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. And the second beast performed great signs to cause even fire from heaven to come down to earth in the presence of the people. Because of the signs it was given to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived those who dwell on the earth, telling them to make an image to the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet had lived. The second beast was permitted to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship it to be killed. And the second beast required all people small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark—the name of the beast or the number of its name. Here is a call for wisdom: Let the one who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and that number is 666'. BSB*

So, this beast is also described as having a mark, that being 666 i.e., the mark of human government, which is exclusive of the divine, whose mark is 777. From this we can read that there is no Godliness in the nature of the beast for it is completely driven and obsessed with evil motives and intent. Previous generations have seen evil regimes rise and fall, yet this one is yet to come and is total in the fullness of its iniquity and wickedness.

9.5 The beast carries a detestable woman on its back

This beast carries on its back a detestable woman which embodies an ideology that attracts and yet pollutes many world leaders. This woman is described like a harlot that sits upon many waters. The waters represent a multitude of people groups and the ideology appears to have polluted the minds of both kings i.e., leaders, and peoples. Specifically, this ideology and its embodiment has the intent to kill 'saints' i.e., those who are different from its own; Gr. 'hagios' holy, different, other, which for believers means 'likeness of nature with Jesus' because they are 'different from the world' (Strong's Commentary). More specifically the ideology of this woman is intoxicated with 'the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus' (Rev. 17:8) and this ideology intoxicates its followers. The doctrine of persecution of minority groups is evident through history and continues apace today. Persecution on the grounds of religious belief is most evident against Christians where they are in a minority. Christians are the receptacle of light, and of the Spirit of Jesus, they are the anointed ones, and this makes them stand out in society. Matt. 5:14-16 describes why they stand out differently for it reads '*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savour, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven*'. Yet when they do stand out, they can also be targeted by those with malice and wrong intent. This is borne out by evidence from independent sources. The International Society for Human Rights consider that of all the religious groupings on the planet, 80% of religious persecution is against Christians who are the most persecuted religious group. See below concerning the persecution of the Christians.

The full text of Rev. 17:1-6 reads '*Then one of the seven angels with the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. The kings of the earth were immoral with her, and those who dwell on the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her immorality."*

And the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, where I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. She held in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. 5And on her forehead a mysterious name was written:

**BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

I could see that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and witnesses for Jesus. And I was utterly amazed at the sight of her'.

Jesus had no other way to share with Daniel the concept or notion of a future power-based system of government than as describing it in this way. Today we might use slightly different terminology to describe this system of government, but it is still meaningful to use to understand the power of a king. These two kings have control over specific areas of the globe, and they will control them in the over-ruling autocratic manner of if they were kings,

answerable to no higher earthly authority. It is for this reason that the term empire, kingdom, federation or similar could be applied to these rules.

9.6 The Concept of Empire

As with previous empires and kingdoms their formation takes time, often plotted through political and military means. Likewise, the last empire kingdom to dominate Israel / Jerusalem will take time to strengthen and expand. It is for this reason that the prophecies concerning the signs of the times are so relevant and that is why we can see the formation of preliminary events long before the full plan is made known. The fig tree produces its first leaves in spring long before the fruit appears in the summer. The economic and political collapse of some nation states leaves a vacuum for others to expand and form. The degradation of the nation states along the course of the Euphrates is particularly relevant and this is referred to in the prophecies as the 'drying up' of the River Euphrates (Rev. 16;12).

9.7 Syria and Iraq. So, Iraq and Syria are again referred to here, not only because of their geographic locations referred to above in relation to the River Euphrates but also because Daniel's prophecy describes what is a confederacy of 'kings' coming against God's people in the last days and their arrival being from the east across the Euphrates. In addition to the geographic location of these countries it is also significant that both countries have seen their virtual collapse as nation states in this century to date. In these few decades each country has significantly subrogated their rights to other nation state powers.

9.7.1 Iraq

Iraq as mentioned above has the highest percentage of the Euphrates River through it and is situate to the east of Israel / Jerusalem, so this country is significant at the time of the Sixth Seal, the time at the end, the time during 'the tribulation, the great one' (Rev 7:14). It is at this time when the armies of the ten-kingdom alliance cross over the Euphrates from the east and through Iraq. However, we must consider that country as it is at the beginning of the third decade of the 20th Century. Since the first Gulf War this country has seen a collapse in much of its infrastructure with Shia Iran is growing much stronger there such that many report its governance as being so heavily influenced by Iran that it is becoming more like a proxy state of Iran. This is so different from when Iraq and Iran were at war Sept 1980 to August 1988. A war which ended in a stalemate which left each country as equal sovereign states.

9.7.2 Iran

As we consider the increasing role played by the alliance of nation states then we must then also consider the role of Iran and its alliances. It is most notable that Iran seen its government isolated from the west and so has set up what is termed cultural, social, and economic exchanges along what is termed the 'Silk Road' between Iran and China. This relationship has developed such that China now considers Iran as its permanent partner.

As of 2019 Iran had signed onto Xi Jinping's signature One Belt One Road plan, and Iran is a key part of China's geopolitical ambitions in central Asia and the Middle East, sometimes described in terms of a new Great Game. The Belt and Road Initiative is a framework which includes a total of 17 signed agreements, including one which relates to the Iranian nuclear program. The Chinese will help connect Tehran with Mashhad via their high-speed rail technology. To commit to these trans-national ventures then of necessity China will need to secure agreements with the countries between it and Iran; these are the countries of Central Asia. China will need the re-assurance that it has stability in this region as it seeks to extend

its influence and invest there and will no doubt seek to reach strategic partnerships there too.

In addition, in 2020 details emerged of a 25-year economic and strategic partnership in which China would invest in Iranian infrastructure, transport, and seaports, in exchange, Iran would provide a heavily discounted regular supply of its oil. China is now investing in the modernization of Iran's oil and gas sector to secure access to the resource. Above all, the reasons for the timing of this long-term partnership agreement is the rivalry between the US who is the main opponent to Iran, and China who is the main supporter to Iran, and this plays the major role in taking the step to signing this agreement.

China is also reported to have given military assistance to Iran in the form of training of high-level officials on advanced systems, providing technical support, supplying specialty steel for missile construction, providing control technology for missile development, and building a missile factory and test range. It is rumoured that China is responsible for aiding in the development of advanced conventional weapons including surface-to-air missiles, combat aircraft, radar systems, and fast-attack missile vessels. This assistance dates to the Iran-Iraq war when it became known that China using North Korea to traffic arms to Iran. China and Iran have held joint naval drills since 2017. Nuclear cooperation began in the 1980's when China built a research reactor and supplied four other research reactors. Continued aid came in the form of helping Iran construct a uranium enrichment plant. Speculation continues as to China's involvement in nuclear deals with Iran and it demonstrates no urgency to resist Iran's attempts to gain nuclear capabilities. This is in stark contrast to many other countries both in and away from that immediate region of the Middle East who are most concerned with Iran's nuclear program. The key supporters of Iran are China though others include Russia, Sudan North Korea, and Venezuela. The UN reported that Iran and North Korea commenced missile collaboration in 2020.

To date, Iranian ambitions have intensified, and it has sought to extend its sphere of influence. Within the country it has organised militias such as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Beyond its borders it is seen to a warmongering nation as demonstrated by its willingness to engage in many proxy wars in areas of conflict such as Syria, Yemen and Lebanon. In these countries Iran has extended its reach through its allies and proxies. These proxies are political-military organisations such as Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, the Houthis in Yemen, and others.

Iran also continues with its ambitions to create a land bridge between Tehran and Damascus. Iran has established bases in Syria's two largest cities, Aleppo and Damascus. Israeli airstrikes continue to target Iranian installations in Syria. Hezbollah is arguably one of the most powerful forces in the region, and coupled with the emergence of Iraq's Hashd Al-Sha'abi (Popular Mobilization Units), it is not likely that the Iranian military is going to abandon their plans to complete this land bridge (Source: <https://geopolitics.news/south-asia/iran-not-abandoning-land-bridge-plan-from-damascus-to-tehran/>)

9.7.3 The Iran-Israel Cold War

Immediately after the Islamic Revolution that occurred in Iran in 1979 its government declared the nation as an Islamic Republic and cut off all official relations with Israel; the country then turned from being secular and friendly to Western interests to that of an anti-Western Islamic theocracy. Initially it was politically expedient for Iran to accept Israeli help, for in the Iran-Iraq war 1980-88 Israel supplied arms to Iran. However, from 1989 to present

the Islamic leaders of Iran have increasingly adopted an anti-Zionist stance which is driven by Islamic rhetoric to justify its policies. After the Revolution in 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini declared Israel an "enemy of Islam" and 'The Little Satan' and the United States was called 'The Great Satan'.

By the early 1990's this hostility had turned from a cold peace to open hostility and the rhetoric intensified. In December 2000 Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called Israel a "cancerous tumour" that should be removed from the region. On 15 August 2012, during a meeting with veterans of the Iran–Iraq War, Ayatollah Khamenei said that he was confident that "the fake Zionist (regime) will disappear from the landscape of geography". On 19 August 2012, Khamenei reiterated comments made by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which members of the international community, including the United States, France, European Union, and United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned, during which he called Israel a "cancerous tumour in the heart of the Islamic world" and said that its existence is responsible for many problems facing the Muslim world. It would not normally be necessary to quote dated news material, but this same rhetoric continues apace today, its message has not changed, rather the country's media incessantly purvey this message to its people and beyond

In 1985, Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shia radical movement sponsored by Iran, called for armed struggle to end the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory. When the Lebanese civil war ended and other warring factions agreed to disarm, Hezbollah and the SLA refused. Combat with Hezbollah weakened Israeli resolve and led to a collapse of the SLA and an Israeli withdrawal in 2000 to their side of the UN designated border. The war flared again Lebanon War of 2006.

Iran and Israel have also conflicted in Gaza particularly with military engagement in 2008-9 and 2014. In Gaza Iran supports the militia group called Hamas. Gaza is also the scene of a power struggle between regional powers including Egypt, Iran and Turkey together with Qatar, supporting different sides of the conflict in light of the regional standoff between Iran and Saudi Arabia on one hand and between Qatar and Saudi Arabia on the other, as well as crisis in Egyptian-Turkish relations.

From 2018 the Iran-Israel cold war has erupted into more open military engagement as assassinations continue and many proxy groups become increasingly well-armed and capable. As noted above, Israel continues to target Iranian and Iran backed militia groups in Syria.

The rhetoric may be viewed by the savvy western media as being bluff and counter bluff, but commentators are increasingly concerned that Iran has a program to work on weapons of mass destruction and through global terrorism has genocidal intent (Quote Dr Gregory Stanton, Global Watch).

In return Israel has shown itself more than capable of defence, it has significant military assets, and appeals to global Western powers to come to its assistance.

9.7.4 Syria

The location and events that have occurred in Syria in C21 has had global reverberations. The Syrian conflict 2011 to date has drawn in many other nations. In the terms of the prophecies of the Bible it fits the prophesy concerning to location and powerbase of the

Antichrist. Since the beginning of its civil war, it has seen the near collapse of its nation state, with other countries now involved there; notably Russia and Iran who have fought in support of the Assad Regime, and Turkey who have acted as a belligerent there.

Russia has long insisted of its special bi-lateral relationship with Syria. The Russian economy is not significant as a global force, being only equivalent to that of Spain, yet it is a nuclear power with significant military strength and technologies, furthermore the ambitions of its leader is to re-establish it as significant international player as it once was up to 1989, when it was known as the USSR. Since that time it has been known as the Russian Federation. Russia's only Mediterranean naval base for its Black Sea Fleet is in the Syrian port of Tartus. On 30 September 2015, Russia began a military intervention in the Syrian Civil War in support of the Syrian government, consisting of intensive air and cruise missile strikes against several terrorist groups, including ISIS and Al-Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda's official affiliate in Syria). It dubbed this political and military aid as its 'Mission in Syria'. Since then, Russia has increased its involvement with continued support for Syria with airbases situated there and military arms supplied to the Assad Regime. This is generally credited as being the most important factor in keeping the Assad Regime in power. The Russian leader, Vladimir Putin, has on several occasions visited his troops in that country. Syria, Russia, and other belligerents in that conflict have repeatedly made and broken ceasefires which has caused causing a humanitarian catastrophe, as desperate civilians, fleeing the fighting, seek refuge.

Since 2011, when the war in Syria started, to December 2020, various estimates put the death toll in in the country to be between 387,000 and 593,000. Throughout the war than half the country's population has been forced to flee their homes, with 6.2 million people, including 2.65 million children displaced within Syria, the biggest internally displaced people in the world <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/internally-displaced-people> In addition, 6.6 million refugees are seeking safety in neighbouring countries.

9.7.5 The Belligerents and their Leaders

Syria, Iran, Russia, China, North Korea have all been referred to above. Each are examples of states with leaders who act more like kings, each have changed laws so that in effect, of their choosing, they could have a lifetime in office. Their leaders see their country as an extension to their own goals and ambitions. Each use their powerbase to preserve their own positions.

The writer of this study is not saying that these leaders are the kings referred to in the prophecies referred to elsewhere in this study but does rather ponder on their actions as being king-like. It is the writer's view that each of these leaders appear to be able to operate with autocratic powers such as might be exercised by a king. The kings of the last part of this age may be alive today, or they may yet be to come, even so they will inherit the reins from these and other countries and peoples and we can consider present day events in this context.

It is also significant that in each of these countries there has been and still is significant levels of persecution against Christians and this referred to in more detail later in this study.

Yahweh God hides his plans in a mystery to protect his people from apathy and to thwart the powers of darkness who cannot understand it. Instead, He requires of us to be under a certain tension that comes from knowing Him and the workings of His Spirit. In this way we

have the privilege to act as his ambassadors, to pray and to act in faith, and even to see the course of nations changed through prayer.

9.8 The Secret to Answered Prayer

So, how do we pray for ourselves and our nation(s) in through the coming times of trouble?

The following three scriptures refer to two linked words which though interpreted in the scriptures as 'intercede' are more accurately interpreted as 'intervene' (Gr. entygxánō and hyperentygxánō). As Christians we must properly understand the meaning of intervention so that we can be effective in our prayers. In this way we can ask Yahweh Elohim to intervene on our behalf in the events on the earth.

First of all let me quote Vincent's Word Studies Commentary which makes it clear that the verb for 'intercession' really means 'intervention' for with regard to the use of the verb used in the following three verses then he writes *'The idea is not intercession, but intervention. It includes every form of Christ's identifying himself with human interests'*.

If we read these verses and use the word intervention rather than intercession, then we can be encouraged in our faith.

I also include Strong's Concordance in regard to these two words as it makes clear to us in Hebr. 7:25 that Jesus lights upon and meets with us to intervene and hit the 'bull's eye' i.e., that we might be 'spot on' in our prayers and in our circumstances and then in Rom. 8:26 that through the Holy Spirit working deeply through His gifts of tongues, yearnings, knowledge and discernment of our circumstances, and other Holy Spirit gifts too, then we can 'come in line with the Lord's eternal purpose' and bring 'sacred mysteries into our daily walk with Christ'. How important this is to understand the workings of God and the signs of our times.

Hebr. 7:25 reads *'Therefore He is able to save completely (or forever) those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede (intervene) for them'* BSB

Strong's Concordance on the word intercede in Hebrews 7:26:

1793 entygxánō (from 1722 /en, "in," which intensifies 5177 /tygxánō, "to obtain by hitting the mark") – properly, "light upon (meet with), obtain" (LS); "to go and meet a person to converse, consult," i.e. to intervene ("intersect with").

[J. Thayer documents how this meaning is consistently the same in ancient Greek writers. The root of 5177 (tygxánō) means "to strike, hit the bulls-eye" ("spot on"). Accordingly, it is used in classical Greek as the antonym of harmartia ("to miss the mark, sin"), so Lucian, Xenophon, Homer, etc. (see Thayer, 5177 /tygxánō).]

Romans 8:26 reads *'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes (intervenes) for us with groans too deep for words'* BSB

Strong's Concordance on 'intercede' in Romans 8:26:

5241 hyperentygxánō (from 5228 /hypér, "for benefit" and 1793/entygxanō, "come in line with") – properly, to light upon (happen); literally, "bending over" to intercede, "confer benefit" (cf. R, 629). 5241 (hyperentygxánō) is used only in Ro 8:26.

5241/hyperentygxánō ("intercede") refers to the Holy Spirit interceding in every scene of our lives so we can "come in line with" the Lord's eternal purpose. The content of these intercessions goes beyond human language, and includes bringing sacred mysteries into our daily walk with Christ.

1 Tim. 2:1-3 reads 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions (interventions), [and] giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and [for] all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this [is] good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour'. KJV

Yahweh God is raising up his people today to pray in like manner, so that this generation too might see the course of nations change. We too can curb the appetites of world leaders for the good. As happened after the death of Paul and Peter in 66-68AD, at the hands of the Romans who were involved in the First Jewish War (66-70AD) at that time, we as Christians need to earnestly seek God for judgement upon the earth. That war was not started by the Christians though they soon became included as a target of the persecution that took place at that time, especially as some Christians who had previously fled persecution themselves in Judea had set up small communities in Rome.

Soon after the deaths of these two apostles in the early Christian communities it may be no co-incidence that the Emperor Nero (reign 54-68AD), who is likely to have ordered their execution, committed suicide at the age of 31. Nero's lethal tyranny is well documented. According to Tacitus he was said to have seized Christians as scapegoats for the great fire that took place in Rome in those times and burned them alive, seemingly motivated not by public justice but by personal cruelty.

Today Christians who may be of the Terracotta Army of God i.e., hidden from normal view, are also receiving visions and dreams of events and warnings to come, and pass them on to their fellow Christians, for prayer, protection and guidance.

Such visions have been given to Christians which may be above their 'pay-grade' in that they involve the leaders of nations, yet they are still called to pray, as God yearns for His people to get ready for the darkness now coming upon the earth. In early 2020 the writer had two distinct dreams and a vision regarding the Chinese leader; one where he rejected the light of the Christian's gospel (the light of the candle of Jesus shone in his face yet he hardened his heart), one showing his autocratic authority over the peoples there (when he crashed the two large brass cymbals everyone stopped and took notice of him), and the third which forth told of a tsunami to come not from the sea but from the direction of China onto Hong Kong and the people there. Since the vision the Chinese Government has changed laws and increased oppression there, if the tsunami is to happen in full then much more will follow, and suddenly too.

Similarly, a dream of the Russian President who looked to align a set of what appeared to be a set of blue vertically hung overlapping pieces of hanging linen, like vertically hung window blinds. These were all the same vivid deep blue colour, and though each were separate the object was to show each of them as a set. However, one of them was slightly noticeable in that it had a emblem or similar in the fabric or might have been upside down or for some reason showed an imperfection which though not obvious so was not quite ready for the

photo shoot. However, at a time of his choosing, the leader gave the order that the photo to be taken. It seemed apparent to the seer the leader of that country was aligning a series of draped flags or similar and was working to arrange them as overlapping each other so that each, though a separate vertical strip of blue cloth, appeared like a set as one block of colour together i.e., like a set of closed blue vertical blinds which you might see in a window that appear like one when together and overlapping, i.e., other member states or similar, and /or an alliance, to show unity, yet this was being done clandestinely, and only upon the order of the leader would the photoshoot be taken i.e., the announcement to be made public. Such visions, dreams and prophetic words advise and warn Christians to pray and prepare for the people.

SEE TEXTS FROM PHONE

9.9 The prophecies

The prophecies make it clear that the Antichrist, when he finally becomes apparent, appears from the north whereas the 10-king alliance appears from the east. These two come together to act with one mind to act with military force against Israel. As with many actions, in the context of global events then there can be unintended consequences. Such events happened at the start of WW1 and WW2 and there is no reasoning or power on earth that can stop it happening again.

The actions of the Antichrist and the kings of the east are likely to be opportunistic and driven by their ambitions to control and dominate as kings, to engage and to settle long simmering disputes; even when the outcome is a conflagration beyond imagination. When your enemy is distracted then to take advantage. The prophecies refer to a Treaty or Covenant Agreement forged by the Antichrist at the beginning of the last seven years of this age. From the prophesy of Daniel this reads as though it will be a Covenant specifically confirmed for a seven-year term, if so, it is breached halfway through. However, this Agreement is broken by the Antichrist after 3.5years, and this is what precipitates the Great Tribulation of the final 3.5years of this age. The prophecies that relate to Antichrist breaking this Covenant this breached Agreement are Daniel 9:27 which reads *'And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make [it] desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate'*. KJV See also Daniel 11:40-45; 12:1; Is. 66:7-8; Matt. 24:15-22.

What is the power behind these events and what triggers the final 3.5yrs of the 8th Head as referred to by Daniel? It is the enemy of souls, the one whose sole aim is to deceive and to slander for Rev. 12:9 reads *'And the great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him'* and Rev. 12:12b reads *'But woe to the earth and the sea; with great fury the devil has come down to you, knowing he has only a short time'*. The attributes of Satan are taken on by Antichrist and the vasaal kings.

One might say that all the above is a matter of conjecture, and so it is, other than the evidence is mounting to suggest otherwise. Only upon the opening of the seals of the book by Jesus will the final events become clear; by which time the peoples of the earth need to be prepared and ready, for his coming will then be near; *'So also, when you see these things happening, know that He is near, right at the door'* Mark 13:29; Matt. 24:33.

9.10 The time of the Seventh and Eighth king. So, what more is told us from the scriptures concerning the times of the seventh and eighth kings? John explains what happens at the time of the seventh king who comes *'for only a little while'* for after it will follow an eighth king. At the time of the eighth king Rev 17:12-13 reads *'The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but will receive one hour of authority as kings, along with the beast. These kings have one purpose: to yield their power and authority to the beast'* BSB. So, at the time of the eighth king then ten more kings arise. These do not have individual kingdoms but consciously and actively subscribe to the evil that arises from the Abyss (Rev. 17:8). This is their wilful purpose, to yield to receive 'one hour of authority' i.e., a short period of authority as kings, along with the beast.

9.11 The powers, authority, and motivation of the Antichrist. Rev. 17:13-14 reads *'These (ten kings) have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him [are] called, and chosen, and faithful'* KJV. So, the confederation is of one mind, and in agreement they subsume their authority to the beast. Though separate entities they all share a common goal to fight against and defeat the Lamb of God.

What entities and which are the vassal states that would be party to such hatred of the Lamb today? In this respect the Open Doors World Watch List is most informative and their categorisation of the treatment of Christians in respective nation states as being either 'High' 'Very High' or Extreme'.

Furthermore, as referred to under the heading below entitled the persecution of Christians it is noted that the treatment of Christians in a country is often like the canary in the cage analogy. Their treatment denotes in inverse proportion the strength and acquiescence of the ruling authorities to the powers of the Evil One who is also called Satan, the Accuser of the Brethren, that old Serpent. Many prophecies from the scriptures refer to the persecution of Christians, not just these from the book of Revelation. The Lamb of God knew that He would be a sign spoken against, as Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:34 reads 'for a sign which shall be spoken against', and this certainly has been and will still be so.

What further can we deduce of the character and attributes of the eighth king, the Antichrist? He is also called the 'man of lawlessness' and the 'abomination of desolation'. From this we know that he is a man. This ruler is not of the ten kings but is referred to as the one who acts with ten kings or rulers, he co-ordinates with them and is strengthened by them as they yield their power to him for as it says in Rev. 17:12 *'these kings have one purpose: to yield their power and authority to the beast.'*

The beast then appears to have over-ruling power and authority and the seat of his power is where once were six ancient empires. The power which he is given comes from the very seat of Satan and the authority which he is able to wield is emanates from territories which were once part of ancient empires. If we overlay the territories covered by all six previous Empires as referred to in the vision and prophecy of Daniel, then the only territory which is common to all is situated in present day Syria. Hence, when we consider these prophecies then we can be reasonably concluded that the Antichrist will also emanate from this same area i.e., Syria. It is this Antichrist then who controls the confederacy, defined by a league or alliance of nation states, each of which has a system of government which is over-ruled by a single ruler, headship or as described by Daniel, a king.

It takes time to seek for and align such a confederacy and the current events in the Middle East are witness to the aligning of nation states as a confederacy which acts against the Yahweh God and against his anointed One.

Many commentators have attempted to make parts of these old prophecies fit modern day circumstances and in so doing have erred and led people astray in their thoughts and doctrines with the result that when one cries wolf too many times then when the real wolf appears then too few people recognise it or are awake enough to respond and warn others.

It may be that my findings are erroneous, imaginings of my own mind, mere speculation, fantasy, but all should be asked to consider the prophecies and the weigh carefully the evidence and signs of our times. The writer of this study has found the following two commentaries the best studies available on this subject and it is worth including the following quotes from their studies here. Other writers can also be found to corroborate their findings.

The first commentary is by Bill Turner <https://prophetbillturner.com/> Bill passed away at the age of 80 in 2012. At all times he considered the revealed scriptures and prophecies to do as the Bereans in Acts 17 did, to study to understand the mind and heart of God and his dealings with us. For example, see Study #38 'BEWARE! Don't Let Anyone Fool You And Lead You Astray' I copy and quote from this page in full as an example of how he considered the prophecies of old and how we might also consider them to understand their significance and possible outworking in relation to modern day nation states and events; also to consider their continued significance to us, and the intervention of Yahweh God in the events and affairs of the contemporary world. Bill's study also makes reference to Syria, and because I have made reference to Syria in my previous paragraphs concerning the Euphrates, I include this extract here. Consider too that Bill wrote this study in approximately 2005 and died in 2012. The bold type are his additions, the underlined is added by the writer of this study. P.25 of his study reads:

10. AWAKE AND BEWARE!

The following quote is taken from www.prophetbillturner.com Study No. 38 entitled 'BEWARE! Don't let Anyone Fool You And Lead You Astray' Page 25:

'We are living in the 'perilous times' that Paul warned us about in 2Tim.3v1. These are critical days and it is high time for the Church of Jesus to awake to the hour that we are living in and prepare for the dark days ahead. Jesus warned us that the darkness of the last days will demand an extra reserve of oil. Mt.25v1-13. This oil consists of prophetic truth as well as the Holy Spirit's anointing and gifts, for Peter tells us that the sure word of prophecy is a light that shines in a dark place. 2Pet.1v19. Some foolishly look upon those who study prophetic truth as unbalanced cranks. However, the study of prophetic truth is a study of the mind and purposes of God, and the study of Revelation carries a special blessing from our Lord. Rev.1v3. Since the first edition of my commentary on the book of Revelation was written in 1958, many significant world events have occurred, which show us that the prophecies concerning the end of this age could soon be fulfilled. The ethnic conflicts, wars and rumours of wars, that our Lord warned us about, have become a daily feature of the news. Mt.24v7. Some of the most prophetically significant of the present day events are the attempts to make peace between Israel and the Arab states. The collapse of the Communist empire is another remarkable and significant fact, and its confederation of states has also brought about a possible fulfilment of a ten king alliance. A ten king

confederation of Islamic Arab states is another even more likely possibility. These are two possible answers to God's prophetic puzzle. The ten kings of prophecy could be a mixture of both former Communist and Arab states, for from **Dan 8 and 11**, there can be no doubt that Syria is linked with the final Antichrist and is definitely part of the ten king alliance. The events of future world history will reveal the make up of this ten king federation. **The link of the European common market with these ten kings is certainly wrong, for they can in no way said to be North of Israel, nor can any of them said to be the prophetic king of the North. Dan.11v6,7,8,11,13,15,40.** At the strategic divine epoch of human history, Jesus will open the seven seals, and the identities of the ten kings and the Antichrist will be revealed. God will fulfil His divine purposes and personally unfold these epochal world events.

God reigns and rules in the kingdoms of men even when the vilest of kings are set up. **Dan.4v17,32.** The proximity of these last day events forces us to examine again the foundations of our knowledge of prophetic truth. God has given a prominent place to the truths concerning the second coming of Christ, and we must make sure that we give them a prominent place in our studies, thoughts, preaching and witnessing. I shall be very happy if the readers of this book are challenged to search the Scriptures, and to purify their hearts and walk closer to the Lord. The blessed hope of the Church is our Lord's appearing in power and great glory; may this hope purify, challenge and comfort every Christian's heart. **1Thes.4v18. Titus.2v13. 1Jn.2v28. 3v2,3.**

Let us obey Paul's words in **1Thes.5v20,21.** "Despise not prophesyings. 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." **KJV.'**

Bill makes it clear in his study that only upon the opening and release of the seven seals by Jesus will the events of the End Times be made known, however much has prepared us through the prophecies so that we might be determined and ready, lamps set on a high place, warnings from the ramparts of the city, like watchmen, we have been given the blueprint and the manual of instructions and now await the trumpet calls to come.

The second commentary is similar to the first commentary though is compiled by Alister Hamilton, see <https://truthforthelastdays.com/> Specifically see 'The Visions of Daniel' where reference is made and clarity is given on the following subjects: The times of the Gentile nations, The fulness of the Gentile nations, the visions of Daniel and their link to the Book of Revelation, the specific timing of events as given in prophecy especially with reference to the last seven years of the prophecies. It is the archangel Gabriel who conveyed the prophecies to Daniel, and it is thought most likely that Gabriel also conveyed the prophecies to John too. The chart included on page 9 is particularly helpful in describing the seven years of Daniel's prophecy from the information given in the Book of Revelation.

And I quote from this study page 12:

'The main burden of Gabriel's prophecy concerns, "The Time Of The End"

Gabriel reveals that the prophecy concerning "the little horn" is to be fulfilled at the end of the age. "Understand, O son of man; for the vision belongeth to the time of the end." Dan 8v17.

"Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in THE LATTER TIME of the indignation; for it belongeth to THE APPOINTED TIME OF THE END." Dan 8v19.

"And IN THE LATTER TIME OF THEIR KINGDOM, when transgressors are COME TO THE FULL." Dan 8v23. This is the very statement made by our Lord in Matt 24v12, "Because the lawlessness is filled up, the "agape" love of Christians

will grow cold." Judgement will fall on the world as it did on the Amorites, when their iniquity came to the full. Gen 15v13-16.

“Shut thou up the vision; for it BELONGETH TO MANY DAYS TO COME.” Dan 8v26. Jewish Bible. There was a fulfilment of the prophecy of the “little horn” in Daniel eight by Antiochus Epiphanes, but Gabriel indicates a further (and complete) fulfilment at a more distant date in the future, and gives a vivid and gruesome picture of what we, and the Jews, can expect from the final Antichrist, the future “little horn” and beast of Dan 7v7,8,24-27.’

This study goes on to describe the attributes of the Antichrist under the headings of: Antichrist will be an occultist who "understands dark sayings" Dan 8v23, Antichrist will be possessed and energised by Satan Dan 8v24, Antichrist "shall destroy wonderfully" with Satan's power Dan 8v24, Antichrist, like Satan, is the enemy of mankind, Antichrist through "craft and by peace shall destroy many" and the time periods of Daniel 12.

Under the heading 'Antichrist comes out of one of the four parts of the Grecian Empire' Dan 8v9,23 the study reads: *'Some think that the prophecy of Isaiah 10v5,12,24, concerning "the Assyrian," is referring to the Antichrist, but this could refer to the captivity under the Assyrians. However, there can be no doubt that in Dan 11v40, he is called "the king of the north," who "at the time of the end" makes a rapid advance into Egypt, Ethiopia and Libya.'* As previously referred to the focal point of all these prophesies is Israel, so the 'king of the north' i.e., Antichrist, will emanate from one or more of the countries directly north of Israel which today are the nation states of Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, or Russia. However, from the commentary on Rev. 17:9-11 referred to above then Syria would be central to that vision, out of which would emanate the man of lawlessness and deceit, the Antichrist.

The Great Deception then is specifically that which occurs leading up to and during the time referred to by Jesus in Matt. 24 when the deception particularly operates through the means of both false prophets (Matt. 24:5,11,24), of which there is specific reference to the archetypal False Prophet (Rev. 13:11,16:13, Rev. 19:20, Rev. 20:10), and through the anti-Christ of which specific reference is made to the archetypal Antichrist (Rev. 13, Rev. 17:12-17, Dan. 7:5,20-27) of the End Times.

Jesus refers to these entities as operating under the cover of hidden mysteries, also called the 'mystery of iniquity' (KJV) or the 'mystery of lawlessness' (BSB) and from a place and covering of darkness, and from the shadows. A fabric of deceit to cover the 'mystery of iniquity'. Like the smoke screen of old when used in sea battles, the smoke hid the size and movements of the enemy forces to outwit their opponent. We as Christians have been warned to watch out for such deceit and to make preparation; to be fully informed and ready for the conflicts which are inevitably already taking place and will increase, not decrease, as the signs of the times come about in our age and generation.

The full text of the prophesy given by Paul concerning this 'Man of Lawlessness' in 2 Thes. 2:1-12 reads: *'Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be easily disconcerted or alarmed by any spirit or message or letter seeming to be from us, alleging that the Day of the Lord has already come. Let no one deceive you in any way, for it will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness— the son of destruction— is revealed. He will oppose and exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship. So he will seat himself in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.'*

Do you not remember that I told you these things while I was still with you? And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now restrains it will continue until he is

taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and annihilate by the majesty of His arrival.

The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the working of Satan, with every kind of power, sign, and FALSE wonder, and with every wicked deception directed against those who are perishing, because they refused the love of the truth that would have saved them. For this reason God will send them a powerful delusion so that they believe the lie, in order that judgment may come upon all who have disbelieved the truth and delighted in wickedness.’ BSB

The ‘man of lawlessness – the son of destruction’ referred to in Paul’s prophesy is he who ‘will seat himself in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God’. Jesus also prophesies concerning this same man in Matt. 24:15-22 – see below under ‘the abomination of desolation’.

For a much fuller understanding of these scriptures and this subject, again please refer to <https://prophetbillturner.com/> and Study #38 referred to above.

11) FALSE PROPHETS

The Great Deception is significant at the End Times as it driven by both an archetypal False Prophets and by other false prophets too who spew out of their mouths ‘evil frogs’ to lead many people astray. Rev. 16:13 reads ‘*And I saw three unclean spirits that looked like frogs coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. 14 These are demonic spirits that perform signs and go out to all the kings of the earth, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty*’ BSB

Mt. 24:23-25 records ‘At that time, if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There He is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible. See, I have told you in advance.’

There have been those who are wolves in sheep’s clothing who have acted to corrupt the teachings and the people of God from the times of the earliest records. Satanic intrigue operates most effectively under the shadow of mystery, half-truths and doubt.

At the time of the early Christian church Peter records the following stern warning concerning false prophets 2 Peter 2:1-6 where in v.1-3 it read ‘*But there were FALSE prophets also among the people, even as there shall be FALSE teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*’ KJV

Jude also records a similar warning concerning false prophets in Jude v.12,13 ‘*These men are hidden reefs in your love feasts, shamelessly feasting with you but shepherding only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried along by the wind; fruitless trees in autumn, twice dead after being uprooted. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.*’ BSB

The sifting of knowledge and discernment of the prophets is paramount in those times. Prophecy must be tested by others with the gift of prophesy for the spirit of the prophet must be subject to others with that gift. Together they will be able to confirm the word of God for the people.

As the time approaches there is an even greater need to discern false prophesy. The enemy of souls knows from prophesy that his time is short, and he will endeavour to derail many, in particular, those who could do him and his works most damage, However, those who are the anointed sons of God and know His Word shall be strong and do exploits. Da,11:32 reads: 'And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits' KJV.

There is a great need for the church of Jesus Christ to call out false prophets, and not delay. For in these days, we must be aware not only of false prophets but also to the coming time of the overarching False Prophet. The one who is the mouthpiece of the spirit of deception released from the Satanic realm.

12) MULTIPLICATION OF WICKEDNESS

Mt. 24: 12 *'Because of the multiplication of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.'* Not an addition but a multiplication, an exponential growth meaning of an increase becoming more and more rapid; an example is that seen today facilitated globally by the internet, including cybercrime now committed supra-governmentally on an international scale. Note the prophesy in Daniel 12:3,4 referring to the call to Christians in the last days and to the increase in knowledge in those times: *'Then the wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will roam to and fro, and knowledge will increase.'* BSB

Wickedness is able to multiply because it operates as a 'mystery'. It is not an unknown, but instead is hidden, un-revealed. John the apostle testified to the spirit of the antichrist being in the world and defines such people as liars and deceivers who deny the Father and the Son and are deceivers (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3) 2 John 1:7 reads: *'For many deceivers have gone out into the world, refusing to confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.'* BSB These deceivers operate under a cloak of 'darkness'. Their works are un-revealed.

The mysteries of God are kept for those who seek his face, the rewards and treasures of heaven are covered such that faith and spiritual sight is necessary to understand them. This is why Jesus spoke in parables, and prophets spoke and saw always through the eyes of faith so that we too must receive the parables and prophesies through the same medium of faith and truth. 1 Timothy 3:16 *'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.'* BSB

However, the same spiritual principle is seen to be effective and used by the powers of darkness and those who operate in hidden places. The manifestation of evil is always deceitful and there is always an attempt to cover it over. If it were obvious then people would recognise it for what it is and with the human spirit and reasoning likely to reject it. However, because it is hidden and un-revealed it causes many in the world to fail; sin might seem attractive, yet its end is a bitter pill.

Paul describes the operation of this principle prior to the coming of Christ and our being gathered to him. He writes that the *'mystery of lawlessness is already at work' with 'power, sign, and FALSE wonder, and with every wicked deception directed'*. The mystery is only revealed through the operation of the Holy Spirit so that judgement might be given by Christ: *'then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and annihilate by the majesty of His arrival.'*

The full script reads in 2 Thes. 1-11 *'Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be easily disconcerted or alarmed by any spirit or message or letter seeming to be from us, alleging that the Day of the Lord has already come. Let no one deceive you in any way, for it will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness— the son of destruction— is revealed. He will oppose and exalt himself above every so-called god or object of worship. So he will seat himself in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.'*

Do you not remember that I told you these things while I was still with you? And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now restrains it will continue until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and annihilate by the majesty of His arrival.

The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the working of Satan, with every kind of power, sign, and FALSE wonder, and with every wicked deception directed against those who are perishing, because they refused the love of the truth that would have saved them. For this reason God will send them a powerful delusion so that they believe the lie, in order that judgment may come upon all who have disbelieved the truth and delighted in wickedness.' BSB

This same hidden evil is referred to as 'mysterious' in Rev. 17:5 *'On her forehead a mysterious name was written: Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth.'* And Rev. 17:7 *"Why are you so amazed?" said the angel. "I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and ten horns.'* Thank God that he gives his prophets insight through his angels to pull back the cloak or curtain of deceit to reveal these hidden mysteries which hold so many people and nations hostage. The knowledge of this principle along with an understanding of the ministry of deliverance equips the saints to pray to Father God through the words of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit to shine His light into dark places, to arrest evil, to dis-arm spiritual foes, to dispel evil to the place prepared for it, to set the captives free and to bring deliverance for the people Eph. 6:10-13 *'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world's darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore take up the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand.'*

This principle of setting the captives free, of liberty and release, was clear to Jesus after his 40 days in the wilderness and encounter with the Evil One. He knew his enemy's tactics and so knew how to bring deliverance to the people. Immediately after this encounter we read in Luke 4:18 *"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good*

news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed,' In addition to reading this prophesy from Isaiah 61:1, It is notable that Jesus then adds the next statement as a reference to timing... v.19 *'to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'* So, when these events take place, then is the acceptable year of the Lord.

This principle applies too in regard to his Second Coming, again the prophesies refer to His Coming at a time and in a year which is acceptable to Jesus and the Father.

The signs of the Messiah's first coming were clear when Jesus began his ministry in Nazareth Luke 4:18, Is. 61:1 and the signs of His coming again will also be clear 2Thes.2:1-12, see v.3 *'Let no one deceive you in any way, for it will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness— the son of destruction— is revealed.'*

This warning against deception is a repeat of that given by Jesus in Mark 13:5 and Matt 24:4,5: *'And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'* NKJV

The powers of the kingdom of darkness operate with deceit and it is a warning that the gospel writers and Paul warn against in the church Eph. 5:6 (empty words) 1 John 3:7 (wrong practices) *'This is why the Son of God was revealed, to destroy the works of the devil'* Col. 2:18 (false humility) *'Let no man deceive you of your reward'* 1 Cor. 3:18 (wisdom of this world) *'Do not deceive yourselves'* Rom. 16:18 (those who create divisions) *'For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.'*

After the Millennium, the slanderer and accuser, Satan continues in character to go out to deceive the nations Rev. 20:7 *'When the thousand years are complete, Satan will be released from his prison, and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth— Gog and Magog— to assemble them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the seashore.'* BSB

There are further warnings as to the characteristics of the deceit which manifests itself in the End Times:

1 Timothy 4:1

Now the Spirit expressly states that in later times some will abandon the faith to follow deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, BSB

2 Timothy 4:3

For the time will come when men will not tolerate sound doctrine, but with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires. BSB

Jude 1:18

when they said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow after their own ungodly desires." BSB

It is also notable that at both times of Messiah's comings there are what is described by the prophets as perilous, troublesome, distressful, or terrible times. The conflicts in the heavenly places become more apparent on the earth because Satan knows that his time is short and the end of all things is determined by the decrees and actions of Christ, Rev. 12:12 *'Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the*

earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

Dan. 9:25 *‘Know and understand this: From the issuance of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until the Messiah, the Prince, there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of distress.’* BSB

2 Tim. 3:1 *‘But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come.’* BSB

What separates these perilous and troublesome times from any other throughout history?

These times are specifically referred to by Jesus in Matt. 24:8 as follows: *‘All these are the beginning of birth pains.’* of what is recorded by John in Rev. 7:14 as *‘the great tribulation’* or more accurately described in the Greek as *‘the tribulation, the great one’*

13) WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

Mt. 24:6,7 *‘You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. These things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.’*

14) FAMINES AND EARTHQUAKES

Mt. 24: 7,8 *‘There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.’*

15) PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

Mt. 24: 9-11 *‘Then they will deliver you over to be persecuted and killed, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray and hate one another, and many false prophets will arise and mislead many.’* See Open Doors World Watch List which has been monitoring the persecution of Christians since 1992.

Rev. 7:13,14 *‘Then one of the elders addressed me: “These in white robes,” he asked, “who are they, and where have they come from?” “Sir, I answered, “you know. So he replied, “These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’*

The great tribulation referred to here defines it from other tribulations in history as *‘the Great One’*.

Strong’s Concordance:

Defines ‘great’ as ‘large, great, in the widest sense’

Defines ‘tribulation’ as:

2347 *thlipsis* – properly, pressure (what constricts or rubs together), used of a narrow place that "hems someone in"; tribulation, especially internal pressure that causes someone to feel confined (restricted, "without options").

2347 */thlipsis* ("compression, tribulation") carries the challenge of coping with the internal pressure of a tribulation, especially when feeling there is "no way of escape" ("hemmed in").

The persecution of the last days particularly refers to peoples who are hemmed in, who suffer much internal pressure from their societies and feel that there is 'no way of escape'

Jesus prophesies that this time will not come suddenly but will develop as birth pangs come upon a woman prior to labour and the delivery of a baby Matt. 24:8 'All these (signs) are the beginning of birth pains.'

So, prior to the end of the age, we can expect to see certain changes which occur to indicate that the time is near.

Quote Dakes 'Jesus is the cause but not the occasion of it'

OD summary of scriptures and stats esp Syria stats and significance re antiChrist

INSERT RE PERS OF CHR SYRIA 'slow genocide in Middle East' Jews already fled from these countries, only remaining country with a quorum of Christians is Lebanon, also Israel in a safe haven for them

16) THE GENERATION THAT SEES THESE SIGNS

Timing is crucial to the events of the end of the age. It has been quipped by scientists that 'time is an inconvenience to stop everything happening at once'. Likewise, the prophets saw the visions and dreams, and received the prophesies, but could not always determine their timing. Maybe they did not ask Father for the time of these events or maybe they did ask but He would not tell them for a reason.

If we knew in advance we would be lazy and slothful, waiting around for the return of the landlord of the vineyard like the unfaithful servants in the parable recorded in Mark 12:1-12, Luke 20:9-18, Matt 21:33-46 When the harvest time drew near... they will respect my son... but instead the 'tenants of the vineyard' took advantage of the delay in the return of the landlord and took what they had in possession for their own gain.

As the Son of Man Jesus was not informed of the day or the hour of his Second Coming, yet in heaven as the Triune God He certainly will be aware of the pain and destruction of those days and the time of His Coming. Matt 24:19-25 reads *"How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! 20 Pray that your flight will not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short."* So we can deduce from these scriptures that we can pray for a least 6months change in events i.e. We can pray that his Coming will be in the summer, not in the winter. It is clear then that the prayers of the saints are crucial in the end times. If the saints were removed before hand then how can they pray to change the events of those days?

Matt. 24:32-35 *'Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.'*

Matt 24:23-24 *'At that time, if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There He is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs*

and wonders that would deceive even the elect, if that were possible. See, I have told you in advance.'

17) A TESTIMONY TO THE NATIONS

Mt. 24:14 'And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.'

18) 'THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION' STANDING IN THE HOLY PLACE

Mt. 24:15-22 'So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination of desolation,' described by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop come down to retrieve anything from his house. And let no one in the field return for his cloak.

How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not occur in the winter or on the Sabbath. For at that time there will be great tribulation, unmatched from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be seen again. If those days had not been cut short, nobody would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short.'

19) THE TRIBULATION OF THOSE DAYS

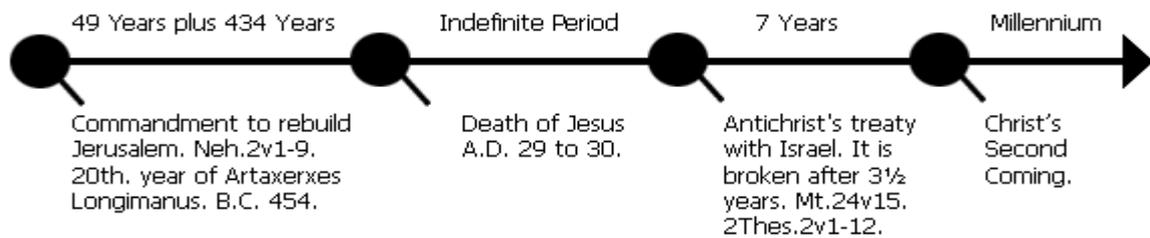
There have been many tribulations of many peoples, but it is after the tribulation, 'the great one' (Rev. 7:14) of those days that He will come

Mt. 24:29 'Immediately after the tribulation of those days: 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.' This prophesy is included again in the revelation of the Father, through Jesus, to the angel and to John in Re. 6:12 '

APPENDIX 1

Extracts taken from www.prophetbillturner.com Study #23 P.99 Appendix 3 by Bill Turner and www.truthforthelastdays.com 'The Visions of Daniel' pages 5-9. Appendix 1 by Alister Hamilton Bill Turner and Others.

CHART OF DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS OF YEARS. Dan.9v20-27

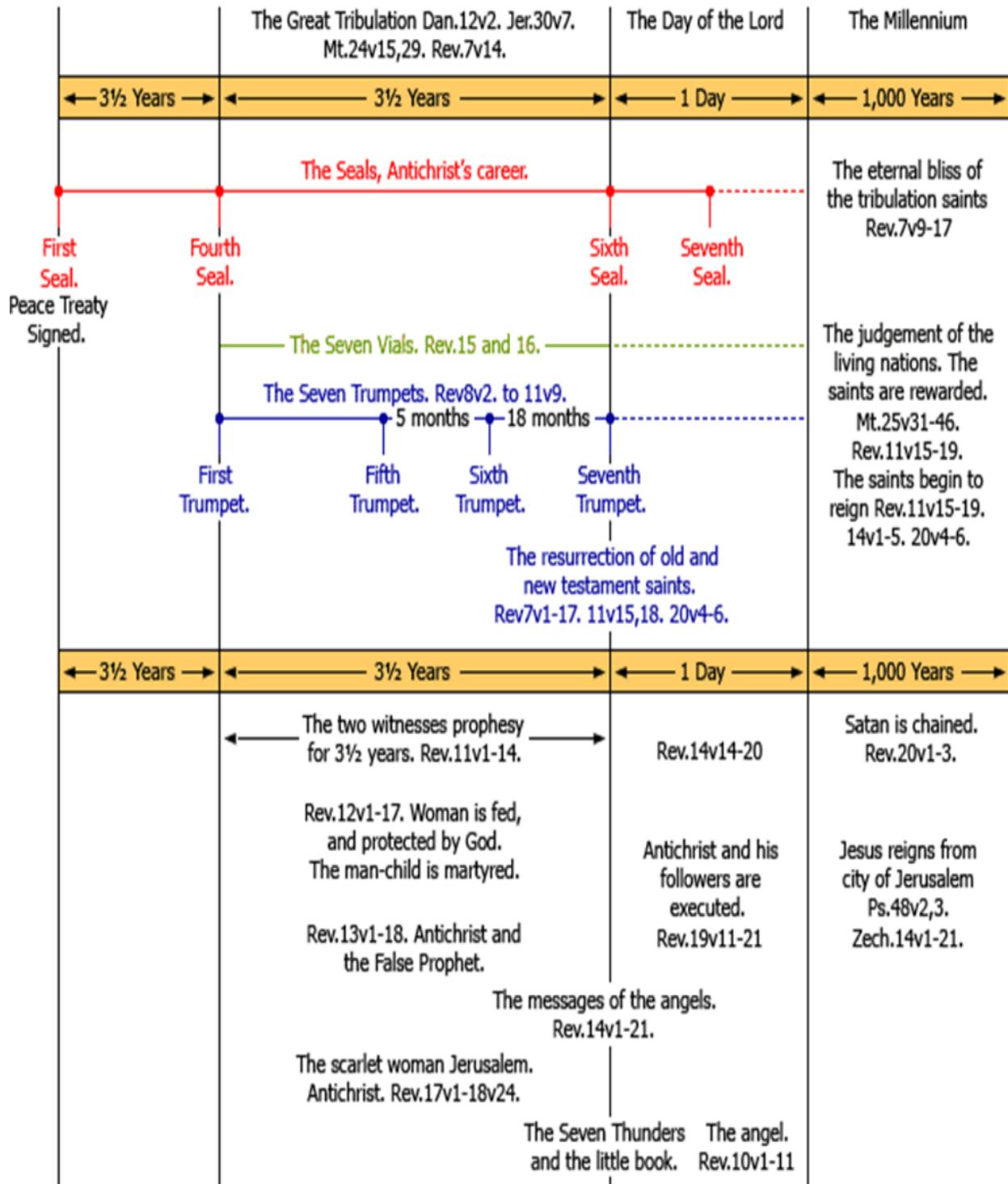


The first six heads of the Beast of Rev.17v3,8-11., are six kingdoms that have conquered, ruled and tyrannised Israel and Jerusalem during the 483 years of the prophecy of Dan.9v20-27. The first six kingdoms were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Egypt, Syria, and the sixth one was Rome; the 7th. head, the kingdom of Antichrist, is still to come.

/... cont:

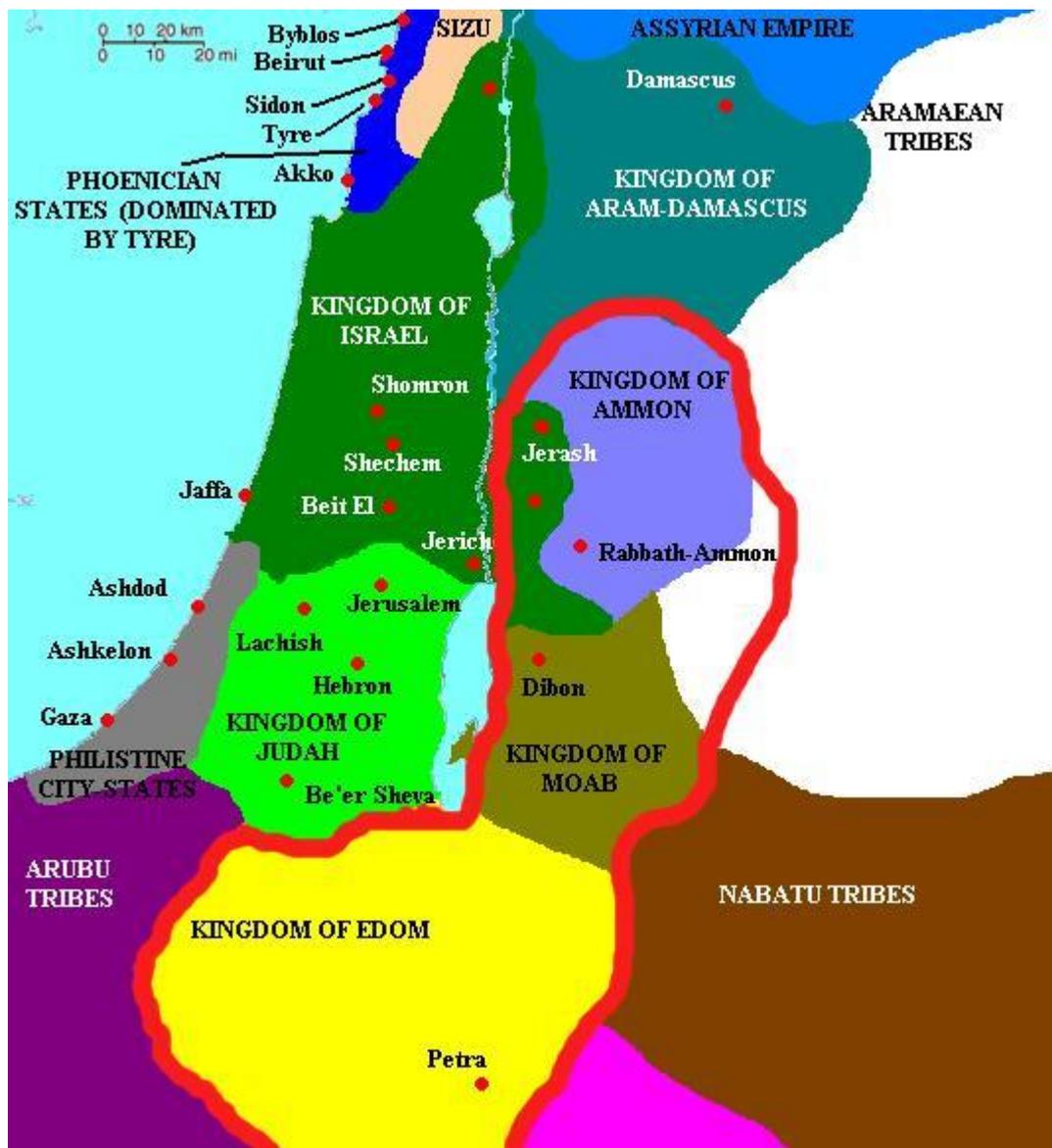
THE LAST SEVEN YEARS OF THE PROPHECY OF Dan.9v20-27.

This chart looks at the 7 years of Daniel's prophecy from the information given in the book of Revelation.



APPENDIX 2

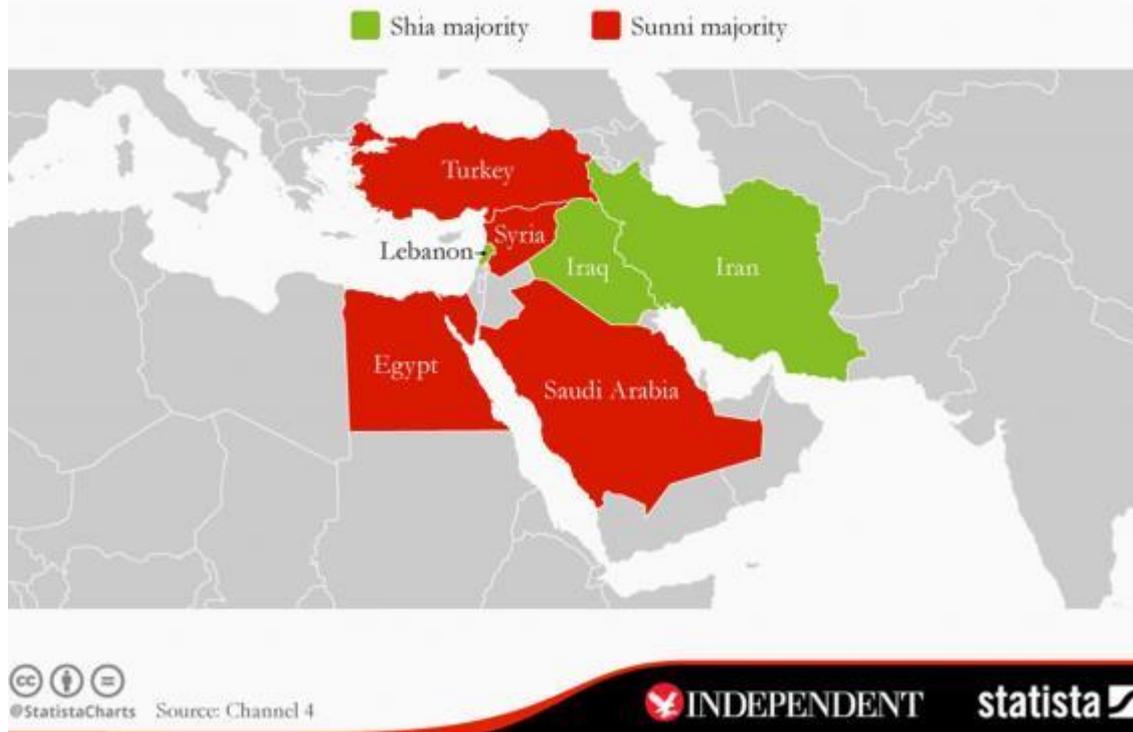
Map of Edom, Moab, and the Land of the Ammonites – the Phoenician City States at the time of Daniel the Prophet



Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/search>

APPENDIX 3

The distribution of Shia & Sunni Muslims in the Middle East



APPENDIX 4

The Iran-Saudi Arabia Proxy Conflict - 2021

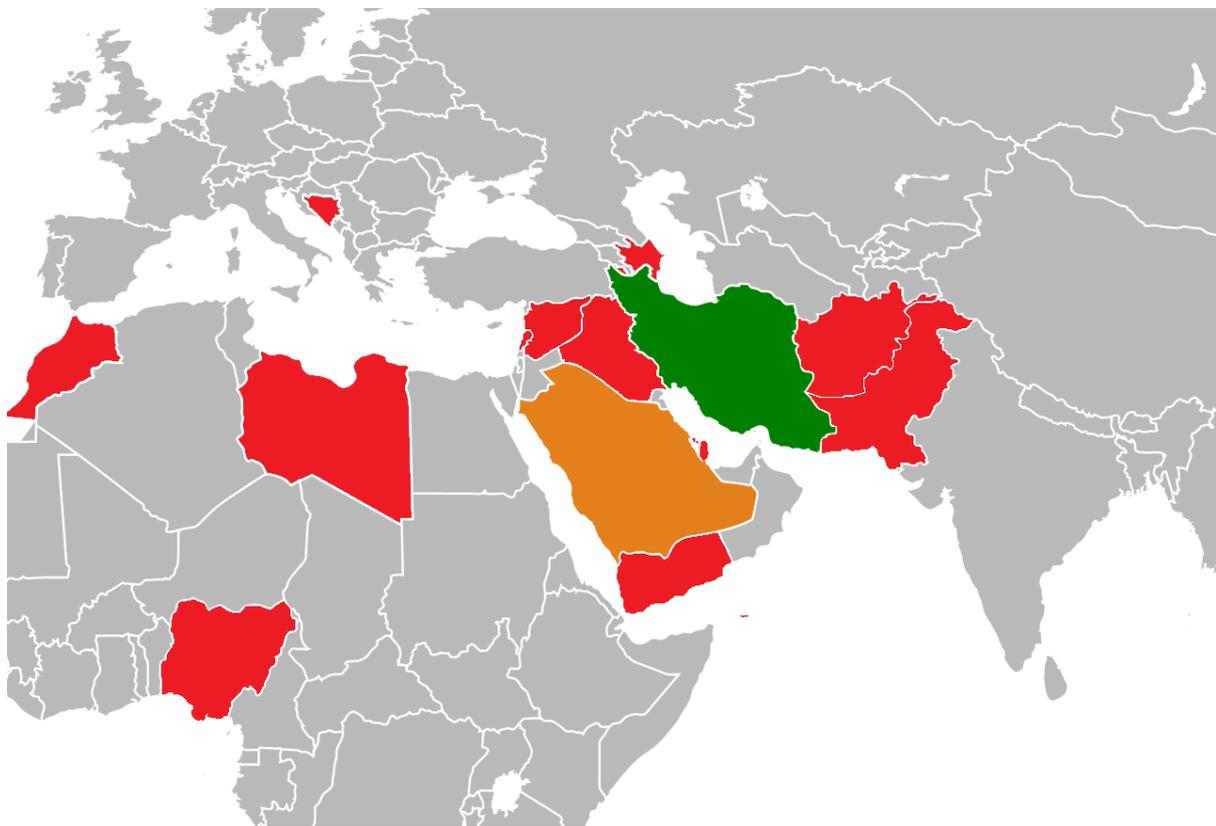
Part of Arab-Iranian conflict, Iran-Israel proxy conflict, Arab Spring and Arab Winter

Key:

Green = Iran

Orange – Saudi Arabia

Red – Major proxy locations



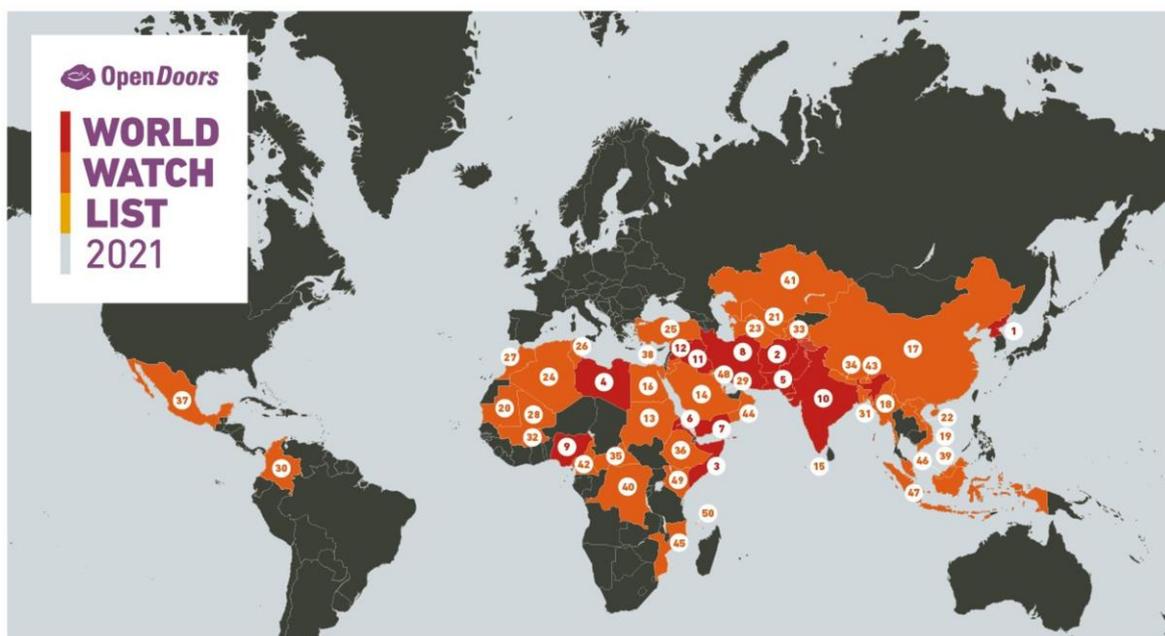
Source author: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran-Saudi_Arabia_proxy_conflict

Note: In addition, Islamic extremism causes conflicts in many of the sub-Saharan Africa e.g., Burkina Faso, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, DRC, Mozambique, Kenya

17/01/21

APPENDIX 5

The Open Doors World Watch List 2021



Source: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/>

2021 rankings:

1 North Korea	17 China	33 Tajikistan	49 Kenya
2 Afghanistan	18 Myanmar	34 Nepal	50 Comoros
3 Somalia	19 Vietnam	35 Central African Republic	
4 Libya	20 Mauritania	36 Ethiopia	
5 Pakistan	21 Uzbekistan	37 Mexico	
6 Eritrea	22 Laos	38 Jordan	
7 Yemen	23 Turkmenistan	39 Brunei	
8 Iran	24 Algeria	40 Democratic Republic of the Congo	
9 Nigeria	25 Turkey	41 Kazakhstan	
10 India	26 Tunisia	42 Cameroon	
11 Iraq	27 Morocco	43 Bhutan	
12 Syria	28 Mali	44 Oman	
13 Sudan	29 Qatar	45 Mozambique	
14 Saudi Arabia	30 Colombia	46 Malaysia	
15 Maldives	31 Bangladesh	47 Indonesia	
16 Egypt	32 Burkina Faso	48 Kuwait	

APPENDIX 6

'Let Me Go There' also referred to as 'The Coming'

by R S Thomas (1913 – 2000)

And God held in his hand

A small globe. Look, he said.

The son looked. Far off,

As through water, he saw

A scorched land of fierce

Colour. The light burned

There; crusted buildings

Cast their shadows: a bright

Serpent, a river

Uncoiled itself, radiant

With slime.

On a bare

Hill a bare tree saddened

The sky. Many people

Held out their thin arms

To it, as though waiting

For a vanished April

To return to its crossed

Boughs. The son watched

Them. Let me go there, he said.

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2011/04/20/r-s-thomas-poet-of-the-cross/8661/>

Addendum: '... and return He will' DT

To quote from this website: *'Thomas does not offer an easy resolution of the paradox of absence and presence, but in the long encounter he waged with doubt and silence—often on his knees, as many of the poems tell us—he seems to have won his way to a rugged kind of faith, an affirmation of love as the meaning of the cross, and a posture of patient waiting... For Thomas, the struggle was to learn just that: waiting is not despair'*

We too wait, though with strong and tested faith know that in the candlelight of his prophetic Word He shows us the footpath ahead.

APPENDIX 7



Saint Patrick's 'Breastplate' Prayer

('...and having on the breastplate of righteousness;' -Ephesians 6:14)

*I bind unto myself today
The strong Name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same,
The Three in One and One in Three.*

*I bind this day to me for ever.
By power of faith, Christ's incarnation;
His baptism in the Jordan river;
His death on Cross for my salvation;
His bursting from the spiced tomb;
His riding up the heavenly way;
His coming at the day of doom; *
I bind unto myself today.*

*I bind unto myself the power
Of the great love of the cherubim;
The sweet 'well done' in judgment hour,
The service of the seraphim,
Confessors' faith, Apostles' word,
The Patriarchs' prayers, the Prophets' scrolls,
All good deeds done unto the Lord,
And purity of virgin souls.*

*I bind unto myself today
The virtues of the starlit heaven,
The glorious sun's life-giving ray,
The whiteness of the moon at even,
The flashing of the lightning free,
The whirling wind's tempestuous shocks,
The stable earth, the deep salt sea,
Around the old eternal rocks.*

*I bind unto myself today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to hearken to my need.
The wisdom of my God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward,
The word of God to give me speech,
His heavenly host to be my guard.*

*Against the demon snares of sin,
The vice that gives temptation force,
The natural lusts that war within,
The hostile men that mar my course;
Or few or many, far or nigh,
In every place and in all hours,
Against their fierce hostility,
I bind to me these holy powers.*

*Against all Satan's spells and wiles,
Against false words of heresy,
Against the knowledge that defiles,
Against the heart's idolatry,
Against the wizard's evil craft,
Against the death wound and the burning,
The choking wave and the poisoned shaft,
Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning.*

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

*I bind unto myself the Name,
The strong Name of the Trinity;
By invocation of the same.
The Three in One, and One in Three,
Of Whom all nature hath creation,
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.*

* Note: 'day of doom' is an Old English term meaning 'Day of Judgment'

Source: https://prayerfoundation.org/st_patricks_breastplate_prayer.htm

Extract quoted from above source:

This One Map Sums Up the Economy of the Middle East

If we could only show you one map to explain the economy of the Middle East, it would be this one.

In one fell swoop, the map below tells us a lot about the wealth, geopolitical influence, and natural resources of the region as well as parts of Central Asia. Many intricacies are also evident as well, which we will get to later on in this post.

Oil

We'll start with the obvious: the number one export for many countries here is crude oil or related petroleum products. Middle Eastern countries made up a significant portion of global oil export revenues during 2015 with shipments valued at \$325 billion or 41.3% of global crude oil exports.

Saudi Arabia, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iran, and Oman were all among the top 15 exporters of crude oil in 2015. Russia and Kazakhstan, countries on the Central Asian part of the map, were also members of that same group.

Regimes in the region found that there were many other corollary benefits from this economic might. Unrest could be stifled by rising wealth, and these countries would also have more influence than they otherwise would in global affairs. Saudi Arabia is a good example in both cases, though a major driver of Saudi influence has been slipping in recent years.

Outside of Oil

Aside from exports of oil, there are some other interesting subtleties to this map. One of the most advanced economies in the region, Israel, is not dependent on oil exports at all. The country has had to find other ways to create value in the global market and its three major exports include electronics and software, cut diamonds, and pharmaceuticals.

War-torn Afghanistan, which is not a significant producer of petroleum on the world market, gets the majority of its export revenue from different natural

resource. Opium is Afghanistan's most valuable cash crop, and opiates such as opium, morphine, and heroin are its largest export. Fetching an estimated value of \$3 billion at border prices, it was estimated to make up about 15% of the country's GDP equivalent in 2013.

Lastly, countries on the map without oil wealth tend to be less influential on the world stage from a geopolitical perspective. Armenia, for example, mainly exports pig iron, unwrought copper, and nonferrous metals and is the world's 138th largest exporter by dollar value, ranked in between Jamaica and Swaziland. Surrounded geographically by countries that Yerevan considers hostile, Armenia has increasingly turned to Russia for its support.

The World's Oil Markets

The following source is also helpful:

Forbes Jan 7, 2020 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rpapier/2020/01/07/how-much-oil-do-we-import-from-the-middle-east/?sh=478bed8f21c6>

The Middle East presently produces about a third of the world's oil. The most important producers there, ranked according to 2018 production, are:

Saudi Arabia - 12.3 million barrels per day (BPD)

Iran - 4.7 million BPD

Iraq - 4.6 million BPD

United Arab Emirates (UAE) - 3.9 million BPD

Kuwait - 3.0 million BPD

Qatar - 1.9 million BPD

Note: The majority of Saudi Arabia's oil in 2018 went to countries in Asia — particularly Japan, China, South Korea and India (Source: Washington Post <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/09/16/who-buys-saudi-arabias-oil>)

Hurt not the oil (energy supplies) and the wine (trade and infra-structure)

Yet the map tells only half a story as with all international trade there is a balance of payments. Good and resources flow both ways. So, with the Iran-Chinese Agreement. The following are extracts from BBC News 31 March 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-56574336>

'China sets sights on Middle East with Iran co-operation deal...

China and Iran signed a deal over the weekend that their foreign ministers said was designed as a strategic partnership to last for the next quarter of a century.

The details have not been published yet, but the assumption is that China, in defiance of American sanctions, will buy Iranian oil. It will, in turn, invest some of its wealth in Iran. Sanctions have starved Iran of foreign investment.

It is the latest extension to China's vast infrastructure project, the Belt and Road initiative, which is creating the connections Beijing needs to continue its expansion as a global power.

Some Iranians were suspicious of China's motives when a draft of the co-operation agreement was leaked last year. Belt and Road deals are intended to benefit China most of all. Some that looked attractive have turned sour when smaller, poorer countries (and most countries are smaller and poorer than China) found they were in out of their depth.

Iran - smaller than China, but still a big country with huge natural resources and an activist foreign policy - is a different proposition...

Russia saw space to revive the Soviet Union's old role by intervening in Syria.

China believes that the US is in a long-term, irreversible decline. It sees itself as the world's rising power of the 21st Century and beyond. A power of that magnitude cannot ignore the Middle East...

Now that Iran has signed a strategic accord with China, which is also a party to the JCPOA, it will be hoping for more than simply increased oil sales, vital as they are to an economy that has been badly damaged by sanctions.

The deal should give Iran more leverage with the US.

President Biden, like his two predecessors, has tried to “pivot” away from the Middle East to the lucrative and strategically important Asia-Pacific region. In practice, it has been impossible, as there is too much in the Middle East that the US considers vital to its interests. One of those agenda items is Iran, and the nuclear ambitions that it claims not to have.

While the US has not performed its longed-for pivot and pulled back, it has not pushed forward either. Its reluctance to dig any deeper holes for itself in the Middle East has opened up opportunities for its rivals.

Strategic co-operation in the Gulf might have more significance for China's long-term ambitions than any short-term benefit banked by Iran.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's Middle East tour was not confined to Tehran for the signing ceremony.

China Daily, an organ of the Chinese Communist Party, reports that he unveiled a five-point plan "for achieving security and stability in the Middle East by offering constructive boosts to Palestine-Israel dialogue, resuming the Iran nuclear deal and building a security framework in this region".

That is the kind of thing that Western diplomats say too. But the US has seen the Middle East as its preserve since the end of the Cold War. It has resisted allowing its allies in the European Union much of a role beyond signing cheques.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army has already built its first overseas military base on the Red Sea, in Djibouti. It overlooks one of the world's busiest shipping lanes and is only 10km (six miles) away from the home of the US military's Africa Command.

Could Beijing be planning something similar on Iran's Gulf coast, giving it a naval foothold in what the US Navy has regarded as its own lake?

Joe Biden and his administration might find a way back into the JCPOA. They judge it is in their best interests.

They will be much more uneasy about signs that China, as its rise gathers pace, is jostling its way into the world's most unstable region'.

...End of Quote