

The Coming Tribulation: a History of the Apocalypse

Part 5: Armageddon and the 2nd Advent

Revelation 16:1 - 19:21

(also available on-line at ichthys.com)

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Introduction: From the point of view of believers, the overarching event of the Tribulation's second half has been the Great Persecution and the martyrdom it has entailed as our adversary the devil through his son the beast has been attempting to eliminate faith and the faithful from the earth entirely. Had this evil process and the regime of antichrist been allowed to continue uninterrupted for much longer, not only would it have meant an end to the remnant of faith upon the earth, but it is also the case that "no flesh would have survived". It is precisely "for the sake of the elect" that our Lord has "shortened the days" (Mk.13:20). Beginning with the bowl judgments in the Tribulation's final year, God's direct and powerful intervention into human events will complicate Satan and the beast's control of the world, leading inexorably and ineluctably to our Lord Jesus Christ's return in judgment and glory at Armageddon, and granting believers a measure of respite in the process. For those who have survived until this point, the message is clear: "Be strong! Don't be afraid! Behold! Your God will come, as an Avenger. [Your] God will come, as a Rewarder. He will come, and He will deliver you." (Is.35:4b).

(25) "And there will be signs in the sun and the moon and the stars, and on the earth there will be [great] distress among the nations [who will be greatly] bewildered by the roaring of the sea and [its massive] waves, (26) [and] men will lose heart out of fear and expectation of what is about to come upon the inhabited world. For the luminaries of the heavens will be [powerfully] shaken. (27) And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and much glory. (28) ***When these things begin to happen, stand up and raise up your heads, because your redemption is near.*** (29) Then He told them a parable. "Look at the fig tree and all its leaves. (30) When they have already come out [like this], you can see for yourselves by examining it that summer is near. (31) So also when you see that all things have come to pass, know that the Kingdom of God is near." Luke 21:25-31

I. The Bowl Judgments: Revelation 16:1-21

As to the precise placement of the bowl judgments in the chronology of the Great Tribulation, scripture provides a number of clues which give us the ability to project a plausible time-line for their occurrence. As is made clear throughout chapter sixteen, the exact terminus for the bowl judgments is Armageddon and the Second Advent (see esp. Rev.16:16-17), since both of these events and the build-up to them are part and parcel of bowls six and seven. Further, the start-point for these seven judgments must occur at some point during the Tribulation's final three and a half years (obviously, in that, along with everything else which follows Revelation 11:15-19 and precedes Christ's return in chapter 19, they are part of the seventh trumpet which represents the Great Tribulation). So although there is clearly a relationship (and many obvious parallels) between the seven judgments of warning and the seven judgments of punishment, at first glance it may seem impossible for the bowls to parallel the trumpets in terms of raw time since the total number of months of warning comprised by the trumpet judgments is 63 (when the 42 months of the seventh trumpet, the Great Tribulation, are included in the count). On the other hand, the termini provided by the start and stop points of the Great Tribulation can provide us with only 42 months at most. In actuality, of course, the linear total has to be far fewer than 42, since a good

deal of time must be allowed at the beginning of the Great Tribulation for the Great Persecution (for it is to this offence that the bowls constitute a divine response; cf. Rev.16:5-7). The correct solution lies in positing an *overlap* in the effects of the bowl judgments (i.e., a continuation of the effects of each judgment even as the next in sequence begins, with the effects of all seven continuing until Christ's return). In this way it is possible to telescope these seven in a manner that will both yield a total of 63 total (partially overlapping) months of judgment parallel to the 63 (sequential) months of warning represented by the Trumpet Judgments, while at the same time allowing the Bowl Judgments to fit into the Great Tribulation's second half in a reasonable and workable way.

See Figure #1 at rear: "The Seven Bowl Judgments"

The above schema is certainly in keeping with the rising crescendo of punishment designed to be unbearable in contrast to the sequential and (relatively) endurable hardships of the warning judgments. Bowls six and seven, which comprise the entire Armageddon campaign along with all of the other events which precede the Second Advent, form the anchor for this system. Since, as we have already seen, Armageddon and our Lord's return occur in the fall (as symbolized by the Day of Atonement),¹ and since the events of bowls six and seven will almost certainly require the bulk of the preceding summer and spring (the summoning and transporting of the beast's armies to Israel from throughout the world being a particularly time-consuming logistical task), the positing of six and seven months for the seventh and six bowl judgments respectively fits the evidence. This schema also has in its favor the fact that the supplying of a further month for each additional bowl judgment working backward (i.e., totals of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and, finally, 12 months for each bowl judgment from the seventh to the first respectively) yields the desired total of 63 months reckoned in overlapping total, yet manages to do so in only 12 months of overall, linear chronological time (as can be seen from the diagram above).

This modeling of the likely chronology of the bowl judgments also has in its favor:

1) It allows for the fact that just as the seven trumpets constituted a build up to the Great Tribulation, so the seven bowls constitute a rising crescendo of judgment in anticipation of the return of our Lord and His judgment of the beast, the devil, and all their minions at the battle of Armageddon.

2) It allows for the fact that, inasmuch as these judgments are in no small part the divine response to the Great Persecution (chap.14-15 plus 16:5-7; cf. Is.35:4; Rev.19:15), sufficient time must first pass for that persecution to take place before the bowl judgments begin (and, as we have seen, the persecution is allowed to take its course for quite some time).

¹ See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section III.8.c, "The Jewish Ceremonial Calendar".

3) It allows for the bowl judgments to fit into the gap between the Great Persecution and Armageddon (and it is difficult to see how this could extend much past the suggested chronology of the Tribulation's final year).

4) It allows for the time required for all of the armies of the world to gather for Armageddon, the subject of the fifth and sixth bowl judgments, with this assembly taking place during the spring and summer of the final tribulational year, and with Armageddon itself taking place in the fall (i.e., lining up with the Day of Atonement), as well as allowing for sufficient time for the prophesied war between the beast's invading forces and Israel.

5) It allows for sufficient time for the other events which are prophesied to take place in this final year or so, including the plunging of the beast's kingdom into darkness (the event that dislodges him temporarily from Jerusalem), the revolt of Babylon and Israel, the destruction and pillaging of Babylon, and the invasion of Israel preparatory to Armageddon.

For the Lord has a day of vengeance, even *a year of retribution* for Zion's cause.²
Isaiah 34:8 (cf. Is.63:4)

Although the overall length of time for this punitive period of judgment is only 12 months from beginning to end, we are not to draw from this fact the notion that the bowl judgments will for that reason be less intense. Quite the contrary. Such an idea is easily refuted by the nature and effect of this second set of judgments as should be obvious even from a cursory reading of Revelation chapter sixteen. Moreover it is also the case that, in contrast to the trumpet judgments which are sequential and non-overlapping, the effects of each bowl judgment continue from their inception right down to the end of the Tribulation at the battle of Armageddon and the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. This build up of "blow upon unrelenting blow" is characteristic of the pattern of divine punishment where the objects of God's wrath have emphatically and categorically rejected His mercy (cf. Deut.28:16-68; 2Thes.1:9). Thus the manner in which these final seven judgments are administered reflects their punitive nature (in contrast to the monitory nature of the trumpet judgments; see Rev.15:1; 15:8; 16:1).

1. Sores (1-2)

(1) And I heard a loud voice from the [heavenly] temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out upon the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God". (2) And the first [angel] went out and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and dreadful and terrible sores arose upon the people who had the mark of the beast and upon those who were worshiping his image.
Revelation 16:1-2

² As explained in part 1 of this series, section IV.b.2, "The Day of Vengeance", this "day" and "year", strictly speaking, refer to the entire tribulational period, the "Day of the Lord".

Bowls: The Greek *phiale* (φιάλη), equivalent to the Latin *patera* (the diminutive of which is *patella*), is a large, deep saucer (about the size of a medium deep-dish pizza pan). This deep-dish plate was commonly used in antiquity for libations so that it had a general sacrificial use. It was chosen for libations instead of what might seem to us more practical utensils such as true bowls, cups or jars no doubt because of its suitability for dispersing the liquid libation in a way so as to maximize the emission of fragrance, the visibility of the outpouring, and the area moistened. So in our analogy here, the widespread and tangible nature of the judgment produced is the picture we are meant to receive through the use of this particular ceremonial device: the consequences of the bowl judgments will be even more emphatic and wide-ranging than was the case with the trumpet judgments.

The Seven Angels: The number seven suggests that, as in the case of the trumpet judgments, the archangels are once again in charge of administering this series of judgments.³ As with the blowing of the trumpets, the pouring out of the bowls constitutes the command to begin. Upon receiving this command, we may understand that the large number of elect angelic angels under each archangel's command will then be responsible for carrying out the particulars of each judgment. One additional important difference between the trumpet and the bowl judgments is that while in the case of the former each angel received individual, sequential orders to blow his trumpet, here we see *all seven* archangels at the same time commanded to "pour out upon the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God" (a fact which further argues for the overlapping duration of the bowl judgments as explained above).

Sores: Beyond the physical pain involved, afflictions of the skin are particularly psychologically wearing because they are at once difficult to put out of mind and at the same time obvious to others. When given the opportunity to attack Job physically, the devil, a shrewd judge of human nature, chose to smite Job "with painful sores from head to foot" no doubt as much because of the anticipated effect upon his morale as anything else (Job 2:4-8). The sores in question here, recalling the "boils" that afflict the Egyptians during the sixth Exodus plague (Ex.9:8-12), "arise" upon the followers of the beast immediately after the first bowl is poured out, and we can take heart that the scripture here names them as the recipients, thereby indicating that believers will be exempt (as in the case of many of the effects of the trumpet judgments as we have seen; cf. Ex.15:26). The sores themselves are described as "dreadful and terrible". The Greek words here are generic (*kakos/κακος* and *poneros/πονερος* respectively), with the former most likely referring to their ugly appearance and the latter to their unpleasant quality. Suffice it to say that they will serve as a constant reminder to everyone who worships the beast of God's displeasure, right up until the point of our Lord's return in glory.

2. Sea Turned to Blood (3)

³ See part 3A of this series, section I.1, "The Seven Archangels with the Seven Trumpets".

And the second [angel] poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like the blood of a dead [person], and every living thing in contact with the sea died.
Revelation 16:3

This second bowl judgment also represents a clear intensification over the similar second trumpet judgment wherein only a third of the creatures in the sea perish as a result of a third of the sea being turned into blood (Rev.8:8-9). Human fatalities are also to be understood here as well (cf. Rev.8:9b), since it is not only “everything *in* the sea” which perishes but everything (and everyone) “in contact” with the sea at the instant this judgment comes down. As with the sores which appear on all of the beast’s followers so this plague upon the earth’s seas is deliberately reminiscent of the plagues upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians in response to his persecution of the Israelites (compare Ex.9:8-12 with Ex.7:14-24). And just as Pharaoh and his armies were destroyed soon after the end of that cycle of judgment, so it will be with antichrist and his hordes when our Lord annihilates them at the battle of Armageddon. But until that time, this judgment of blood and the deprivation of the sea as a source of food will, like the sores of the first bowl judgment, continue to weigh heavily upon the anti-God population of the world until that blessed end comes to pass. Finally it should be noted that in all three instances the blood in question is literal blood, making the reality of the divine source of this judgment impossible to refute – except by hearts that have been hardened past the point of any return to reality or repentance (the universal state of affairs for antichrist and his followers). Therefore here we clearly see God’s power and righteousness underscored by this judgment: in spite of undeniable proof of its evil, the world nevertheless stubbornly refuses to repent.

3. Waters Turned to Blood (4-7)

(4) And the third [angel] poured out his bowl onto the rivers and the springs of waters, and it (i.e., all fresh water) became blood. (5) Then I heard the angel of the waters (i.e., the third angel) saying,

“O You who are and [always] were, the Holy One, You are justified in rendering these [seven bowl] judgments. (6) For [the inhabitants of the earth] have poured out the blood of [Your] saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. The very thing which they deserve.”

(7) And I heard the altar saying

“Yes, [O] Lord, God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”

Revelation 16:4-7

Just as the previous bowl judgment affected all bodies of salt water on the earth, so this third judgment will affect all bodies of fresh water. Just as the Israelites were protected during the similar cursing of the river Nile (cf. Ex.7:18 and 7:21: “the *Egyptians* will not be/were not able to drink the water”), so we may expect that believers still alive at this time will be provided some respite. For although the method and manner of the relief for those who have not succumbed to the worship of the beast are not specified here, it is very clear from the verses above that the

punishment involved here is specifically directed at antichrist's followers (and verse 5b applies this principle to *all seven* of the bowl judgments).

Water, lest we forget, is symbolic of the life-giving truth of the Word of God (Is.55:1; Jn.3:5; 3:8 [Greek]; Jn.4:10; 4:13-14; 7:37-39; 1Cor.10:4; Eph.5:26; Heb.10:22; 1Jn.5:8; Rev.7:17; 21:6; 22:1; 22:17; cf. Ex 17:5-6; Num. 20:8; Ps.36:8-9; 42:1-2; 63:1; 84:5-7; Is.8:6; 12:3; 41:17; 44:3; 55:10-11; Jer.2:13; 17:13; 1Cor.3:6-7; Heb.6:7). The appropriateness of this judgment, therefore, whereby the world's fresh water is turned into a symbol of judgment not fit to drink should be very clear. For just as the worshipers of the beast have rejected the sweet water of truth and spilled the blood of those who love it instead, so their access to the fresh water which symbolizes that truth has now been taken away and replaced with undrinkable blood.

A word should be said here about the justice of God. Despite what might seem to be terrible and unthinkable judgments falling upon countless people the world around, the third angel is given here to sing a hymn praising God precisely for the *justice* of what He is doing in holding the world to account for its evil in following and worshiping the beast and thus facilitating the massive persecution of the true Church, believers in Jesus Christ. Indeed, in verse six, it is "the inhabitants of the earth" who are charged with spilling the blood of the "saints and prophets". Even though the moral ambiguity which reigns in our day would no doubt find great fault in the destruction of all sea-life, the pollution of all fresh water, and the severe smiting of so many people with painful sores, God is completely "justified in rendering these judgments". They are pure, and good, and righteous according to the angel's hymn, and this evaluation is seconded by none other than the Son of Man Himself who died on behalf of all mankind on the altar of the cross (a sacrifice now memorialized by the heavenly altar of incense represented here), our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: "Yes, [O] Lord, God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments."

4. Scorching Heat (8-9)

(8) And the fourth angel poured out his bowl onto the sun. And it was given to it to burn men with [its] fire. (9) And men were burned with a great scorching, and they blasphemed the Name of God, the One who holds the authority over these plagues, but they did not repent [so as] to give Him glory.
Revelation 16:8-9

As with the sores of the first judgment, this plague also affects primarily the skin (a place of visible and intensive suffering as we have pointed out above) of those who worship the beast, and with even greater apparent immediacy and intensity than was the case in the plague of the sores. The type of scorching described in these verses and the fact that it affects the entire unbelieving world argues for the effects of this plague being supernaturally present regardless of precautions men may seek to take. Just as the frogs, flies, gnats and locusts of the Exodus plagues made their way into the innermost places of the houses of the Egyptians (and they were incapable of preventing it), so it seems that these burns will be impossible for the followers of

antichrist to avoid altogether (cf. Ex.8:3; 8:17; 8:21; 10:6). On the other hand, here too we anticipate our Lord's divine protection for those who remain faithful to Jesus (1Thes.1:10):

The Lord is the One who guards you. The Lord is your shade, at your right hand. By day the sun will not strike you down, nor will the moon [do so] by night.
Psalm 121:5-6

By the time of this fourth bowl judgment we might expect the cumulative effect and build-up of the cursing – the sores and the oceanic devastation and the undrinkable fresh water and now this scorching heat – to have finally broken the will to resist among the followers of antichrist. For, one would think that all of these events, pressing down with such force and effect at the same time, would leave no doubt as to the insanity of opposing the God who made heaven and earth and who holds our very lives in His hands. But instead of giving in to this truth, instead of crying “uncle!” and acknowledging the obvious fact of His superiority, instead of repenting and giving Him the glory due His Name, those who worship the beast actually have the temerity to blaspheme that holy Name in the face of such inexorable judgments! No stronger evidence can be found in scripture for the blindness brought on by the hardening of the heart through the embrace of evil, except perhaps for the example of Pharaoh.⁴ And it is in fact Pharaoh that we are meant to recall, who, in his similar blind arrogance, so inexplicably and defiantly continued to oppose the God of heaven in the face of similarly irresistible plagues (Ex.9:16). But just as his implacable resistance only served to further the plan of God – both by demonstrating God's power and also by proving beyond all question the solidity, depth and irreversibility of Pharaoh's arrogant disposition – so now this curse directed to God, at once so impotent and so horrific, only serves to show that no amount of mercy or judgment could ever be sufficient to sway the followers of the beast from their evil ways. This incredibly arrogant behavior is in stark contrast to that of a previous world ruler, the “head of gold” himself, Nebuchadnezzar, who when personally confronted with the awe-inspiring power of God, humbled himself in response to the Lord's discipline (Dan.4:28-36):

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.
Daniel 4:37 NIV

5. Darkness (10-11)

(10) And the fifth [angel] poured out his bowl onto the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened, and [the inhabitants] were chewing their tongues because of the suffering [this caused them]. (11) And they blasphemed the God of heaven on account of their sufferings, but they did not repent.

⁴ See the series, Exodus 14: Hardening Pharaoh's Heart, and part 3A of the present series, “The Tribulation Begins”, section II.c, “The Process of Apostasy”.

Darkness is one of the most significant of all divine judgments (e.g., Ex.10:21-23; 14:20; Ps.105:28; Is.8:22; Matt.8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Lk.16:24; 2Pet.2:4; 2:17; Jude 1:6; 1:13), for God is light, and there is no darkness in Him (1Jn.1:5-7; cf. Jn.1:3-9). Response to the light, God's truth, is thus the universal litmus test of true creature character. Therefore, as in His turning off of the universal lights in response to Satan's rebellion (Gen.1:2),⁵ God has always used this judgment of darkness to show in a very graphic and tangible way not only His power but also the true character of those judged: antichrist and his most ardent core of followers are given the darkness they truly love and have unquestionably merited by their entirely blind and light-less conduct (cf. Gen.19:11; Deut.28:28-29; 2Kng.6:18ff.; Acts 13:11).

And this is the [basis for] judgment: the Light (i.e., Jesus Christ) has come into the world, yet men loved the darkness more than the Light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who commits detestable practices hates the Light and does not come to the Light, lest his deeds be exposed [for what they really are]. But everyone who acts in accordance with the truth comes to the Light so that it becomes obvious that his deeds have been done in God (i.e., in accordance with God's will).
John 3:19-21

As was the case with the darkness occasioned by the fourth trumpet judgment (Rev.8:12), it will be impossible for contemporaries to rationalize away this casting of the beast's kingdom (comprising roughly a fourth part of the earth) into what is being described here as at the very least near total darkness. But again, although the power of God is unquestionably being made manifest in this judgment, and although the pain and suffering this judgment brings ought to provoke a response of humility and repentance,⁶ in the completely hardened hearts of the worshipers of antichrist it will provoke instead only impotent blasphemy against the One who made and sustains the very heavens and earth (cf. Jer.6:27-30; Ezek.22:17-19). In this respect too then, this bowl judgment at least foreshadows the supernatural darkness that will occur just prior to the Second Advent, the time when the beast and his followers will finally be destroyed for so enthusiastically serving the darkness rather than the light (Is.13:9-13; 34:4; 60:1-3; Ezek.32:7-10; Joel 2:2, 2:10, 2:31; 3:15; Zeph.1:15-18; Zech.14:6-8; Matt.24:29; Mk.13:24-25; Acts 2:17-21; Rev.6:12-13).⁷

⁵ See part 2 of The Satanic Rebellion: Background to the Tribulation: "The Genesis Gap", section II.2, "The Darkness".

⁶ See part 3A of the present series regarding the fourth trumpet judgment, section III.4, "The Heavenly Lights Stricken".

⁷ See part 2 of The Satanic Rebellion: Background to the Tribulation: "The Genesis Gap", section II.2.d.3, "The Supernatural Darkness at the Second Advent".

That the darkness mentioned here affects only “the kingdom of the beast” is extremely significant. It will be remembered that the fourth trumpet judgment, while seemingly less intense in that it reduced the emission of light from the sun, moon and stars by a third whereas here the darkness is described in absolute terms, was nevertheless the first judgment wherein the entire earth was adversely affected. By contrast here we see the darkness, while total in the area directly stricken, only said to affect that one particular area, namely the “throne” and “kingdom” of the beast. By this point in the Tribulation, it is true that antichrist will exercise some degree of control over the entire world, enough, for example, to orchestrate the Great Persecution in all quarters of the globe. But in the precise terminology used here, “throne” and “kingdom”, something less than the entire world is meant. Specifically, Revelation 16:10 has to be referring to the original seven members of the ten nation confederacy (i.e., the European continent) which, following his seizure of Babylon, came to constitute the power base for the beast’s worldwide dominion.

(40b) And [the beast] will invade the lands [of the southern alliance], and inundate [them] and sweep through [them], (41) and he will advance into the Beautiful land (i.e., Israel). Now many lands will fall before him, but these will escape from his control: Edom, and Moab, and the first [part of the territory] of the sons of Ammon. (42) And [antichrist] will extend his control over the lands (of the southern alliance), so that even the land of Egypt will not escape. (43) Thus [antichrist] will take control of all the repositories of gold and silver, even over all of Egypt’s treasures, with Libya (i.e., representing North Africa) and Cush (i.e., Sudan-Ethiopia) following her [in submission]. (44) ***But reports [coming] from the east and the north will disturb him***, with the result that he will depart [from Israel] in a great rage to destroy and to exterminate many. (45) Then [upon his return to Israel] he will pitch the tents of his [royal] pavilion between the seas (i.e., the Mediterranean and the Dead seas) near the mountain of the beauty of holiness (i.e., the temple mount in Jerusalem). But [in spite of this (i.e., his hopes for success in the battle of Armageddon)] he will come to his end, and no one will aid him [then].
Daniel 11:40b-45

As we have seen previously, verses 40b-43 above describes the beast’s conquest of the southern confederacy and consolidation of his power during the Tribulation’s second half. Then, in verse 44, we are given additional critical information about antichrist’s subsequent conduct, specifically, his actions at the time of the fifth bowl judgment which we are presently studying. At that time, the beast will quit Jerusalem because of “reports” which will “disturb him”. These “reports”, furthermore, are said to emanate from “the east and the north”. They will provoke him to “a great rage” and motivate him “to destroy and to exterminate many”. The following context in verse 45, is a clear reference to the battle of Armageddon where the beast will meet his end at the hands of our victorious returning Lord. This means that antichrist’s hasty departure from Jerusalem in verse 44 has to be sandwiched between the two, and in the description given seems to occur during the time period just prior to the Second Advent (as also in Zech.9:8, NASB: “him [i.e., antichrist] who passes by *and returns*”). There is thus much to recommend understanding the cause of these “reports” which so enrage the beast and cause him to abandon his new world headquarters in Jerusalem’s temple for a wide-ranging and destructive punitive campaign as

being the darkness of the fifth bowl judgment.⁸ For just as in Daniel 11:40-45 the departure lies between events taking place late in the Great Tribulation and the return of Christ, so in Revelation chapter 16 the fifth bowl judgment occurs just before the commencement of the Armageddon campaign (the sixth bowl judgment), and is likewise positioned late in the Great Tribulation (e.g., it follows the Great Persecution and the previous four bowl judgments).

So in the same way that Babylon will be singled out during the seventh bowl judgment, here we see the earth's northern quadrant (essentially synonymous with antichrist's seven nation European confederacy, although for geographical reasons we can omit Israel in this case) being similarly singled out – not destroyed, as Babylon will be, but plunged into darkness. That this blacking out of the entire continent of Europe will be the cause of much political and social disruption should come as no surprise especially given the horrendous nature of antichrist's social and economic policies in particular (that is to say, there will unquestionably be many who will take advantage of this opportunity to rid themselves of his rule).⁹ The mention of the “east” here as also being a source of the disturbing reports is significant as well. The degree of control enjoyed over the world's eastern hemisphere by antichrist at this time will be, as previously discussed, based upon an overall military, political, and economic dominance, and exercised in that quadrant largely through surrogates (i.e., “the kings of the east”), rather than being underpinned by large-scale military occupation (although the deployment of his substantial naval superiority in this endeavor is not to be ruled out). Therefore, though not suffering the judgment of darkness itself, the global disruption of command and control that this unprecedented event will produce can reasonably be expected to engender at the very least the rumblings of an increased degree of political independence in these eastern regimes. It is certainly in keeping with antichrist's character to react vigorously and ruthlessly to any perceived threats to his power and position, especially when they are so potentially serious as what we are contemplating here. In such circumstances, a campaign of terror designed to put down any hint of rebellion in the north and by example squelch all potential moves towards political independence in the east may be understood in phraseology of verse 44: i.e., antichrist's method in temporarily relinquishing Jerusalem “in a great rage” will be “to destroy and to exterminate many” in order to repair the breaches in his worldwide empire.

In Daniel 11:45 we see antichrist returned to Israel, and taking up positions with ominous intent *against* rather than in Jerusalem. As with verse 44, this description is again in complete harmony with what we find in Revelation chapter 16 where, shortly after the darkening of the north during the fifth bowl judgment, we find that the “kings of the east”, rather than entertaining rebellion, are now full-fledged participants in the anti-God Armageddon campaign (Rev.16:12). This

⁸ Compare the parallel situation described in Isaiah 37:9 where a similar “rumor” caused the Assyrian king (typologically reminiscent of antichrist as we have seen in part 3B of this series) to quit the land of Israel.

⁹ See part 2B of this series, section IV, “The Seven Seals”, and part 3B, section II.2.c, “Gleanings from the Policies of antichrist”.

development, and the mustering of the armies of the world to do battle with the soon to return Lord Jesus Christ (detailed in section VII below), is sufficient to show that antichrist's efforts to reestablish his authority in the north and east following the disruption of his control occasioned by the darkness will be entirely effective.

The Jewish Rebellion: We saw in part 3B of this series in our treatment of antichrist's second campaign against the south, the campaign following which he takes up residence in the temple in Jerusalem, that Israel was said to be subject to "harsh treatment" at this time according to Balaam's prophecy (Num.24:23-24). Much of this "harsh treatment" is almost certainly a proleptic reference to the "rage" with which antichrist will return to Israel from Egypt following the failed attempt upon his person (Dan.11:30). Thus the bulk of the maltreatment suffered in Israel at that time will be intimately connected with the beast's war upon Moses and Elijah and the 144,000, the scapegoats chosen by antichrist to atone for the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate him (Rev.11:7-13). We can also expect as a result of these developments, especially in light of the fact that the beast from this point forward takes up residence in Jerusalem, that personal freedom in Israel at this time will be even more limited than is the case in the rest of antichrist's empire. Conservative unbelievers and zealots, who resisted the message of Moses and Elijah but fell short of wholeheartedly embracing antichrist as God, will be extremely resentful of the beast's representation of himself as the Holy One of Israel. Indeed, as suggested in part 3B, the source of the previous assassination attempt will most likely derive from these circles, and this "breaking of the [pseudo-Messianic] treaty" between himself and Israel during the middle of the Tribulation will be a major grounds for continuing unrest (Dan.9:27).

But although political liberties may be nonexistent in Israel during the Great Tribulation, relative to much of the rest of the world she will be experiencing at least some measure of material prosperity thanks in no small part we may assume to the fact that Jerusalem has now become the capital of the world. Thus the resulting pilgrimages to the temple and the embassies connected with the Great Persecution on the one hand, and the likely desire of the beast to make "the place of his feet glorious" (as part of the pseudo-fulfillment of the messianic promises to which he lays claim: Is.60:13) will to some degree enrich Israel in material terms (cf. Ezek.38:7-16 where Israel appears as relatively prosperous before Armageddon), even though she will never know a time of greater spiritual abasement. Nevertheless, scripture does also indicate that even in the case of this relative material prosperity, the bulk of the population will be subject to extreme exploitation and maltreatment at the hands of the beast's ruling class, notable among them being the "false shepherd", one of the "ten kings" and Israel's ruler during this period (Ezekiel 28:1-5).

We can therefore easily understand how many elements within Jewish society at this time would find the supernatural darkening of antichrist's home kingdom and his departure from Israel with the greater portion of his military forces an ideal opportunity to throw off the beast's yoke once and for all, little understanding or appreciating that this very action will soon set in motion the Armageddon campaign as the beast summons all of the world's military forces to Israel in hopes of destroying her forever in retaliation for her unfaithfulness. This rebellion and the response it

provokes thus fulfills the prophecies of wars and desolations destined to continue for her until our Lord returns (Dan.9:26; cf. Lk.21:9).

A word needs to be said here as well about the role in this rebellion of prophetic Babylon (i.e., the U.S., antichrist's original home country). Although it will be recalled that antichrist is Babylon's "king", scripture also indicates that she will have a regent as well, no doubt managing her government while the beast is occupied overseas (as he will be for the bulk of the Tribulation).¹⁰ This would be the "regent" of Babylon as opposed to her true "king", antichrist (contrast Ezek.28:2-10 referring to the former, with Ezek.28:12-19, which applies to the latter). We can well imagine that with the beast and the majority of his imperial guard disappearing into the darkness that enshrouds Europe at this time, it will not only be Israel and the eastern marches of the beast's empire who are entertaining thoughts of independence. Therefore a revolt centered upon antichrist's new capital is likely to bring a receptive response from all such quarters, and none will be more naturally sympathetic toward such a development than Babylon and her regent. For, it will be recalled from part 3B of this series, the emotional tie between Babylon and Israel did much to bring about the two campaigns that led to antichrist's world dominion in the first place. And as to the deputy ruler of Babylon, scripture indicates that in his arrogance he is very likely to see himself as the beast's natural successor, with the present crisis providing an opportunity to move that succession forward in time beyond anything previously anticipated. But of course this thinking represents a miscalculation in the extreme.

(1) Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, (2) Son of man, say to the *prince*[-regent] of Tyre (i.e., as opposed to the "king" in v.12), "Thus says the Lord. Because your heart is lifted high [with pride], and because you say 'I am a god [and] I occupy a position like God's in the heart of the seas', but because you are a man and not a god, though you have indulged your heart [with divine prerogatives] as if it were God's heart . . . (3) behold, you are wiser than Daniel! No hidden thing is concealed from you! (4) It is by your own wisdom and understanding that you have enriched yourself and piled up gold and silver in your storehouses! (5) It is by your own abundant wisdom, by your own trafficking, that you have multiplied your wealth! But [in fact] your heart has been lifted high [with pride] because of [that very] wealth of yours.'

Ezekiel 28:1-5

We see the regent of antichrist's home country Babylon described above as the "prince-regent of Tyre", with Tyre being an alternative representation for the same prophetic future state stressing economic as opposed to military power (cf. Ezek.28:12ff. where the *king* of Tyre is a type of

¹⁰ This also explains why "Gog", a.k.a. antichrist, is called the *chief* prince of Meshech and Tubhal" (Ezek.38:2; 39:11), namely, because there is also a [non-chief] secondary prince of Magog (i.e., eschatological Babylon), until she is destroyed (cf. Ezek.39:6).

both antichrist and Satan). The unfaithfulness demonstrated by the beast's sub-ruler at this time will have much to do with motivating the destruction of Babylon soon hereafter.¹¹

(46) And lest your heart grow faint and you become afraid at the report heard against the land (i.e., antichrist's decree against Israel in his call to Armageddon: Rev.16:12-16), in the year this report comes, after it will come another report in the same year; the one [will be] of violence against the land [of Israel], the other of a ruler (i.e., antichrist) **against a ruler** (i.e., the prince of Babylon). (47) For behold, in days to come I will render judgment on the idols of Babylon. Her entire land will be ashamed, and all of her slain will fall in her midst.

Jeremiah 51:46-47

Another representation for this deputy ruler is "Pharaoh" in those cases where Egypt and Pharaoh are being contrasted with Assyria and her king in prophetic contexts. In such situations, Assyria and her king represent revived Rome and her ruler antichrist, while Egypt and Pharaoh represent prophetic Babylon and antichrist's disobedient deputy respectively.¹² Israel's reliance at this time upon prophetic Babylon, a pagan nation which only recently contributed mightily to her troubles, is eerily parallel to her reliance in the past upon literal Egypt. In both cases not only does such confidence prove to be entirely misplaced, but it also demonstrates the folly of Israel looking **anywhere** for help apart from the Lord who created her.

(1) Woe to [you] rebellious children, says the Lord, [who purpose] to carry out a plan (but it is not from Me) and to make an alliance (but My Spirit has not [led you to it]) in order to heap sin upon sin. (2) [You] who proceed to go down to Egypt (but have not asked My opinion), in order to seek protection from Pharaoh and to find shelter in the shade of Egypt. (3) But Pharaoh's protection will result [only] in shame, and sheltering in Egypt's shade [only] in reproach. (4) Although [Israel's] officials appear in Zoan, and her ambassadors reach Hanes, (5) everyone [of them] will be put to shame on account of a people who can profit them nothing. (6) This will not result in help and it will not result in profit, but only in shame as well as reproach.

Isaiah 30:1-6

(1) Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, [who] rely upon horses and put their faith in chariots because they are numerous and in cavalry because it is strong, but who have not looked to the Holy One of Israel, and have not sought the Lord. (2) But He (i.e.,

¹¹ The appellations Peqod and Merathaim in Jeremiah 50:21 speak to this point, with the former meaning "visitation" representing her destruction, and the latter meaning "double rebellion" bespeaking her rebellion against antichrist.

¹² In many cases, of course, Pharaoh is a type of the beast. For explanations of that typology, see part 3B of this series, section I.3, "Prophetic Types", and section II, "The Origin, Character and Rise of Antichrist".

the Lord) is shrewd too, and [knows how] to bring on disaster, and He does not turn aside His decrees. For He shall arise against [that] group of evildoers, even against the help of those who work iniquity (i.e., in having supported antichrist). (3) For the Egyptians are men and not gods, and their horses are flesh and not spirit. And it will come about that He will smite with His hand so that he who helps will stumble, and he who is being helped will fall, and both of them will come to a dire end.

Isaiah 31:1-3

Moreover, our eyes failed, looking in vain for help; from our towers we watched for a nation that could not save us.

Lamentations 4:17 NIV

(6b) [I shall destroy you in this way, O Pharaoh], because you have been a staff [made only] of reed for the house of Israel. (7) When they took hold of you, you splintered in their hands, and [so] you broke everyone's back [who leaned on you].

Ezekiel 29:6b-7

At this juncture, therefore, though there will be a renewed dialogue between antichrist's home country and insurrectionist forces within Israel for reasons of political expediency on both sides, and though this will serve to greatly encourage the rebel camp within Israel, whatever material support Babylon may give to this rebellion will all be for naught. For Babylon will be destroyed soon thereafter, while the rebellion itself will only furnish motivation and pretext for that destruction, as well as for the Armageddon campaign which follows in its wake.

(13) And I heard one of the holy ones who was speaking, and he said to the other holy one who was speaking, "How long will this vision of the daily sacrifice and of the [spiritual] rebellion (i.e., apostasy) which produces desolation and of the handing over of the holy [place] (i.e., the inner court) and of the trampling down of the host be?" (14) And he replied to me, "Until 2,300 evenings and mornings have passed. ***Then the holy [place] will be purified.***"

Daniel 8:13-14

This passage in Daniel allows us to reconstruct the timing of the rebellion with great specificity. It will be recalled from the chart of the bowl judgments above, that the supernatural darkness which strikes the beast's kingdom of revived Rome will occur at the beginning of the eighth month preceding our Lord's return at the end of the Great Tribulation. That is to say, the fifth bowl judgment occurs 1,020 days into the Great Tribulation and 240 days from its termination.¹³

¹³ That is, according to the prophetic-year scale of 12 thirty day months per year consistently used in scripture to describe this period (Dan.7:25; 9:27; 12:7; Rev.11:2; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5). Of course, the addition of the requisite "solar days" and the fact that the end of the Tribulation will be "shortened for the sake of the elect" (Matt.24:22; Mk.13:20), means that we can take our Lord's assurance that "no one knows the [precise] ***day*** or the [precise] ***hour***" quite

The information in Daniel's prophecy above further assures us that the beast's pollution of the temple, begun it will be recalled at the Great Tribulation's outset, will last for 1,150 days (i.e., 1,150 evenings plus 1,150 mornings). This means that it will take just over four months (130 days) after the fifth bowl judgment begins for the Jewish rebels to re-occupy the Temple Mount and complete the requisite ritual purification of the holy place (a process which took the priests under Hezekiah half a month to complete: 2Chron.29:17). Thus the beast's departure from Israel, the formation (or coming out into the open) of an armed resistance, the capturing of the Temple Mount, its ritual purification, and antichrist's reaction in mounting the Armageddon campaign will all happen in rapid-fire succession as the pace of events accelerates toward the Tribulation's end. The re-conquest of the Temple mount will certainly not mean the end of armed struggle within the borders of Israel. Part of antichrist's modus operandi of rulership worldwide will be to cement his control through the use of "fortresses" (Dan.11:38-39), strong points manned by his loyalists as a hedge against just such attempts on his regime, and scripture indicates that the same will be true in Israel (Is.2:15; 25:12; 30:25; Zeph.1:16; 3:6; 3:15 [Hebrew only]). Once the rebellion begins, these strong-points will no doubt be occupied not only by the beast's residual garrison, but also by those Jews whose allegiance to antichrist has passed the point of no return (as, for example, the "king" of Israel: Ezek.28:1-5). Given the progression of the Armageddon campaign (see section VII below), we can expect a number of these outposts to hold out until antichrist returns for Armageddon, and thus for the struggle to continue right up until our Lord's return (Dan.9:26), for it will be His Second Advent which destroys the beast and delivers Israel rather than this rash attempt at self-deliverance.

(6) Then [one of the two other angels] said to the man (i.e., the angel) clothed in linen who was [suspended] above the waters of the river, "How long [will it be] until the end of [these] astounding things?" (7) And I heard the man (i.e., the angel) clothed in linen who was [suspended] above the waters of the river. He raised his right hand and his left hand to heaven and he swore by Him who lives forever and ever that it would be a period [of time and] two periods [of time] and half [a period of time] (i.e., the three and one half years of the Great Tribulation), and that [just] when the power of the holy people was being completely crushed, [all] these things would come to their completion.

Daniel 12:6-7

And after the sixty two weeks, Messiah will be cut off and have nothing (cf. Is.53:8), and the people of the prince who is coming (i.e., antichrist) will destroy both the city and the holy place. And his end will come with a flood (i.e., the "flooding away" of his armies at Armageddon), and ***until that end there will be wars*** – [appalling] devastation has been decreed.

Daniel 9:26

6. Preparation for Armageddon (12-16)

literally (i.e., it is "a unique ***day***, without daytime or nighttime – a ***day*** known to the Lord. When ***evening*** comes, there will be light" Zech.14:7 NIV; cf. Matt.24:36; Mk.13:32).

(12) And the sixth [angel] poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water dried up in order that the way of the kings of the orient (lit., “sun’s rising”) might be prepared. (13) And I saw [coming] out of the mouth of the false prophet three unclean spirits like [unto] frogs. (14) Now these are spirits of demons which produce “signs”: they will go forth to the kings of the entire earth to gather them together for the war of the great day of God the Almighty. (15) – Behold, He (i.e., our Lord Jesus) is coming like a thief. Happy is he who both stays awake and guards his clothing, in order that he may not walk about naked and [people] see his shame. – (16) And they (i.e., the demons) gathered them (i.e., the kings of the earth and their armies) together to a place called in Hebrew, “Armageddon”.

Revelation 16:12-16

The Kings of the East: It will be remembered that reports coming from both east and north had compelled antichrist to abandon temporarily his new world headquarters in Jerusalem in order to re-secure his base of power. Only the north, the “kingdom of the beast”, had been plunged into supernatural darkness, but the disruptions caused in that quadrant of the world produced rumblings of insurrection in the eastern quarter of the globe as well. Now, scarcely a month later, we see the situation entirely reversed. In characteristically “leopard-like” fashion (Rev.13:2), the beast’s fierce and lightning-swift reaction to incipient rebellion in his own kingdom has not only restored complete control to the north, his current location, but has apparently so over-awed the “kings of the east” that they are now more than willing to offer him the use of their own massive if inferior military forces as a sign of their loyalty and obeisance (and no doubt with the intention of warding off a similar punitive strike aimed in their direction).

And the entire earth was in awe of the beast. And they worshiped the dragon because he had given his authority to the beast. And they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? And who is able to make war with him?”.

Revelation 13:3-4

Thus, the rumblings of rebellion are rapidly and mercilessly squelched by antichrist and die out without so much as a whimper. Instead of their actions being cloaked by a worldwide insurrection to throw off the beast’s yoke, the rebels within Israel now find themselves not only bereft of erstwhile allies (Babylon temporarily excepted), but have now become the primary target of the remaining military might of the entire world. For antichrist is now mustering every available battalion from the four corners of the earth. Previously in control of the south, and having regained control of the north, now we see even the forces of the east available to him. As this process begins to unfold, we now find ourselves some six or seven months away from the climax of the Armageddon campaign which culminates with our Lord’s return at the Second Advent. Judging from the description of massive troop movements from the east, it appears that the beast, with time now on his side, will opt for a somewhat different strategy to crush Israel. Rather than striking immediately with limited forces, he will choose instead to gather all of the world’s military forces in and around Israel for a final massive assault on Jerusalem with the intention of annihilating Israel stock and stem (and we can expect him to use every aspect of his

considerable political and social control to bring this campaign to pass in a spectacular way).¹⁴ Thus, even as the Jewish rebellion proceeds and consolidates around the newly reclaimed temple, antichrist's juggernaut will be gathering momentum even as it grows ever greater in size, assembling on the borders of Israel from every corner of the globe. Finally, as to Babylon, as suggested in the parallels to Egypt and Pharaoh and the historical disappointments they consistently dealt to Israel whenever she relied on them for support against northern invaders, the west, still under Babylon's nominal leadership, will provide no tangible help (for reasons to be covered in section II below), so that her previous encouragement will only have served to have emboldened secular Israel to take up this hopeless fight, hopeless, that is, without extreme divine intervention, a contingency upon which these rebels never planned.

The Sixth Bowl: The meaning of the drying up of the Euphrates is symbolic (cf. Is.11:15). As a purely geographical barrier, it presents no great obstacle, whether dry or at flood stage, to the passage of a massive modern army. But it did mark the traditional boundary between east and west, one which was rarely crossed in antiquity with any sort of effect. By "drying it up" we are meant to understand that all of the factors which have so far prevented or restrained involvement of "the east" from the seat of conflict in the Middle East have now been removed by divine intervention. It may seem somewhat odd that this sixth bowl judgment seemingly plays into antichrist's hands, removing all restraint on the previous reluctance of the kings of the east to participate in Middle-Eastern conflict. But just as the removal of Holy Spirit restraint worldwide was a necessary measure in order to allow "the book to be opened" and the Tribulation to begin,¹⁵ so the removal of the barrier to involvement by the kings of the east is a necessary measure to allow all of the earthly forces of evil to assemble for the Great Day of Lord, the battle of Armageddon. This, then, is truly a judgment as well, because now the east too, the last quadrant of the world so far not directly involved in the military affairs of the Tribulation, will be drawn into the destruction about to be rained down by our returning Lord Jesus Christ.

The Three Unclean Spirits: The first thing to notice from the translation provided above is what is *not* present in verse thirteen, namely, any reference to the dragon or the beast as origins of the three unclean spirits. The occurrence of the words "the dragon and the beast" are a latter addition not present in the best manuscript, and were added no doubt in an effort to match the three spirits with three sources. However, this non-scriptural supplement is, like all such improper additions, misleading. As we have seen, the false prophet is both the herald of the

¹⁴ Compare the Persian empire's similar mobilization scheme. During its heyday, full military mobilization required at least a year, but when invoked produced numbers on a scale that dwarfed any contemporary empire. This characteristic is reflected in the imagery of the "feet of the bear" of Revelation 13:12, extremely powerful but much less swift than the other symbolic beasts mentioned in Daniel chapter seven (i.e., the winged lion and the leopard).

¹⁵ See Part 2B of this series, section III "The Restraining Ministry of the Holy Spirit".

beast, disseminating his propaganda all over the world, as well as the one who performs the “false signs” in his name (Rev.13:11-17; cf. Matt.24:24; 2Thes.2:9-12).¹⁶

And the beast was seized and the false prophet with him (*the one who had performed the signs before him with which he had deceived those who took the sign of the beast and worshiped his image*). The two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with sulphur.

Revelation 19:20

We find both of these elements present in the function of the three spirits in verse fourteen. For each of these “three spirits” are actually numerous demons going forth to assemble the world’s armies for the final battle of the Tribulation at Jerusalem. The false identification of them with the so-called “un-holy trinity” merely obscures the true reason why these demon forces are split into three groups, namely, to rally the military forces of all three of the world’s remaining quadrants to Armageddon (the fate of the fourth, the west represented by Babylon, will be discussed below). It is nonetheless true, of course, that the beast will lead this “crusade” against the chosen people of God and the devil is the ultimate force of will behind this event, and thus will it ever be with every assault upon the people faith until the evil one is once and for all removed from the world.

And when the thousand years were completed, Satan was released from his prison, and he came forth to *deceive the nations* which [reside] in *the four quadrants* (lit., “corners”) of the earth, Gog and Magog (whose number is as the sand of the sea) in order to marshal them together for war.

Revelation 20:7-8

The use of the comparison to frogs at Revelation 16:3, i.e., the statement that these three demon divisions [looked] *like* frogs, is another example (cf. “the woman”, “the beast” and “the dragon”) of John using very descriptive allegorical pictures to represent actual entities. As in all of the other cases where he employs this device, however, John under the Spirit’s guidance also leaves us in no doubt whatsoever as to what these similes represent. “Frogs”, notoriously animals to be detested according to the Law of Moses (Lev.11:9-12) and reminiscent of the Egyptian plague (Ex.8:1-14), are an especially effective choice to bring home the repulsive nature of the task these demons are calling the world to undertake: the complete annihilation of the Jewish people.

Like a Thief: Verse fifteen is an interjection addressed to believers which interrupts the call to Armageddon in verse fourteen from the gathering together of the kings of the earth and their armies in verse sixteen. As mentioned above, there is the possibility that antichrist, consumed by this new purpose, namely, the utter destruction of Israel, will leave off for the moment his prosecution of the Great Persecution. Yet the interjection here in verse fifteen, the command to believers to “stay awake”, clearly demonstrates that these will continue to be most difficult times

¹⁶ See Part 4 of this series, section VI.2 “The False Prophet”.

for all who remain alive and maintain their confession of Jesus Christ as Lord. Many believers (as we shall see below) will find themselves at this time within Israel, the very target of the beast's unprecedented and massive military mobilization of the entire world's armed forces. Within the broader and largely unbelieving community of Israel, the "emotional high" based upon the assumption that antichrist's hold on world power is beginning to crack will swiftly give way to panic as innumerable armies from the four corners of the globe begin to make their way toward Jerusalem.

Verse fifteen thus serves to remind believers of the folly and the danger of becoming caught up in either of these short-sighted emotional reactions. The only solution to the problems of this world is Jesus Christ. That has always been the case (Heb.13:8). And it will never be more important to remember this principle than in the waning days of the Great Tribulation. For the Second Advent will occur when no one thinks it possible or likely, when no one is expecting it as still even being a likely possibility, and when many have given up hope of thinking it might yet happen. Just when it is least expected, our Lord will return – like a thief in the night – past the point of when it seems there is any hope of deliverance, and yet extraordinarily out of nowhere with unbelievable power and glory!

Thus we are warned ahead of time and solemnly charged here to remember this truth and to make a point of not judging by what our eyes may see or our emotions may feel, but instead by what we know irrefutably to be true through the Word of God. We are to "stay awake" like the wise virgins of Matthew 25:1-13 (where sleep likewise represents the loss of faith by tribulational believers), not fall asleep in our faith. The consequences of falling asleep are said here to be the loss of our clothing. As in Revelation 3:18, the consequences of spiritual failure are the exposure of this "nakedness", a very descriptive picture of the loss of everything we have worked so hard for by abandoning our faith. Tragic at any time, it would surely be a horrendous thing to have suffered through so much, only to lose faith in the whirling vortex of events that will characterize the Tribulation's final days. At that time, then, even more than at any other time, it will be crucial for believers to avoid looking to political solutions and fixing their gaze on earthly developments. Instead, then more than ever, we shall need to keep our hearts focused on the Lord and the divine solutions that only He can provide.¹⁷

Armageddon: Armageddon is the scene of the last battle of the Tribulation, the place where our Lord will destroy the massive armies of antichrist on the "great day of God the Almighty" just as they are on the point of destroying Israel and all who have recently sought shelter within her borders. Contrary to popular belief, Armageddon has nothing to do with "Megiddo", an ancient city located in the north of what today is the state of Israel. Armageddon is, rather, a prophetic name for Jerusalem, the place where the unbelieving rebels and the saints recently escaped from Babylon make what appears to be their "last stand".

¹⁷ Part 7 of this series, "Preparing for Tribulation", will be concerned exclusively with these issues.

The popular (and misinformed) association of Armageddon with Megiddo rests entirely upon the similarity in spelling between these two proper names. This is not an unreasonable place to begin a consideration of what scripture means by the name “Armageddon” (a word that occurs only here in Revelation 16:16), but further investigation will show that, while the perceived etymological connection is illusory, scripture leaves us in no doubt whatsoever about the fact that, just as we ought to have expected, it is at Jerusalem that the final battle of the Tribulation will occur (while, on the other hand, the Bible is entirely silent about Megiddo on this score; cf. Ps.2:1-6; Is.4:3; 22:1-14; 25:6-7; 31:9; 33:3-5; 33:10-22; 40:1-2; 40:9-10; 52:1-8; 60:1-3; 62:11; Joel 3:1-2; Zeph.3:14-17; Rom.11:26):

(1) Woe to you, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped (i.e., Jerusalem)! Add year to year, let your festivals run their course, (2) but I will besiege Ariel so that there will be mourning and lamentation, and she will become to Me like an “Ariel” (lit., “God’s [sacrificial] altar”). (3) For I will beleague you round about with palisades, and surround you with siege works. (4) You will be brought low and speak from the ground, and from the dust your speech will be humbled. Your voice will come ghost-like from the earth, and your speech will come muttering from the dust. (5) But the multitude of your enemies will become like pulverized powder, even like chaff swept away [on the wind], that multitude of ruthless [enemies]. And it will come to pass in an instant that (6) you will experience visitation from the Lord of Hosts [Himself], with thunder and quaking [of the earth] and a loud voice, with tempest and whirlwind and devouring flames of fire. (7) And the hordes of the nations mustering against Ariel will become like [just] a dream in the visions of the night, even all those who camp against her and her fortress and besiege her. (8) And it will be as when a hungry man dreams he is eating, but when he awakes his appetite remains unfulfilled, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking, but when he awakes his thirst remains. This is how it will be for the multitude of all the nations who are going to marshal themselves against **Mount Zion**.

Isaiah 29:1-8

(9) Break forth [in song] and rejoice altogether, O ruins of **Jerusalem**! For the Lord has had compassion on His people. He has redeemed **Jerusalem**. (10) The Lord has uncovered His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God!

Isaiah 52:9-10

(18) As they have done, so He will repay them, wrath to His adversaries and recompense to His enemies. Even unto the islands (i.e., the remotest lands of the west) He will repay the recompense [due them], (19) so that they will fear the Name of the Lord in the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun (i.e., the east). For although the enemy (i.e., antichrist) will attack like the River (i.e., the great Nile or Euphrates; cf. Dan.11:22; 11:26), the Spirit of the Lord will put him to flight. (20) For the Redeemer will come to **Zion**, even to those in Jacob who turn away from their transgression.

Isaiah 59:18-20

(30) For I will display wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. (31) The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the Day of the Lord, that great and terrible [day]. (32) And it will come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. For on **Mount Zion and in Jerusalem** there will be deliverance as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

Joel 2:30-32

(12) Let the nations be roused [from their places], and let them come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat (i.e., the valley of “the Lord will judge”). For there I will sit in judgment over all the nations on every side. (13) Send forth the sickle for the harvest is ripe! Come down into the winepress for it is full and the vats overflow. For great is their wickedness. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of doom! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of doom. (15) The sun and moon will darken, and the stars will gather up their light. (16) Then the Lord will roar from **Zion**, and from **Jerusalem** He will let sound His voice, and the heavens and the earth will quake.

Joel 3:12-16

(15) For the day of the Lord is near against all the nations. Just as you have done, it will be done to you, and your recompense will return on your own head. (16) For just as you have drunk on My holy mountain, so all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow down [the Lord’s cup of wrath] and will be as if they never were. (17) But on **Mount Zion** there will be deliverance.

Obadiah 1:15-17a

(2) For behold, I am going to make **Jerusalem** a cup of reeling for all the nations round about. And Judah also and Jerusalem will be besieged. (3) And it will come to pass on that day that I will make **Jerusalem** a burdensome rock for all the nations. Everyone who tries to lift it will surely be injured. For against her (i.e., **Jerusalem**) will be gathered all the nations of the earth.

Zechariah 12:2-3

And it will come to pass on that day that I will make it My purpose to destroy all the nations which are attacking **Jerusalem**.

Zechariah 12:9

And this is the plague with which the Lord will smite all the peoples who marshal themselves against **Jerusalem**: Their flesh will rot even as they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

Zechariah 14:12

Thus the precise place where our Lord was crucified and resurrected, and to which He is prophesied to return, is where this final battle of the Tribulation will take place (cf. Acts 1:11):

(1) The Lord said to My Lord, "Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." (2) From **Zion** the Lord will send forth your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! (3) Your people will volunteer on the day of your valor[ous victory] (i.e., the armies of Israel). In the holy chambers, from the womb of the dawn, your young [troops] will [come] to you like the dew (i.e., the armies of the newly resurrected). (4) The Lord has sworn and He will not recant, "You are a priest forever in the manner of Melchizedek." (5) The Lord is at your right hand. He will shatter [those] kings on the day of His wrath. (6) He will render judgment on the nations. He will shatter [their] head (cf. Gen.3:15) broadly throughout the land filled with corpses [as a result]. (7) [But as to His troops], they will drink from a brook beside the way. Therefore He will lift up their head.

Psalm 110:1-7

Thus says the Lord: I will return to **Zion** and dwell in the midst of **Jerusalem**. And **Jerusalem** will be called "the City of Truth", and "the Mountain of the Lord, the Mountain of Holiness".

Zechariah 8:3

Rejoice greatly, daughter of **Zion**. Shout [for joy], daughter of **Jerusalem**. Behold, your King will come to you. Righteous and victorious He is; humble and riding on a donkey, even on a colt, a donkey's foal.

Zechariah 9:9

(2) For I shall gather all the nations to **Jerusalem** to fight against her. The city will be captured, its houses will be sacked, and its women will be ravished. (3) Half of the city will be taken away captive, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth, and He will fight against those nations as when He fights on a day of battle. (4) For His feet will stand on that day on the **Mount of Olives** which lies before **Jerusalem** on the east.

Zechariah 14:2-4a

And the winepress [of the slaughter of Armageddon] was trodden down outside of the city [of Jerusalem]. And blood from the winepress went forth up to the horses' bridles for a distance of twelve hundred stadia.

Revelation 14:20

Given the overwhelming testimony of scripture to the fact that Jerusalem will be the focal point of the final battle of the Tribulation, it is indeed strange that the misunderstanding of the name "Armageddon", a *hapax legomenon* occurring only here at Revelation 16:16, has had such a profound (and negative) influence on the true interpretation of these events. A few words about the true etymology of this word are, therefore, in order here. The first thing to notice is that the similarity between "Megiddo" and "Armageddon" is primarily one of correspondence between the Septuagint's most common transliteration of Megiddo (at e.g., Josh.12:21) and what we find here at Revelation 16:16 (i.e., Μαγεδων versus 'Αρμαγεδων). However, a number of other

transliterations of Megiddo are attested in the LXX (i.e., Μεγεδδω, Μαγεδδων, Μαγεδδω, Μαγεδω, Μαγεδδωρ, Μακεδω, Μαγδω, Μαγεδαων, Μαγεδδωδ, Μακεδδω, Μαγεδδει), with this variety of renderings sufficient to show that at least some degree of care should be taken before seizing upon the Megiddo-Armageddon identification. In the preceding list, the first alternate transliteration given, Μεγεδδω, is, for our purposes here, the most interesting. For the Hebrew word for this place (vDgm, *Megiddo*), is really best reflected by this first rendering Μεγεδδω / *Megeddo*.¹⁸ Indeed, our English rendering of this place name, “Megiddo”, is in fact a more accurate transliteration of the Hebrew than any of the Septuagint’s attempts. Using this information then, it is easy to see the disparities between the two names: *Megiddo* versus *Har-Mageddon*. The pre-formative “a” in the latter, its medial “e” versus the “i” of the first form, and the addition of the letter “n” at the end are not insignificant differences. Alone, they would invite us to seek a more plausible etymology for “Armageddon”, and this is especially the case since John under the Spirit’s influence comments that this is “a place *called in Hebrew*, ‘Armageddon’”. Therefore it is to the Hebrew that we must look for our etymological clues, not to Greek transliterations in the LXX version.

Most interpreters agree that the *Har-* of Armageddon (the “h” sound present in the Greek being commonly if unfortunately left out in the traditional transliteration of this name) is the Hebrew word for “mountain” (and it should be noted in passing that the most common geographical feature that has recommended Megiddo to exegetes has been its extensive plain rather than any “mountain”). This leaves us to explore the second part of this compound place name, - *Mageddon*. First in this respect, it is best to take the *Ma* as a pre-formative *mem* used here in the locative sense, i.e., “Mountain-which-is-a-*place of* _____”. The use of the letter “m” as a prefix indicating “place of” to whatever root it is attached is a well-attested phenomenon in Semitic languages.¹⁹ This leaves us to derive -*geddon* from either the “double *ayin*” root *gdd* (ddg), or the hollow root *gud* (dvg). The distinction is largely academic here, as both roots have the same essential meaning in BH: “attack, cut, go in troops or throngs”. Given that the most commonly attested substantive from either root, *ghedhudh* (dvdg), generally refers to military formations, the most likely meaning of Armageddon is “Mountain of Troops” or “Mountain of [mustered] Troops”.²⁰ As such, it is a very clear reference to the assembly from the world over

¹⁸ Only once out of twelve occurrences do we find this form concluded with the Hebrew letter “n” or *nun* (vDgm, *Megiddon*). That is at Zechariah 12:11 where it is entirely possible that the reference there is not to “Megiddo” at all (the LXX, for example, certainly does not see “Megiddo” at Zech.12:11).

¹⁹ See S. Moscati et al., An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages (Wiesbaden 1969) 80-81. What we have here is most likely a *maqtil* “ground form” on the order of *machshelah* (hlwkm), “a ruin” or “a place of falling”, from *chashal* (lwk), “to fall or stumble”. See Gensenius’ Hebrew Grammar, ed. E. Kautzsch (Oxford 1980) 237.

²⁰ See Alan Johnston “Revelation” in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary ed. F.E. Gaebelien (Grand Rapids 1981) v.12, p. 552.

of all the forces of antichrist to Jerusalem. Here they will assemble, at Jerusalem called here prophetically and appropriately “the Mountain of [Assembly of] Troops”, for here all of the beast’s worldly armies will be annihilated by our Lord. Indeed, it is for this very purpose that they will be so assembled:

And it will be as when a hungry man dreams he is eating, but when he awakes his appetite remains unfulfilled, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking, but when he awakes his thirst remains. This is how it will be for the multitude of all ***the nations who are going to marshal themselves against Mount Zion.***

Isaiah 29:8

(2) For behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup of reeling for all the nations round about. And Judah also and Jerusalem will be besieged. (3) And it will come to pass on that day that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome rock for all the nations. Everyone who tries to lift it will surely be injured. ***For against her will be gathered all the nations of the earth.***

Zechariah 12:2-3

And this is the plague with which the Lord will smite ***all the peoples who marshal themselves against Jerusalem:*** Their flesh will rot even as they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

Zechariah 14:12

Understood in this way, we can then see in Micah 5:1-5a the *locus classicus*, for “Armageddon”, that is, the passage which John under the guidance of the Spirit had in mind when coining this prophetic name. In Micah 5:1-5a, we see that this predominantly Second Advent passage also brings in testimony about our Lord’s first advent, weaving the two events together in a wonderful, poetic way, a common phenomenon in Hebrew prophecy as we have seen²¹:

(1) But now marshal your [own] troops (<gdd, ddg), O city (lit., “daughter”) of troops (<gedhudh, dvdg) [which are marshaled against you]. For they have laid siege to us. For they have struck on the cheek with a rod the Judge of Israel. (2) But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be numbered among the clans of Judah, from you I will bring forth the One who is to rule over Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, even from the days of eternity. (3) For He will give them over [to the oppressor] until the time when [Jerusalem] labors [like] a woman in labor. At that time the rest of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel (i.e., prior to the Second Advent; see section II below). (4) For He (i.e., our Lord Jesus at His return) will arise and will be their Shepherd, in the might of the Lord, and in the majesty of the Name of the Lord His God. And they (i.e., His flock) will abide, for then He will be great, even to the ends of the earth. (5) For this One will be our Peace.

²¹ See part 1 of this series, section IV.1.a “Prophetical Foreshortening”.

7. Earthquake and Hail (17-21)

(17) And when [the seventh angel] poured out his bowl upon the atmosphere, a loud voice issued forth out of the [heavens coming] from the throne [of God], saying “It is done!” (18) And there occurred thunderous voices and flashes of lightning and a great earthquake such as had not occurred since men came to be upon the earth – of such great magnitude was [this] earthquake. (19) And the great city (i.e., Jerusalem) was split into three parts. And the cities of the gentiles fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God [so as] to give to her [the] cup of the wine of [God’s] angry wrath (Jer.25:19-32; Ob.1:16; Zech.12:2-3; cf. Jer.51:7; 2Thes.1:8-10; Rev.17:4; 18:6). (20) And every island fled, and mountains could not be found. (21) Then great hail stones the size of a talent (i.e., approx. 80 lb.) were coming down out of heaven upon mankind, and they blasphemed God on account of the plague of hail, because that plague was very severe.
Revelation 16:17-21

“It is done!”: The seventh bowl comprises all of the final events of the Great Tribulation which culminate in our Lord’s return and His destruction of the beast and his armies at Armageddon. Some of the items in this description, specifically, the thunderous voices (of God) and the flashes of lightning, the earthquake and the hail, we have seen before (Rev.4:5; 8:5; 11:19). All of the signs mentioned here presage the coming of the Lord. As with their parallel predecessors, these miraculous signs will be perceptible around the globe and as yet unimaginably awesome to experience (as was the case in their previous occurrences).²² Moreover, their intensity will dramatically increase (cf. of the earthquake “such as had not occurred since men came to be upon the earth” and of the hail “the size of a talent”, both of which signs are covered individually below). The increased intensity here indicates that our Lord’s coming is now imminent, even as the words “It is done!” are unquestionably meant to show. In fact, history since our Lord’s ascension into heaven has been, from the divine perspective, a series of preparatory periods of intensifying warning telescoped into ever smaller windows of time: The Church Age (2000 years), whose last era is Laodicea (144 years), which culminates in the Tribulation (7 years), whose most intense phase is the Great Tribulation (three and a half years), which ends with the seventh bowl judgment (six months), which is itself concluded by the Second Advent proper (a unique, single day, the “Day of the Lord”: cf. Zech.14:1-7). For as with the signs which preceded the Lord’s descent to Mount Sinai (Ex.19:16-20), these signs too are indications of the imminence of the awesome and terrifying presence of God Himself, soon to return to the earth in

²² See part 3A of this series, section I.5, “The Thunderous Voices, Lightning, and Earthquake”. For the awesome nature and symbolism of the throne from which these voices proceed, see part 2B of this series, “The Throne”, in section I.3.b.

judgment.²³ With the words “It is done!”, we have God’s assurance that the Great Tribulation is now in its final phase.

The Earthquake: Earthquakes are prominent precursors of most of the ever shortening periods of warning that lead up to our Lord’s return (Matt.24:7; Mk.13:8; Lk.21:11; cf. Amos 1:2 w/ 1:1; Hag.2:6-7; Heb.12:26-29), and, as this unprecedented temblor indicates, their intensity parallels the intensity of the period covered. For we find exceptional earthquakes characterizing and marking the commencement of . . . 1) the Church Age (lasting 2000 years: Matt.27:51; 27:54; 28:2; Acts 4:31; cf. Acts 2:1-2); [2] possibly the era of Laodicea (lasting 144 years)];²⁴ 3) the Tribulation (lasting 7 years: Rev.8:5); 4) the Great Tribulation (lasting 3.5 years: Rev.11:13; 11:19); 5) this earthquake which accompanies the Seventh Bowl Judgment (and governs the period 6 months prior to the Second Advent: Rev.16:18-20); 6) the Second Advent proper (coincidental with the Day of the Lord’s official commencement: Is.29:6; Ezek.38:19; Hab.3:6; cf. Zech.14:3-5; Rev.6:12); and finally, 7) the beginning of eternity (Hag.2:6-7; 2:20-21; 2Pet.3:10-13; Rev.6:12-17; 20:11). As is the case with many of the horrendous events destined to occur during the Tribulation, it is difficult to digest and appreciate the magnitude of this particular earthquake and the terror it will inspire when actually experienced (cf. Lk.21:25-31). Scripture clearly indicates that this earthquake will be unparalleled in human history and experience, and of such incomprehensible force that it will bring down “the cities of the gentiles”.

Although Babylon is often described as “the great city” (cf. Rev.14:8; 17:1; 17:5; 18:2; 18:10; 18:16; 18:18-19; 18:21; 19:2), her punishment is related in this context as the third event in the sequence of events which comprise the seventh bowl judgment (following the lightning and the earthquake). That punishment will be unique, and is detailed in Revelation 17:15 - 19:3 (covered in section II below). Jerusalem, antichrist’s world capital of late, is the “great city” mentioned here (as she is described at Revelation 11:8 as well, also in the context of a great, local earthquake, #4 above: Rev.11:13). Having previously undergone an earthquake judgment earlier in the first half of the Tribulation (Rev.11:13), and with another major earthquake foretold to accompany the Second Advent proper (Is.29:6; Ezek.38:19; cf. Zech.14:1-7; Rev.6:12), Jerusalem will at this time be physically split into three parts. It will be recalled that those Jews who responded to the ministry of Moses and Elijah and the 144,000 are at this time enjoying safe haven in the desert (see part 4 of this series, section IV “The Dragon’s Persecution of Believing Israel”). This earthquake, among other things therefore, will be another sign to the as yet

²³ Of course at Mount Sinai the standard of judgment was given (i.e., the Ten Commandments), whereas the Second Advent will find our Lord carrying out a series of righteous judgments based upon the perfect divine standard of justice.

²⁴ While merely hypothetical since scripture does not mention it, the explosion of Krakatoa in 1883 at the beginning of the Laodicean era is perhaps not merely coincidental in this regard (the era of Laodicea commencing in ca. 1882 according to our reckoning in part 2A of this series).

unbelieving population of Israel of the futility of seeking deliverance apart from God. For we can expect this mammoth quake to seriously disrupt all plans for resistance to the beast as he begins to muster his forces for Armageddon. The earthquake which splits Jerusalem into three parts will have two salutary effects, however: 1) while it will degrade the overall effectiveness of the Israeli armed forces, it will make Jerusalem herself more defensible (cf. the complications to the German offensive at Stalingrad caused by the great mass of industrial ruin and debris); and 2) the dislocation caused by the earthquake will result in opening up the way for an influx of refugees from Babylon (who might otherwise be denied entrance were the civil administration not reeling from this event; see section II.4 below).

Since as explained above the seventh bowl entails a series of divine judgments which begin six months prior to but culminate in the return of our Lord, we may expect little or no time between the last event described here, the plague of hail, and that return. On this point, the preceding words “every island fled, and mountains could not be found” must be applied to the next major earthquake which accompanies that return (i.e., #6 above, and not #5). This second earthquake in context, the “2nd Advent” quake, will be a gigantic one, with these words indicating that few geographical features will remain unaffected by its massive, global shockwaves. The world’s islands and coast-lands will be swamped by the tsunami effect of this world-wide event, with its violent vibrations affecting all of the world’s mountains as well, bringing many eminences crashing to earth as a result. This fourth event in the seventh bowl judgment is thus the same earthquake referred to in the description of the Second Advent given in the sixth seal (Rev.6:12-17), the same event often mentioned in prophecy as the harbinger of our Lord’s return (Is.2:21; 24:18-20; 29:6; Ezek.38:19-20; Joel 3:16; Hag.2:6-7; 2:21; cf. Zech.14:1-7), with the “fleeing” of mountains, islands, earth and sky being a characteristic feature which accompanies the coming of the Lord to execute judgment (Rev.20:11; cf. 2Pet.3:10):

And I saw when He (i.e., the Lamb) opened the sixth seal, a great earthquake occurred, and the sun became black like hairy sackcloth, and the moon became entirely like blood [in appearance], and the stars of heaven fell to the earth like a fig tree casting its fruit when shaken by a strong wind, and the heaven retreated like a scroll when it is rolled up, and *every mountain and hill was moved from its place*. And all the kings of the earth and the prominent men and the generals and the wealthy and the powerful and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and the rocks of the mountains. And [thus] they say to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand [before them]?”

Revelation 6:12-17

Hail: Large hailstones falling worldwide, it will be recalled, also accompanied the blowing of the seventh trumpet, the event which heralded the beginning of the Great Tribulation proper, also accompanied by “thunderous voices and flashes of lightning and an earthquake” (Rev.11:19). But just as the earthquake of the seventh bowl judgment is exponentially larger and incomparably more devastating than its predecessor, so this worldwide hailstorm will be without parallel in world history, surpassing both the seventh plague of the Exodus (9:13-35) and the hail rained

down by the Lord upon the Canaanite kings at Gibeon (Josh.10:11) – not only in its ferocity, but also by virtue of the fact that it will not be localized as those two judgments were: everyone on earth will feel the fury of this divine judgment (believers excepted to some degree as always: cf. Is.26:20-21; 32:19-20).

Though we can scarcely imagine the terror produced or the damage caused by the raining down of hailstones some eighty pounds in weight, yet the most remarkable thing about this judgment will be the continued implacable hardness of heart on behalf of the worlds' unbelieving population. In spite of the massive earthquake, in spite of this massive hail, in spite of the warning voices, thunder and lightning, there is still not the slightest thought of repentance. Indeed, their only response is to blaspheme God. Surely in all this God has shown Himself to be just in all He has done – and in all He is about to do to this world of unrepentant and irremediable evil.

(5) For the earth has befouled itself at the hands of its inhabitants. For they have transgressed the teachings [of God]; they have altered [His] statute[s]; they have violated the eternal covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants are punished. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are incinerated, and little of mankind remains.

Isaiah 24:5-6

II. Judgment on Babylon: Revelation 17:1 - 19:4

1. Babylon, the Woman who Rides the Beast: Revelation 17:1-14

(1) Then one of the seven angels with the seven bowls spoke with me, saying, “Look! I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters, (2) [the one] with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication even as the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk from the wine of her fornication.” (3) And he took me off in the Spirit to a desert.²⁵ And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was covered with blasphemous names,²⁶ [and which] had seven heads and ten horns. (4) And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and was adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, [and was] holding a golden cup in her hand filled with abominations and [all] the unclean things of her prostitution and [the prostitution] of the earth (Jer.51:7;

²⁵ See the note on Rev.4:2 in part 2B of this series. The phrase “in the Spirit” as it used here does not refer to an entrance into a completely new spiritual state as in Rev.1:10, but of the provision of a new revelation through the Holy Spirit as in Rev.4:2 and Rev.21:10.

²⁶ Compare Rev.13:1 where a single salient “name of blasphemy” (antichrist arrogating the title “Christ” to himself) is written distributively on the heads of the beast in contrast to the collection of blasphemous names covering the beast’s body being described here.

Rev.18:6; cf. Jer.25:19-32; Ob.1:16; Zech.12:2-3). (5) And on her forehead a name was written: “mystery Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the world”. (6) And I saw that the woman was drunk from the blood of the saints, even from the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw [this], I was greatly amazed. (7) And the angel said to me, “Why are you amazed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and the beast who is carrying her, the one who has the seven heads and the ten horns. (8) The beast, which you saw, was (i.e., “existed”), and is not (i.e., came “not to exist”), and is going to rise from the Abyss (i.e., the revival of Rome on the one hand and apparent resuscitation of antichrist on the other), and is going to its destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, [those] whose names have not remained written in the book of life [where they were written] from the beginning of the world, will be in awe when they see the beast, because he was (i.e., “existed”), and is not (i.e., came “not to exist”), and will again be present on the scene (i.e., return to life in the case of antichrist, and be reestablished in respect to the empire). (9) This calls for a mind having wisdom: the seven heads [of the beast (cf. v.3 and 13:1)] are seven mountains whereon the woman sits. They are also seven kings. (10) The [first] five [of these kings] have fallen. The [next (i.e., the sixth)] one is now [alive]. The last (i.e., antichrist) has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain for a short time (i.e., the Tribulation). (11) And [as to] the beast which was and is not, this is the eighth [king] and he is [also] one of the seven, and he is going to [his] destruction. (12) And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they will receive authority as kings for one hour (i.e., time period, specifically, the Tribulation) along with the beast. (13) These will have one purpose and [are going to] give their power and their authority to the beast. (14) These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, because He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and those who are with Him are called, and elect – and [have remained] faithful.”

Revelation 17:1-14

Most of chapter seventeen has already been exegeted and discussed in part 3B of this series in our treatment of antichrist, and the reader is invited to revisit that study. Nevertheless, some attention to these verses is necessary here in order to examine the primary focus of chapter seventeen, the judgment on Babylon. In verse two, the angel who is speaking with John is quite clear about the fact that the purpose of the vision here described is to “show you the judgment of the great prostitute (i.e., Babylon) who sits on many waters”. For this chapter is primarily concerned with Babylon’s judgment, while the inclusion of the beast is necessary since Babylon’s downfall cannot be explained apart from her involvement with antichrist.

A. The Woman Babylon who Rides the Beast (verses 1-6)

Like the four horsemen of chapter six and the woman and the dragon of chapter twelve, this vision which John is given to see of Babylon and the beast is an allegory, that is, a symbolic representation of events which provides concentrated and memorable content related to the future. Babylon, as we have pointed out (see part 3B), is the home country of the beast, an economic, military, and cultural powerhouse which was the first part of antichrist’s kingdom and

the springboard both for his military conquests as well as for his worldwide religion. As verse fifteen later tells us, the “waters” upon which the woman sits are “peoples and multitudes and nations and languages”, and this clearly speaks to the potency of Babylon’s worldwide power and influence (cf. Jer.51:12-13). But John does not see her “sitting on many waters”. This bit of information comes in verse one before the angel shows him the vision in verse two. What John sees in this vision is a gaudy prostitute sitting on a scarlet beast with seven heads.²⁷

The woman Babylon’s appearance and behavior as described above in terms of prostitution and fornication tell us much about the character of her role in antichrist’s plan for world domination and the institution of Satan’s pseudo-millennium. In the metaphor here, prostitution and fornication refer in general terms to illegitimate, sinful, and evil as opposed to godly behavior and relationships. Specifically, the metaphor is comparing to prostitution Babylon’s embracing of and trafficking for the devil’s pseudo-Messiah (antichrist, the beast) and the devil’s pseudo-divine kingdom (of which she styles herself the capital). Just as prostitutes use superficial yet attractive wiles to entice their customers, so Babylon will be instrumental in “selling” antichrist’s ideology and false religion. Her methods are cultural, economic-technological, and military ones, yielding political, social, and religious results for the beast’s conquest and domination of the world. Rather than serving the One who should be her true Husband, our Lord Jesus Christ (to whom the entire world owes its true allegiance), Babylon has developed her unfaithfulness to a high art, and has sold herself to the devil’s anointed in the prosecution of his horrible goals. This facilitation of the beast’s influence and power on Babylon’s part is said here to extend both to the “kings” and also to the “inhabitants” of earth generally, demonstrating that the witches brew of her influence, i.e., the “wine” she has mixed for her victims, has had an enormous effect both strategically (in the larger military-political scheme of things) and tactically (on the level of personal influence through culture, religion, and techno-economic impact). It should be noted here that the sinful and evil aspects of current day U.S. cultural and other influences are quantitatively and qualitatively not to be compared to what Babylon of the Tribulation will do. For the “fornication” of that final eschatological day will be conscious, deliberate, and out of all proportion to anything presently imaginable. Therefore she will be completely without any excuse whatsoever in the face of the divine judgment described in Revelation chapters 17-19. Babylon’s outrageous aiding and abetting of antichrist’s corruption, seizure and abuse of the world generally constitutes the first divine charge against her. The second charge on the bill of indictment against Babylon is her facilitation of the Great Persecution as the original headquarters of antichrist’s world religion. This is the meaning of the description of her in verse six as “drunk from the blood of the saints, even from the blood of the martyrs of Jesus”, and the fact that this heady wine has intoxicated her suggests that rather than being a reluctant participant in the Great Persecution, Babylon has taken a sick pleasure in it, for she is “drunk” on this wine.

²⁷ The symbolism and meaning of the seven heads and ten horns of the beast (referring to the nations which, in addition to Babylon, make up antichrist’s kingdom) is covered in detail in part 3B of this series, section III.1, “The Ten Horns of the Beast”.

The “desert”, a place of physical desolation where we find the woman mounted on the back of the beast, speaks of the spiritual desolation of the world under the rule of antichrist, in which spiritually desolate Babylon has played a signal role. This symbolism, moreover, has for Babylon a double meaning, for the spiritual desolation she has fostered is about to bring upon her a literal, physical desolation through the judgment which God is about to unleash upon her as a result.

The scarlet color of the beast speaks of the unprecedented slaughter which will characterize antichrist’s reign,²⁸ and that is also the point of comparison in the woman Babylon’s scarlet dress, for she has aided and abetted antichrist in the slaughter of his opponents generally and in his martyrdom of believers in particular. She is also described as wearing “purple”, the color of royalty, and this is a reference to the fact that Babylon styles herself the “Queen of the World”, the jewel of kingdoms through which the beast has gained world political dominion. It is from this lofty height that she shall fall, with her fall all the more precipitous and destructive as a result.

For you [O Babylon] said, “I will be a queen forever”. But you did not consider these things (i.e., the ramifications of your evil actions) in your heart. You did not call to mind the consequences [of your deeds].
Isaiah 47:7 (cf. Is.47:3)

To the same degree that she glorified herself and indulged in wanton excess, to that same degree give her torment and grief. For she says in her heart, “I am enthroned as a queen, and I am not a widow and I shall not see grief”.
Revelation 18:7

The golden goblet encrusted with gemstones and pearls, yet filled with fornication and abomination, completes the allegory of Babylon. All of these elements speak to the nature of her evil influence upon the world in the service of the beast. She has prostituted herself for antichrist, and this description of the cup and its contents relates entirely to that service on antichrist’s behalf. The “wine” of fornication, antichrist’s message of political “deliverance” and religious “devotion” is potent,²⁹ taking away the wits of the nations and kings of the world who drink it (Jer.51:7; Rev.18:6), and yet it is delivered in a very attractive package (the impressive goblet) at the hand of an alluring agent (though it will bring on the corresponding cup of God’s wrath in the end: Jer.25:19-32; Ob.1:16; Zech.12:2-3). Babylon appears to be a beautiful and

²⁸ Since red is the color of blood (cf. Rev.6:4; 12:3; and compare Is.1:15 with 1:18). The Hebrew word for blood, *dham* (,d), is probably derived from *’adham* (,da), i.e., “Adam”, whose name means red or ruddy.

²⁹ Babylon is thus very much like her master, the beast on which she rides. Compare Hab.2:5: “If you think that *wine* deceives, [how much more will he! (i.e., antichrist)]”. See part 3B of this series, section II.2.b, “Characteristics of antichrist”.

perfect mate, but she is in reality a shameless prostitute. These symbols indicate in no uncertain terms that the prostitute and her wiles will be difficult to resist – except for those who know and faithfully follow their God.

B. The Beast on whom Babylon Rides (verses 7-14)

Verses 7-14 serve to bring the focus of action back to the beast and his kingdom, reprising the history of his rise and bringing us forward to the threshold of the Great Tribulation's end, a cluster of eschatological events which precede the Second Advent, key among which is the destruction of Babylon. As in the case of Babylon, in this multi-part study we have already had occasion to cover the beast, antichrist, and his kingdom in great detail, including most of these verses in chapter seventeen (see part 3B of this series: "Antichrist and his Kingdom"). The reader is therefore advised that what follows is provided mainly for the purpose of summary and review:

verse 7: The word "mystery" is used here because the vision of the woman riding the beast which John sees is an allegory which must be explained. The woman is Babylon, the beast is antichrist, and the seven hills and ten heads represent the beast's original European federation and the ten rulers of his post-conquest composite empire respectively. The beast is said to be "carrying" Babylon at this point, because, now that antichrist has conquered the world and faces no more political opposition, Babylon's support is no longer necessary (making her vulnerable to the judgment described below).

verse 8: Rising from the Abyss, the symbolic place of death (and actual present place of deceased unbelievers) represents antichrist's pseudo-resurrection and his European empire's seemingly miraculous reconstitution. Thus, the three-fold description "was, is not, and will come" is descriptive both of antichrist, the personal beast, and the empire of revived Rome, the territorial beast, which constitutes the power-base from which (in addition to his original kingdom of Babylon) antichrist will gain world dominion. The three-fold description as applied to the territorial beast refers to revival in modern form of a pan-European power block which will greatly resemble the Roman empire in size, power, and location. The three-fold description as applied to the personal beast refers to his apparent death and pseudo-resurrection through which he will falsely convince much of the world's unbelieving population that he is the true Messiah. As a result of being deceived, these unbelievers will not come to saving faith in Christ, for although their names were originally written in the book of life "before the foundation of the world", they are blotted out for actively rejecting Jesus Christ by choosing instead to follow antichrist.³⁰ This description allows for the existence of unbelievers who, in spite of all that has presently transpired, do not put their faith in the beast (including many Jewish unbelievers who will yet turn to Christ when they witness His Second Advent return: Zech.12:10-14).

³⁰ See Coming Tribulation part 4: "The Great Tribulation", section VI.1, sub verse 39, "The Book of Life".

verses 9-11: The seven heads of the beast represent seven “mountains” or power-blocks within the revived Roman empire (cf. Jer.51:25; and see part 3B for probable geographic identification). In terms of the vision John sees of the scarlet beast, they also represent rulers of the historic Roman empire. This device is used to explain antichrist’s status. The beast will be “the seventh” in the line of absolute rulers or “Caesars” in that he will likewise come to have complete power and authority over the area ruled by Rome just as the Julio-Claudians, the original ruling house of the Roman empire, possessed.³¹ Five of these emperors were “fallen” or deceased at the time John wrote Revelation, but the sixth, Nero, was still alive. Antichrist is described here as being the next in the sequence (i.e., he will be a ruler just as powerful and absolute over revived Rome as the Julio-Claudians were over historic Rome), but also as being “an eighth”, because in addition to being the new emperor of revived Rome, he will also be king of Babylon, a kingdom and an empire in its own right through the dominance of which antichrist will come to control revived Rome.

verse 12-14: The ten horns are the ten kings of the beast’s composite empire of revived Rome, seven of whom will be his regents over the seven “mountains” (his original European power-base plus Israel), three of whom will be his regents over the three power-blocks of the southern alliance which the beast will conquer during the Tribulation’s first half (see part 3B). As discussed in our earlier treatment of this issue, all ten of these sub-rulers are likewise servants of Satan, and will be in league with antichrist from the beginning. The truth of this may be seen in verse thirteen where they are said to “have one purpose and [are going to] give their power and their authority to the beast”. Thus, by the Tribulation’s midpoint, the entire globe will be under antichrist’s control to one degree or another, opening the way for the Great Persecution which defines its second half and yields the name, “The Great Tribulation”. In verse fourteen, the synoptic view offered by this vision and its allegory now moves swiftly forward through those events of the Tribulation’s second half (which John has just written about in detail in the preceding chapters 13-16), and on to the battle of Armageddon and the Second Advent, the closing events of the Tribulation. But although the assembled military might of the entire world of that time will be marshaled against Him, it will be no match at all for the conquering Lamb of God. For He is “Lord of Lords and King of Kings”, true God and true man in One unique Person forever. Having won the victory over death through His own death on our behalf on the cross, He will quickly dispatch the forces of evil arrayed against Him on that future day of His glorious return. Here we are given a particular and blessed piece of encouragement: as believers in Jesus, no matter whether we are taken to be with Him before the Tribulation begins, die as martyrs for our Lord during that fiery trial, or endure until His return, we will in any case accompany Him, resurrected at the point of His return to live forever with Him in glory, partaking with Him of the victory of that great and glorious day. We are described, moreover, as “the called, selected, and faithful”. This gives the progression of our salvation, called to believe, selected to the family of God on the basis of that belief, and maintaining that belief firm until the end, no matter what may

³¹ This number contemplates six emperors from the Julio-Claudian family, and includes Julius Caesar, the founder of the dynasty and first true imperial ruler. See Coming Tribulation 3B: Antichrist and his Kingdom, section II.1.c.4.

come. For it is on the basis of our faith, held fast until the end of life or the resurrection, whichever may come first, that we will experience the “first resurrection” (cf. Rev.20:5), and will rise to meet and then accompany our Lord in His victorious return. These words thus serve as an important reminder to all believers of the critical importance of maintaining our faith firm until the end, even in the face of the most intense tribulation the world will ever know, the Great Tribulation.

2. Hatred of Babylon: Revelation 17:15-18

(15) Then he said to me, “These [waters] which you saw upon which the prostitute sits are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. (16) Now as for the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will come to hate the harlot [Babylon] and will render her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. (17) For God put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose and to be of one accord and to give their kingdoms to the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled. (18) And the woman whom you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

Revelation 17:15-18

verse 15: This verse demonstrates the worldwide scope of Babylon’s power and influence, a major point in the jealousy she arouses, not least in the beast, whose ego cannot brook the elevation of anyone or anything to any degree of earthly glory that might compete with his own. The fact that without Babylon and her political, economic, military and, last but far from least, cultural influence he never would have achieved the mastery of the world he now enjoys will matter little to antichrist. As a true son of his father the devil, there is not a scintilla of gratitude to be found in the beast’s heart of solid stone, a fact that should give pause to any and all who contemplate serving him or his master Satan, even from a strictly worldly way of evaluating matters.

verse 16-17: This is our first indication in Revelation of the precise manner in which Babylon will meet her demise. In all of the various Old Testament passages which speak of the destruction of Babylon (historical and eschatological), God is the cause, but in all such instances He makes use of earthly means (see section II.3-5 below). The seven European rulers together with the three rulers of the southern alliance’s main power blocks will all be equally jealous of Babylon’s status, power, influence and wealth, no doubt all the more so inasmuch as we have already seen that Babylon will, up to this point, have been largely spared from the worst effects of the Tribulation, including much of the economic dislocation (as evidenced by the description of the prostitute’s wealth earlier in this chapter), the ravages of war (since the conflicts will be fought far from her doorstep), and, as the beast’s home country and favored realm, from the worst of antichrist’s social, religious, economic and political system and “reforms”. The beast’s own hatred is also unquestionably predicated upon Babylon’s recent infidelity to him. For it will be recalled that during the just concluded fifth bowl judgment, Babylon had made use of the dislocation occasioned by the darkness of the seven kingdoms to conspire against him.

The unfaithfulness demonstrated by the beast's sub-ruler in charge of Babylon at this time will have much to do with motivating her destruction. Rather than expressing disapproval in the face of the ruler of Babylon's intrigues with Israel during antichrist's emergency expedition into the darkness of the rebellious north, there is no indication that either the powerful or the general population of Babylon were at all averse to exploring the possibility of alternative leadership. Given that Babylon has up till now been the privileged exception to all of the beast's depredations, it is no wonder that his attitude on returning will be one of "hatred" for Babylon, motivated by his own anger over such ingratitude, and mixing with the "hatred" born of jealousy on the part of the ten kings.

Although antichrist and his ten rulers are the means used, this judgment itself originates directly from the hand of God and is completely in God's plan (for reasons that will be made clear below). But in verse seventeen we are also given a good deal of information about the course and manner of this judgment. First, Babylon will be isolated from allies and support (the beast and the ten kings will "render her desolate"), then stripped of all of her defenses (made "naked"). Once Babylon is completely defenseless, "they will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire", a twofold process wherein Babylon will first be plundered ("eat her flesh"), and then made subject to devastating conflagration (see section II.5 below), with all aspects of this horrendous judgment emanating from antichrist and his subordinates, but originating with God: "for God put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose".³²

verse 18: As discussed in a previous installment (part 3B, sections II-III), while Babylon represents religious, cultural, and technological power, she is first and foremost a discrete geographical nation, a great "city-state" (Greek *polis*, *πολις*) "which has dominion over the kings of the earth". This dominion, rule, and influence which preceded antichrist's rise to power came primarily as a result of her political, military, and economic power (and it is of these assets and defenses that she will be stripped before being plundered and destroyed). Babylon represents the jewel in Satan's crown. Aside from ancient Rome, no other nation in the history of the world has come close to matching such systematic and tangible power (political, military, and economic), wrapped up in such systematic and intangible influence (religious, cultural, and technological). But whether we focus upon Babylon as a nation projecting power or Babylon as a system projecting influence, we should not forget that, in the end, Babylon is made up of people, and it is the collective depravity of her population on that future, eschatological day which will call down this extreme divine judgment.

Raise the standard on the walls of Babylon! Strengthen the guard, station the watchmen, prepare the reinforcements! But nevertheless what the Lord has planned, that He will do, namely, what He has decreed against *the inhabitants* of Babylon.
Jeremiah 51:12

³² cf. the description of antichrist in the destruction of Babylon as the Lord's "chosen ally" in Is.48:14.

3. Fallen is Babylon: Revelation 18:1-3

(1) After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven with great power, and the earth was lit up by his glory. (2) And he cried out in a mighty voice, saying, “Babylon the great has fallen! And she has become a dwelling place for demons, and a place of confinement for every [sort of] unclean spirit, and a place of confinement for every unclean and detestable bird. (3) For the nations have drunk from the wine of [God’s] wrath [that flows] from her prostitution. And the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her. And the merchants of the earth have grown rich with her from the [economic] power [flowing from] her wanton excess”.

Revelation 18:1-3

verse 1: Like the angel with the little scroll of Revelation chapter ten, this angel too is best seen as a type of Christ.³³ For just as in the case of the angel of Revelation chapter ten, this angel too is seen “coming down from heaven” (a picture of the Second Advent). This angel too is said to possess “great power” (cf. v.1 with Rev.10:1), and have a “mighty voice” (cf. v.2 with Rev.10:3). And in a manner analogous to the powerful angel of Revelation chapter ten whose hair and face “were like the sun” (Rev.10:1), in the case of this angel it is said that “the earth was lit up by his glory” (v.1). Since the fall of Babylon is, in prophetic terms, intimately connected with the final events of the “Day of the Lord”, comprising part of the final series of judgments which bring the Great Tribulation to an end and usher in the Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the fact that this prophecy about the impending fall of Babylon should be given to another powerful angel whose appearance likewise foreshadows the now imminent return of our Lord,³⁴ serves to emphasize the immediacy of that return: once Babylon has been destroyed, Armageddon and the Second Advent will follow in rapid-fire succession.

verse 2: As in the case of the angel in Revelation chapter ten, the proclamation given here, “Babylon the great has fallen!”, is prophetic – but only just so. The command to “flee Babylon” comes immediately upon the heels of this prediction (Rev.18:4), with the actual destruction following with very little intervening time elapsed (the description of which begins in Rev.18:5).

The symbolic relegation of post-judgment Babylon to a habitation for demons, unclean spirits, and unclean birds, serves to underscore that this judgment is from God and that it represents cursing of the first order.³⁵ Just as the original earth, a paradise of light and delight created

³³ See part 3A of this series, section IV.1, “The Powerful Angel is a Type of Christ”.

³⁴ See part 6 of this series, section I, “The Second Advent Judgments”.

³⁵ To the extent that the presence of unclean birds and the restriction of demons to Babylon is literal, it must be short-lived, for on the one hand the Millennium will be a time of unimaginable blessing worldwide, and on the other all fallen angels will be removed from the

perfectly and out of nothing from the hand of God in Genesis 1:1, was cursed with the devastating judgment of being made dark in utter waste and desolation becoming “ruined and despoiled” by the time of the situation described in Genesis 1:2 as a result of God’s judgment upon Satan’s rebellion,³⁶ and just as Sodom and Gomorrah were totally annihilated with fire and brimstone and remain a curse to this day, so Babylon’s judgment will be cataclysmic, with her end serving as a memorial to the folly of serving Satan in place of the one true God (cf. Rev.18:22-23; 19:3).

verse 3: While we have already considered the reasons why the beast and his ten sub-kings should hate Babylon (retaliation and jealousy respectively), here we are given the first of two reasons why Babylon has earned such a devastating judgment from God. This first reason concerns the negative effect she has had upon the world, primarily upon unbelievers, in promoting, supporting, and in fact to a very great degree producing the system of spiritual “prostitution” which will characterize human life throughout the Tribulation and which will hold sway throughout the world of that time. This corrupting influence is described here as having three main venues: 1) other nations generally, 2) the “kings” or ruling hierarchies around the world, and 3) the “merchants”. Herein we are given to see just how all-pervasive Babylon and her corrupt values and practices have been. For in this three-fold breakdown we can see her cultural and religious, political and military, and economic and technological influences at work upon these three respective groups. The spirit of prostitution, of seeking solutions apart from God (and turning instead by definition to Satan, and explicitly so in following the beast), will penetrate deep down into the marrow of every significant power-bloc in the world of that future day. With this level of culpability, having made herself essential to all that antichrist and his father the devil have “accomplished” in the world at large during the Tribulation, it is small wonder that Babylon has incurred such an extraordinary measure of divine wrath.

4. Flee Babylon: Revelation 18:4

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out from her, O my people, that you may not receive a share of [the punishment for] her sins, and that you may not partake of the plagues [which are about to fall upon] her.
Revelation 18:4

Up until this point, as we have had occasion to mention before, Babylon has apparently been spared many of the more draconian aspects of the beast’s tribulational rule. The command given here in verse four is a clear indication that she has also been a sort of “safe haven” for believers. We should not, of course, expect that believers dwelling in Babylon and her vicinity have been

earth at our Lord’s return once and for all with only the devil being temporarily released at the end of the thousand years (Rev.20:7-10). See part 6 of this series, section I.4, “The Incarceration of Satan and his Demons”.

³⁶ See part 2 of the Satanic Rebellion: “The Genesis Gap.

completely exempt up until now from either the general trials of the Tribulation (e.g., the two series of worldwide divine judgments and the general suffering brought about by antichrist's policies), or from the Great Persecution. However, the fact that the remainder of this chapter in Revelation definitely paints a picture of a Babylon characterized by excessive luxuries certainly indicates that she has fared far better than the rest of the world to this point, with at least her privileged classes knowing very little lack as judged from the description in Revelation 18:4-24. Secondly, our present verse definitely assumes that 1) there are a sizeable number of believers still alive and living in Babylon in spite of the Great Persecution, and that 2) at this point at any rate they have the freedom of action and opportunity necessary to respond to this command to "flee Babylon". For some, it will doubtless be the case that their prior imprisonment or confinement or restriction had been lifted at the point of Babylon's rebellion, when the beast and his imperial guard temporarily disappeared into the supernatural veil of darkness which had fallen upon his kingdom. For others, it may well be that they had been largely spared the intensive trouble endured by their brothers and sisters in Jesus around the world. For all concerned, however, the recent destruction in Jerusalem on account of the worldwide earthquake will make that city seem the last place that anyone should flee *to*, especially in light of that city's recent status as antichrist's world capital. But regardless of prior experience or human reasoning, it will be absolutely critical for believers to respond to this command when it comes, for the safe haven of Babylon is about to become a danger zone. Failure to do so will result in "sharing the plagues which are about to come upon her" (Rev.18:4).

Given other previous heavenly commands, signs, and signals during the Tribulation (e.g., Rev.8:5; 10:3-7; 11:15; 11:19), it is best to understand this command to flee Babylon as one which will likewise be audible and, to all believers within Babylon's borders at least, comprehensible. All the more so then will it be absolutely essential for those who have retained their faith in Jesus Christ to respond to this mandate immediately, for there will be no excuse for non-compliance with this exceptionally clear warning (cf. 2Pet.3:1-13).

(28) Likewise just as it happened in the days of Lot, [people] were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, planting [orchards] and building [homes]. (29) But on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven, and [the judgment] destroyed everyone [who had not left]. (30) It will be the same on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (31) In that day, who[ever] is on [the roof of] the house, even though his possessions are in the house, let him not come down to collect them, and let the one who is in the field likewise not turn back. (32) **Remember Lot's wife!** (33) Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses it (i.e., treats it as lost) will preserve it.

Luke 17:28-33

When [people] are saying "Peace!" and "Safety!", at that precise time destruction will fall swiftly upon them, just like labor pains on a pregnant woman (i.e., the tribulational judgments culminating in Armageddon will begin).

1st Thessalonians 5:3

The verses above, while not technically describing this situation, are certainly applicable, with the first passage driving home the lesson that our response at that time must be swift and decisive, with no looking back and no indecision, while the second passage indicates that the need for flight will be completely counter-intuitive. To the secular world, the fifth bowl judgment which plunged the beast's kingdom into darkness, the instability which followed, and antichrist's temporary disappearance into the gloom will seem to mark the end of a long nightmare, but in reality it will begin what is apparently a very short count-down to Babylon's annihilation. Those who draw the false conclusion that their trouble is over once and for all will likely fail to flee in time, even if they recognize their error after antichrist's re-emergence from the darkness prior to Babylon's destruction: this passage in Revelation definitely indicates that the window of opportunity for flight will be a narrow one indeed.

Depart from Babylon! Flee from the Babylonians!

Isaiah 48:20a

(8) "Take flight from the midst of Babylon and from the land of the Babylonians! Depart, and be like the he-goats at the head of the flock! (9) For behold, I am about to stir up and bring up against Babylon an assemblage of great nations from the land of the north. And they will array themselves against her, and from there she will be captured. Their arrows are like those of a skilled warrior who bereaves – they will not return without effect. (10) The Babylonians will be plundered, and those who plunder them will get their fill", says the Lord.

Jeremiah 50:8-10

Cut off the sower from Babylon, and the one who grabs the sickle in time of harvest. Let everyone return to his own people and let everyone flee to his own land from before the sword of the oppressor.

Jeremiah 50:16

(6) Flee from the midst of Babylon, and save your lives, everyone! Don't be annihilated on account of her iniquity! For this is the time of the Lord's vengeance, and of His recompense – He will repay her in full. (7) Babylon is a golden cup in the hand of the Lord which makes the whole earth drunk. The nations have drunk of her wine, [and] therefore the nations have gone mad. (8) Babylon will fall in an instant and be broken. Lament over her! Get balm for her disease! Perhaps she can be healed. (9) We would have healed Babylon, but she could not be healed. Abandon her! And let us get out, everyone to his own land. For the judgment against her has reached up to heaven and has risen to the clouds.

Jeremiah 51:6-9

(6) "Awake! Awake! And flee from the land of the north (i.e., Babylon), even though I scatter you like the four winds of heaven [were driving you on]!" says the Lord. (7) "Awake! Flee to Zion, you who dwell with the Babylonians!

Zechariah 2:6-7

The above passages all have a double application, referring first to the historical return of the Jews to Israel following the Babylonian captivity, but also referring to the situation at hand, the escape of believers from eschatological Babylon prior to her destruction. Indeed, many of the details in these and other like passages are incomprehensible without understanding and applying this final fulfillment in the last days. From the above quotations, the answers to several important questions about this escape come to light:

What is meant: In addition to the historical return from Babylon, three other “exoduses” are mentioned in the prophecies about the end times: 1) the rapid flight of believers within Israel to the divinely prepared sanctuary in the desert which takes place as antichrist assumes worldwide control at the Tribulation’s mid-point (cf. Rev.12:6; 12:13-16; covered in part 4 of this series, section II, “The Woman and the Dragon”); 2) the measured exodus of Jews from all the nations of the world returning to Israel after the end of Tribulation following the Second Advent (e.g., Is.60:4ff.; 66:20); 3) the rapid flight of believers from within Babylon just before her destruction prior to Armageddon (to which our passage, Revelation 18:4, refers).

Where to flee: As we have seen, the one place other than Babylon at this time not under antichrist’s control will be Israel. Scripture indicates that believers who flee Babylon at this time will have but one safe haven and therefore one objective in fleeing, namely, Jerusalem:

Wail, O gate! Howl, O city! Melt away, all you Philistines! A cloud of smoke comes from the north, and there is not a straggler in its ranks. What answer shall be given to the envoys of that nation? “The Lord has established Zion, and in her (i.e., Jerusalem) his afflicted people will find refuge.”
Isaiah 14:31-32 NIV

The voice of the refugees and fugitives from the land of Babylon [resounds], to tell in Zion (i.e., Jerusalem) of the vengeance of the Lord our God, vengeance for His temple (i.e., believers; cf. 1Cor.3:16-17; 6:19; 2Cor.6:16; Eph.2:21; 1Pet.2:4ff.).
Jeremiah 50:28

(9) We would have healed Babylon, but she could not be healed. Abandon her! And let us get out, everyone to his own land. For the judgment against her has reached up to heaven and has risen to the clouds. (10) The Lord has brought forth the vindication [due us] (cf. Rev.19:8b). Come and let us tell in Zion (i.e., Jerusalem) of what the Lord our God has done [for us].
Jeremiah 51:9-10

(44) For I will visit [judgment] on Bel in Babylon, and I will bring out of his mouth what he has swallowed (i.e., believers released from antichrist’s religious persecution represented by “Bel”). And the nations will never stream to him again. For the wall (i.e., the military protection) of Babylon has fallen. (45) Come out of her My people! And let everyone [of you] save his own life [by fleeing] from the fierce wrath of the Lord!

Jeremiah 51:44-45

You refugees, flee from the sword! Don't stay put! Remember the Lord from your far away land (i.e., Babylon), and let Jerusalem ascend in your hearts (i.e., set your thoughts on her)!

Jeremiah 51:50

(2) But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be numbered among the clans of Judah, from you I will bring forth the One who is to rule over Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, even from the days of eternity. (3) For He will give them over [to the oppressor] until the time when [Jerusalem] labors [like] a woman in labor. At that time ***the rest of His brethren*** will return to the sons of Israel.

Micah 5:2-3

(6) "Awake! Awake! And flee from the land of the north (i.e., Babylon), even though I scatter you like the four winds of heaven [were driving you on]!" says the Lord. (7) "Awake! ***Flee to Zion***, you who dwell with the Babylonians!

Zechariah 2:6-7

When to flee: Given that before the bowl judgments begin, antichrist is ruling in Jerusalem as Satan's world regent with the world as a whole to one degree or another directly under his control, the beast's departure into the gloom of the fifth bowl judgment's darkness and the accompanying revolts in Israel and Babylon would seem to be the first opportunity for believers either to leave Babylon or to escape to Zion. As we have seen above, antichrist, to the amazement and confounding of his adversaries, reappears very shortly thereafter and issues his directive to all of his confederate forces throughout the world to assemble at Armageddon. This order given to all of the armies of the world under his command (i.e., with apparently only the meager forces of Israel and Babylon being excepted), constitutes the sixth bowl judgment, an event which occurs a mere month after the beast's disappearance (see figure #1 above). Although we may suppose that the proclamation for Armageddon comes immediately after the beast's reappearance, and that in light of the severe dislocation of this command structure as a result of the preceding events effective implementation of this command and reassertion of his worldwide control will lag to some extent, it can nevertheless be concluded that from this point forward flight will become problematic. Thus the guidance given above about the necessity for ***immediate*** flight upon the first opening of this narrow window of opportunity should be heeded with all the rigor demanded by our Lord's warning to flee in haste and not turn back (Matt.24:18; Mk.13:16; Lk.17:28-33; cf. 1Thes.5:3), in spite of the fact that in the (temporary) absence of the beast this will seem completely counter-intuitive to worldly eyes (cf. the pre-judgment description of Babylon as "lounging in security": Is.47:8). The necessity for rapid flight would also seem to rule out any sort of extensive preparations. Believers who have either been imprisoned or living under great restriction of their personal freedom heretofore will have to trust the Lord to "make a way through the Red Sea", that is, to provide the necessary transport to Israel. Whether by air or by sea, time will be of the essence, and it is very likely that little in the way of tangible material assets will be capable of being brought along. Like Lot leaving Sodom

and the Israelites leaving Egypt, we will have to depart with what we can carry, and do so in great haste (cf. Jer.21:9).

Why flight is necessary at this time but may be ill-advised earlier: The command given here to flee Babylon is clearly given to believers (i.e., “my people”). Thus ipso facto this command to flee shows that there are some of God’s people still in Babylon at this time, and, given the prominence of this command in scripture, one would imagine a goodly number of them. We must therefore conclude that at the very least while these facts do not prohibit an early flight from Babylon, it is no sin for a believer to be still residing within Babylon’s borders during the second half of the Tribulation. As suggested above, for many if not most believers, an earlier escape may be impossible. For we may expect that during the Great Persecution, even if those dwelling in Babylon proper are spared execution for their refusal to take the mark of the beast and worship antichrist, it is very likely nevertheless that they will be placed under severe restrictions (which may include incarceration in prison or concentration camps, seizure of property, restricted travel and mobility, etc.). Therefore the issue of leaving Babylon before this time may be entirely moot for most of those who choose to follow the Lamb wherever He leads instead of bowing to the beast.

There are other reasons too why seeking an earlier departure may be ill-advised, among which may be 1) to continue Christian service and ministry; 2) to continue spiritual preparation for the crisis; 3) to continue witnessing for the Lord; 4) to provide leadership and support for those who are not able or who are unwilling to leave earlier. In sum, we must assume that for many if not most believers in Babylon, the Lord has a purpose for us being here until that final directive to withdraw, and it is not an insignificant consideration that to leave before this command in Revelation 18:4 will be to act in the absence of a clear and definitive divine message (even though we are told here through prophecy that this very one will indeed be forthcoming).

Finally, it is well to ask for those who are inclined to remove themselves from Babylon before this crucial last command to do so the critical question: what possible place of refuge might they find? For prior to this moment the entire world has been under antichrist’s control, with only Babylon offering any degree of sanctuary for believers (with the exception of course of the divinely provided and completely inaccessible refuge in the wilderness provided for the believing refugees from Israel just prior to the Great Tribulation’s commencement; see part 4, section IV, “The Dragon’s Persecution of Believing Israel”). Thus it could very well be the case that attempts to anticipate this command may put those who opt for early flight to some self-selected refuge in a far worse situation than if they had patiently awaited the Lord’s timing. Only at this point, with the beast’s control temporarily disrupted, will there be a clear opportunity to depart and a definite, divinely prophesied destination to seek: Jerusalem.

How: Just as when haled before the beast’s tribunals during the Great Persecution we are instructed to give no thought ahead of time to what we will say (Matt.10:19-20; Mk.13:11; Lk.21:14-15), so it would seem that prior preparation for this exodus will be of little help, if only because the precise particulars of that future situation are unknowable except for the fact that the

window of opportunity will be so narrow. This last point suggests that elaborate prior plans will not be able to be implemented and could act as a hindrance, at least to the extent that they cause those who have made them to delay until “everything can be worked out”. For is it more than likely that we shall all have to leave much behind in order to obey the Lord’s insistent command: houses, property, possessions, assets, money – even loved ones who are for whatever reason reluctant to flee with the required rapidity. Those who delay overmuch are likely to end up like Lot’s sons in law; those who look back are likely to end up like Lot’s wife.

A corollary to this principle is that, since specific prior preparations are likely to be of no use when the time comes, there is little point to making them. Scripture gives no support for adopting a “survivalist mentality”, stock-piling food and weapons and withdrawing to some remote location. Indeed, it is more than likely that over the course of the seven years of Tribulation antichrist will have little trouble identifying, locating, and persecuting all who are truly “of Christ”. Rather than seeing this as an entirely negative thing, it is also possible to look on the positive side. Since when the time comes the Lord will provide a way for us to follow His directive to flee Babylon, the loss of all of our worldly goods in the Great Persecution which precedes is something we should try not to take to heart: there will be a way out because God ordains it, and, on the other hand, if we have managed to retain and are relying upon our possessions to provide that “out”, it is just possible that these may instead form an “anchor” which keeps us from departing in a timely fashion. When we hear the command “flee Babylon!”, for most of us it will probably be the case that we have little to gain by staying behind anyway, and that may prove to be a blessing in disguise.

As suggested above, the temporary departure of antichrist from Israel and Babylon’s sympathizing with Israel’s rebellion will provide an opportunity for travel to Jerusalem. Isaiah 43:14 describing the later flight from Babylon of unbelieving fugitives at least suggests that travel by sea at this time will also be the likely means of transport (although Is.21:6 indicates that a variety of transport is possible). We can well imagine that, with Jerusalem’s recent status as the beast’s world religious and political headquarters, and with all the world making pilgrimages to the temple in order to demonstrate their allegiance to antichrist, a large ferry service will have developed along the lines of the one we see bringing Moslems to Mecca, only in this case even much more extensive and serving all regions of the world, Babylon most especially. With the temporary cessation of all such activities, this same ferry service would seem the likely means to transport believers to Jerusalem. Those just released from prison and or camps may have little or no material resources, but we can have complete confidence in the Lord that He will provide the material means for our departure. Just as the Lord gave the Israelites “favor in the eyes of the Egyptians” and enriched the children of Israel in their hasty departure from Egypt (Ex.12:35-36; cf. Ex.3:21-22; 11:2-3; Ps.105:37), so we can be absolutely sure that no one who is willing to follow our Lord’s command will be left behind for want of boat fare (or anything else).

(33) And those among the people who have insight will teach the people who will be persecuted by sword (i.e., martyrdom), and flame (i.e., torture leading to martyrdom), and

captivity (i.e., imprisonment), and plundering (i.e., confiscation of property), for some time. (34) And when they are persecuted, they will receive a little help . . .
Daniel 11:33-34a

The Exodus parallel: As we shall consider in greater detail in part 7 of this series, the experience of the children of Israel during the Exodus furnishes a prophetically important and detailed parallel to the experience of believers undergoing the Tribulation over all. However the actual departure from Egypt provides some critical points of comparison which should be noted at this point:

- The origin and character of the people being delivered: Just as Israelites went down to Egypt, so a godly seed came to America and has been both nourished and expanding ever since. But just as there was a time for God to make a distinction between those who were His and those who were not, and to call forth His people from Egypt, so it will be in Babylon's case (cf. Heb.11:7-8).
- Deliverance from oppression by divine agency: Just as Egypt was originally very hospitable to the people of God, so also in the case of Babylon. However, in the last days of Israel's abiding in that land, a harsh ruler oppressed the Israelites mightily. So also in the case of Babylon we may anticipate that the days of Tribulation will weigh heavily upon the people of God, and that believers will face ever increasing oppression in this country. But just as the Israelites were delivered from the hand of Pharaoh by the mighty power of God, so also the bowl judgments of retribution will create a situation whereby God opens the doors of the prison house so that we may safely take our leave of Babylon. Just as darkness preceded immediately the plague of the firstborn and the Exodus, and just as there was light for the Israelites but darkness for the Egyptians, so on that coming day there will be darkness on the kingdom of antichrist but light for believers to escape from Babylon.
- Divine provision: As mentioned above, the Lord did not allow the Israelites to leave Egypt empty handed, but gave them grace in the eyes of the Egyptians so that they "plundered" them (Ex.12:35-36; cf. Ex.3:21-22; 11:2-3; Ps.105:37). So also we may have every confidence that no matter how we may have been oppressed, no matter how long we have been in prison or otherwise confined, no matter how widespread and extensive the confiscation of our belongings has been, we shall nevertheless be provided the means we need to depart Babylon for Jerusalem.
- Rapid departure: God led Abraham out of his country to the land of promise at just the right time (Heb.11:8). God prepared Noah to "flee" the destruction of the world of his day by following His instructions so that he was preserved and not destroyed along with it on the day the flood came (Heb.11:7). And God brought the Israelites out in an equally swift and decisive manner, having them leave at twilight ready for a hasty march when the time came to depart (Ex.12:11; 12:31; 12:34; Deut.16:6). Just so, when the divine

command is clearly received on that future day, it will be incumbent upon the believers who receive it to make haste in carrying it out.

- Deliverance through the sea to the promised land: Just as the Israelites who faced the seemingly impossible obstacle of the Red Sea between them and the land of promise were miraculously delivered through the sea by the mighty hand of God, so also we may have every confidence that our Lord will bring us through every trouble, trial and tribulation, safely to the place He has made for us in Jerusalem to await His return (and in the New Jerusalem thereafter where we will rejoice in Him forever).

5. Babylon Destroyed: Revelation 18:5-8

(5) For [Babylon's] sins have been piled up to heaven, and God has called to mind her wicked deeds. (6) Repay her just as she also herself has repaid. And give her a double measure according to her deeds. In her own cup with which she mixed [her evil brew], mix a double batch for her. (7) To the same degree that she glorified herself and indulged in wanton excess, to that same degree give her torment and grief. For she says in her heart, "I am enthroned as a queen, and I am not a widow and I shall not see grief". (8) Because of [all] this [arrogance of hers], her plagues will come in one day: death and mourning and famine. And [then] she will be burned down with fire (the invasion undertaken by the beast and his confederates). For the Lord God who has judged her is mighty.

Revelation 18:5-8

It is an occupational hazard of great material abundance to lose humility and all sense of proportion in terms of our mortality. This is true on an individual as well as a national level:

When you eat and are satisfied and bless the Lord your God on account of the good land which He has given you, take care for yourselves lest you forget the Lord your God so as not to keep His commandments, judgments, and statutes which I am commanding you [to keep] this day. Lest, when you eat and are satisfied and build fine homes and dwell [in them] and your cattle and sheep multiply and your gold and silver increase and everything you have increases, your heart become proud and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery, He who led you through the great and awesome wilderness with its deadly snakes and scorpions, a thirsty place without water, He who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock, He who in [this] desert gave you manna to eat (of which your fathers had no knowledge), in order to afflict you so as to test you that it might go well with you in the future. Lest you say in your heart, "My strength and my own hand have produced this wealth for me". [Rather] that you may remember the Lord your God, that it is He who gives you the strength to produce wealth, [and] that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:10-18 (cf. Hos.13:6)

Jeshurun grew fat and kicked - [Yes,] you grew fat and heavy and were sated – so that he abandoned God who made him, and considered foolish the Rock, His Savior.
Deuteronomy 32:15

Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, “Who is the Lord?” Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.
Proverbs 30:7-9 NIV

But Babylon is seen here to have taken this principle to what may be a historical extreme. In the divine wisdom of God, her punishment will consist in her deprivation of the very things she has treasured and boasted of, things of which she had thought she would never be deprived, and the loss thereof will be like a sword piercing her heart, a “double measure” and “double batch” of destruction that will bereave her of everything upon which she has arrogantly prided herself (cf. Ezek.7).

5 "Sit in silence, go into darkness,
Daughter of the Babylonians;
no more will you be called
queen of kingdoms.

6 I was angry with my people
and desecrated my inheritance;
I gave them into your hand,
and you showed them no mercy.
Even on the aged
you laid a very heavy yoke.

7 You said, 'I will continue forever—
the eternal queen!'
But you did not consider these things
or reflect on what might happen.

8 "Now then, listen, you wanton creature,
lounging in your security
and saying to yourself,
'I am, and there is none besides me.
I will never be a widow
or suffer the loss of children.'

9 Both of these will overtake you
in a moment, on a single day:
loss of children and widowhood.

They will come upon you in full measure,
in spite of your many sorceries
and all your potent spells.

10 You have trusted in your wickedness
and have said, 'No one sees me.'
Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you
when you say to yourself,
'I am, and there is none besides me.'

11 Disaster will come upon you,
and you will not know how to conjure it away.
A calamity will fall upon you
that you cannot ward off with a ransom;
a catastrophe you cannot foresee
will suddenly come upon you.

12 "Keep on, then, with your magic spells
and with your many sorceries,
which you have labored at since childhood.
Perhaps you will succeed,
perhaps you will cause terror.

13 All the counsel you have received has only worn you out!
Let your astrologers come forward,
those stargazers who make predictions month by month,
let them save you from what is coming upon you.

14 Surely they are like stubble;
the fire will burn them up.
They cannot even save themselves
from the power of the flame.
Here are no coals to warm anyone;
here is no fire to sit by.

15 That is all they can do for you—
these you have labored with
and trafficked with since childhood.
Each of them goes on in his error;
there is not one that can save you.

Isaiah 47:5-15 NIV

Babylon Invaded: As we saw above in our translation of Revelation 17:15-18, Babylon is destroyed in accordance with the will of God, but the agents of His judgment are the beast and

his sub-kings for “God put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose” (v.17). It is not uncommon for the Lord to make use of the devil and his minions, whether human or angelic, to accomplish His overarching purpose (cf. Paul’s handing over of the offending Corinthian believer “to Satan for the destruction of his flesh”, 1Cor.5:4-5).³⁷

The actual destruction of Babylon will be preceded by a military invasion that will occasion much plundering, after which Babylon, or at least all of her significant cities and towns, will be put to the torch by this invasion force. This sequence of events is clearly visible in the near context of Revelation 17:16 where we are told that the beast’s henchmen (1) “will render her desolate and naked”, (2) “and they will eat her flesh”, then (3) “will burn her up with fire” (compare our present context of Revelation 18:8: “her plagues will come in one day: death and mourning and famine. And [then] she will be burned down with fire.”). The rendering of Babylon “desolate and naked” in Revelation 17:16 refers to the removal of all of her defenses, the “eating of flesh” to the plundering of Babylon by the beast’s invasion force, and the “burning with fire” to the literal physical destruction of Babylon at the conclusion of this campaign.

1) The Disarming of Babylon: It will be remembered that by this time the beast will have been in control of the world for several years, with all its military forces under his command (direct or indirect). At this time, it is very doubtful that Babylon will possess significant forces within her borders. On the one hand, the need for defense against foreign attack will have evaporated (or so it will seem). On the other hand, what use there will be for the military at this time will be in maintenance of the beast’s control over his realm. Furthermore, the campaign to reduce the north to full obedience occasioned by the darkness of the fifth bowl judgment is likely to have resulted in the summoning of the remaining major portion of Babylon’s military power to his aid (and this would have preceded her rebellion). In short, by this time the vast bulk of whatever military force Babylon does possess in principal will be fully integrated into the beast’s one-world army, and geographically located outside of Babylon. Finally, there are indications from scripture that by this time much of Babylon’s military will be composed of foreign nationals or “mercenaries” in any case (a trend already incipient today), so that Babylon is unlikely to be able to count on the loyalty of those who are at this time still ostensibly in “her army” (Ezek.27:3b-11).³⁸ Rendering Babylon “desolate and naked” may demand little more than requiring her few remaining troops to place their oath of fealty to the beast ahead of their oath to her, with the result that the few

³⁷ See Bible Basics part 2A: Angelology, section II.9.7, “God’s use of evil spirits”.

³⁸ On Tyre as an alternative designation for Babylon compare Revelation 18:11-24 with Ezekiel chapters 26-27, and part 3B of this series *passim*. It will also be recalled that antichrist, the King of Babylon, is also represented as the King of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:11-19 (Coming Tribulation part 3B, section II.1.c.1). The similar comparison between Pharaoh/antichrist and Egypt/kingdom of the beast also suggests the diminution of indigenous military power at this time and its destruction at the hands of the beast, the “king of Babylon”(Ezek.32:11-12).

resident forces which choose to remain loyal will be pitifully insufficient to prevent her destruction.³⁹

Look at your troops – they are all women! The gates of your land are wide open to your enemies; fire has consumed their bars.

Nahum 3:13 NIV

Your guards are like locusts, your officials like swarms of locusts that settle in the walls on a cold day – but when the sun appears they fly away, and no one knows where.

Nahum 3:17

Prepare the nations for battle against her – the kings of the Medes, their governors and all their officials, and all the countries they rule. The land trembles and writhes, for the Lord’s purposes against Babylon stand – to lay waste the land of Babylon so that no one will live there. ***Babylon’s warriors have stopped fighting; they remain in their strongholds. Their strength is exhausted; they have become like women.*** Her dwellings are set on fire; the bars of her gates are broken. One courier follows another and messenger follows messenger to announce to the king of Babylon that his entire city is captured, the river crossings seized, the marshes set on fire, ***and the soldiers terrified.***

Jeremiah 51:29-32 NIV

Your wealth, merchandise and wares, your mariners, seamen and shipwrights, your merchants ***and all your soldiers***, and everyone else on board will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your shipwreck.

Ezekiel 27:27 NIV

2) The Invasion of Babylon: As the above passages describing the fall of historical Babylon and eschatological Babylon show, the campaign of conquest will not be much of a campaign at all. In practical terms, this assault will amount to little more than a rapid “Blitzkrieg” style occupation of an essentially defenseless country. Based both upon the scriptures which predict it and the scant time remaining before all of antichrist’s forces are collected at Armageddon, we can safely say that the small forces still remaining in Babylon are likely to put up only scattered and token resistance in the face of what will be a rapid and largely unexpected onslaught by an overwhelming assemblage of opponents assaulting her from the north (Jer.25:9; 50:3; 50:9; 50:41ff.; cf. Rev.17:16), the east (cf. Ezek.27:26), the desert (Is.21:1-10), the sea (Ezek.27:34), in short, from each and every side (Jer.51:1-2).

³⁹ Quotations in this section referring to contemporary Tyre, Egypt and Assyria have secondary prophetic application to Babylon as the realm of antichrist, the ultimate eschatological referent under the “Day of the Lord paradigm” (see part 1 of this series, section IV.1.b).

“Therefore, behold, I am going to bring foreigners against you, the [most] ruthless of the nations, and they will un-sheath their swords against the allure of your wisdom, and they will defile your glory.”

Ezekiel 28:7

“You (i.e., the ruler of Tyre, the beast’s rebellious regent) will die the violent death of the uncircumcised *at the hands of foreigners* (i.e., the multi-national invasion force sent by antichrist to finish off Babylon). For I have spoken”, says the Lord God.⁴⁰

Ezekiel 28:10

(4) The sound of a multitude on the mountains, like a great army. The sound of an uproar of the kingdoms, the nations are being gathered. The Lord of hosts is mustering an army for war. (5) *They are coming from a distant land, from the ends of the earth.* The Lord and the instruments of His rage, to despoil the entire land [of Babylon (cf. v.1)].

Isaiah 13:4-5

We cannot underestimate the fury which Babylon’s behavior during the Tribulation has aroused worldwide, both externally among the other nations of the world, all of whom to one degree or another have to this point been her imperial possessions, and also internally among a large and most likely majority population of immigrants, slaves, and those reduced to penury and indentured servitude.⁴¹ Likewise, we cannot underestimate the attractiveness of plundering Babylon at this time given the extreme contrast between her excessive wealth and the incredible poverty and dearth otherwise throughout the world during the dark days of the Great Tribulation. Thus the motive for the latter internal unrest as well for the invading armies will be two fold, jealousy and revenge on the one hand . . .

There is no alleviation for your disaster. The blow [which has befallen you] is grievous. All who hear of this report about you will clap their hands against you. For against whom has your wickedness not come continually?

Nahum 3:19

Woe to the one (i.e., antichrist’s Babylon) who multiplies what is not his (i.e., through theft). How long will he enrich himself through usury?

Habakkuk 2:6

⁴⁰ Literally, “deaths”, but the plural here is indicative of intensity, hence the translation “violent death”.

⁴¹ In both of these respects, that is, the nature of her cruel economic and political imperialism under the beast and the re-institution of slavery and virtually debt-slavery, we see important distinctions between the eschatological Babylon of antichrist and the contemporary U.S.

(16) Now as for the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will come to hate the harlot [Babylon] and will render her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. (17) For God put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose and to be of one accord and to give their kingdoms to the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

Revelation 17:16-17

. . . and greed and plunder⁴² on the other:

“For the Babylonians will become plunder, and all her pillagers will have their fill”, says the Lord.

Jeremiah 50:10

For thus says the Lord of hosts, “In later times He [the Father] shall send Me in glory against the nations who have plundered you (for whoever touches you touches the apple of My eye). At that time, behold, I shall wave My hand against them, and they will be plundered by their slaves. In this way you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me. Zechariah 2:8-9

A dire vision [of Babylon’s fate] has been shown to me. The traitor betrays, and the despoiler despoils.

Isaiah 21:2 (cf. Is.33:1)

Plunder the silver! Plunder the gold! The supply is endless, the wealth from all its treasures! She is pillaged, plundered, stripped! Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale.

Nahum 2:9-10 NIV

A sword against her horses and chariots and all the foreigners in her ranks! They will become women. A sword against her treasures! They will be plundered.

Jeremiah 50:37 NIV

Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord. She will become plunder for the nations, and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the Lord.

Ezekiel 26:5-6 NIV

They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea.

Ezekiel 26:12 NIV

⁴² For the practice of pillaging as characteristic of antichrist’s forces, see Ezek.38:11-13.

(7) Will not those who pay you [exorbitant] interest rise up suddenly, and those whom you shake down [for payment] awaken? For you will become plunder for them. (8) Since you have looted many nations, all the remaining peoples of the earth will pillage you on account of your shedding of blood and your violence against the earth, against its cities and those who dwell in them. (9) Woe to the one who heaps up unjust gain for the benefit of his own empire (lit., “house”), in order to set his nesting place on high so that he might be rescued from the grasp of disaster. (10) But you have devised only shame for your empire (lit., “house”) by your cutting down of many peoples and have acted in sinful folly against your own life. (11) For [even] the stones in your walls [of your empire/house] will cry out, and the beams from its wooden [framework] will reply [in condemnation of your behavior]. (12) Woe to the one who builds his city[-state] (i.e., empire) on bloodshed.

Habakkuk 2:7-12

3) The Destruction of Babylon: As a political state, historical Babylon was destroyed by the Persian invasion “from the north” ca. 529 B.C., but Babylon the province was never entirely depopulated (cf. Daniel 5:31 - 9:1), and Babylon the city, though in decline ever after, continued as provincial capital of the Persian empire and, later, as Alexander’s eastern capital. In the time of Christ, the city was a shadow of its former self, and in recent times it has indeed become completely depopulated (though it was revived as a tourist attraction under Saddam). These historical facts invite us to pose the question of whether or not the devastating destruction leveled upon eschatological Babylon by antichrist and his forces will indeed be total in our modern, western sense of the word. For without a doubt there are many passages which certainly suggest something like total destruction by any definition (Is.13:5; 13:19; 47:3; Jer.40:12-13; 50:29; 50:39-40; 51:29; 51:13; Ezek.26:17-21; 27:26-36; and compare the similarity of these last two passages with Rev.18-19).

Babylon will be “burned with fire”, left “naked and desolate” with her “flesh eaten”.

(16) Now as for the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will come to hate the harlot [Babylon] and will render her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.

Revelation 17:16-17

(19) And they cast dust upon their heads [in grief] and they cried out, wailing and grieving, saying, “Woe, woe for the great city, [by consorting] with whom all who have ships on the sea became wealthy from her exceptionally expensive [tastes]! [Woe to her] for in a single hour she has been bereft [of it all]”.

Revelation 18:19

(21) And a powerful angel lifted up something resembling a huge stone and cast it into the sea, saying, “Thus in the blink of an eye shall Babylon the great city be thrown down, and never again will there be heard in her (22) the sound of harpists or musicians or flute players or trumpets, and never again will there be found in you any of your skilled

technicians, (23) and never again will there be seen in you the light of your lamps, and never again will there be heard in you the [joyous] sound of bridegroom and bride!
Revelation 18:21-23a

(1) After these things I heard something like the sound of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and power belong to our God, (2) for His judgments are true and just. For He has judged the great prostitute who was corrupting the earth with her prostitution, and He has exacted retribution from her hand for the blood of His servants.” (3) And they spoke a second time, “Hallelujah! And her smoke is rising up forever!”
Revelation 19:1-3

Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there. But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged.
Isaiah 13:19-22 NIV

(3) And it will come to pass on the day when the Lord gives you rest from your pain, and from your turmoil, and from the hard labor which was levied upon you, (4) that you will take up this taunt concerning the king of Babylon (i.e., antichrist), and you will say, “How the oppressor (i.e., antichrist) has come to an end! How the golden [city] (i.e., Babylon) has ceased to be!”
Isaiah 14:3-4

Prepare a place to slaughter his sons for the sins of their forefathers; they are not to rise to inherit the land and cover the earth with their cities. “I will rise up against them,” declares the Lord Almighty. “I will cut off from Babylon her name and survivors, her offspring and descendants,” declares the Lord. “I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland; I will sweep her with the broom of destruction,” declares the Lord Almighty.
Isaiah 14:21-23 NIV

The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred. In the streets they cry out for wine; all joy turns to gloom, all gaiety is banished from the earth. The city is left in ruins, its gate is battered to pieces.
Isaiah 24:10-12 NIV

Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.
Isaiah 27:10 KJV

“Attack the land of Merathaim and those who live in Pekod. Pursue, kill and completely destroy them” declares the Lord. “Do everything I have commanded you.”
Jeremiah 50:21 NIV

Come against her from afar. Break open her granaries; pile her up like heaps of grain. Completely destroy her and leave her no remnant.
Jeremiah 50:26

The land trembles and writhes, for the Lord's purposes against Babylon stand – to lay waste the land of Babylon so that no one will live there.
Jeremiah 51:29 NIV (cf. vv.36-37; and even 25-26)

For the time will surely come when I will punish the idols of Babylon; her whole land will be disgraced and her slain will all lie fallen within her.
Jeremiah 51:47 NIV

Tyre (i.e., as eschatological parallel to Babylon; see notes #38 and #39 above) has built herself a stronghold; she has heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets. But the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea, and she will be consumed by fire.
Zechariah 9:3-4

Clearly, the coming judgment upon Babylon, whether or not it involves her complete and total depopulation and systematic devastation for all future time, will be horrendous:

Babylon's affliction will produce a dramatic outflow of her non-native population:

Like a hunted gazelle, like sheep without a shepherd, each will return to his own people, each will flee to his native land.
Isaiah 13:14 NIV

Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed. “We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to his own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the clouds.”
Jeremiah 51:8 NIV

Babylon's native population will be terribly abused and depleted:

Whoever is captured will be thrust through; all who are caught will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses will be looted and their wives ravished.
Isaiah 13:15-16 NIV

And I will send foreigners to Babylon to winnow her and to empty her land. For they will be against her on every side on the day that evil [comes] upon her.
Jeremiah 51:2 NIV

Babylon will never be rebuilt to her former glory:

For you [O Lord] have turned [Babylon] from a city into a pile of stones, from a fortified town into a ruin, from a city into a citadel for foreigners. It will never be rebuilt forever.
Isaiah 25:2

Sit in silence, go into darkness, Daughter of the Babylonians; no more will you be called queen of kingdoms.
Isaiah 47:5 NIV

In many respects, it is a moot point whether the territory of Babylon, devastated by this invasion and its aftermath, will play host to any significant millennial population.⁴³ For on the one hand, in the coming kingdom of our Lord, Babylon's name, fame, power and prestige will be gone forever in any case, with her commercial might completely obliterated. And, on the other hand, no one in their right mind who with the benefit of scripture has discerned the "signs of the times" will forsake the opportunity to flee during this narrow window when the world in general and the population of Babylon in particular wrongly assume that antichrist's reign of terror has come to end.

On balance, the many descriptions of complete devastation seem to leave little doubt that Babylon will be irreparably destroyed by antichrist's dual assault of massive invasion followed by deliberate incineration. It seems clear that the Lord is making a very deliberate example of Babylon, one whose lesson will continue into the millennial kingdom (and the extensive description given in the rest of chapter eighteen certainly confirms this impression). All other things being equal, therefore, one might suppose that everyone who does not take the opportunity to escape to Jerusalem during the calm before this storm will be caught up in it and destroyed (with the exception of those who somehow manage later to flee successfully: e.g., Is.47:2). There is, however, one piece of information which may challenge this assumption. We have posited in the past that up until this point, Babylon, the original homeland of the beast, has to a large degree been shielded from some of the worst of antichrist's depredations, and may in fact

⁴³ The possibility at least exists for such a scenario when we consider that Tyre, a synonym for eschatological Babylon, is likewise destined for complete destruction, but also for a later reestablishment after a symbolic seventy year hiatus (compare Is.23:17 and Ps.45:12 to Ezek.26-28). Compare also Zeph.1:3 and 1:18 where worldwide destruction is described in terms of totality, yet we know of a certainty that some will survive the Tribulation to form the nucleus of the millennial population (cf. the regathering of Israel described in the next installment of this series). And see Obadiah 1:21 in comparison with the book as a whole where Edom's fate is described in similar terms. And see Jer.4:27.

have functioned as a sort of safe haven – not necessarily just for dedicated Christians, but possibly also for marginal believers and for non-believing Jews as well (especially perhaps in regard to avoiding the mark, something they will no doubt be keen to do in spite of a lack of faith in Christ: cf., Deut.11:18; Jer.30:11). Now one of the first orders of business in Christ’s millennial kingdom will be the regathering for evaluation of all remaining Jews from the four corners of the world (cf. Is.11:11-12; 48:20-21; 52:12). It will be recalled that the ministries of Moses and Elijah and the 144,000 resulted in the salvation of a large number of Jewish people around the world though by no means anything like a majority. At this point in time, the believing remnant is enjoying a protected interlude in the desert kept safe by the power of God from all the troubles of the Great Tribulation until Christ’s return (Rev.12:13-17; see the previous installment of this series, section IV). Given the large Jewish population in this country, and the very likely possibility that it will increase significantly as Jews around the world seek a place of safety during the worst of the tribulational events, it stands to reason that those Jews living in Babylon at this time will at least escape with their lives so as to be available for the great regathering after our Lord’s taking up of His millennial kingship (and that they may perhaps form the largest element of this return).

Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field. ***You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued.*** There the Lord will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies.
Micah 4:10 NIV

Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, “The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob.” They did not thirst when he led them through ***the deserts***; He made water flow for them from the rock; He split the rock and water gushed out.
Isaiah 48:20-21 NIV

I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered—with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath. I will bring you ***into the desert of the nations*** and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you. As I judged your fathers in the desert of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign Lord
Ezekiel 20:34-36 NIV

(3) And he took me off in the Spirit to ***a desert***. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was covered with blasphemous names, [and which] had seven heads and ten horns. (4) And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and was adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, [and was] holding a golden cup in her hand filled with abominations and [all] the unclean things of her prostitution and [the prostitution] of the earth. (5) And on her forehead a name was written: “mystery ***Babylon the great***, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the world”.
Revelation 17:3-5

Such a deliverance from Babylon after the fact would follow the parallel of the Jewish return to the land after the destruction of the historical Babylon. It is thus entirely possible and consistent with the scriptures quoted above to envision a scenario wherein Babylon will be so thoroughly looted and so deliberately put to the torch that she becomes largely uninhabitable for all time to come, yet without the complete and immediate destruction of all who live within her borders at that time, even though the loss of life may be extreme and the loss of property nearly complete. According to this interpretation, the transfer of population from out of the territory of destroyed Babylon will occur after Christ's return with life in the ruins until that time existing on a bare subsistence level (quite a contrast to Babylon's former unprecedented luxury).

This is what the Lord says – your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “For your sake I will send to Babylon and bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians, in the ships in which they took pride.”

Isaiah 43:14 NIV

6. The Lament for Babylon: Revelation 18:9-19

(9) And the kings of the earth will cry and mourn over her, even those who committed fornication with her and indulged in wanton excess [with her], when they look upon the smoke of her conflagration, (10) standing at a [safe] distance on account of their fear of her torment, saying, “Woe, woe for the great city, Babylon the mighty! For in one hour the judgment [due] you has come [upon you].” (11) And the merchants of the earth [who did business with] you are crying and grieving over you, because no one buys their cargoes any longer, (12) cargoes of gold and silver, of precious stones and pearls, of linens and purple [fabrics] and silk and crimson [cloth], and every [sort of product made of] fragrant wood, and every [sort of] product [made of] ivory, and every [sort of] product [made of] exceptionally precious wood and bronze and iron, (13) and [spices of] cinnamon and anise and [various sorts of] incense and myrrh and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and grain and livestock and sheep, and of horses and chariots and bodies, that is, human beings [enslaved or indentured]. (14) Indeed, the imports your heart lusted for have departed from you. And as to all your sleek and shiny [cultural] exports, [the people of the world] will never find them again. (15) The merchants of [all] these things who grew rich from her (i.e., Babylon) will stand at a distance on account of their fear of her torment, crying and grieving, (16) saying, “Woe, woe for the great city, the one clothed in linen and purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stones and pearls! (17) [Woe to her,] for in a single hour she has been made bereft of such great wealth!” And every captain and everyone sailing to that place, and sailors, and as many as make their living from the sea stood at a distance, (18) and as they looked at the smoke of her burning they cried out, saying, “What [city was ever] like this great city?” (19) And they cast dust upon their heads [in grief] and they cried out, wailing and grieving, saying, “Woe, woe for the great city, [by consorting] with whom all who have ships on the sea became wealthy from her exceptionally expensive [tastes]! [Woe to her] for in a single hour she has been made bereft [of it all]”.

Revelation 18:9-19

This passage evokes many obvious parallels with Ezekiel's lament over Tyre (chapter 27; cf. also the "woes" of Is.33:1), and depicts the destruction of Babylon as being as thoroughly complete as that of other previous world empires. However the indictment after the fact here of Babylon's exceptional and unprecedented luxuriation at the expense of others without any concern on her part and in complete rejection and disregard for the Lord's opinion of her wanton behavior is a strikingly severe justification of her total destruction (cf. Zech.5:5-11). There can be no doubt that her supercilious arrogance ascended to record-breaking heights, and that her correspondingly precipitous downfall is not only thoroughly justified but the cause for just as much welcome celebration among the righteous as it is here of lamentation on the part of her accomplices in materialistic excess. As quickly as the forces of antichrist have descended upon Babylon, just as quickly we may expect to see them go, heeding the call to assemble for the battle of Armageddon and leaving a burned out shell in their wake (i.e., Rev.18:10: "one hour" refers to the rapidity of the operation; cf. Jer.51:8). Believers who have now escaped from Babylon in response to the divine warnings that preceded her destruction will have occasion to appreciate the Lord's deliverance of them from that fatally stricken country, no matter how wrenching the departure may have been or how much they may have seemed to have lost in a material way: to have stayed would have meant losing everything, and most probably their lives as well. Jesus tells us that we believers are "the salt of the earth" (Matt.5:13; Mk.9:50; Lk.14:34; cf. Lev.2:13; Num.18:19; Col.4:6), and salt with its preservative properties is a piquant metaphor for the preservative effect of a remnant of genuine, godly believers whose presence God honors wherever they may be found, even if it be in the midst of the Great Prostitute. But now, with all responsive believers having heeded the Lord's command to withdraw from Babylon, the wanton creature has found herself without any shred of protection. And while from the human viewpoint the lack of military defense will seem critical (discussed above), those who know their God will realize that just as the withdrawal of Lot from Sodom paved the way for her destruction, so the removal of the remnant of believers from Babylon will likewise remove the final impediment to her reaping what she has sown (in a similar way that the degradation of the remnant in Israel led to her removal from the land; cf. Lev.26).

The possessive genitive of the second person singular pronoun *sou* (σου) in Revelation 18:11 (in the original of the Sinaiticus manuscript) makes it clear that the merchants in question in Revelation 18:11-13 are not "Babylonian" merchants (who apparently share in the judgment) but traders from other countries around the world. The extensive list of goods in that context are luxury imports, underlining what the Greek words *streniao* (Rev.18:7; 18:9) and *strenios* (18:3) mean in this chapter, namely, Babylon's luxuriating in "wanton excess" even while the rest of the world is going through the stark deprivations of the Tribulation. Babylon is dressed in fine linen (bespeaking her economic dominance and luxury), purple (referring to her [tyrannical] rulership), scarlet (the color both of prostitution and of blood), and is adorned with gilding and precious stones (the results of these three anti-God activities: Rev.18:16). In every respect then, Babylon had become the queen of the nations, but what did this profit her? Though she came close to gaining the entire world, she has now been made bereft of everything she had possessed, plundered, looted, and put to the torch.

Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?
Habakkuk 2:13 NIV

(3) And it will come to pass on the day when the Lord gives you rest from your pain, and from your turmoil, and from the hard labor which was levied upon you, (4) that you will take up this taunt concerning the king of Babylon (i.e., antichrist), and you will say, "How the oppressor (i.e., antichrist) has come to an end! How the golden [city] (i.e., Babylon) has ceased to be!"
Isaiah 14:3-4

7. Heavenly Rejoicing over Babylon: Revelation 18:20 - 19:4

(20) "Rejoice over her, O heaven, even [all] the saints and the apostles and the prophets, because God has exacted from her the retribution due you!" (21) And a powerful angel lifted up something resembling a huge stone and cast it into the sea, saying, "Thus in the blink of an eye shall Babylon the great city be thrown down, and never again will there be heard in her (22) the sound of harpists or musicians or flute players or trumpets, and never again will there be found in you any of your skilled technicians, (23) and never again will there be seen in you the light of your lamps, and never again will there be heard in you the [joyous] sound of bridegroom and bride! For those who did business with you were the great men of the earth, [doing so] because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. (24) And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all those slain upon the earth." (1) After these things I heard something like the sound of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and power belong to our God, (2) for His judgments are true and just. For He has judged the great prostitute who was corrupting the earth with her prostitution, and He has exacted retribution from her hand for the blood of His servants." (3) And they spoke a second time, "Hallelujah! And her smoke is rising up forever!" (4) And the twenty four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits upon the throne, saying, "Amen! Hallelujah!"
Revelation 18:20 - 19:4

The laments for Babylon's destruction coming from the merchants of the world and based upon earthly, materialistic concerns is answered in these verses by heavenly songs of victory which put Babylon's annihilation into its proper, divine perspective: no matter what the world may think, the obliteration of Babylon is a decidedly *good* thing from the only point of view that really counts, God's point of view (for she is inherently evil: see part 3B, section II.1.c.5.e).

In the process of underlining the permanence of the chilling judgment upon Babylon, we are given here the second divine reason for her destruction. As we saw in verse three of chapter eighteen, the first divine reason concerned the corrupting influence Babylon had exercised upon the world, primarily upon unbelievers, in promoting, supporting, and in fact to a very great degree producing the system of spiritual "prostitution" exploited by antichrist. After reaffirming this first basis for her judgment in Revelation 19:2 ("For He has judged the great prostitute who

was corrupting the earth with her prostitution”), the great heavenly multitude whom John hears provide him with the second indictment which has provided grounds for her obliteration: “He has exacted retribution from her hand for the blood of His servants”. Thus, Babylon’s pivotal role in antichrist’s attempt to expunge all believers in Jesus Christ from the earth during the Great Persecution is the behavior which has sealed her fate. For not only did she support the devil and the beast in their intensified corruption of the world, but she also opposed God in the most hubristic way by making possible the near eradication of believers from the earth. The precise manner of her involvement in this regard, as was suggested in the last installment of this series, are Babylon’s commercial, political, military, technological and religious dominance, all of which will have been brought to bear in the effort of Satan and his antichrist to destroy believers worldwide (Rev.17:6; 18:20; 18:24; 19:2; cf. Rev.16:6).⁴⁴

(5) And on her forehead a name was written: “mystery Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the world”. (6) And I saw that the woman was drunk from the blood of the saints, even from the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

Revelation 17:5-6a

The voice of the refugees and fugitives from the land of Babylon [resounds], to tell in Zion (i.e., Jerusalem) of the vengeance of the Lord our God, vengeance for His temple (i.e., believers; cf. 1Cor.3:16-17; 6:19; 2Cor.6:16; Eph.2:21; 1Pet.2:4ff.).

Jeremiah 50:28

[Jeremiah] said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. Then say, ‘O Lord, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither man nor animal will live in it; it will be desolate forever.’ When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. Then say, ‘So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall.’”

Jeremiah 51:61-64a NIV

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them.” So I took the cup from the Lord’s hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it: Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn and cursing, as they are today; Pharaoh king of Egypt, his attendants, his officials and all his people, and all the foreign people there; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the Philistines (those of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the people left at Ashdod, Edom, Moab and Ammon; all the kings of Tyre and Sidon; the kings of the coastlands across the sea; Dedan, Tema, Buz and all who are in distant places; all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the foreign people who live in the desert; all the kings of Zimri, Elam and Media; and all the kings of the north, near and far,

⁴⁴ See Coming Tribulation part 4: “The Great Tribulation”, section VII.9, “The Role of Babylon”.

one after the other—all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. *And after all of them*, the king of Sheshach (i.e., Babylon) will drink it too.
Jeremiah 25:15-26 NIV

III. The Beast's Armageddon Crusade

Following the destruction of Babylon, the narrative in Revelation moves swiftly to the Tribulation's end, and the first indication we receive that the battle of Armageddon is about to take place comes later on in chapter nineteen in the description of the Rider on the white horse in verse eleven and following. But we are given no further information in this passage about the activities of the beast in assembling the armies of the world to Israel with the purpose of destroying her and opposing the return of the King. The reason for this rapid conclusion to the narrative of tribulational events is no doubt twofold: 1) from this point forward, the Messiah and His victorious return in company with His newly resurrected Bride, the Church, form the true and proper focus of all that remains to tell next in Revelation, and 2) we are already in possession of the details of antichrist's Armageddon "crusade" which is sufficiently described elsewhere in scripture. Therefore before moving on in Revelation proper (whose next descriptions in 19:5ff. deal exclusively with events on the threshold of the Second Advent, followed immediately by the Second Advent itself), it will be helpful first to pull together here the biblical testimony about the intervening events, that is, the scriptures which deal with antichrist's mustering of all of the armed forces of the world to invade and destroy Israel, and to oppose Jesus Christ upon His return.

With the north back under his control, with all restraint removed for the assembly of the kings of the east, with Babylon now out of the way, and with the forces employed in her destruction now available, the beast's mustering of the armies of the world for the assault upon Israel will begin in earnest. Throughout his rule and visible in his opposition to all truth, antichrist has continually represented the lie as the truth and evil as good. This trend will reach its apex now at the end of the Great Tribulation in the battle of Armageddon, where our returning Lord will be represented by the beast as the usurper who must be opposed at all costs (cf. 2Thes.2:4). We may expect the beast to bill this final "crusade" as being one of so-called "good" against so-called "evil" (Ezek.38-39; Rev.16:12-16; 19:19-21), casting the Jewish people in the role of the last stain which much be erased in order to gain the final victory. Moreover once Israel is destroyed, there will be no one left to deliver. Thus antichrist's gathering of the nations to Jerusalem to exterminate Israel will seem to him and his father the devil the ideal way to put the Lord "on the spot", daring Him to prevent the elimination of the Jewish state and the Jewish race. Since he is the pseudo-Messiah, it had no doubt been a sweet thing for the beast prior to this Jewish rebellion to have his military headquarters at Jerusalem, the prophesied millennial capital. For the past several years, Jerusalem was the capital of death where many were forced to come to worship antichrist on pain of execution; but Jerusalem is also the coming capital of life, where all will desire to come and appear before the true Messiah (Zech.8:23; cf. Is.2:3ff.). That coming wave of visitation will be in response to the divine millennial blessings about to be poured out upon the entire earth. At present, however, we see the earth reeling under the bowl judgments of

which Armageddon is the final travail. The unbelieving world led by antichrist is responding to these just judgments from the Lord exactly as Pharaoh had done, by attacking God's people rather than learning from their mistakes. Instead of repentance, the proper response in the face of such clear divine disapproval, the world as a whole is only too happy to join in the madness of the beast's crusade – in an attempt to fight against God Himself.

Now these are spirits of demons which produce "signs": they will go forth to the kings of the entire earth to gather them together for the war of the great day of God the Almighty.
Revelation 16:14

(1) Why are the nations forming into a mob and the peoples [of the earth] grumbling idly.
(2) The kings of the earth are assembling and its princes are gathering together – against the Lord and His Anointed One, [saying] (3) "Let us pull off Their chains, and cast Their cords from us!"
Psalm 2:1-3

The beast's response to the Jewish rebellion will be characteristically swift (cf. Dan.7:6; Rev.13:2), and yet overwhelming in spite of its speed, coming "like a flood" raging over the land of Israel (Is.8:6-8; Dan.9:26; 11:22 [in the Hebrew]).⁴⁵ Feverishly mustering the united armed forces of evil from all the remaining quarters of the earth, antichrist will cause to descend upon the true center of the world an innumerable, polyglot horde with Jerusalem as its objective. But the Lord will help her "at break of day" (Ps.46:5), and, indeed, it has been His plan all along to bring antichrist and all his forces together and cause them to founder on Zion's Rock.

(9) Proclaim this among the nations! Prepare a holy war! Rouse [all] the mighty men! Let all the men of war come near [and] come up [to Jerusalem]. (10) Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears! Let [even] the feeble man say "I [too] am a mighty man (i.e., fit for service)!" (11) Hurry and come from every direction that you may be assembled there! And Thou, O Lord, Do Thou [likewise] bring down Thy [own] warriors [there to Jerusalem]. (12) Let the nations be roused [from their places], and let them come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat. "For there I will sit in judgment over all the nations on every side". (13) Send forth the sickle for the harvest is ripe! Come down into the winepress for it is full and the vats overflow. For great is their wickedness. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of doom! For the day of the Lord

⁴⁵ Since this will be antichrist's third invasion of Israel from the north, we can anticipate that the logistical procedures and supply lines developed in the two previous conflicts with the southern alliance will greatly facilitate this third invasion and contribute to the speed with which it is conducted. It will also be remembered that a major amphibious assault on the coast of Israel was critical to the beast's success in the decisive second campaign against the south, and we certainly should not rule out the possibility of many formations being brought to Israel by the beast's extensive navy (especially in the case of those units just recently deployed against Babylon).

is near in the valley of doom. (15) The sun and moon will darken, and the stars will gather up their light. (16) Then the Lord will roar from Zion, and from Jerusalem He will let sound His voice, and the heavens and the earth will quake.
Joel 3:9-16

As we saw in our treatment of Revelation 16:12-16 above (i.e., the sixth bowl judgment with its call to Armageddon), this will be a universal proclamation to all the nations on the face of the earth, bringing every able-bodied man to do battle at Jerusalem. Overlooked universally in the translations of this passage is that the Hebrew verb in the second command of Joel 3:9 means “consecrate” rather than simply “prepare” (from the root *qdsh*, *wdq*). This will indeed be a “holy war”, the final “crusade” of Satan and his antichrist against the coming true Messiah at His own **truly** holy and righteous return. The massive nature of the mobilization can be seen from the description in verse ten above where even the implements of peace are rapidly forged into weapons of war for this final assault on the people of God, a command famously and stunningly reversed in the millennial prophesies of Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3 in a way which serves to demonstrate quite clearly the difference between the pseudo-Messiah and the genuine One about to come. From the passage above we also see that even those who would otherwise be disinclined to enter military service will be zealously enthusiastic to join in this final battle of “total war” between the forces of the devil, seen and unseen, against the camp of God in Jerusalem.

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them.” So I took the cup from the Lord's hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it: Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn and cursing, as they are today; Pharaoh king of Egypt, his attendants, his officials and all his people, and all the foreign people there; all the kings of Uz; all the kings of the Philistines (those of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the people left at Ashdod Edom, Moab and Ammon; all the kings of Tyre and Sidon; **the kings of the coastlands across the sea**; Dedan, Tema, Buz and all who are in distant places; all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the foreign people who live in the desert; all the kings of Zimri, Elam and Media; and **all the kings of the north, near and far**, one after the other – **all the kingdoms on the face of the earth**. And after all of them, the king of Sheshach (i.e., a cryptogram for Babylon) will drink it too. “Then tell them, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink, get drunk and vomit, and fall to rise no more because of the sword I will send among you.’ But if they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, tell them, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: You must drink it! See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears my Name, and will you indeed go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, **for I am calling down a sword upon all who live on the earth**, declares the Lord Almighty.’”

Jeremiah 25:15-29 NIV

While the passage from Jeremiah above has its primary application in the lead up to the Babylonian captivity, the highlighted passages show clearly enough that it was meant to have an eschatological application as well, bringing home to Jeremiah's contemporaries the horror of what was about to happen by comparing it to Armageddon (i.e., the "Day of the Lord" paradigm; see part 1 of this series, section IV.1.b). On the other hand, Ezekiel chapters 38-39 are entirely eschatological. Since these two chapters give us the most detailed look at the beast's mustering of the world's armed forces and his subsequent invasion of Israel preceding Armageddon, it is necessary at this point that we make a thorough examination of Ezekiel's description of "Gog of Magog".

Gog of Magog:

(1) And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, "Thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I am against you, Gog (i.e., antichrist), chief prince of Meshech and Tubhal. (2) And I will fetch you back, and conduct you, and bring you up from the far reaches of the north. For I will make you come to the mountains of Israel. (3) Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and make your arrows fall from your right hand'".

Ezekiel 39:1-3

In our previous discussions of Ezekiel's description of Gog of Magog (in part 3B of this series: "Antichrist", section II.1.c.1), we saw that Gog is synonymous with the beast, while Magog means "the place of Gog". That is to say, in our prophetic context Magog *is* mystery Babylon (MGG via the use of the Hebrew cryptographic technique of *athbash* stands for LBB = BBL = *Babel*).⁴⁶ It is true that the consonants are reversed in the cryptogram (i.e., a direct correspondence would require Babylon's cryptographic name to be "Gogam"). But "Magog" is a historical name (he is one of the sons of Japheth: Gen.10:2), so that the reversal is used no doubt to preserve the identification with mystery Babylon without altering the historical name and so losing that part of the analogy.⁴⁷ For it is precisely by using the historical name "Magog" that the power center of this future invader of Israel is plainly located for the reader in the far north, the historical locale of Japheth's second son.⁴⁸ Now while eschatological Babylon is, strictly

⁴⁶ "*Athbash*", is an alphabet code whereby the encoded letter stands for the same number sequence letter of the alphabet read in reverse (i.e., *taw*, the first letter read from the end of the alphabet stands for *aleph*, the first in the normal order, while *shin*, the second from the end, stands for *beth*, the second from the front, etc. - hence the name, $a=th-ba=sh$, $a=t - b=w$).

⁴⁷ Moreover, the Hebrew letter *m*- [-m], which frequently bears a locative sense in nominal formations of this sort as it does in the name "Magog", is always used as a prefix in this sense, never as a suffix.

⁴⁸ Scholarship generally assigns Magog a place ranging from the Russian steppes in the north (i.e., "Scythians" acc. to Josephus), and from Lydia-Cappadocia (in present day Turkey; cf. "Gog"/"Gyges") to Media (present day Iran; "Madai" is the next son of Japheth) in the south,

speaking, in the west, historical Babylon is in “the north” in terms of biblical geography, and, until her destruction at the end of the Tribulation, is indistinguishable from the revived Roman empire as part of antichrist’s dual base of power. Thus, for Ezekiel’s listeners, the association of “Gog”, the future invader of the land, with “Magog”, one of if not the most remote of the northern nations, not only conveys in contemporary terms a perfect picture of what will actually happen, but also allows us with the benefit of later prophetic details to take things a step further and identify “Magog” with prophetic Babylon for the reasons already delineated. Further, if we see in the root of the names “Gog/Magog” a doubling of the Hebrew word for gentile, (*goy*, *yvg*), then “Magog” will mean something like “archetypical gentile nation”. And with eschatological Babylon being, in ethnic terms, on the one hand more representative of more Japhetic nations than any other single nation, and on the other hand more polyglot in general than any other nation, the use of “Magog” to represent mystery Babylon as the homeland of the beast (he is “*chief prince*” of Magog) and the lynchpin of the dual confederation presided over by Magog (composed of the two parts, Meshech and Tubhal) makes perfect sense. There are, moreover, many indications throughout the context that show of a certainty that Ezekiel is speaking exclusively of far future events in chapters 38-39, and *specifically* of the events of Armageddon:

1) The Lord Himself repeatedly stresses His own role in assembling *all* of His enemies worldwide for this final showdown and their destruction (Ezek.38:3-4; 38:7; 38:16; 39:2), something which never happens before Armageddon (and certainly not in the two previous campaigns between antichrist and the southern alliance).

2) Gog’s confederacy indisputably includes both peoples from around the world, and clearly from the south as well as the north working in unison, so that it is clear that this is a worldwide undertaking unlike any preceding campaign in Israel, including the preceding campaigns of the Tribulation.

3) The occasion of burying the bodies of the Lord’s enemies after Armageddon in chapter 39 suggests no further satanic activity thereafter but a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity (esp. Ezek.39:25-39). In all of human history after Eden, only the Millennium fits the situation so described. Additionally, the length of time required for this cleanup (cf. especially the “seven years” of Ezek.39:9) is clearly inconsistent with the immediate arrival of New Jerusalem at the end of the Millennium (following the similarly named Gog-Magog assault on Jerusalem directed against the rule of the Messiah). On this last point, at the end of the post-millennial Gog-Magog rebellion, we are also told that “fire came down from heaven and devoured” this final set of rebels, so that there would be no bodies to bury in that case (Rev.20:9).

4) The statement at Ezekiel 39:26 that “they will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward Me when they lived in safety” must be looking back to the

with a “center of gravity” in the Caucasus mountains. See the lexicons *sub voc.* (BDB, Gesenius, and KB), as well as Keil and Delitzsch, S.R. Driver’s Genesis (London 1904), and J. Skinner’s I.C.C. Genesis (Edinburgh 1910).

contemporary and tribulational situation, not to the time of the perfect rule of Christ during the Millennium (when there will be no such “shame” or “unfaithfulness”; e.g., Jer.31:33-34). Moreover the following verse, Ezek.39:27 sets the time frame as still future: “when *I* have brought them back from the nations”, namely, the regathering of Israel by divine agency after the 2nd Advent at the conclusion of the battle of Armageddon (as distinguished from the present political situation; cf. Is.60:8ff.; Zech.8:23).

5) The great earthquake mentioned in this context is an event which precedes the 2nd Advent (i.e., around the time of the seventh bowl judgment: compare Ezek.38:19 with Rev.16:18).

6) There is only one human army described here, that of antichrist, showing that this is not one of the earlier campaigns of antichrist against the south or an earlier historical invasion, but the predicted arraying of the nations against the Lord and His Anointed at Armageddon (Ps.2).

7) The way in which the warriors of the beast go mad and kill each other in a frenzy is also consistent with other 2nd Advent-Armageddon passages (compare Ezek.38:21-22 with Zech.14:13).

8) The plague of hail at Ezekiel 38:22 is, as we have seen, also a well-known pre-cursor of the 2nd Advent-Armageddon (cf. Rev.16:21).

9) The Lord uses the destruction of Gog’s army to make Himself and His power known to the world (Ezek.38:16; 38:23; 39:6), something that only happens at its most emphatic at the 2nd Advent during the battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev.1:7; 19:11-16).

10) The bodies of the dead providing food for the birds is also a 2nd Advent-Armageddon reference (compare Ezek.39:17ff. with Rev.19:17-18).

11) The fire which is poured out upon Magog (Ezek.39:6) is in part a reference to the same event as the fiery destruction of Babylon in Revelation 17-18 (although with the phrase “even upon those of the coast-lands who live in safety”, we have an expansion of the judgment to more of the west after Armageddon; see part 6 of this series).

12) Ezekiel 39:36 speaks of the regathering of Israel following the invasion as a result of which there will be “no one to make them afraid” any longer, a clear reference to the peace and security of the Messiah’s millennial kingdom.

(2) “Son of man, set your face against Gog (i.e., antichrist) of the land of Magog (i.e., Babylon, the home kingdom of the beast) [he who is] chief prince of Meshech and Tubhal (i.e., Revived Rome). Prophesy against him (3a) and say ‘Thus says the Lord God. Behold, I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubhal.

Ezekiel 38:2-3a

Just as Ezekiel’s reference to historical Magog refers prophetically to the beast’s home country, Babylon, so his use of Meshech and Tubhal, also sons of Japheth, is likewise focused on future rather than contemporary events. The pairing here of these two ancient nations reveals to us that in addition to ruling his own “super-nation”, Babylon, antichrist also holds sway over a larger, composite empire (a.k.a., “revived Rome”), one consisting of two essential parts and named here “Meshech and Tubhal”.⁴⁹ Thus, as in the case of Magog, these names are given to Ezekiel by the Spirit in order to express future prophetic realities in geographical terms understandable to his contemporary readers. For our purposes here in examining the beast’s Armageddon campaign, we can say that the core of his invasion force will be composed of the same set of armies he used to conquer the south, that is, the armed forces of the west and the north, that is, of (now destroyed) Babylon and her allies and of the revived Rome and her allies respectively. However, since *both* Meshech and Tubhal are mentioned, we can be sure that the second part of antichrist’s revived Roman empire, the newly conquered southern alliance (i.e., the three horns out of the ten which fall before the small horn in Daniel 7:8), will also contribute her entire complement of military might (and we have also seen from Rev.16:12 that the east will contribute as well).

(3b) “And I shall bring you back [here again] (i.e., for Armageddon). (4) For I shall put my hooks in your jaw and make you come, [you] and your entire army of horses and horsemen, all of them fully arrayed [in battle gear], a vast multitude, all of them with shields and bucklers and carrying swords. (5) Persia, Cush, and Put will be with them, all with shield and helmet, (6) Gomer, and all her hordes, Beth-Togarmah (i.e., “the house of Torgarmah”) [at] the recesses of the north and all her hordes, a host of [allied] nations with you [O Gog]. (7) Make thorough preparations, you [O Gog] and all your troops who have gathered together around you, and be on your guard for them.”

Ezekiel 38:3b-7

This passage demonstrates that bringing the beast and his hordes to Jerusalem in order to destroy them utterly is unquestionably “of God”, while the image in verse four of our Lord physically impaling Gog and his armies with a hook and dragging them to the slaughter of Armageddon states in the most unequivocal terms the irresistible nature of the divine plan to defeat this final offensive of the devil and the devil’s chosen one, and to do so in an unprecedentedly decisive way. For it is the Lord who will “bring you *back*”. The Hebrew verb here (*shabhabh*, bbw) indicates quite unmistakably that Gog has been in Israel before (a reference to antichrist’s prior residence in Jerusalem). This theme of Gog being led to his destruction by the Lord in the manner of Pharaoh is later emphatically repeated in the above quoted beginning of chapter 39:1-3

⁴⁹ Please see the discussion in part 3B of this series: Antichrist and his Kingdom, section III, “The Kingdom of the Beast”. The use of Meshech and Tubhal to describe the two discrete parts of revived Rome is particularly appropriate, since these two tribes are often associated with one another not only in scripture but also in ancient secular history (cf. Gen.10:2; 1Chron.1:5; Is.66:19; Ezek.27:13; 32:26; 39:1) e.g., Herodotus (*Hist.* 3.94; 7:78) as well as Assyrian records. See Unger’s Bible Dictionary, and The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, s.v. “Meshech” and “Tubhal”.

as well where the Lord renews His pledge to “bring Gog *back*” to Israel, adding that He Himself will “*conduct* you” (i.e., the Lord’s facilitation of a rapid and complete arrival of antichrist’s forces to Jerusalem),⁵⁰ “*bring* you up from the far reaches of the north” (“up”, as always because of Jerusalem’s relative elevation; “the north” is precisely the region whence antichrist will begin the campaign) and, finally “*make* you come”. This last phrase shows us once again that in spite of the beast’s and the devil’s enthusiasm for this evil crusade, the Lord is the One who is leading them on to a complete annihilation that is already firmly determined in the plan of God, precisely as He led Pharaoh into the Red Sea only to dispose of him and his army in an equally complete and miraculous manner.

The following verses describe in vivid terms the sheer size of this expedition which will constitute the largest and most powerful force ever brought to bear against a single objective in world history (v.4 “a vast multitude”, and cf. the muster list later in the chapter). Nor should we assume based upon the excessively large numbers involved that the quality of these troops will be substandard: 1) it will be an entirely mechanized force (v.4 an “entire army of horses and horsemen”); 2) it will be an exceptionally well equipped force (v.4 “all of them fully arrayed [in battle gear]”, “all of them with shields and bucklers and carrying swords”); 3) it will be a force composed of “1A” regulars and veterans, the best each political entity has to offer (v.5 “all with shield and helmet”). And in spite of the swiftness of its mustering and the rapidity of its assembly in the theater of operations, it will not for all that be either disorganized, or unprepared, or operating without proper plans or orders. For the Lord Himself is seen here to give the command and to offer encouragement to the beast and his general staff to put forth their very best effort in this regard as well (v.7 “Make thorough preparations, you [O Gog] and all your troops who have gathered together around you”, and “be on your guard for them”). In short, this will be absolutely the largest, best equipped, best trained and prepared, most professional combat force conducting the most effective operation in world history – and that is precisely the point. Were the defenders reduced to mere human means, they would stand less than no chance before antichrist and his irresistible Blitzkrieg. But it is the Lord whom they will meet at Armageddon, and the sharp sword that proceeds out of the mouth of the glorious Messiah, the Son of Man, our Savior Jesus Christ (Rev.19:15; cf. Is.1:20; 49:2; Heb.4:12; Rev.1:16; 2:12; 2:16).

As to the nations listed in verses 3-7 above, these can be broken down into three essential groupings: 1) Persia, Cush, and Put; 2) “Gomer, and all her hordes” along with “Beth-Togarmah [at] the recesses of the north and all her hordes”, and 3) “a host of [allied] nations”. As to the first group, these nations are representative of the south and, specifically, of the three regional powers of the southern alliance now subject to the beast (i.e., three of the ten horns that form the revived Roman empire; cf. Dan.7:7; 7:20; Rev.12:3; 13:1; 17:3-16). Persia may be taken to represent Iran and the central Asian power center (Turkey to Kazakhstan). Put refers to Libya and represents North Africa. Cush, in biblical terms usually refers to Ethiopia but sometimes also to

⁵⁰ The translation “I shall thoroughly deceive you” is also possible, deriving the verb not from the otherwise unattested *shasha* (aww), but considering it a *shaphel* formation from *nasha*’ (awn), with the *nun* assimilated in a not unprecedented syncope of this rather long form.

Mesopotamia (cf. Cush, the father of Nimrod who operated in that region: Gen.10:8), and in our context probably has both meanings, referring to the arc of southern kingdoms from Ethiopia and Sudan across the Red Sea and into Arabia and Iraq. Egypt is notably missing from this description no doubt because as the head of the southern alliance she suffered especially grievously at the hands of antichrist after their defeat (cf. Ezek.30:2-26; 32:11-15).

“For I will spur on Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight one against his brother and another against his friend, a city against a city and a kingdom against a kingdom (i.e., the splintering of the triple coalition). And Egypt’s spirit will be emptied from the midst of her, for I will confound her plans, although they consult their idols and mediums and oracles and familiar spirits. And I will hand Egypt over into the hand of a cruel master (i.e., antichrist), even a stern king (i.e., antichrist; cf. Dan.8:23) [who] will rule over them, says the Lord God of hosts.”

Isaiah 19:2-4 (cf. Is.19:5-17 compared with Is.19:18-24)

In the second grouping we find only two subdivisions, Gomer and “the house of Togarmah”. That is because these two sons of Japheth represent the twin pillars of the beast’s power during the first half of the Tribulation, the west from whence he sprang (and which until only just recently was dominated by the now destroyed Babylon), and the north (that is, the first seven kingdoms of revived Rome), conquered in the early days of the Tribulation. Gomer and Togarmah, often taken to be the Cimmerians dwelling in the *terra incognita* of the northern steps and the somewhat less remote Armenians,⁵¹ thus represent from the biblical perspective the more and the less exotic quadrants of the world respectively, namely, the (in Ezekiel’s time) unknown west and the somewhat less mysterious north. With the addition of the final element in verse six, “a host of [allied] nations with you [O Gog]”, we have a reference to the last of the world’s four quadrants, the east, now brought into this final conflict by specific divine facilitation represented by the “drying up” of Euphrates to “prepare the way for the kings of the east” at Revelation 16:12 in the sixth bowl judgment, “Armageddon” (cf. Rev.16:16). In the clearest possible terms his contemporaries could fathom, Ezekiel has thus through his delineation of the muster list of antichrist demonstrated through the Spirit that this mobilization will be worldwide in its scope and massive in its implementation.

(8) “Many days from now you [and your forces] will be mustered. At the end of the years (i.e., at the end of the 6,000 years of human history just prior to Armageddon) you will come to a land restored from the sword, [to a nation] gathered out of many peoples, [you will come] against the mountains of Israel which had [previously] been [in a state] of continual devastation. (9) When you come up [against the land of Israel] you will come like a cataclysm. You will be like a [storm] cloud and cover the land, you and all your hordes and the many peoples with you.”

Ezekiel 38:8-9

⁵¹ See the references cited in note 49.

For the many reasons already delineated (i.e., the list of twelve given above), what is being described here is not the end of the Millennium, but rather that political situation as it will obtain on the eve of Armageddon. The passage is very careful *not* to say that the inhabitants of the land have been regathered “by the Lord” (the process of this prophetically necessary pre-Tribulation regathering is already far advanced in our time of course). Further, while the situation in Israel on the brink of the beast’s invasion will be one of “restoration from the sword”, nothing more is implied by these words than a breathing space from war and domination by others (and certainly not the much anticipated prosperity of the Millennium). The fact that the world in general and the government of Israel with her ally Babylon had imprudently anticipated antichrist’s demise as he disappeared into the darkness of the fifth bowl judgment will merely make the short respite all the more disappointing. For the contrast between the anticipated end to the beast’s rule and all the concomitant evils of the Great Tribulation will be jarring as the newfound peace and tranquility dissolves into the cataclysm of this advancing storm.

(10) Thus says the Lord God, “It will come to pass on that day that thoughts will rise in your heart and you will devise an evil plan. (11) For you will say, ‘I shall go up against [that] land of unfortified towns and villages. I shall attack those who are at peace, all living in [false] security, all of them inhabiting [towns and villages] without defenses (lit., “bars and doors”, i.e., city gates).’ (12) [For you shall] take plunder and take spoil and set your hand against [previously] desolate places which are [now] inhabited, and against a people [recently] gathered from the nations and now in the process of acquiring livestock and property and dwelling at the center of the world. (13) Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her nobles will say to you, ‘Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your troops to carry off silver and gold, to take [their] cattle and property, to take much loot?’”

Ezekiel 38:10-13

In no further need of the Jewish state and eager to punish them for their unfaithfulness, antichrist at the behest of his father the devil has conceived the “evil plan” of annihilating the Jewish race now heavily concentrated in this single location. As at the present time, the indications are that during the Tribulation the Jewish state has continued to rely on the strategy of counter-attack and mobile rather than static defenses. While generally a superior approach for a highly skilled armed force, against vastly numerically superior and equally skilled opponents attacking simultaneously from every direction, the lack of any significant fixed fortifications will be sorely felt, and, as the scriptures above suggest, will place the Israeli army at a considerable disadvantage. We may expect that, as news of the beast’s re-emergence and of his mustering of the world’s armies for Armageddon reaches Israel, it will occasion a frantic effort to construct makeshift forts and entrenchments throughout the land, and especially around the capital of Jerusalem. To the rest of the world, however, the imminent demise of the Jewish state will seem certain, so that the international merchant class, represented by the traders of Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish (noted trading nations of Ezekiel’s day representing from their relative geography vis-à-vis Israel the mercantile interests of the south, west, and north respectively), will be looking forward to the opportunity of trafficking in what promises to be a wholesale liquidation of all property within the borders of the Jewish state just as soon as antichrist’s mission is

accomplished. The eagerness visible in the verses above is no doubt accentuated by the fact that the seven years of tribulation have taken their toll on the world and its wealth (not to mention that their best customer, Babylon, has just recently been obliterated), but Israel, as the headquarters of the beast and his religion for the past three years has benefitted economically significantly more than any other nation, though that “benefit” has come at the extremely high cost of having to experience the presence of antichrist and his anti-God rule more directly than any other nation.

(14) “Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord God. On that day when My people are living [in false] security will you not realize it? (15) For you will come from your place, from the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding horses, a huge multitude and a vast army. (16) And I will bring you up against my people Israel like a cloud covering the earth. At the end of days (i.e., in the last days, the Tribulation: cf. Is.2:2) it will come to pass that I will bring you against my land so that the nations may know Me (i.e., understand who I am) when I show forth My holiness in their sight by [destroying] you, O Gog’.”

Ezekiel 38:14-16

Finally, it should also be pointed out here that the essential strategy of Armageddon has been developed by Satan, and that Israel is really not so much the target as she is the bait, for it is the true essence of the devil’s mad plan to force the issue in one place and at one time in a final confrontation of all the forces he can muster, human and angelic, with the Lord Himself (e.g., Ps.2:1-3; Rev.16:14). But of course the entirety of all creature effort is a laughable pittance in the face of the least expression of divine power. Just as the Lord raised up Pharaoh for the very purpose of displaying His power and proclaiming His Name (Ex.9:16; cf. Rom.9:17), so all the devil’s efforts through the mobilization of more human might than has ever been deployed in one place in world history will only serve to “show forth my holiness in their sight by [destroying] you, O Gog” (Ezek.38:16).

The Jewish Resistance:

As the class most resentful of antichrist in his portrayal of himself as “the Holy One of Israel” coupled with his breaking of the pseudo-Messianic treaty (Dan.9:27; cf. part 3B of this series, section IV, “Antichrist's Alliance with Israel”), we may expect that it will have been the religious conservatives and nationalistic zealots who took the lead in rebelling against the beast. While the first object of their attention, Jerusalem, has by now most likely come completely under their control (or nearly so: cf. Rev.11:2), we may also posit as suggested above, that, at the time of the beast’s re-emergence from the northern darkness and his call to Armageddon, there will still remain strongholds within the land of Israel whence the loyalists of the secular party and the relatively small contingents of antichrist’s armed forces still based in the land of Israel at that time will have fled for safety. The existence of these hostile strong-points throughout Israel in the face of an imminent invasion of incredibly mammoth proportions will pose a major complication for the leaders of the Jewish resistance and will greatly complicate the defense.

Indications from scripture are that instead of attempting to defend the entire land of Israel, a very difficult prospect under the best of circumstances and objectively impossible in this situation, the Jewish generals will fall back upon Jerusalem and fortify the capital with every available soldier and all available means (as was typically the case in antiquity, e.g., 586 B.C. versus the Babylonians and 70 A.D. versus the Romans). Thus it is at Jerusalem that the final battle of the Tribulation will be fought, the “Mountain of [the assembly of] Troops” otherwise known as Armageddon. This has been the Lord’s plan from the beginning, and it is He who is in truth directing things to this end (Ezek.38:16).

Something to keep in mind as we examine the passages which relate the heroic but seemingly futile Jewish resistance to antichrist’s invasion is that these defenders however noble and however courageous share a common characteristic which has brought them to this pass: they all rejected the ministry of Moses and Elijah during the Tribulation’s first half. Had they accepted the testimony of these two great prophets and the ministry of the 144,000 martyrs, they would presently find themselves safely ensconced in the wilderness far east of Jerusalem, riding out the storms of the Great Tribulation and this latest catastrophe in the embrace of God’s protection, waiting for the return of the King when they, in company with all believers still alive and all who have by then passed on to be with the Lord, would have been resurrected on that glorious day of victory at the 2nd Advent of Jesus Christ. Many if not most of these men and women who resist the beast’s assault will convert when they see the sign of the Son of Man and witness His return with their own eyes (Matt.24:30; cf. Zech.12:10; Rev.1:7), but their reluctance to put their faith in Jesus before His actual return will mean that they will have to wait for their own time of resurrection as the double portion of Christ’s victory prize, the resurrection of the Friends of the Bride who will take on immortality at the end of His millennial kingdom (1Cor.15:24). Nevertheless, there is indeed a distinction to be made on the one hand between these courageous, conservative defenders whose hearts have been vexed in all of antichrist’s doings, who come in for scriptural praise in their conduct of the defense, and who apparently *do* convert upon our Lord’s return, and on the other hand the secular compromisers who embraced the beast, no doubt accepting his mark. This distinction is also born out in the prophetic passages which describe honorable fighting by the former group while other scriptures describe the low state of affairs in Israel on the threshold of this invasion. Since the Tribulation is a time of judgment, the Lord is using this invasion also as a final bit of punctuation to demonstrate that compromise with evil whether to a small or great degree (i.e., failure to choose for the good on the one hand and wholehearted choosing of evil on the part of the latter) both invite divine judgment.

(1) Blow a trumpet in Zion, and raise the alarm on my holy mountain. All the inhabitants of the earth are distressed, because *the Day of the Lord* is coming, because it is near at hand. (2) A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and deep gloom. An army great and mighty is [coming], spreading itself out over your mountains like the dawn. There has never been anything like it since the beginning of time and never will be again in latter times from generation to generation. (3) Fire devours in front of them, and behind them flames are set ablaze. In front of them the land is like the garden of Eden, but behind them is a desolate desert and nothing escapes them. (4) Their appearance is like that of horses, and they race forward just like mounted cavalry. (5) Their clatter on the

mountains is like that of chariots, like the sound of fire devouring chaff, like a mighty army arraying itself for battle. (6) Before them the nations writhe in anguish and every face turns pale. (7) They rush on like mighty men. Like men of war they storm the wall. They all keep their ranks and all march straight ahead. (8) They do not crowd each other. Each maintains his file. They throw themselves at the defenses. They do not falter. (9) They charge into the city. They rush the wall. They go up into the houses. They enter into the windows like a thief. (10) The earth trembles before them and the heavens quake. The sun and the moon grow dark and the stars contract their light. (11) Then the Lord will sound forth with His voice before **His** host, for **His** army is [also] very large, for [the forces] who obey **His** word are [also] numerous. For **the Day of the Lord** is great and extremely awesome. Who can endure it?

Joel 2:1-11

Comment: The passage above is a very clear example of the sort of dual application of prophetic scripture we have been discussing since the beginning of this series. Through the use of the “Day of the Lord paradigm”, Joel is very clearly speaking both about the invasion of locusts during his own day (cf. Joel 1:2-4), while at the same time illustrating that invasion through comparison to the beast’s invasion for Armageddon. By terming the locust “a nation” in chapter one verse six, Joel has prepared his readers for this more expansive comparison in chapter two wherein the invasion of locusts is deliberately compared to the invasion of the beast’s army prior to Armageddon, an event which ends in the “Day of the Lord” proper when Christ returns and destroys the literal armies of antichrist. The comparison is rendered unmistakable when Joel actually describes this “locust” invasion as directly preceding “the Day of the Lord” (framing the passage with that description in both verse one and verse eleven). Through this common prophetic and Holy Spirit inspired device, not only are Joel’s contemporaries given a helpful point of comparison for their suffering in judgment, but we too are blessed in being given a precisely parallel representation of the beast’s invasion where the speed, shock, and irresistible nature of antichrist’s offensive are brought home in a very graphic way. The eschatological significance not only of this and other passages but also of the situation generally cannot have been lost on the Jewish rebels who are led by religious though non-believing conservatives. It is safe to say that as in the case of other such Jewish rebellions in the past, they are staking their survival on divine intervention, and, specifically, on the return of the Messiah. It is thus more than a little ironic that these religious conservatives will in truth have correctly divined the signs of the times and the prophetic situation, but will have missed the main point of this entire exercise (i.e., the need for faith in Christ), stumbling over the cross of Messiah in order to embrace His crown. But before this campaign is at an end, the futility and pointlessness of all human endeavor apart from accepting the merciful provision of God in the Person of Jesus will be made evident.

(6) “Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, (7) therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the River — the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks (8) and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the

breadth of your land, ***O Immanuel!***” (9) Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered! Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Prepare for battle, and be shattered! (10) Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for ***God is with us.***

Isaiah 8:6-10 NIV

Comment: The word “Shiloah” means “[the] One sent” and is reference to the true Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn.3:16; 3:34; Jn.17:1-5; 17:18; 17:20-22; Rom.8:3; Gal.4:4-6; Heb.3:1; 1Jn.4:9-10; cf. Gen.49:10; Is.8:6; Zech.2:9; 2:11; 4:9; 6:15), and the water is a reference to the truth of the gospel that brings rest and salvation (Jn.3:5; 1Cor.10:4; Rev.7:17; 21:6; 22:1; 22:17). Isaiah’s contemporaries, like the religious conservatives of the brink of Armageddon, were relying on human agency rather than the divine help which only comes to those who are seeking God in the correct way – through His Son Jesus Christ. As a result, the “hired razor from beyond the Euphrates” (Is.7:20) would be employed to destroy the idolatrous northern kingdom and chastise the sinful southern kingdom, not entirely annihilating the latter, but, as the passage above says, sweeping through the land like a flood that reaches all the way up to the neck (i.e., stops only just short of utter devastation). It will be recalled that the Lord did indeed deliver the kingdom of Judah on this occasion and in miraculous fashion as the Angel of the Lord (an appearance of Christ in “Christophany”) slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers encamped before Jerusalem (Is.37:36).⁵² Thus we see many parallels in the previous historic situation to the one presently under discussion wherein Immanuel, “God ***with*** us” is indeed on the point of returning to rule the world. Just as the northern kingdom was swept away at that time, so on this occasion only Jerusalem and its environs will prove able to provide anything more than token resistance in the face of antichrist’s assault, and just as the Lord made a point of delivering Judah in an unanticipated and miraculous way only after she had been thoroughly chastened and only after all human means had utterly failed, so our Lord will return in glory to extirpate the beast’s hordes only after the resistance of the rebellion has been broken (cf. Dan.12:7). The Messianic war cry of the rebels, “God is with us!”, that is “*Immanuel*”, will prove to be true indeed, but not for the reasons they suppose, nor will their deliverance come at a time or in the manner they hope. They will first have to experience the shattering of their might, and then will be revealed the sign of “the Son of Man” emblazoned in the heavens for all to see: the ***Cross*** of Jesus Christ (Matt.24:30; cf. Zech.12:10; Rev.1:7).

(9) And He said to me, “Go and say to this people, ‘Hear well, but do not comprehend. See well, but do not understand’. (10) Harden the heart of this people, make their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, so that they may not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their hearts, nor repent and be healed”. (11) Then I said, “Until when, Lord?” And He replied, “Until their cities are devastated without anyone dwelling [there] and their houses [are empty] without any inhabitants, and their land is devastated

⁵² For the doctrine of Christophany, see Bible Basics part 1: Theology, section II.C.3, “Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament”.

with appalling destruction. (12) And [until] the Lord removes the inhabitants far away so that the desolation is great in the midst of the land [of Israel].
Isaiah 6:9-12

Comment: This passage and many others firmly connect the resistance of the inhabitants of the land of Israel to this final scourging judgment at antichrist's hand, so that whether the recipients are secular confederates and servants of the beast or conservative religious Jews who have continued to resist the reality of the true Messiah Jesus Christ, the essential reason for the devastating nature of the beast's invasion will be precisely on account of their rejection of God's will for them (see also especially Is.3:1 - 4:1; 5:8-30; 17:4-14, 33:7-9, 51:17-20; 64:9-12, prophetic descriptions of the dire state of affairs in Israel at this time and the underlying reason for it).⁵³

(5) "Announce in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem and say: 'Sound the trumpet throughout the land!' Cry aloud and say: 'Gather together! **Let us flee to the fortified cities!**' (6) Raise the signal to go to Zion! Flee for safety without delay! For I am bringing disaster from the north, even terrible destruction." (7) **A lion** has come out of his lair (i.e., the beast); **a destroyer of nations** has set out (i.e., antichrist). He has left his place to lay waste your land. Your towns will lie in ruins without inhabitant.
Jeremiah 4:5-7 NIV

(11) At that time this people and Jerusalem will be told, "A scorching wind from the barren heights in the desert blows toward my people, but not to winnow or cleanse; (12) a wind too strong for that comes from me. Now I pronounce **my judgments** against them." (13) Look! He advances like the clouds, his chariots come like a whirlwind, his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us! We are ruined!
Jeremiah 4:11-13 NIV

(15) A voice is announcing from Dan, proclaiming disaster from the hills of Ephraim. (16) "Tell this to the nations, proclaim it to Jerusalem: 'A besieging army is coming from a distant land, raising a war cry against the cities of Judah. (17) They surround her like men guarding a field, because she has rebelled against me,'" declares the Lord.
Jeremiah 4:15-17 NIV

(29) At the sound of horsemen and archers every town takes to flight. Some go into the thickets; some climb up among the rocks. All the towns are deserted; no one lives in them.
Jeremiah 4:29 NIV

⁵³ The use of this parallel reference in the "Day of the Lord paradigm" is particularly prevalent in Isaiah precisely because Isaiah was imploring Judah to avoid following the coming pattern of rejection of the Lord which has led in the case we are studying here to this judgment and destruction.

Comment: These excerpts from Jeremiah chapter four speak about the contemporary situation of Nebuchadnezzar's imminent invasion of Israel during the 6th century B.C., but also have the same prophetic application we have been noticing throughout.⁵⁴ The attribution of the attack to "a lion" and "a destroyer of nations" is a clear reference to the beast, and the message that the judgment about to be leveled at his hands has a divine origin is impossible to overlook. The swiftness of the assault and stunning nature of the devastation it will wreak are also very clear from the quotes above and from the rest of Jeremiah chapter four as well. Finally, these passages also illustrate the last ditch strategy of the rebels, namely, retreat to the most inaccessible and highly fortified areas within the land of Israel, and, preeminently, to Jerusalem, the one place most worth fighting for to the end, and the one place where divine deliverance may best be expected.

The rapid narrowing in of the campaign to the network of valleys surrounding Jerusalem and leading down to the coast is especially obvious in Isaiah chapter 22 where the frantic efforts to fortify the capital in the face of the northern invasion are recounted.

(1) An oracle concerning the Valley of Vision: What troubles you now, that you have all gone up on the roofs, (2) O town full of commotion, O city of tumult and revelry? Your slain were not killed by the sword, nor did they die in battle. (3) All your leaders have fled together; they have been captured without using the bow. All you who were caught were taken prisoner together, having fled while the enemy was still far away. (4) Therefore I said, "Turn away from me; let me weep bitterly. Do not try to console me over the destruction of my people." (5) The Lord, the Lord Almighty, has a day of tumult and trampling and terror in the Valley of Vision, a day of battering down walls and of crying out to the mountains. (6) Elam takes up the quiver, with her charioteers and horses; Kir uncovers the shield. (7) Your choicest valleys are full of chariots, and horsemen are posted at the city gates; (8) the defenses of Judah are stripped away. And you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest; (9) you saw that the City of David had many breaches in its defenses; you stored up water in the Lower Pool. (10) You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. (11) You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago.
Isaiah 22:1-11 NIV

All of the factors discussed above are evident here, the rapidity of the oncoming disaster, the early shift of focus for the defense exclusively to Jerusalem, and the stop-gap measures taken to ward off the coming assault. And even in the face of the overwhelming force swiftly arrayed in

⁵⁴ Indeed, as Dr. Charles Feinberg pointed out, many of the details here do not actually fit with the Babylonian invasion of Jeremiah's day and yet that invasion must be the main historical reference: Jeremiah (Grand Rapids 1982) 50. The answer to the apparent discrepancy is again the incorporation of details referring to the future invasion of antichrist as a chilling point of comparison for Jeremiah's contemporary audience.

battle line before the city and the irresistible nature of their approach, still we see a stubborn refusal to understand that this judgment is from the Lord and is the result of the rejection of His true Messiah.⁵⁵

The Siege Begins:

But now *marshal your [own] troops* O city of troops [marshaled against you]. For *they have laid siege to us*.

Micah 5:1a

Then [upon his return to Israel] he (i.e., antichrist) will pitch the tents of his [royal] pavilion *between the seas* (i.e., the Mediterranean and the Dead seas) *near the mountain of the beauty of holiness* (i.e., the temple mount in Jerusalem). But [in spite of this (i.e., his hopes for success in the battle of Armageddon)] he will come to his end, and no one will aid him [then]. Daniel 11:45

(1) Woe to you, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped (i.e., Jerusalem)! Add year to year, let your festivals run their course, (2) but *I will besiege Ariel* so that there will be mourning and lamentation, and she will become to Me like an “Ariel” (lit., “God’s [sacrificial] altar”). (3) For *I will beleaguer you* round about with palisades, and *surround you with siege works*. (4) You will be brought low and speak from the ground, and from the dust your speech will be humbled. Your voice will come ghost-like from the earth, and your speech will come muttering from the dust. (5) But the multitude of your enemies will become like pulverized powder, even like chaff sweeping away [on the wind] that multitude of ruthless [enemies]. And it will come to pass in an instant that (6) you will experience visitation from the Lord of Hosts [Himself], with thunder and quaking [of the earth] and a loud voice, with tempest and whirlwind and devouring flames of fire. (7) And the hordes of the nations mustering against Ariel will become like [just] a dream in the visions of the night, even all those who camp against her and her fortress and besiege her. (8) And it will be as when a hungry man dreams he is eating, but when he awakes his appetite remains unfulfilled, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking, but when he awakes his thirst remains. This is how it will be for the multitude of all the nations who are going to marshal themselves against Mount Zion.

Isaiah 29:1-8

⁵⁵ We may also see in the rejection of Shebna for Eliakim (Is.22:20-25) the change of leadership which accompanied the coup in the absence of antichrist. For although Eliakim is clearly superior to the disgraceful Shebna, nevertheless he too will fall from the weight of the pressures unleashed against Israel because the beast’s advance cannot be checked through human efforts.

These passages, while presaging the beast's defeat in the soon to ensue battle of Armageddon, show antichrist hemming in the resistance in preparation for a grand assault on Jerusalem. At His return, our Lord will breathe courage and might into the defense (Is.28:5-6; Ob.1:18; Mic.4:11-13; 5:5-9; Zech.9:13-16; 10:3-7). At this moment, however, as the dire nature of their predicament sinks in, the defenders have begun to realize the complete hopelessness of their cause absent a miraculous divine intervention, a situation producing mixed emotions and pleas for help amidst expressions of despair:

The harvest is over, the summer has past (i.e., time-frame nearing the Day of Atonement), but [still] we have not been delivered!
Jeremiah 8:20

(9) Proclaim this among the nations! Prepare a holy war! Rouse [all] the mighty men! Let all the men of war come near [and] come up [to Jerusalem]. (10) Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears! Let [even] the feeble man say "I [too] am a mighty man (i.e., fit for service)!" (11) Hurry and come from every direction that you may be assembled there! ***And Thou, O Lord, Do Thou [likewise] bring down Thy [own] warriors [there to Jerusalem].***
Joel 3:9-11

(1) You have rejected us, O God, and burst forth upon us; you have been angry – now restore us! (2) You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its fractures, for it is quaking. (3) You have shown your people desperate times; you have given us wine that makes us stagger. (4) But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow. Selah (5) Save us and help us with your right hand, that those you love may be delivered. (6) God has spoken from his sanctuary: "In triumph I will parcel out Shechem and measure off the Valley of Succoth. (7) Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter. (8) Moab is my washbasin, upon Edom I toss my sandal; over Philistia I shout in triumph." (9) Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom? (10) Is it not you, O God, you who have rejected us and no longer go out with our armies? (11) Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless. (12) With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies.
Psalm 60:1-12 NIV

(5) For this One (i.e., the Messiah) will be our peace. When Ashur (i.e., a type of antichrist's world coalition) comes against our land, and when he tramples upon our fortifications, we will appoint seven generals (lit., "shepherds"; cf.) against him, even eight rulers of men (i.e., the seven and the supreme civil commander represented by Shebna in Is.22:20-25). (6) And Ashur will ravage the land with the sword, even [the people of] Nimrod right up to the very entrances [to Jerusalem].
Micah 5:5-6a

For I will assemble all the nations to Jerusalem for war, and the city will be captured, and its houses will be plundered, and its women will be ravished, and half the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.

Zechariah 14:2

(6) And I asked the man (i.e., angel) clothed in linen [suspended] above the waters of the Euphrates how long [it would be] until the fulfillment of these marvelous things. (7) And I heard the man (i.e., angel) clothed in linen [suspended] above the waters of the Euphrates; for he lifted his hand and his left hand to heaven and swore by the One who lives forever that it would be a time, times, and a half (i.e., the three and a half years of the Great Tribulation), and that when [they] (i.e., the beast's forces) had finished shattering the power of the holy people, all these things would come to an end.

Daniel 12:7

As the last two passages in particular demonstrate, all resistance will prove vain, for it has not been of God. The Lord will allow the “power of the holy people” to be shattered, and Jerusalem to be captured and on the point of going completely into exile – and then He will arise to deliver His people.

IV. Signs of the Second Advent: Revelation 19:5

Then a voice came forth from heaven saying, “Praise our God, all His servants who fear Him, the small and the great [alike]!”.

Revelation 19:5

This voice comes to John directly after the lengthy section dealing with the judgment on Babylon and immediately before the invitation to the “wedding of the Lamb”, that is, the resurrection of the Church which takes place immediately before and contemporaneously with our Lord's return to earth (see section V directly following). Thus, the praise solicited here from all who serve and fear God, whether great in the kingdom to come or saved by the “skin of their teeth”, both looks backward in appreciation of our Lord's destruction of the “hammer of the whole earth” (Jer.50:23) with which the beast smote the nations and through which he persecuted the Church, and at the same time looks forward to the impending resurrection of the Bride of Christ, including those who have been recently martyred and those still alive at the point of our Lord Jesus' return.

But while for believers in heaven above and on earth below there is call for nothing but praise, joy, and confidence in anticipation of the reality of the light of the Son of God about to overwhelm the darkness of the past seven years, for those who have followed the beast, there will be, conversely, a complete reversal of all their expectations, coming right at the point of the defeat of the final resistance in Jerusalem, the last place on earth where any defiance to antichrist's rule still remains (cf. 2Pet.3:1-13).

When [people] are saying "Peace!" and "Safety!", at that precise time destruction will fall swiftly upon them, just like labor pains on a pregnant woman.

1st Thessalonians 5:3

No one, it is true, will know the precise date of that great Day or the precise hour when the 2nd Advent will begin, but the situation as related above is itself a “sign”, a historical record given in advance for the precise purpose of encouraging all who look to the Lord for their deliverance.

“And there will be signs in the sun and the moon and the stars, and on the earth there will be [great] distress among the nations [who will be greatly] bewildered by the roaring of the sea and [its massive] waves, [and] men will lose heart out of fear and expectation of what is about to come upon the inhabited world. For the luminaries of the heavens will be [powerfully] shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and much glory. When these things *begin* to happen (i.e., the entire general situation of the end in concert at the very end with the celestial and earthly phenomena related above), stand up and raise up your heads, because your redemption is near.” Then He told them a parable. “**Look at the fig tree and all its leaves.** When they have already come out [like this], you can see for yourselves by examining it that summer is near. So also when you see that all things have come to pass, know that the Kingdom of God is near.”

Luke 21:25-31

Since our Lord Jesus tells us here personally to “hold our heads up” when we see such clear signs of His imminent return occurring (Lk.21:28-31; cf. Matt.24:32-36; Mk.13:28-32; 1Thes.1:10), our attitude on the threshold of that Day should be one of complete faith in the ultimate deliverance that is in Jesus Christ and even joy at the prospect of seeing Him soon face to face at last, no matter if the world around us seems to be both figuratively and literally falling apart.

(1) God is our refuge and strength. [He is] our help in [times of] tribulation, [and] very quick to be found. (2) Therefore we shall not fear when the earth totters, when the mountains quake in the heart of the seas, (3) [when] its waters roar and foam, when the mountains shake on account of its swells.

Psalms 46:1-2

But it is only during the last hours before our Lord’s return to earth that the final indisputable signs of His Second Advent will occur, namely, the supernatural darkness of that unique day, along with the cataclysmic heavenly and earthly events which accompany it (cf. Lk.21:25-31).

(6) Howl, for the Day of the Lord is near, all destroying from the Almighty. (7) Therefore will every hand hang slack and every human heart melt, and they will be dismayed. (8) Convulsions and pain will seize them, and they will writhe like a woman about to give birth. They will look at each other in astonishment, their faces ablaze. (9) Behold, the Day of the Lord is coming, a mighty day of anger and intense wrath, to make the earth desolate and remove her sinners from upon her. (10) **For the stars of heaven and the**

constellations will not flash forth their light. The sun will grow dark on its course and the moon will not pour out its light. (11) Then will I punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. I will bring an end to the arrogance of the proud and bring down the haughtiness of the ruthless. (12) I will make men more rare than gold, and mankind than the choice bullion of Ophir. (13) Therefore ***I will shake the heavens, and the earth will quake from its place*** on account of the anger of the Lord and on the day of His fierce wrath.

Isaiah 13:6-13

(6) This is what the Lord Almighty says: “In a little while ***I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.*** (7) I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,” says the Lord Almighty.

Haggai 2:6-7 NIV (cf. Hag.2:21-22)

This combination of supernatural darkness coupled with celestial and terrestrial upheaval has its parallels in the other two major divine judgments on the world, God’s blacking out of the universe in response to Satan’s rebellion before the dawn of human history, and the future destruction of the present heavens and earth at the point of their replacement by the new heavens and new earth, the eternal state in which only righteousness will dwell (i.e., “phase one” and “phase three judgment” respectively with the Second Advent judgments which we are studying here constituting the “phase two” judgment of the overall plan of God).⁵⁶ We also find a very clear parallel to these occurrences in the events accompanying the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, the central pivot of the plan of God and focal point of all history, human and angelic alike. At noon on the day our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified (cf. Amos 8:9, also at noon), a similar supernatural darkness covered the land (Lk.23:45 actually describes it as an “eclipse of the sun” in the Greek text). Then, three hours later in the middle of the afternoon, our sins propitiated and His work complete, our Savior expelled His human spirit (Matt.27:50; Mk.15:37; Lk.23:46; Jn.19:30). Our Lord’s physical death was immediately accompanied by the supernatural splitting of the temple’s inner veil which shielded the holy of holies (Matt.27:51; Mk.15:38; Lk.23:45), an event which to be sure symbolizes the opening of the way into heaven for all who believe in Jesus Christ (Heb.6:19; 9:3; 10:20). However, as the inner curtain could not be seen apart from a similar splitting (or knocking down) of the outer veil, an additional part of the symbolism at work here is the representation of the disruption of the heavens and the heavenly luminaries that each phase of divine judgment includes (i.e., the outer veil represents the heavens proper or “second heaven”, while the inner veil represents the way into the very throne room of God, the “third heaven”).⁵⁷ The same parallelism may also be seen in the contemporaneous earthquake

⁵⁶ For a synopsis of the three phases of God’s plan in judgment, restoration and replacement, see The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: “Judgment, Restoration and Replacement”, section IV, “Things to Come: Judgment, Restoration and Replacement Phases II and III”.

⁵⁷ See part 2B of this series in section I, “The Earthly Tabernacle and Temple as a Type of the Heavenly Temple”.

(Matt.27:51), followed directly by a resuscitation of departed believers (Matt.27:52-53), an event which symbolizes the restoration to life seen in the six Genesis days most notably in the creation of mankind, the resurrection about to take place at Christ's return, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth with the concomitant final phase of the resurrection, all dependent upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ at the "conjunction of the ages" (Heb.9:26). Finally, just as there is recognition on the part of saved and unsaved alike at the conclusion of each of these groups of signs and events in all three phases (the fallen and elect angels at the point of re-creation: Job 38:7; the mourning of Israel at Christ's return: see section VI below; and the full recognition of all at the point eternity begins: cf. 1Cor.13:12; Rev.20:11-15), we have at the time of the crucifixion the centurion's remark: "Truly, this man was the Son of God!" (Mk.15:39; cf. Matt.27:54; Lk.23:47), accompanied by the laments of all (Lk.23:48). Thus in the account of our Lord's death on the cross, we see a series of precise parallels to all three judgment phases in God's plan, and to the signs immediately preceding His Second Advent in particular, seismic disruption on the earth below, catastrophic turmoil in the heavens above, and all enshrouded in a supernatural darkness (cf. Is.2:10; 2:19-21; 5:30; 24:1-6; Jer.4:23; 25:32; 30:7; Ezek.38:18-19; Hos.10:8; Amos 5:18-20; 8:9 [at noon]; Mal.3:2; Matt.24:7; Mk.13:8; Lk.21:11; Heb.12:26; 2Pet.3:7-13; cf. Ezek.32:7):

(17) Terror and pit and snare [have come] upon you, you who dwell on the earth! And it shall be that he who flees from the sound of the terror shall fall into the pit, and he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare. (18) For the sluice-gates on high have been opened, and the foundations of the earth quake. (19) The earth is broken in pieces. The earth is split asunder. (20) The earth totters violently. The earth staggers wildly like a drunken man and sways like a shanty. For its transgression weighs heavily upon it. So will it fall, and not rise up again.

Isaiah 24:17-20

You will experience visitation (i.e., the judgment of Armageddon) from the Lord of Hosts [Himself], with thunder and quaking [of the earth] and a loud voice, with tempest and whirlwind and devouring flames of fire.

Isaiah 29:6

(2) The Lord is angry with the nations; His wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, He will give them over to slaughter. (3) Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood.

(4) *All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.*

Isaiah 34:2-4 NIV

(1) Blow a trumpet in Zion, and raise the alarm on My holy mountain. All the inhabitants of the earth are distressed, because the Day of the Lord is coming, because it is near at hand. (2) A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and deep gloom.

Joel 2:1-2a

(30) For I will display wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. (31) The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the Day of the Lord, that great and terrible [day]. (32) And it will come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

Joel 2:30-32

(12) Let the nations be roused [from their places], and let them come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat (i.e., the valley of “the Lord will judge”). For there I will sit in judgment over all the nations on every side. (13) Send forth the sickle for the harvest is ripe! Come down into the winepress for it is full and the vats overflow. For great is their wickedness. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of doom! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of doom. (15) ***The sun and moon will darken, and the stars will gather up their light.*** (16) Then the Lord will roar from ***Zion***, and from ***Jerusalem*** He will let sound His voice, and the heavens and ***the earth will quake.***

Joel 3:12-16

(18) Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. (19) It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. (20) Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light – pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

Amos 5:18-20 NIV

(14) The great Day of the Lord is near, very near and coming quickly. The sound of the Day of the Lord will be one of warriors roaring bitterly. (15) That day will be ***a day of blackness, a day of constraint and pressure, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and deep gloom,*** (16) a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the high corner-towers. (17) For I shall bring distress upon mankind, and they will walk about like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord. And their blood will be poured out like dust, and their innards like excrement. (18) Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the anger of the Lord. And all the earth will be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. For He will bring all the inhabitants of the earth to a complete, yes, a terrifying end.

Zephaniah 1:14-18

And I saw when He (i.e., the Lamb) opened the sixth seal, a great earthquake occurred, and the sun became black like hairy sackcloth, and the moon became entirely like blood [in appearance], and the stars of heaven fell to the earth like a fig tree casting its fruit when shaken by a strong wind, and the heaven retreated like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and hill was moved from its place. And all the kings of the earth and

the prominent men and the generals and the wealthy and the powerful and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and the rocks of the mountains. And [thus] they say to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand [before them]?"

Revelation 6:12-17

Thus the last day of the Tribulation which is also the beginning of the Day of the Lord proper, the day of Jesus' return, will be a unique day, a day which begins with darkness, but which ends with light – precisely as in the case of the first Genesis day of re-creation.⁵⁸ This supernatural darkness which gives way to equally miraculous light is thus not only *the* unmistakable sign of the 2nd Advent, but a powerful metaphor for the return of God's rule on earth in the person of the Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as the darkness of the world now become complete gives way to the light of Him who is the Light of the world, the bright Morning Star (2Pet.1:19; Rev.2:28; 22:16).

The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the Lord binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.

Isaiah 30:26 NIV

For behold, *the darkness* – it will cover the earth, even a deep gloom its peoples. ***But the Lord will rise over you, and His glory will appear above you.***

Isaiah 60:2

(6) For it will come to pass that ***on that day there will be no light.*** [The light of the heavenly bodies will be withheld (lit., "curdled").] (7) For it will be a unique day, one which is known [only] to the Lord, neither day nor night, and it will come to pass at evening time that ***there will be light.***

Zechariah 14:6-7

For in His day, the Son of Man will be just as lightning which, when it flashes, lights up the earth from one horizon to the other.

Luke 17:24

V. The Resurrection of the Lamb's Bride: Revelation 19:6-10

(6) And I heard something like the sound of a great crowd, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of powerful peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah (i.e., "praise the

⁵⁸ Cf. also the parallels of light separated from darkness in the deliverance of the Exodus (Ex.14:19-20; cf. Ex.10:21-22), and the unique day of Gibeon as Joshua, a type of Christ, leads Israel into the land of promise (Josh.10:12-13).

Lord”)! For God our Lord the Almighty has begun His kingly reign! (7) Let us rejoice and be jubilant, and let us give glory to Him, because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His Bride (lit., “wife”; cf. Rev.21:9) has prepared herself.⁵⁹ (8) And it has been given her to wear a pure, resplendent [gown] of the finest material (now this fine material represents the righteous acts of His holy ones [believers]).” (9) And [the angel] said to me, “Write this down: Happy are those who have been called to the [wedding] supper of the Lamb! These [words] of mine are the true words of God”. (10) And I fell before his feet to worship him. And he said to me, “See that you don’t [do that]! I am a fellow servant of you and of your brothers who hold [fast] the testimony about Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony about Jesus is the essence (lit., “spirit”) of [all divine] prophecy”. Revelation 19:6-10

No doubt because the subject of the Messiah’s glorious return and the resurrection of “those who are His at His coming” is so well-known from other scriptures, John is given to describe here only the joy in heaven as Jesus is about to return and be met by His newly resurrected Church.⁶⁰ While we shall take some time here to discuss the resurrection generally including the living transformation of believers still alive on earth at this time, it is important to realize the heavenly perspective given here is really the *right* perspective. From God’s point of view, our resurrection is a reality already complete, and Jesus has already taken possession of His kingdom in effect. Who can therefore help at this point but shout “Hallelujah”? For all prophecy of scripture has anticipated these coming events (e.g., the Psalms of victory which celebrate the Messiah’s coronation, esp. Ps.93-100; cf. Ps.68). Nothing now can stop the consummation of Christ’s coming victory, of which victory we form a crucial part as the Bride He won at the cross and whom He will formally claim on that blessed day. It behooves us to remember all this when the going gets particularly rough during the Tribulation’s darkest days.

(25) “And there will be signs in the sun and the moon and the stars, and on the earth there will be [great] distress among the nations [who will be greatly] bewildered by the roaring of the sea and [its massive] waves, (26) [and] men will lose heart out of fear and expectation of what is about to come upon the inhabited world. For the luminaries of the heavens will be [powerfully] shaken. (27) And then they will see the Son of Man coming in [command of] a cloud [of followers] with power and much glory. (28) When these things begin to happen, stand up and raise up your heads, because *your redemption* (i.e., your “resurrection”; cf. Rom.8:23; 1Thes.1:10) is near.” (29) Then He told them a

⁵⁹ See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: “Judgment, Restoration and Replacement”, section III.8.b.iv, “The Bride”.

⁶⁰ In chapter 20:4-6 we do see the Church, but already resurrected at that point. The verb translated “they came to life” in verse four does refer to this moment of Christ’s 2nd Advent and the resurrection of the Church we are covering here, but does so as a “flash-back” to the point of time we are presently considering (for, clearly, the Church is resurrected before we actually take our seats on our thrones of judgment).

parable. “Look at the fig tree and all its leaves. (30) When they have already come out [like this], you can see for yourselves by examining it that summer is near. (31) So also when you see that all things have come to pass, know that the Kingdom of God is near.”
Luke 21:25-31

From the earthly perspective, prior to the events which we see covered in the remaining verses of Revelation chapter 19 and treated in section VII below, namely, Christ’s Second Advent and the battle of Armageddon where our Lord rapidly dispatches all of His foes, two other important events occur which need to be described here. The first of these is the repentance of many in Israel who now understand upon seeing the Messiah’s glorious return that Jesus is the true object of faith (and we shall address this event in the immediately following section VI). The other is the resurrection of the now completed Church, an event which is the earthly counterpart of the joy in heaven over the wedding of the Lamb to His Bride in verses six through nine of Revelation nineteen, and one which accompanies the re-illumination of the supernaturally darkened earth with the brilliance of the Messiah’s coming.

(29) Immediately following the tribulation of those days, the sun will grow dark and the moon will not give out its light, and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (30) And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and will see the Son of Man coming in command of the clouds of heaven (i.e., the heavenly hosts) with power and much glory. (31) And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet, and He will gather together His elect from the four winds from one end of the heavens to the other (i.e., this is not to “help” us but to marshal us – we are already flying to meet those just resurrected). (32) Learn this parable from the fig tree. When its branches become supple and its leaves sprout, you recognize that the summer is close. (33) In the very same way when you behold all these things (i.e., the events of Matt.24:1-31), recognize that [My return] is right at the door.

Matthew 24:29-33 (Mk.13:24-27)

Just as dawn is preceded by the darkest part of the night, so it will be at the end of the present age when our victorious Lord returns and turns our darkness into light (cf. Num.24:17; Is.9:2; 60:1; 60:19; Matt.2:2; 2:9-10; Jn.1:4-5; 8:12; 2Pet.1:19; Rev.2:28; 21:23; 22:16). The wonder of the return of that One truly New Person, our resurrected Lord, will seem all the more wonderful in contrast to the pain of the Tribulation that precedes it. And the brilliance of the glory of His return will seem all the more brilliant in contrast to the darkness of the supernatural night that precedes it. This will be all the more so true for His Bride, the Church, of which we who believe are all a part. For on that glorious day of days, those of us who are still “in the body” will be resurrected while we yet live, and lifted up in our new bodies to join the Lord at His return in company with all who have gone before us.

As Paul tells us in 1st Corinthians, the resurrection takes place in three echelons: 1) our Lord Jesus Christ, 2) the Church, and 3) all who believe after Jesus’ return.

(23) But each [will be resurrected] in his own echelon. Christ [is the] first-fruits. Next [will be] those belonging to Christ at His coming (i.e., the 2nd Advent). (24) Then the end, when He will hand the Kingdom over to the Father, after He has brought an end to all rule, all power, and all authority. (25) For He must rule until He has placed all His enemies under His feet – (26) and death is the final enemy to be done away with.

1st Corinthians 15:23-26

The resurrection of Jesus Christ Himself, the Head of the Body, constitutes the initial echelon of the resurrection.⁶¹ And as the Head, our Lord rules two further, subordinate echelons. The first of these is the Church, that is, all believers who have ever lived from Adam and Eve to the last person to accept Christ before His return when the resurrection of the Bride begins.⁶² This is the resurrection treated in our context in Revelation 19:6-8. The uniting of Christ with His Church in resurrection is the “wedding” that finally binds us together forever with our Husband Jesus Christ in full experiential reality (cf. Matt.9:15; Matt.25:1-13; Mk.2:19; Lk.5:34; Jn.3:29; 2Cor.11:2-3; Eph.1:22-23; 5:22-33; Rev.21:2-4; 21:9ff.; 22:17). Although we are His here and now in a positional way, on that greatest of days we shall be His irreversibly and unconditionally forevermore, “and thus shall we ever be with the Lord” (1Thes.4:17). For only when we are resurrected do we become His Bride in this official and permanent way. As the context of Revelation chapter 19 shows, this wedding of the entire Church to Christ is a preliminary event which immediately precedes our Lord’s taking up His rightful rule over the earth on the heels of His victory at Armageddon. The final echelon of the resurrection will occur at the end of the Millennium, just prior to the last judgment, the destruction of the present heavens and earth, and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. This final group to be resurrected we may term “the Friends of the Bride” in accordance with what the angel tells John in verse nine of our context: “Happy are those who have been called to the wedding of the Lamb” (cf. the “virgin companions” of the Messiah’s Bride in Psalm 45:14, a clearly Messianic victory Psalm). Revelation 19:9 expresses the invitation to the great banquet in the kingdom given to all who believe after Christ’s return (Matt.8:11; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Lk.13:29; cf. Is.25:6-9), a group which at the time will largely be composed of repentant and now believing Jews (see section VI immediately below). As explained in an earlier discussion, there is evidence to the effect that at the end of human history, the number of believers in each of the two subordinate echelons of the resurrection, that is, the Church and the Millennial Believers, will be precisely equal, and will in

⁶¹ For a more detailed discussion of the resurrection from the point of view of the individual believer, see Peter's Epistles, lesson #20, “The Resurrection”, and part 2B of the Bible Basics series: “Eschatology”.

⁶² The fact that all who have believed up to this point, Jews and gentiles alike, alive or dead, are resurrected together as the Bride of Christ belies the false distinction often proffered which seeks to divide as “the Church” believers since the cross from those who came before (a heresy effectively refuted by Paul in Romans 11). See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: “Judgment, Restoration and Replacement”, section III.8.b.ii, “The Church”.

turn collectively be precisely equal to the number of elect angels.⁶³ The final fulfillment of both the Church at Jesus' return and the complement of Millennial believers at the end of human history will thus leave the devil and his fallen angels not only effectively replaced, but superabundantly and marvelously so (in a ratio of two to one). It is at this point, the defeat of all hostile human and angelic opposition (cf. Rev.20:7-10) at the end of the present creation, and at the beginning of the new, eternal one, that death itself, the last enemy (cf. Psalm 110:1), will be removed from the scene once and for all, as we and our fellow servants of the Lord live an indescribably blessed eternal life with Jesus ever after and forevermore.

(15) For we tell you this by the Lord's own Word, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord (i.e., the Second Advent which brings the Great Tribulation to a close) will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the archangel's blast on the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first (in resurrection), (17) then we who are alive and remain will be snatched up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and in this way we shall always be with the Lord.

1st Thessalonians 4:15-17

In the above passage we see the essentials of the resurrection at Christ's return. First, our Lord returns from the third heaven where He is presently seated at the Father's right hand "until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (Ps.110:1; cf. Acts 2:35; Heb.1:13; 10:13). Glowing with refulgent light brighter than the sun (as befits the Light of the world; cf. Acts 26:13), He will split the supernatural darkness which has enveloped the world and in the heavens above will be visible to everyone on the earth (Rev.1:7; cf. Matt.24:30). It is in that instant that Jesus will give the command to rise (cf. Jn.11:43), while the archangel at His side blows assembly in response (cf. Matt.24:31). Then all those believers who have to that point passed from life will rise from the places where they were laid to rest, the dust of their former bodies transformed into their eternal forms in the manner of the Son of Man Himself (Phil.3:20-21; 1Jn.3:2), while all believers still alive on earth will follow them in a living resurrection, transformed into their eternal state without ever experiencing physical death, a significant blessing experienced only by those who have had to endure the Tribulation (while unbelievers are "left behind": Matt.24:36-41; Lk.17:34-35). As each group rises in resurrection, either through the uniting of their departed spirits with their new eternal bodies or, in the case of those still alive, through the transformation of their bodies while their spirits still indwell this present flesh, we are conducted to the assembly area above the earth (cf. Matt.24:31), where our Lord and the rest of His heavenly legions of elect angels (i.e., those not involved in the process of mustering the newly resurrected believers; cf. Mk.13:26) are arrayed in anticipation of initiating the battle of Armageddon once His entire host is complete (Dan.7:13; 1Thes.1:10; 4:13-18; 2Thes.1:7-10; Rev.17:14; cf. Lk.2:13; Matt.16:27; 25:1-13):

⁶³ See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: "Judgment, Restoration and Replacement", section III.8.c, "The Jewish Ceremonial Calendar".

For first, Jesus returns and appears with His angelic legions above the earth:

Immediately following the tribulation of those days, the sun will grow dark and the moon will not give out its light, and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and will see the Son of Man coming in command of **the clouds** (i.e., the angelic hosts) of heaven with power and much glory.
Matthew 24:29-30

“But I say to you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and [after that] returning in command of **the clouds** (i.e., the angelic hosts) of heaven.”
Matthew 26:64b (cf. Mk.14:62; Lk.21:27)

Behold! **He is coming with clouds**, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the peoples of the earth will grieve on account of Him.
Revelation 1:7

Then our Lord gives the command for the dead to rise and for those of us who are His and still in our physical bodies to be resurrected while yet alive as well, and so we shall be resurrected in response to the archangel’s trumpet blast (Matt.24:31; cf. Ps.50:5):

(50) But I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (i.e., live in eternity with the Lord), nor can corruption inherit incorruption (i.e., we need the resurrection to live forever). (51) Behold, I tell you a mystery: not all of us will fall asleep, but all of us will be changed (52) in [that] moment of time, in the blink of an eye, at the final trumpet blast. For **the trumpet will sound**, and the dead will rise incorruptible, and we too (i.e., believers still alive) will be changed [at that time (i.e., the Lord’s Second Advent return)].
1st Corinthians 15:50-52

(16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the archangel’s **blast on the trumpet** of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first (in resurrection), (17) then we who are alive and remain will be snatched up together with them **in clouds** to meet the Lord in the air, and in this way we shall always be with the Lord.
1st Thessalonians 4:16-17

Finally, Christ and all His hosts, elect angels and resurrected believers alike, proceed to the final battle of the Tribulation:

And **His armies** (i.e., elect angels and the Church once the mustering of the resurrection is complete) were following Him in the sky [mounted] on white horses, [and] clad in linen white and pure (cf. Rev.19:8).
Revelation 19:14

This is our future hope (2Cor.4:17-18; Col.1:27; 3:1-4; 1Tim.1:1), the full realization of our adoption as sons and daughters of the Lord (Jn.1:12-13; Rom.8:16-17; Gal.3:21-4:7; Eph.3:15; Heb.12:4-11; 1Jn.3:1-2), the redemption of our physical bodies (Matt.6:12; 18:27-32; 20:28; Lk.1:68; 24:21; Rom.3:24; 1Cor.1:30; 6:20; 7:23; Gal.3:13; 4:4-5; Eph.1:7; Col.1:14; 2:14; 1Tim.2:6; Tit.2:14; Heb.9:12-15; 1Pet.1:18; 2Pet.2:1; Rev.5:9; 14:3-4), that is, their transformation into perfect and eternal “resurrection bodies” in which we shall dwell forevermore in the presence of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we enjoy sweet fellowship with Him for all eternity in the New Jerusalem (Rev.2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26-28; 3:4-5; 3:12-13; 3:21; 21:4; 21:27; 22:3-6; 22:14). While scripture may not tell us everything we should wish to know about the body we shall inhabit forever, we have some very definite information that does tell us two very significant things about them: 1) these eternal “resurrection” bodies will be comparable to the one possessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and 2) they will be characterized by “glory”, that is, the pure resplendent light that is our God.

For our [true] citizenship has a heavenly existence, and it is from there that we expectantly await our Savior, Lord Jesus Christ, who will *transform* this humble body of ours into one *that matches His glorious body* through His powerful ability to subordinate everything to Himself.

Philippians 3:20-21

Beloved, we are already the children of God, but what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He is *revealed* [in glory], we will be *like Him*, that we shall see Him exactly like He is.

1st John 3:2

As the Son of Man returns to earth, marshaling His hosts in the skies above, His glory will split the supernatural darkness like a flash of the most intense lighting imaginable and illuminate the dark world below. For He is the Light of the world, literally as well as in every other way (Jn.1:4-9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46; cf. Rev.21:23; 21:11; 22:5). It is unto this radiant Savior of ours that we shall congregate as we rise up from the earth, flocking to Him like eagles gathering in the sky above.⁶⁴

(26) So if they say to you, “Look! [The Messiah] is [out] in the desert!”, don’t go out there, or “Look! He is in the inner rooms (i.e., hidden somewhere in town)!”, don’t believe [it]. (27) For just as lightning flashes in the west and lights up the sky all the way to the east, so it will be with the Son of Man’s return. (28). Wherever there is a body, there the eagles will gather.

Matthew 24:26-28

(30) “It will be just like this (i.e., the examples of vv.22-29) on the day the Son of Man is revealed. (31) On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside,

⁶⁴ The connection in the following passages between the analogy of eagles or “vultures” attracted by a body and the communion metaphor is surely deliberate; cf. Job 39:27-30.

should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. (32) Remember Lot's wife! (33) Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. (34) I tell you, on that *night* (i.e., just previous to vv.30-33 which represent the dawning of the Day of the Second Advent) two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. (35) Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." (37) "Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."
Luke 17:30-37 NIV (cf. Matt.24:40-41)

Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me.
Isaiah 8:18a NIV (cf. Heb.2:13)

United now with our Lord Jesus for all time to come (Jn.12:26; 14:1-3; 17:24; 2Cor.5:8; Phil.1:23; 1Thes.4:17), and clothed in our eternal forms, we shall be free from tears and pain and want forever after (Rev.7:17; 21:4; cf. Is.25:8; 35:10; 65:17-19; 1Cor.15:54-58; Heb.2:14; Rev.2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26-28; 3:4-5; 3:12-13; 3:21; 21:4; 21:27; 22:3-6; 22:14).

"These are the ones who are about to come forth from the Great Tribulation. And they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. And the One who sits upon the throne will pitch His tabernacle over them. They will neither hunger nor thirst again, nor will the sun beat down upon them nor any burning [heat], because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and will lead them to fountains of living water (lit., "fountains of waters of life"), and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes".
Revelation 7:13b-17

This is our blessed future hope, for a critical part of the true good news of Christianity is that we will not cease to exist after death (as atheism claims) or experience some sort of "shadow existence" as many pagan religions claim, but will instead have a tangible *real* body forever in resurrection, and one that is far better than at present we can have any idea:

So now that we have been justified by faith, let us take hold of the peace [we have] with God [the Father] through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have also obtained our access into this grace in which we stand, and let us boast *in the hope of the glory* of God (i.e., in anticipation of our resurrection).
Romans 5:1-2

To all [believers] God desired to make known what wealth there is in this glorious mystery regarding the gentiles, for it is that Christ – your *hope of glory* – is in you.
Colossians 1:27

[W]e who are awaiting *the blessed hope*, namely the *epiphany of the glory* of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (i.e., when we too will be resurrected in glory when He appears).

As the passages quoted immediately above make clear, “glory” is the word often used for our blissful eternal state, not as an abstract expression of that blessed future time to come, but on the contrary the word has been deliberately chosen because it expresses vividly our sharing in God’s glorious light in a very real and tangible way after our bodies have been transformed in resurrection.

(17) And if we are God's children, then we are also His heirs, even fellow heirs of Christ – that is if we have indeed suffered with Him so that we might also ***be glorified together with Him***. (18) For I do not consider these present hardships in any way comparable to ***the glory*** destined to be ***revealed*** for us [at the 2nd Advent]. (19) For all creation eagerly awaits ***the revelation*** of the sons of God. (20) For the created world is now subject to futility – not of its own choosing, but because of Him who subjected it [as a consequence of Adam's sin] – but not without hope. (21) For [at the 2nd Advent] the created world will be liberated from its enslavement to decay at ***the glorious liberation*** of the sons of God (i.e. our resurrection). (22) For we know that the whole creation has been experiencing intense pain and agony right up until this present time. (23) And not only the created world, but we too who have received the Holy Spirit as a foretaste [of the good things to come] agonize within ourselves as we eagerly await our adoption, that is, the redemption of our body (i.e. resurrection). (24) This is ***the hope*** with which we were saved.

Romans 8:17-24a

The effulgent glory of divine light is an essential trait of our Lord’s divinity (Is.40:5; Jn.12:41) and also of His humanity now that this part of His nature too has been glorified (Matt.24:30; 25:31; Mk.8:38; 9:2-8; 13:26; Lk.9:26; 21:27; cf. Jn.7:39b). Therefore since our confident hope is to share in this same resurrection glory, we can learn much about our own glorification in resurrection from considering the glory which characterizes His resurrected, eternal human form.

For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels ***in the glory of His Father***, and then He will repay every man in his own coin.

Matthew 16:27

And [there on the Mount of Transfiguration] He was ***transformed*** before them, and His face ***shone like the sun*** and His clothing became ***white like light*** [itself].

Matthew 17:2

(29) And it came to pass while He was praying that the appearance of His face changed and His clothing [turned] ***white, flashing forth*** [like lightning]. (30) And, behold, two men were speaking with Him – and they were Moses and Elijah. (31) These [two] appeared ***in glory*** . . .

Luke 9:29-31a

And now ***glorify*** Me, Father, with your own ***glory***, [that glory] ***which I had in your presence before the world existed.***”

John 17:5

[Jesus Christ], who appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the [Holy] Spirit, was revealed to angels, was preached among the nations, was believed upon in the world, **was taken up in glory**.

1st Timothy 3:16

[Jesus] is **the shining forth of** [the Father's] **glory**, the precise image of His essence, the One who sustains the universe by His mighty Word. When He had accomplished the cleansing of [our] sins, He took His seat (i.e., beyond the veil) at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 1:3

But now we do see Jesus **crowned with glory and honor** on account of the death He suffered, even He who became "a little lower than the angels" [for a brief span] so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of us all.

Hebrews 2:9

But to the degree that you are [truly] participating in Christ's sufferings, be joyful about it, so that **at the revelation of His glory**, you may also rejoice with great gladness.

1st Peter 4:13

(12) So I turned around to see [the source of] the voice that was speaking to me, and when I had turned around, I saw seven golden lampstands. (13) And in the middle of the lampstands was what looked like a man, dressed in a long robe with a golden belt tied around His waist. (14) And His head and his hair were as white as wool or as snow, and His eyes were like a fiery flame, (15) and His feet were like white-hot bronze when super-heated in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. (16) And He held seven stars in His right hand, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. **And His face shone like the sun in its glory.**

Revelation 1:12-16

As part of His Body, the Bride, the Church, glory will characterize our eternal human forms as well. For we shall share the glory, the divine refulgent light of the Son, a characteristic which does much to explain the nature of the eternal life we shall lead with Him forever (1Cor.2:7; 2Cor.3:11; 2Cor.3:18; Eph.5:8-14; 5:27; 1Tim.1:11; 1Pet.5:10). For we shall be children of light (Eph.5:8) in an eternity where, just as there will be no more death, there will never be darkness again as all evil will have been inexorably and eternally expunged from the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev.21-22; cf. 1Jn.1:5): light and life, the glory of our eternal bodies and the eternal life we shall evermore enjoy in them are inseparable.

In the holy chambers, from **the womb of the dawn**, your young [troops] will [come] to you **like the dew** (i.e., the armies of the newly resurrected).

Psalms 110:3b

But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your *dew is like the dew of the morning*; the earth will give birth to her dead.

Isaiah 26:19 NIV

(2) For many who sleep in the dust will awake, some to eternal life, but the others to shame and eternal separation [from God]. (3) Then those who have insight will *shine like the shining forth of the dawn*, even those who led the many to righteousness, like stars forever and ever.

Daniel 12:2-3

(6) [God], who will give to each person according to his works, (7) to those who by persevering in the good course are seeking *glory*, honor and immortality, [He will give] *eternal life*.

Romans 2:6-7 (cf. Rom.2:10; 3:23; 15:7)

(29) For those whom He foreknew, He also foreordained *to share the likeness of His Son* (i.e., to have identical resurrection bodies), so that He might be the Firstborn over many brothers [and sisters]. (30) And those whom He foreordained, these He also called [to salvation], and those whom He called, He also made righteous [through faith in Christ], and those whom He made righteous, these *He also glorified* (i.e., our resurrection and eternal life has been set fast in the plan of God since before the world was made).

Romans 8:29-30

(17) For this present light affliction of ours is working out for us *an eternal weight of glory* beyond any possible estimation. (18) [Let us] not [then be] having [any] regard for what can be seen, but [instead] for what cannot be seen. For the things which can be seen are ephemeral. But the things which cannot be seen are eternal.

2nd Corinthians 4:17-18

(1) Therefore since you have been resurrected [positionally] with Christ, strive for the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Think on the things above, and not the things on the earth. (3) For you are already [positionally] dead [to all that], and your [true] life has been hidden away with Christ in God. (4) When Christ – your [true] life – is revealed [at the 2nd Advent], then you too will be *revealed in glory*.

Colossians 3:1-4

For it is precisely for this purpose (i.e., salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and faith in the truth; v.13) that He called you through our gospel in order that you might *gain lasting possession of the glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., the resurrection).

2nd Thessalonians 2:14 (cf. Eph.1:14; 1Thes.5:9; Heb.10:39; 1Pet.2:9)

For this reason I endure all things for the sake of the elect, in order that they themselves too may lay hold of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ *with eternal glory* (i.e., resurrection).

2nd Timothy 2:10

For it was fitting for [the Father] to make complete through sufferings Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even Him who has **led many sons to glory** (i.e., resurrection), [our Lord Jesus Christ]. For the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified belong to One [Father], and for this reason [Christ] is not ashamed to call them His brothers, as He says: “I will proclaim Your name to My brothers. In the midst of the assembly I shall praise you.” and elsewhere, “I [too] shall put My confidence in Him (i.e., the Father),” and elsewhere, “Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me”.

Hebrews 2:10-13

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised, who has in His great mercy caused us to be reborn to a hope which lives through Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and to an inheritance which will never be destroyed, defiled, or dimmed, but which is being guarded in heaven for us, who are ourselves also being kept safe by God’s power and our faith in Him to an ultimate deliverance ready to be unveiled at the end of time. Rejoice in this [salvation to come], even though at present it may for a time be your lot to suffer through various trials so that this validation (lit., “assaying”) of your faith [which results from your successful passing of these tests] may **result in praise, glory and honor** for you at **the revelation of Jesus Christ**. For this [validation process] has a greater benefit [for you] than [is true in the case of] gold, which, while it is also proved by fire, ultimately perishes (e.g., in contrast to the eternal rewards of faith proved genuine through testing).

1st Peter 1:3-7

(1) So I urge the elders among you as a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, even one who shares [with you] in **the glory which is about to be revealed**, (2) pastor the flock of God under your charge, overseeing them not out of compulsion but willingly in response to God, not eager for shameful material gain, but out of genuine enthusiasm, (3) not lording it over the charges [entrusted to you], but as genuine examples to your flock. (4) And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will carry off in victory the **crown of glory which will never fade**.

1st Peter 5:1-4

As can be seen from the passages above, eternal rewards are an important part of the glorification of the resurrection, and indeed eternal rewards are not given out until the resurrection (cf. Heb.11:39-40), for it is the resurrection body which will be glorified forever in no small part by these rewards (with which they are indelibly associated: cf. Dan.12:13). As the process of evaluation of the Church known as “the Judgment Seat of Christ” does not take place until Jesus has taken His seat as Ruler of the world in Jerusalem and begun His millennial rule, this glorious event will be covered in part 6 of the present series (cf. Matt.16:27; 19:28; 20:8; Lk.14:14; Rom.14:10-12; 1Cor.3:10-15; 2Cor.5:6-10; Rev.2:7; 2:10-11; 2:17; 3:5; 3:11-12; 2:26-27; 3:21; 11:18; 20:4-6). Nor should it be thought that until that blessed day of resurrection when we see

the Lord in His glory and partake of a similar body of eternal glory that we will in any way be disadvantaged. For the interim state our departed brothers and sisters in Christ presently enjoy is greater than our earthly state in ways we can only dimly imagine (though it falls short of the glory we shall enjoy forever in resurrection).

For we know that if our earthly tent-dwelling (i.e., our physical body) be struck, we have an abode [that comes] from God, a dwelling made without human agency, eternal in the heavens (i.e., the resurrection body). For indeed we do groan in this one, desiring to put on our habitation which comes from heaven. And [even] if we do put off this present one, at any rate, we (i.e., our spirits) will not be found naked (i.e., “body-less”; for we will enjoy an interim body in the meantime: cf. Lk.16:19-31; Rev.6:9-10; Rev.7:9-17).
2nd Corinthians 5:1-3

The resurrection body, its nature and its capabilities, consistently described in terms of “glory” as we have seen above, can best be understood from a consideration of the resurrection body of our Lord Jesus Christ (although it is important to keep in mind as we have noted above that in all of His post resurrection, pre-ascension appearances He had not yet been glorified as would soon be the case; compare those appearances with Jn.7:39; and with Acts 9:1-6; 22:6-11; 26:12-18; Rev.1:12-16). Rather than being a diminishment of our current bodily state in any way, the resurrection body will constitute an improvement upon our present state of affairs in every way – and to a degree we cannot properly now appreciate. For all its benefits and glory, the resurrection body is still a *real and genuine body*. In resurrection, Jesus is recognizable as Himself and behaves as Himself with no diminishment of personality in any way (Lk.24:31; Jn.20:16; 20:20; 20:26-28; 21:12). Christ’s transformed body is solid and tangible (Matt.28:9; Lk.24:39; Jn.20:17; 20:27), and capable of the entire range of normal human activities (Matt.28:10; 28:18-20; Lk.24:15; 24:43; Jn.21:13-15). And even before His ascension and glorification, the resurrection body of our Lord (the model and the pattern for the one we shall receive: Rom.6:5; Phil.3:20-21; 1Jn.3:2), possessed super-material capabilities without at the same time sacrificing material advantages, being capable of negotiating material space at will (cf. Matt.28:1-3; Lk.24:31; 24:36; Jn.20:19; Acts 1:9-10). The most complete description of these specifics is given by the apostle Paul in the book of 1st Corinthians:

(35) Now somebody will no doubt say, “In what manner do the dead rise? And with what sort of body do they come back?” (36) Use a little common sense! When you plant a seed, it doesn't “come back to life” unless the seed itself is first destroyed, does it? (37) And what you put in the ground is not the actual plant which later sprouts, but an “empty shell”, so to speak, of the wheat or of whatever you are planting. (38) God then transforms this seed into a plant in accordance with His creative plan, giving each specific seed its own unique structure. (39) [As it is with seeds and plants, the same is true of animate bodies.] For in an analogous way, not all bodies are the same. Obviously, the bodies of men are different from the bodies of cattle, the bodies of birds are different from the bodies of fish, (40) and, just as obviously, bodies capable of dwelling in heaven are different from the bodies we occupy here on earth. Moreover the splendor of our heavenly bodies will transcend that of our earthly ones. (41) [Nor should we imagine that

all heavenly bodies will possess the same degree of splendor.] After all, the radiance of the sun and of the moon and of stars is different in each case, and even the stars differ amongst themselves in glory. (42) So it is with the resurrection of the dead. The body sown is corruptible, the one raised incorruptible. (43) The body sown is dishonorable, the one raised *glorious*. The body sown is weak, the one raised powerful. (44) The body sown is suited to physical life, the one raised to spiritual life. If there is a physical body (and there patently is), then there is also a spiritual one. (45) For as it has been written that “Adam, the first man, became a physical being, possessing life”, so Christ, the last Adam, became a spiritual being, bestowing life. (46) However it is not the spiritual body, but the physical body which comes first, and the spiritual body follows. (47) The first man was earthly, being taken from the ground. The second Man is heavenly. (48) And as was the earthly man, so also are we of the earth. And as is the heavenly Man, so also shall we be when we too take on heavenly form. (49) For just as we have born the image of the earthly man, so also shall we bear the image of the heavenly Man.

1st Corinthians 15:35-49

As the verses above make clear, the “spiritual” or resurrection body is not in any way less real or tangible or capable than the corruptible body we now inhabit. Far from it. We will still be “who we are” in the eternal home we will receive on that great day of days, only then possessing a body that is completely in tune with the life we shall live with God forevermore, capable of appreciating Him and the blessings of the eternal life He has prepared for us and for all who love the appearance of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is our blessed hope. For this we wait in expectation day by day, looking forward to the return of our Lord, the redemption, the adoption, the glorification of our bodies in resurrection, and the rewards and wonders of eternal life in the New Jerusalem in the presence of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ forever and ever (Matt.13:30; 25:1-13; Jn.5:29; Acts 24:15; Rom.6:5; 6:9; 8:11; 8:23; 8:29; 1Cor.6:12-14; 1Thes.3:13; 2Thes.2:1).

(1) Rise up! Shine forth! For your Light has arrived, and the glory of the Lord has burst forth upon you. (2) For behold, the darkness – it will cover the earth, even a deep gloom its peoples. But the Lord will rise over you, and His glory will appear above you. (3) Nations will come to His light, and kings to the brilliance of His rising.

Isaiah 60:1-3

“For this is My Father’s will, for everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him to have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

John 6:40

(25) Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even if he dies. (26) And everyone who lives and believes in Me will surely not die forevermore.”

John 11:25-26

The Wedding of the Lamb:

(7) Let us rejoice and be jubilant, and let us give glory to Him, because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His Bride (lit., “wife”; cf. Rev.21:9) has prepared herself. (8) And it has been given her to wear a pure, resplendent [gown] of the finest material (now this fine material represents the righteous acts of His holy ones [believers]).” (9) And [the angel] said to me, “Write this down: Happy are those who have been called to the [wedding] supper of the Lamb! These [words] of mine are the true words of God”.

Revelation 19:7-9

These verses look forward by way of ecstatic anticipation to the events which follow the resurrection on the far side of Armageddon. As such, they will be discussed in detail in the next installment of this series, part 6, “Last Things”. After our Lord’s return to the heavens above the earth, at His command the resurrection of the Church will take place, wherein all who have believed in Jesus Christ since Adam and Eve will rise with living believers raised last of all. This glorious event is called here “the wedding of the Lamb”, because it is only by the transformation of our corruptible bodies into eternal, resurrection bodies that we are finally made “one” with Jesus perfectly and experientially forevermore in a perfect, eternal “marriage”.⁶⁵ Immediately following the resurrection of the Church, our Lord will destroy antichrist and his hordes at Armageddon, then commence His millennial reign from Jerusalem. The last judgment in the series of seven judgments associated with Christ’s return will be the evaluation of the Church, otherwise known as the Judgment Seat of Christ. At this time, we shall all be judged for the purpose of bestowing upon us the eternal rewards earned through our legitimate service to our Lord and His Church while here on earth. This service is called here “righteous acts”, and, significantly, the performance of our duty in time (in growing spiritually and helping others to do the same through the gifts and in the ministries God assigns) is said to be the means by which we “prepare ourselves” for our dear Lord Jesus. Everything we have done which is legitimately “righteous”, that is, in accord with the perfect divine standard (of properly motivated response to the true will of God) will receive a reward (Matt.10:42; 25:31-46), while everything that fails to meet this standard will be destroyed by fire (1Cor.3:10-15). This will not affect our salvation in any way (for Christ died for all our sins so that they are not an issue for all who have put their trust in Him), but will remove anything done from impure motivations or not in accordance with God’s will as spots and blemishes (Eph.5:25-27), so that we may instead walk in white with Him forever (Rev.3:4-5).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ See especially Ephesians 5:22-33, and The Song of Solomon, which is largely a simile describing the Church’s relationship with Jesus (S.S. passim, as is Ps.45:8-17; cf. Is.62:5; Jn.3:29). See also The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: “Judgment, Restoration and Replacement”, section III.8.b.iv, “The Bride”.

⁶⁶ Revelation 19:8 does not constitute an exception to the usual shame vs. sanctification image in the white clothing analogy of Revelation 3:18 and 16:15 (cf. Zech.3:4; Rev.3:4-5; 7:9-14; 19:14). The “righteous acts” here (Greek *dikaïoma*; δικαιομα), are our non-meritorious faith responses to the will of God, the works which He “has prepared ahead of time for us, that we might walk in them” (Eph.2:10). The brilliant white clothing in which the entire Church is

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
Isaiah 61:10 NIV

Once this process of evaluation is complete and we, the Church, have received our eternal rewards (2Cor.5:10; cf. Rom.14:10), our crowns (1Cor.9:25-27; Phil.4:1; 1Thes.2:19; 2Tim.4:8; Jas.1:12; 1Pet.5:4; Rev.2:10; 3:11), and “well done’s” from our Lord and Savior (Matt.25:14-30), His victory and our wedding will be celebrated in an inaugural feast of bounty and blessing such as the world has never seen before (Matt.22:2-14; 25:1-13; Lk.13:28-29; 14:16-24).

(6) On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines. (7) On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; (8) he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.
Isaiah 25:6-8 NIV

I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 8:11 NIV

The blessing in our context of Revelation 19:9 on those invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb refers to all who believe in Jesus upon seeing His glorious return and the events which follow. This will apparently be a very large group, composed notably of Jewish believers who have now been brought back to the land of Israel in accordance with the many divine promises of restoration (also to be covered in part 6 of this series), and will also contain gentile believers as well (cf. Zech.8:23). Besides the rest of the unbelieving world, two other groups will be notable by their absence from this banquet: 1) recalcitrant Jews who even now refuse to accept Jesus as their Messiah (Ezek.20:37-38; cf. Matt.8:12-13), and 2) those who fell away from the faith during the Great Apostasy (Matt.25:1-13; cf. Lk.13:24-30). Happy indeed will those be who respond to the Messiah when He returns, for they will be invited to celebrate gloriously on that great day of days in company with all who kept the faith in the great times of trial to come and rose to meet the Lord at His return! For these wonderful and blessed events are not vain hopes, but future realities decreed by unswerving will of God; they are “the true words of God”.

The Testimony about Jesus (Rev.19:10):

And I fell before his feet to worship him. And he said to me, “See that you don’t [do that]! I am a fellow servant of you and of your brothers who hold [fast] the testimony

dressed represents the fact that every member of the Church has earned at least some eternal reward for this service on earth, since faith without any “works” is dead (Jas.2:14-26).

about Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony about Jesus is the essence (lit., “spirit”) of [all divine] prophecy”.
Revelation 19:10

Overcome by the anticipated marvels of Jesus’ return and moved to worship by the assurance that these things “are the true words of God” (v.9), John falls to the ground in praise, but is quickly rebuked by the angel accompanying him. John will succumb to this pressure once more (Rev.22:8-9), on that second occasion in emotional anticipation of the ineffable blessings of eternity and the New Jerusalem and in response to the similar assurance at that time that “these words are trustworthy and true” and to the proclamation that “I am coming soon” (whereupon he will receive a similar rebuke). In that second instance, John is told to “Worship God!” instead, and to take care not to seal up the book he has been given to write. Here, he is also told to “Worship God!”, and further instructed that it is the message of Jesus Christ that is it at the heart of all prophecy and prophetic revelation. That is because Jesus Himself *is* the Word of Truth. The use here of the conjunction “for” (Greek *gar*, γαρ) explains very specifically in the Greek that the reason for the necessity of worshipping God instead of mistakenly being carried away by angels and wonders the eye may behold is precisely because Jesus is the issue (i.e., in salvation and spiritual growth through faith in Him who is the living Word of God), and because the message of and about Jesus Christ is the point, the purpose, and essence of and behind everything in the Bible and all revelation, special and natural, including the Book of Revelation (which is, in its full and correct title after all, “The Revelation *of Jesus Christ*). John is not to be found fault with here for being overcome emotionally in this way. Certainly, he well understood that the worshiping of any created thing was wrong, even angels in their glory in the midst of an overwhelming revelation of this sort. The fact that John was not able to help himself was of divine design, in order that we might see this scene (and the one in Revelation chapter 22), and learn an important lesson. No matter how great the wonders we may anticipate, no matter how great the wonders our eyes may behold in the future, and no matter how impressive the false wonders antichrist may display on earth, the real power, the real glory, the real wonder is *the truth* which is in Jesus Christ and His Word, the Bible.

VI. The Repentance of Israel

The process of “mourning” and grieving on the part of all unbelievers on account of their failure to recognize the true Messiah will commence immediately upon His return to the heavens above the earth in blinding light that splits the sky from one horizon to the other, accompanied by the sign of the cross (Matt.24:27-31). And we may be sure that the rising of the Church in resurrection into our glorious resurrection bodies, with the previously departed being raised up bodily from their graves and with living believers then being transformed before the eyes of all, and with all flying up to meet the Lord in the air, will undoubtedly be an unimaginably astounding sight which will leave the world’s unbelievers aghast. At this time many will no doubt turn to the Lord – too late to be part of this echelon of the resurrection, but in time to enjoy the blessings of Jesus’ millennial reign as His followers. But as impressive as the resurrection of the Church will be, scripture makes it quite clear that for unbelieving Israel, at any rate, it will be

the glorious return of the Messiah Himself that will bring about the end of the “hardness in part” which has characterized the Jewish people since our Lord’s first advent.

(25) Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery (and so think more of yourselves than you should): hardness has come over a part of Israel until the time when the fullness of the gentiles has come in [to the family of God] (i.e., when the Church is completed at the 2nd Advent). (26) And it is in this way (i.e., coming to believe upon witnessing the Messiah’s return) that all [true] Israel will be saved just as it is written:

The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will expel ungodliness from Jacob. (27) And this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins.

Romans 11:25-27

For He will give them over until the time when she who is about to give birth gives birth (i.e., the mother of Jesus’ humanity, Mary: the First Advent), and the rest of His brothers return to the sons of Israel (i.e., Jewish repentance at the Second Advent).

Micah 5:3

This return to the Lord will commence immediately, just as soon as He appears. For He will be visible to the entire world, seen by every earthly eye, prominent at the head of His legions of angels and the now assembled, resurrected Church. Then the reality of their mistake in failing to recognize Jesus as the Christ before this moment of His revelation to the world as the true Messiah and Son of God will cause the entire world “to grieve”.

Behold! He is coming with clouds, and *every eye will see Him*, even those who pierced Him, and *all the peoples of the earth will grieve on account of Him*.

Revelation 1:7

This grief will in many cases be part of a godly repentance in turning to the now revealed Lord Jesus Christ, a phenomenon that will be especially pronounced in Israel.⁶⁷

And I will pour out on the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem *a Spirit of grace and repentance*. For they will look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they will grieve for Him like the grieving for an only son, and they will [weep] bitterly for Him like the bitter [weeping] for a firstborn son.

Zechariah 12:10

(4) For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. (5) Afterward the sons of

⁶⁷ The Day of Atonement, “Yom Kippur”, looks forward to this event. The “afflicting of heart” commanded of all Israel on that day (Lev.23:27, 29 & 32; Num.29:7), and God’s resultant cleansing are symbolic of God’s forgiveness of all in Israel who respond in this appropriate fashion at Christ’s return (compare Lev.16:30 with Is.4:2-6; 59:20-21; Jer.31:34; 50:20; Ezek.20:33-38; 36:24-38; Joel 2:30-32; Zech.12:10-13:1; Mal.3:2-4; Rom.11:26).

Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days.
Hosea 3:4-5 NASB

Moreover, there will be no need for anyone to explain that the glorious Messiah visible to all the world in the heaven above is Jesus Christ our Lord, for His sign, the sign of the cross, will also be emblazoned across the sky, leaving no basis to deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the one and only true Messiah.⁶⁸

(29) Immediately following the tribulation of those days, the sun will grow dark and the moon will not give out its light, and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (30) And then ***the sign of the Son of Man*** will appear in heaven. And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and much glory.
Matthew 24:29-30

Then our Lord will respond to the repentant hearts throughout Israel and particularly in besieged Jerusalem. For He will unleash His violent fury against those who dare to touch “the apple of His eye” (Zech.2:8; cf. Deut.32:10).

(12) “Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. (13) Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. (14) Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing – grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God. (15) Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. (16) Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. (17) Let the priests, who minister before the Lord, weep between the portico and the altar. Let them say, “Spare your people, Lord. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” (18) Then the Lord will be jealous for his land and take pity on his people. (19) The Lord will reply to them: “I am sending you grain, new wine and oil, enough to satisfy you fully; never again will I make you an object of scorn to the nations. (20) I will drive the northern army far from you, pushing it into a parched and barren land, with its

⁶⁸ There is no question but that the cross is the “sign” mentioned in Matt.24:30. For the cross is the universal *biblical* symbol for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf (e.g., Matt.10:38; 16:34; Mk.8:34; Lk.9:23; 14:27; 1Cor.1:17-18; Gal.5:11; 6:12-14; Eph.2:16; Phil.2:8; 3:18; Col.1:20; 2:14; Heb.12:2), and as such the fact of its appearance upon His glorious return is what will make the association of His previous sacrifice and future return unmistakable to all.

front columns going into the eastern sea and those in the rear into the western sea. And its stench will go up; its smell will rise.” Surely he has done great things.
Joel 2:12-20 NIV

(30) I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. (31) The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. (32) And ***everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved***; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls.
Joel 2:30-32 NIV

For the Redeemer will come to Zion, ***even to those in Jacob who turn away from their transgression***.
Isaiah 59:20

VII. The Second Advent and Armageddon: Revelation 19:11-21

Introduction:

Judgment day has now arrived, the quintessential “Day of the Lord” otherwise known as Armageddon, the day of deliverance and wrath to which countless scriptures point and respond, the day of the coming of our Lord.⁶⁹ This is the day upon which the people of God fix their hope, upon which they have always fixed their hope.⁷⁰

(7) Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. (8) Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. (9) Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. (10) Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty – he is the King of glory.
Psalm 24:7-10 NIV

For the Lord has a day of vengeance, even a year of retribution for Zion's cause.
Isaiah 34:8

⁶⁹ In the terminology we have been employing in this and in the previous Satanic Rebellion series, this is “phase II judgment” culminating in the battle of Armageddon and the associated post-2nd Advent judgments (see part 6 of this series, section I), which is closely followed by “phase II restoration”: the Millennial rule of Jesus Christ.

⁷⁰ For example, the Messianic hope of Christ’s return and His judgment on Israel’s enemies is ubiquitous in the Psalms and prophets, e.g., Ps.21:8; 98:1-9; 102:12-17, etc., as will be evident from the many passages quoted and cited in the remainder of this study.

(12) Oh, the raging of many nations – they rage like the raging of the sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples – they roar like the roaring of great waters! (13) Although the peoples roar like the roar of surging waters, when he rebukes them they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills, like tumbleweed before a gale. (14) In the evening, sudden terror! Before the morning, they are gone! This is the portion of those who loot us, the lot of those who plunder us.

Isaiah 17:12-14 NIV

(9) You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!” (10) See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

Isaiah 40:9-10 NIV

The Lord will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.

Isaiah 42:13 NIV

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you!

Isaiah 64:1 NIV

(23) See, the storm of the Lord will burst out in wrath, a driving wind swirling down on the heads of the wicked. (24) The fierce anger of the Lord will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand this.

Jeremiah 30:23-24 NIV

Marana tha (Aramaic = "O our Lord, return!")

1st Corinthians 16:22

1. The Coming of the Word of God: Revelation 19:11-16

(11) And I saw the sky above opened up, and, behold, a white horse, and the One seated on it is called “Faithful and True”, and in righteousness He renders judgment and makes war.

Revelation 19:11

As He hung on the cross, about to bear the sins of the world in His own body in the darkness about to descend on Golgotha, our Lord’s enemies taunted Him with the charge upon which He had putatively been convicted: “You were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself, if you are the Son of God!” (Matt.27:39-40). Three days latter, our Lord did exactly what He had promised, rising from the dead in the restored temple of His new resurrection body, the proof of the acceptability of His sacrifice and

His right to judge the world (Ps.110:1; Rom.1:3-4). Likewise the high priests, scribes and elders took up this refrain and taunted Him: “He is the King of Israel! Let Him come down now from the cross and we will believe in Him!” (Matt.27:41-42). In this moment to come our Lord will do exactly that, appearing out of the sign of the cross in refulgent glory, and many will believe in grief and repentance as they look upon the One whom they pierced, realizing at last that He is undeniably the Messiah, the one and only Son of God (Zech.12:10; Rev.1:7).

John is given to see here the very moment of the 2nd Advent, when, with the Church now resurrected and assembled, Jesus returns physically from heaven in all His glory as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the true Messiah who has come to take possession of the kingdom He earned at the cost of His own blood, His death on the cross for the sake of the whole world. As the heavens above split open, the dark world is bathed in the brilliant light emanating from Him who is the true Light of the world, and every human eye shall see Him.

The white horse is an indication of our Lord’s kingly station and also of His prowess in battle. As He entered Jerusalem in full anticipation of the cross that was before Him, His way bestrewn with palms, He rode upon a donkey’s colt, but also had a horse’s colt in train (Matt.21:1-9), betokening both the humility of his first advent and the coming glory of His second (to which the palm branches were truly appropriate as calling to mind the feast of tabernacles, the second advent celebration).⁷¹

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion. Shout [for joy], daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your King will come to you. Righteous and victorious He is; humble and riding on a donkey, even on a colt, a donkey's foal.
Zechariah 9:9

Just as our Lord’s entry into Jerusalem before the cross had double meaning, so we see the same in the verse above: How could the Messiah be both humble and victorious? How could He be the conquering deliverer of Israel mounted on a donkey? Having long since gained the victory of victories over sin and death at the cross, our Lord will now fulfill the other side of the Zechariah prophecy for which those who threw the palms before Him yearned. Mounted on a white charger He will return in righteousness and victory, and will indeed be the cause of great joy and rejoicing for those who now repent and turn to Him. He is called here “Faithful and True”, for He is the truth and can be completely relied upon as the One who is about to fulfill all the promises of God to Israel. His truth now rips apart the darkness of the terrible times of tribulation, and sends the lie fleeing into the shadows. For He is about to destroy all who have loved and embraced the lie of Satan and his antichrist, and every life He takes will be justly and righteously taken. And from this moment of His return until the end of time at the close of the Millennium, every judgment He makes will be justly and righteously rendered.

⁷¹ See The Satanic Rebellion: Part 5: “Judgment, Restoration and Replacement”, section III.8.c, “The Jewish Ceremonial Calendar”.

(12) And His eyes were a flame of fire, and on His head were many [kingly] crowns, with names written [on them] which no one knows except He Himself.
Revelation 19:12

The fiery eyes, a unique characteristic of our now gloried Lord, one we have encountered before (Rev.1:14; 2:18), bespeak His deity even in His humanity, and call attention to our Lord's complete and perfect knowledge of all things, including, as in this case, of all transgression in need of fiery divine correction (2Chron.16:9; Zech.3:9 with 4:10; Rev.5:6). The reference to these piercing, fiery eyes here makes clear that our Lord is about to wreak a terrible vengeance upon the offending armies encircling Jerusalem (e.g., Is.34:8; 35:4). The names mentioned above (note the plural, *pace* most versions which incorrectly have the singular), are written one to a crown, and demonstrate that Jesus is the King of every kingdom and the Lord of every people that has ever existed, having won that rulership through His victory at the cross (Ps.110:1; cf. Heb.1:3). These titles are known only to Him, for only God understands the true essence of every nation and people, having created them and assigned them their unique times and habitations (Acts 17:26; cf. Gen.11:6; Deut.32:8; Job 12:23; Ps.74:17; Jer.18:7-10), and only Jesus Christ shall rule over them in what remains of time, judging them all when the seven millennial days of human history finally come to an end, both the living and the dead (Acts 10:42). To this we may compare the “new name” that every believer will have (written on the white stone we receive as our token of our membership in the eternal edifice of the Church of Jesus Christ: 1Pet.2:4-8; cf. 1Cor.3:9-15; Eph.2:20-22) which is also known only to the believer in question and to the Lord (Rev.2:17; cf. Is.56:5; 65:15; though we shall all bear the Lord’s Name on our persons: Rev.3:12; 22:4). For as is the case collectively with the nations, so also it is true with individual believers that only He really “knows us” well enough to assign us the unique “name” that captures the essence of all we are and all we chose to do (and that essential designation is a memorial confidence between Jesus and each believer). Moreover, it is Jesus Christ alone who will evaluate the lives of each of us after that great day of His return (Rom.14:10-12; 2Cor.5:10).

(13) And He is dressed in a robe splattered all about with blood, and His Name has [always] been called, “The Word of God”.
Revelation 19:13

The blood mentioned here is a proleptic symbol, anticipating the slaughter to come with which our Lord’s white garments will soon be stained.

(1) Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? “It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” (2) Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? (3) “I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood splattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. (4) For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. (5) I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for

me, and my own wrath sustained me. (6) I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground.”
Isaiah 63:1-6 NIV

In addition to heralding the coming slaughter of the armies of antichrist, the blood of course also recalls the basis for Jesus’ authority to render the judgment of Armageddon and take possession of His kingdom, namely, the shedding of His own blood on the cross on behalf of us all, even on behalf of those about to be destroyed. And if instead of willingly following the beast to oppose our Lord’s return they had responded to this precious sacrifice on their behalf, they would have risen in glory with us instead of now being about to face the wrath of Him who is “The Word of God”.

(14) And His armies were following Him in the sky [mounted] on white horses, [and] clad in linen white and pure.
Revelation 19:14

As discussed in section V above, here we see the Church in resurrection, described in similar terms to the Lord whom we love and follow, likewise mounted on white horses and clothed in the pristine white garments with which our eternal bodies will ever be clothed. The absence of blood on our vestments indicates what Jesus says at Isaiah 63:3 (quoted above; and see the following verse in our context, Rev. 19:15), that He alone will “trample the winepress” of Armageddon, while we accompany Him and observe our Master’s victory.⁷²

(15) And a sharp broadsword proceeded from His mouth wherewith to smite the nations, and He Himself will shepherd them with an iron staff, and He Himself will trample the winepress of the furious wrath of God the Almighty.
Revelation 19:15

As in verse eleven of Revelation nineteen above where it is said of our Lord that “in righteousness He renders judgment and makes war”, here too we have both the rulership of the Messiah emphasized in His coming millennial administration of the world (i.e., “He Himself will shepherd them with an iron staff”) as well as the imminent victory whereby He will take possession of His Kingdom: “a sharp broadsword proceeded from His mouth wherewith to smite the nations” and “He Himself will trample the winepress of the furious wrath of God the Almighty”. The sword mentioned here (Greek *rhomphaia*, ρομφαία), is the same one John saw proceeding out of our Lord’s mouth in His first vision of Christ in chapter one (Rev.1:16; cf. Rev.2:12; 2:16). It is not the smaller, more precise two-edged Roman sword familiar from other passages of scripture (i.e., the *machaira*, μάχαιρα), but the large Thracian broadsword. While the former is sometimes employed to illustrate the surgical-like sharpness of the Word of God (Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12), the broadsword here emphasizes the violent and bloody slaughter about to begin (and described in Rev.19:21). Since elsewhere this sword is described as a spirit or the

⁷² Our participation in the angelic part of the battle will be covered part 6.

Spirit, we likewise see in this description the twofold mission of the Word of God, bringing life through the truth to those who will receive it, and death to those who arrogantly and willfully refuse it:

And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath (lit., “spirit” or “Spirit”) of His lips He will put the wicked to death.

Isaiah 11:4b

He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.

Isaiah 49:2 NIV

Although the enemy (i.e., antichrist) will attack like the River (i.e., the great Nile or Euphrates; cf. Dan. 11:22; 11:26), the Spirit of the Lord will put him to flight.

Isaiah 59:19

And then the lawless one (i.e., antichrist) will be revealed, [that same one] whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and destroy when He appears at His [glorious] return.

2nd Thessalonians 2:8

John is only given to see here in Revelation 19:15 the sword proceeding from our Lord’s mouth. The iron staff and the winepress are described as symbols of (near) future events, and represent respectively the millennial administration of the Messiah’s kingdom and the judgment of Armageddon. In both of these latter cases, the emphasis is on severity. The staff or “rod” is the guiding and directing implement of the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11; Heb. 13:20-21; 1Pet. 2:25; Rev. 7:17), and a reference to the badge of rulership identifying our Lord as the rightful Sovereign of the earth.

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

Genesis 49:10 NIV

(8) Ask of Me and I shall give [You] the nations as your inheritance, and as Your possession the ends of the earth. (9) You shall shepherd them with a **rod of iron**, and You shall shatter them like a potter’s vessel.

Psalms 2:8-9

(26) And to the one who wins the victory and gives heed to My works until the end, I will give to him authority over the nations. (27) And he will shepherd them with **an iron rod** and crush them like vessels of clay, just as I have received [the authority] from My Father.

Revelation 2:26-27

And she (i.e., Israel) gave birth to a male child who is going to shepherd the nations **with an iron staff**. And the child was snatched up to God and to His throne.
Revelation 12:5

The Messiah will brook absolutely no violation of the law or exploitation of the weak throughout His Kingdom. Perfect justice perfectly administered will equally condemn and destroy the wicked in the process of acquitting and vindicating the innocent while Jesus Christ is in control (cf. Prov.17:15).

(1) The Lord said to My Lord, “Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” (2) From Zion the Lord will send forth **your mighty scepter**. Rule in the midst of your enemies!
Psalm 110:1-2

(8) But of the Son He says, “Your throne, O God, is from eternity to eternity, and the rod of your kingdom is **the rod of uprightness**. (9) You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. For this reason God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions (Ps.45:6-7)”.
Hebrews 1:8-9

The third symbol in verse fifteen, the winepress, is a very vivid picture of the slaughter about to be unleashed upon the armies of antichrist wherein the beast’s forces represent the grapes about to be trodden underfoot in conquest by the returning King (Rev.14:14-20; cf. Ps.2:1-2; 110:5-7; Is.11:4; 29:5-8; 34:1-3; 52:10; 59:15-19; 63:1-6; 66:15-16; Joel 3:9-14; Hag.2:21-22; Zech.12:3; 14:1-3). In this image we see the righteousness of the Messiah in making war paralleling His righteousness in administering peace after He has taken His seat on His millennial throne. In the latter instance, it will be a case of meting out swift and severe but completely righteous recompense upon all who do evil **within** His kingdom, while in the vintage of Armageddon it is going to be a case of righteously annihilating all those who oppose and seek to destroy His incipient kingdom **from without**.

(2) And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him (i.e., the Messiah), the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, (3) and the fear of the Lord will be to Him a sweet fragrance. And He will not judge [merely] by what His eyes see, nor reprove [merely] by what His ears hear. (4) For He will judge the poor with righteousness, and will reprove with justice on behalf of the humble of the earth. And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath (lit., “spirit” or “Spirit”) of His lips He will put the wicked to death.
Isaiah 11:2-4

Thus we see that in both primary functions of any good government, maintaining internal law and order while protecting the realm from external threats, our Lord’s administration will function with perfect knowledge and in perfect justice, a fact that should terrify all His enemies whether within or without.

(16) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written: “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”.
Revelation 19:16

As mentioned in our discussion of verse twelve above, our Lord has many names, as many as there are races and tribes and peoples and nations or ever have been. For He is Sovereign over them all. Therefore this Name is given out as the common Name by which He may be known: “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”. For this title sums up His total rule over all (1Tim.6:15; Rev.17:14; cf. Deut.10:17; Ps.136:2-3; Dan.2:47).

(4) John, to the seven churches which are in Asia [Minor]: Grace to you and peace from the One who is and was and is coming (i.e., the Father), and from the seven spirits (i.e., the Holy Spirit) which are before His throne, (5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and *the Ruler of the kings of the earth*.
Revelation 1:4-5

2. The Invitation to the Slaughter: Revelation 19:17-18

(17) And I saw a single angel having taken his stand in front of the sun. And he cried out in a loud voice, saying to all the birds flying in the sky, “Come, gather together for the great banquet of God, (18) that you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of generals, and the flesh of horses and those who ride upon them, and the flesh of all [these wicked men], free and slave, small and great [alike]”.
Revelation 19:17-18

This “banquet” of cursing for the birds of the air consisting of the corpses of antichrist’s followers is in deliberately vivid and somewhat ironic contrast to the great feast of blessing that will follow Christ’s return to celebrate the wedding of the Lamb and His Bride. The actual occurrence of the gorging of the “feast” mentioned in context here is described a bit later in verse 21. It is also described in Ezekiel’s account of Armageddon:

(1) And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I am against you, Gog (i.e., antichrist), chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. And I will fetch you back, and conduct you, and bring you up from the far reaches of the north. For I will make you come to the mountains of Israel. (3) Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and make your arrows fall from your right hand. (4) On the mountains of Israel you shall fall along with all the hordes and nations with you. I will give you as food to the birds of prey, [to] everything on the wing, [and to] the beasts of the field. (5) You shall fall in the open fields, for I have spoken, says the Lord God’”.
Ezekiel 39:1-5

(17) And you, son of man, thus says the Lord God, “Call to the birds, everything on the wing, and to every beast of the field. Assemble them together so that they may come.

Gather them from everywhere for My sacrifice ‘which I am going to sacrifice for all of you [birds and beasts of prey], a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel. And you shall eat fat and drink blood, (18) the flesh of warriors you will eat, and the blood of princes you will drink – [as if they were] rams, lambs, and goats, fattened bulls of Bashan, all of them. (19) For you shall eat fat until you are sated, and you shall drink blood until you are drunk from My sacrifice which I shall sacrifice for you. (20) And you will be sated at My table [with] horses and their riders, warriors and all the men of war’”, says the Lord God.
Ezekiel 39:17-20

In both cases, the slaughter is described as total, with animals perishing as well as men, and with all who accompany the beast destroyed regardless of their status. The reference to “slaves” entails the reality that many of antichrist’s soldiers will be conscripts. But this fact will not spare them: they no doubt have taken the mark of the beast, and it is equally certain that they have chosen to accompany him with the intent of destroying the people of God and of opposing Christ Himself rather than face the beast’s wrath. This is a similar choice to the one many believers will face during the Great Persecution. In both cases, those who are more afraid of the wrath of the beast will have to face the wrath of the returning King of Kings. The reference to horses is only a mild case of John and Ezekiel being given this account in language that is not completely incompatible with their technological frame of reference. For one thing, there may indeed be many horses and pack animals employed in the mustering of the world’s armies for Armageddon (and we cannot say for certain that the events of the Tribulation will not result in serious technological regression). For another, the differences between a war-horse and a mechanical APC (armored personnel carrier) are, from a strictly interpretive standpoint here, not all that dissimilar. That is because a horse prepared for battle is adorned with much accouterment that is inedible (e.g., saddle, bosses, and other protective and decorative gear), though of course its carcass is edible; and on the other hand, while an APC is, strictly speaking, inedible, it will contain much that is (e.g., not only the bodies of its crew which will normally consist of many more than one “rider”, but also the foodstuffs it carries to supply them). These and all who follow the beast will be “sacrifices” for mere creatures, because they chose to follow and to worship the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever (Rom.1:25).

3. Antichrist and his Armies: Revelation 19:19

(19) And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with the One riding on the [white] horse and with His army.
Revelation 19:19

In that antichrist is described here as leading “the kings of the earth”, we are meant to understand that all the standing armies of the world, now under his power, have been assembled in Israel. Further, our text makes it quite clear that the true, mad purpose of this assembly is “to make war” with Jesus Christ! Therefore the immediate purpose of destroying Israel is merely “bait” to bring our Lord to battle. Oh the insanity that arrogance brings! But in this purpose the beast is not only following the behest of his father the devil – he is mimicking Satan’s actions is rebelling

against God before human history began. The results will be comparable, and equally dramatic and swift at that.

The place of this assemblage of the armed forces of the entire world will be, as we have explained above under our initial treatment of Armageddon (section I.6), Jerusalem, whose eastern valleys will accommodate the leading elements of antichrist's train, no doubt composed of his most elite warriors. This will be the *schwerpunkt* or center of his operational mass at the point of our Lord's return, with the rest of his troops deployed from north to south and centered around Jerusalem.

(45) Then [upon his return to Israel] he will pitch the tents of his [royal] pavilion between the seas (i.e., the Mediterranean and the Dead seas) near the mountain of the beauty of holiness (i.e., the temple mount in Jerusalem). But [in spite of this (i.e., his hopes for success in the battle of Armageddon)] he will come to his end, and no one will aid him [then].

Daniel 11:45

(1) For behold, in those days and at that time when I restore the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, (2) I will gather all the nations and bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat (i.e., "the Lord will judge") and will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance Israel whom they have scattered among the nations and whose land they apportioned [to others]. (3) They even cast lots for My people and exchanged a boy for a prostitute and sold a girl for the wine they drank.

Joel 3:1-3

"Therefore wait for Me," says the Lord, "until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy."

Zephaniah 3:8

"Be silent before me, you islands! Let the nations renew their strength! Let them come forward and speak; let us meet together at the place of judgment."

Isaiah 41:1 NIV

4. The Seizure of the Beast and his False Prophet: Revelation 19:20

(20) And the beast was snatched up and the false prophet along with him, the one who had performed the signs in his presence and had thereby deceived those who had received the mark of the beast, even those who were worshiping his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with sulfur.

Revelation 19:20

This verse certainly demonstrates that there is nothing hesitant or indirect about our Lord and His methods. Even before the great slaughter of Armageddon proper commences, He has antichrist

along with his false prophet removed from the head of their armies, thus decapitating the forces arrayed against Jerusalem at the most critical time (a fact that will only intensify the terror of their last moments on earth). Herein we see very clearly the value of walking with the Lord and the terrible folly of making Him an enemy (cf. Jer.30:16), for on that day the judgment He exacts will be swift and severe upon all those who have chosen to oppose Him (cf. Is.10:22-23; Rom.9:28).

The beast, and, for his pivotal role in deceiving the followers of antichrist, the false prophet are immediately “cast alive” into the lake of fire, the final end of all unbelievers and fallen angels (notice that antichrist’s abominations are so extreme and unique in the history of the world that no explanation need be given in the verse above for this immediate seizure and disposition). Not only are these two the first to experience the “second death”,⁷³ but they will do so without the formality of the “last judgment”. This final adjudication is completely unnecessary in their case since they have proven by their extreme words and actions beyond all doubt or argument to the entire world that they never had the slightest interest in responding to God. Indeed, they have opposed Him and His people to such a unique and unprecedented degree that no additional formal process is required to demonstrate their free will choice of the devil over the Lord. Like the fallen angels, their choice has been confirmed to such an extent that human history (and in the case of the beast and his false prophet, their time and actions in it) constitutes their “trial”.

(32) Every stroke the Lord lays on them with his punishing rod will be to the music of tambourines and harps, as he fights them in battle with the blows of his arm. (33) Topheth (i.e., the lake of fire) has long been prepared (cf. Matt.25:41), it has been made ready for the king (i.e., antichrist). ***Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze.***

Isaiah 30:32-33 NIV

Meanwhile, I kept looking on account of the sound of the arrogant words which the horn (i.e., antichrist) was speaking. I kept looking until he was killed and his body destroyed and ***given over to the burning fire.***

Daniel 7:11

And on account of the extreme [nature] of [his] abominations, he [will] be causing desolations (i.e., desertion and estrangement from God), even until the end when what has been determined will be poured out upon the one characterized by [this] desolation (i.e., the beast).

Daniel 9:27b

He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

Daniel 11:45 NIV

⁷³ The second death and the lake of fire will be covered in detail in part 6 of this series.

(13) You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one. You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness, you stripped him from head to foot. Selah (14) With his own spear you pierced his head when his warriors stormed out to scatter us, gloating as though about to devour the wretched who were in hiding.

Habakkuk 3:13-14

(8) And then the lawless one (i.e., antichrist) will be revealed, [that same one] whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and destroy when He appears at His [glorious] return – (9) [that same lawless one] whose appearance [will come about] through Satan’s empowerment [and will be] accompanied by every [sort of] false miracle, both signs and portents, (10) and by every [sort of] unrighteous deception [designed] for those who are perishing, [namely those who will believe these lies] because they did not open themselves up to the love for the truth so as to be saved.

2nd Thessalonians 2:8

5. The Battle of Armageddon: Revelation 19:21

(21) And the rest [of the beast’s forces] were killed by the broadsword which came forth from the mouth of the One riding on the [white] horse. And all of the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

Revelation 19:21

This verse, succinct and to the point, summarizes the essence of what we absolutely need to know about the battle of Armageddon in the context of the book of Revelation: In very short order our Lord will completely destroy the entire collection of antichrist’s armies, giving their flesh to the birds of the air summoned to this great slaughter. One of the reasons that such a pithy summary is possible here is that the final battle preceding the Messiah’s reign is so well-documented elsewhere in scripture, being, in fact, the most prolifically referenced end-times event in the Bible. As the multitude of passages throughout scripture which document Armageddon contain much additional information about the precise course of the final hours of the Tribulation, it will be our purpose here to relate the history of these events beginning with Zechariah 14:2-7, a passage which will need to be considered in some detail.

a. Jesus Christ’s Return to Earth on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:2-7).

Verses 2-3:

(2) For I shall gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against her. The city will be captured, its houses will be sacked, and its women will be ravished. (3) Half of the city

will be taken away captive, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.
Then the Lord will go forth, and He will fight against those nations as when He fights on
a day of battle.
Zechariah 14:2-3

At this point in our treatment of the book of Revelation, we have seen all the nations already gathered in Israel by antichrist and his false prophet. According to the situation described in these two verses, the battle for Jerusalem has been going on now for some considerable time, at least long enough to transport the world's armies to the middle east and reduce most if not all of the rebellion's strong-points shielding Jerusalem (Is.22:8). Given the seven months between the call to Armageddon and Christ's return (see figure #1 above), fighting may have been going on at Jerusalem proper for several months now. The situation at the Messiah's imminent return is dire indeed. Rebel resistance is on the point of collapse, the western half of the city has already been consolidated in the hands of antichrist's troops, and those captured have been harshly used, the women raped (v.2), the young sold into slavery (cf. Joel 3:1-8), and those not killed in the process of the attack now captives of the beast. But now that the situation is at its most desperate, Jesus Christ will come to the rescue of His people (cf. Is.49:24-26: the captives *will* be rescued "from the fierce"). It is often the case that our Lord will bring us to the point of complete helplessness before delivering us, precisely to demonstrate His power, mighty to save (cf. 2Cor.12:10).

The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted 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, times and half a time. *When the power of the holy people has been finally broken*, all these things will be completed."
Daniel 12:7 NIV

It is precisely at this time of seemingly utter hopelessness that the Lord of hope will return, and, after appearing in the heavens above and gathering His Church to Himself, will swiftly descend at the front of His heavenly army to deliver the remnant of His holy people.

(4) This is what the Lord says to me: "As a lion growls, a great lion over its prey – and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against it, it is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor – so the Lord Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. (5) Like birds hovering overhead, the Lord Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will 'pass over' it and will rescue it."
Isaiah 31:4-5 NIV

Verse 4:

For His feet will stand on that day on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east. Then the Mount of Olives will be split in its midst [into] a very great valley

[leading] east and west. For half of the mountain will recede [out of the way] to the north, and half of it to the south.
Zechariah 14:4

As the verse above states plainly, before commencing the slaughter of His enemies, our Lord will first rescue the remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem. He will physically land on the eastern heights of the city known as the Mount of Olives which looks down on the temple and Mount Zion. The Mount of Olives is really a long hog-back ridge running roughly north to south and blocking access to and egress from Jerusalem to the east (absent a time-consuming ascent and descent of this ridge). Cleaving it asunder in this miraculous way will occasion a significant earthquake, prophesied by Ezekiel:

(18) This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign Lord. (19) In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. (20) The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground.

Ezekiel 38:18-20 NIV

Our Lord's astounding splitting of this obstacle in two will greatly facilitate the escape of the beleaguered occupants and defenders of Jerusalem, giving them much needed respite as He proceeds to resolve the Tribulation's final battle. Herein we shall see a fulfillment of the promise of faith for those who now believe: "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him" (Mk.11:23; cf. Matt.21:21; 1Cor.13:2). The moving of the Mount of Olives will be an occasion for great rejoicing, anticipating the victory and deliverance which the Messiah is about provide.

(9) You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" (10) See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm (i.e., Jesus Christ) rules for Him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

Isaiah 40:9-10 (cf. Nah.1:15) NIV

(7) How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (8) Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. (9) Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. (10) The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Verse 5:

Then you will flee by way of the valley of My [two new] mountains, for the valley between the mountains will reach directly over to [you] (i.e., in Jerusalem).⁷⁴ Thus you will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uziah king of Judah (i.e., swiftly). And then the Lord my God will enter [the battle], and all His holy ones with Him.
Zechariah 14:5 (cf. Lk.17:28-33)

The historical earthquake which took place during the days of Uziah king of Judah (ca. 792-740 B.C.), was not accompanied by enemy activity, therefore the direction of the flight of Jerusalem's population was no doubt to the west, down-hill and through the valley approaches to the city, rather than east and up-hill over the Mount of Olives. In this case, with the western approaches occupied by the armies of the beast (which by this time undoubtedly have also flanked the city on the north and the south, east is the only viable direction of retreat, so that this "way of escape" (cf. 1Cor.10:13) opened up by our Lord will be as timely, welcome, and necessary as His opening up of the Red Sea to provide a similar escape from the armies of Pharaoh, a type of antichrist (see part 3B, section I.3.b).

Verses 6-7:

(6) For it will come to pass on that day that there will be no light. [The light of the] heavenly bodies will be withheld (lit., "curdled"). (7) For it will be a unique day, one which is known [only] to the Lord, neither day nor night, and it will come to pass at evening time that there will be light.
Zechariah 14:6-7

These verses harken back by way of explanation to the period before Christ's descent onto the Mount of Olives. Just as the splitting of the mountain to provide deliverance is reminiscent of the Lord's deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh's forces at the Red Sea, so also this picture of supernatural darkness wherein light is miraculously withheld from the enemies of God is a deliberate repetition of the circumstances that obtained before Israel's escape on that former occasion (Josh.24:7; cf. Ex.14:19-20; Ps.105:39).

(2) For behold, the darkness – it will cover the earth, even a deep gloom its peoples. But the Lord will rise over you, and His glory will appear above you. (3) Nations will come to His light, and kings to the brilliance of His rising.
Isaiah 60:2-3

⁷⁴ Reading with a change of vowel pointing, and understanding *etsel* instead of *Atzel*, since verse eight tells us that this will be the *same* valley whereby the water which proceeds from millennial Jerusalem will enter the Arabah, the Jordan rift, and thus must go "*all the way up to (etsel) Jerusalem*".

b. The Terrifying Signs and wonders:

Coincident with our Lord's glorious, resplendent return and His subsequent descent onto the Mount of Olives, various celestial and terrestrial signs and wonders will further serve to terrify the adversaries of God even as they encourage His people. Heaven and earth will be shaken in a dizzying display of the transcendent power of God, events which are well-documented in the prophetic passages which anticipate the Second Advent.

Therefore I will ***shake the heavens***, and the earth will ***quake*** from its place, on account of the anger of the Lord and on the day of His fierce wrath.
Isaiah 13:13 (cf. Is.24:17-20; Matt.24:29; Mk.13:25; Lk.21:25-26)

(6) You will experience visitation (i.e., the judgment of Armageddon) from the Lord of Hosts [Himself], with ***thunder and quaking*** [of the earth] and a loud voice, with ***tempest and whirlwind and devouring flames of fire***. (7) And the hordes of the nations mustering against Ariel (i.e., "Jerusalem") will become like [just] a dream in the visions of the night, even all those who camp against her and her fortress and besiege her.
Isaiah 29:6-7

(2) The Lord is angry with the nations; His wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, He will give them over to slaughter. (3) Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. (4) ***All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.***
Isaiah 34:2-4 NIV

(30) For I will display ***wonders in the heavens and on the earth***, blood and fire and columns of smoke. (31) The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the Day of the Lord, that great and terrible [day].
Joel 2:30-31

(15) The sun and moon will darken, and the stars will gather up their light. (16) Then the Lord will roar from Zion, and from Jerusalem He will let sound His voice, and ***the heavens and the earth will quake***.
Joel 3:15-16

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "In a little while ***I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land***. (7) I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory," says the Lord Almighty.
Haggai 2:6 NIV (cf. Hag.2:21-22; Heb.12:26)

(12) And I saw when He (i.e., the Lamb) opened the sixth seal, a great earthquake occurred, and the sun became black like hairy sackcloth, and the moon became entirely like blood [in appearance], (13) and the stars of heaven fell to the earth like a fig tree casting its fruit when shaken by a strong wind, (14) and the heaven retreated like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and hill was moved from its place. (15) And all the kings of the earth and the prominent men and the generals and the wealthy and the powerful and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and the rocks of the mountains. (16) And [thus] they say to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, (17) because the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand [before them]?” Revelation 6:12-17 (cf. Is.2:19-21; 51:6; 2Pet.3:14)

c. Israel Fights

(1) The Lord said to My Lord, “Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” (2) From Zion the Lord will send forth your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! (3) ***Your people will volunteer on the day of your valor[ous victory]*** (i.e., the armies of Israel). In the holy chambers, from the womb of the dawn, your young [troops] will [come] to you like the dew (i.e., the armies of the resurrected). (4) The Lord has sworn and He will not recant, “You are a priest forever in the manner of Melchizedek.” (5) The Lord is at your right hand. He will shatter [those] kings on the day of His wrath. (6) He will render judgment on the nations. He will shatter [their] head (cf. Gen.3:15) broadly throughout the land filled with corpses [as a result]. (7) ***[But as to His troops]***, they will drink from a brook beside the way. Therefore He will lift up their head (cf. Judg.15). Psalm 110:1-7

In one of the most well-known Messianic Psalms we see very clearly the close connection between our Lord’s return to rule the earth and His support and empowerment of the hard-pressed Israeli forces at the point of His intervention in the battle of Armageddon. Simply put, while Jesus Christ will for the most part destroy the armies of antichrist Himself (by means of the swift sword that proceeds from His mouth: 2Thes.2:8; Rev.1:16; 2:12; 2:16; 19:15; 19:21; cf. Is.11:4; 49:2), Jewish soldiers who repent and turn to Him at the point of His return will be allowed to share in the honor of the final battle. They will be the “willing volunteers” of verse three above, “flocking” to the standard of our Lord as He goes forth to annihilate the forces of the beast, refreshed and energized to play their role in the Tribulation’s ultimate battle (verse seven above).

(9) Proclaim this among the nations! Prepare a holy war! Rouse [all] the mighty men! Let all the men of war come near [and] come up [to Jerusalem]. (10) Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears! Let [even] the feeble man say “I [too] am a mighty man (i.e., fit for service)!” (11) Hurry and come from every direction that you may be assembled there! And Thou, O Lord, Do Thou [likewise] ***bring***

down Thy [own] warriors [there to Jerusalem]. (12) Let the nations be roused [from their places], and let them come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat. For there I will sit in judgment over all the nations on every side. (13) Send forth the sickle for the harvest is ripe! Come down into the winepress for it is full and the vats overflow. For great is their wickedness. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of doom! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of doom. (15) The sun and moon will darken, and the stars will gather up their light. (16) Then the Lord will roar from Zion, and from Jerusalem He will let sound His voice, and the heavens and the earth will quake.
Joel 3:9-16

The battle will turn against the beast first at Jerusalem, the front line where Jewish defenders have so far held off antichrist's forces from re-taking the temple mount in spite of the fall of the city proper (cf. Zech.9:8 "but I will defend My house against marauding forces" with the following verse, Zech.9:10, Messiah's return). Thus Jerusalem, as we saw during our treatment of Armageddon above, along with her Jewish defenders, will be the anvil upon which the Lord will first begin to hammer out the salvation of the Great Day of the Lord. It will not, however, be the place where our Lord's personal treading down of the wine press of Armageddon begins, but rather the place of His final return to assume His throne in the temple at Jerusalem once His victory is complete (Mal.3:1). For just as Joshua in his campaigns to occupy the promised land upon the Israelites' entry into Canaan began his attack in the south then moved to the north (Josh.10-12: Joshua, as we have seen, is a type of Christ, and his campaign is a type of the 2nd Advent), so our Lord will rescue "Judah" before Jerusalem. That is, the slaughter will commence from the south, as our Lord annihilates antichrist's armies which are at this time spread out in a wide arc before the city stretching over hundreds of miles from north to south (with Jerusalem in the concave center of this arced deployment).⁷⁵ That is the essential meaning behind Zechariah 12 wherein the "honor of Jerusalem" is prophesied to be no greater than that of Judah – not because of any relative merit or deficiency, but because the Lord's campaign of Armageddon, while beginning with the splitting of the Mount of Olives and the shielding of Jerusalem, will then proceed to the south, then from south to north, then back southeast to Jerusalem in a triangular or clockwise-shaped route designed to sweep up every last enemy in the net of destruction.

(2) Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of reeling for all the nations round about. And also for Judah there will be a siege against Jerusalem. (3) And it will come to pass on that day that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome rock for all the peoples. All who try to lift it will certainly be ruptured (lit., "lacerated"). For all the nations of the earth will be gathered against her. (4) On that day, says the Lord, I will strike every horse with confusion and every rider with madness. But toward the house of Judah I will open my

⁷⁵ This also explains why at times our Lord's Second Advent is described as coming from a southerly direction, for that is the direction in which His campaign of retribution will proceed: Deut.33:2-5; Is.63:1-6; Hab.3:3-13, on which see esp. vv.13-14 where the reference is to antichrist; Zech.9:14).

eyes. But I will strike with blindness the eyes of every horse of all the peoples [gathered against her]. (5) Then **the generals of Judah** will say in their hearts, “The inhabitants of Jerusalem are a strong support for me through the Lord of Hosts their God!”. (6) On that day **I will make the generals of Judah like a fire pot put to wood and like a fiery torch put to sheaves of grain**. For they will consume on the right hand and on the left all of the peoples round about. Thus Jerusalem will continue to dwell in her place, even in Jerusalem (i.e., she will not be completely deported). (7) But **the Lord will deliver the tents of Judah** first with the result that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants will not be greater than that of Judah. (8) On that day, **the Lord will put His shield around the inhabitants of Jerusalem** so that even those on the point of falling will become like David and the house of David will become like gods (or “angels”), [even] like the Angel of the Lord before them. (9) And it will come to pass on that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations who are attacking Jerusalem.
Zechariah 12:2-9

As can be seen from the passage above, the Spirit of the Lord will both empower and protect the Israeli forces in Jerusalem while our Lord Jesus goes about His work of destroying the armies of antichrist. This protection, inspiration and empowerment for battle of the Jewish army on the Day of the Lord is in fact prophesied in many other passages of scripture:

Like birds hovering overhead, the Lord Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will ‘pass over’ it and will rescue it.”
Isaiah 31:4-5 NIV

(5) On that day (of Armageddon), the Lord of Hosts will be [like] a glorious crown, [like] a beautiful diadem to those who survive among His people. (6) [He will be] a Spirit of [inspiring good] judgment to him who sits in judgment (i.e., the leadership, political and military), and [He will be a Spirit] of [inspiring good] courage to those (i.e., the soldiers) who are turning back the enemy attack (lit., “war”) from the gate.⁷⁶
Isaiah 28:5-6

(11) For at that time many nations will be gathered against you[, O Zion], who will say, “Let her be profaned! And let our eyes look upon Zion [in her defeat]!” (12) But they do not know the plans of the Lord, nor do they understand His purpose. For He has [deliberately] gathered them [to Zion like] tussocks of grain to His threshing floor. (13) “**Wake up and thresh**, daughter of Zion! For I will make your horn a horn of iron, and I will make your hooves into hooves of bronze.”
Micah 4:11-13

⁷⁶ The historical context in this passage is the imminent destruction of the northern kingdom using the day of the Lord paradigm to compare the terrors of Armageddon to Israel’s plight. Note that verse two of Isaiah 28 is a prophetic reference to antichrist (whom the Lord will “throw forcefully to the ground”).

(13) “Indeed, ***I will bend Judah for Myself like a bow*** and I will fill [his bowstring] with Ephraim (i.e., south and north = all of Israel together). I will wield your sons [like a weapon] O Zion (i.e., Jerusalem), against your sons, O Greece (lit., “Javan”, a reference to the origin of antichrist’s typological parallel, Antiochus), and ***I will gird them on like a warrior’s sword.***” (14) ***For the Lord will appear above them***, and His arrows will shoot forth like lightning. And the Lord God will sound the trumpet, and He will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south (cf. Is.21:1). (15) And ***the Lord of Hosts will be a shield around them***, and they will devour (the enemy) and be impervious to [his] sling-stones. And they shall rage [against the enemy] and drink [them down] like wine until they are completely [poured out] like a bowl as [at] the corners of an altar. (16) For the Lord their God will deliver them on that day like the flock of His people.

Zechariah 9:13-16a

(3b) For the Lord of Hosts will give attention to His flock, even the house of Judah, and He will make them like a war-horse in its glory. (4) From [Judah will come] the corner, from [him will come] the peg, from [him will come] the battle-bow – from [him will come] every leader altogether. (5) And ***they will become in that battle like mighty warriors trampling down [the enemy like] mire in the streets.*** (6) For I will make the house of Judah mighty warriors, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will restore them because I love them deeply. And they will be as if I had not rejected them [previously]. For I am the Lord their God, and I will answer them. (7) Then the men of Ephraim will be like mighty warriors, and their hearts will be glad as [when gladdened] with wine.

Zechariah 10:3b-7a

(5) For this One (i.e., the Messiah) will be our peace. When Ashur (i.e., a type of antichrist’s world coalition) comes against our land, and when he tramples upon our fortifications, we will appoint ***seven generals*** (lit., “shepherds”; cf.) against him, even ***eight rulers*** of men (i.e., the seven and the supreme civil commander represented by Shebna in Is.22:20-25). (6) And Ashur will ravage the land with the sword, even [the people of] Nimrod right up to the very entrances [to Jerusalem]. Then He [who is our peace] will deliver [us] from Ashur when he comes against our land and tramples our borders. (7) Then the remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the Lord, like plentiful rains which do not wait for man and which do not tarry for the sons of men (i.e., they will be unstoppable). (8) Then the remnant of Jacob will be among the nations [surrounding Jerusalem], in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep from whom no one can rescue when it passes by and tramples down and mauls. (9) Your hand will be lifted up against your enemies, and all your enemies will be cut down.

Micah 5:5-9a

In the passage above, the “generals of Judah” are seen to be seven in number with an additional commander in charge of the overall operations. For the brief and unspecified “day”, wherein the day begins with darkness, “but at evening, there will be light” (Zech.14:6-7), a day not limited to

any particular span of time (as Joshua's day of victory at Gibeon was supernaturally extended: Josh.10:12-13), the Jewish army will be unstoppable, inspired and empowered by the Lord Himself, even as their enemies flee in terror from before Jerusalem.

And Judah also will fight in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 14:14

(9) Proclaim this among the nations! Prepare a holy war! Rouse [all] the mighty men! Let all the men of war come near [and] come up [to Jerusalem]. (10) Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears! Let [even] the feeble man say "I [too] am a mighty man (i.e., fit for service)!" (11) Hurry and come from every direction that you may be assembled there! And Thou, O Lord, Do Thou [likewise] bring down Thy [own] warriors [there to Jerusalem]. (12) Let the nations be roused [from their places], and let them come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat. For there I will sit in judgment over all the nations on every side. (13) Send forth the sickle for the harvest is ripe! Come down into the winepress for it is full and the vats overflow. For great is their wickedness. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of doom! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of doom. (15) The sun and moon will darken, and the stars will gather up their light. (16) Then the Lord will roar from Zion, and from Jerusalem He will let sound His voice, and the heavens and the earth will quake.

Joel 3:9-16

(9) Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered! Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Prepare for battle, and be shattered! (10) Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us (i.e., "*Immanuel*").

Isaiah 8:9-10

d. The Great Slaughter.

Our Lord Jesus Christ will first return to earth descending upon the Mount of Olives from the east, the direction of the sunrise toward which the temple is oriented (Ex.27:12-13; Ezek.11:23; 41:14; 43:1-4). But in between His splitting of the Mount of Olives and His entrance into the temple at Jerusalem, the nations arrayed against Jerusalem will come to know the full fury of our Lord's wrath and of His zeal for His people.

1) The Vintage:

The slaughter or "vintage" of Armageddon will be carried out by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself by means of the terrible swift sword that proceeds from out His mouth (2Thes.2:8; Rev.1:16; 2:12; 2:16; 19:15; 19:21; cf. Is.11:4; 49:2), for the battle is the Lord's (1Sam.17:47; 2Chron.20:15). Just as Pharaoh and his Egyptian armies raced after Israel into the dry bed of the Red Sea in order to destroy her only to meet their own destruction at His hands, so the massive military forces of the beast have in truth been led to a similar place of slaughter.

(5) The Lord is at your right hand. He will shatter [those] kings on the day of His wrath. (6) He will render judgment on the nations.⁷⁷ He will shatter [their] head (cf. Gen.3:15) broadly throughout the land filled with corpses [as a result].
Psalm 110:5-6

(15) See, the Lord is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. (16) For with fire and with his sword the Lord will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the Lord.
Isaiah 66:15-16 NIV

(11) And I saw the sky above opened up, and, behold, a white horse, and the One seated on it is called “Faithful and True”, and in righteousness He renders judgment and makes war. (12) And His eyes were a flame of fire, and on His head were many [kingly] crowns, with names written [on them] which no one knows except He Himself. (13) And **He is dressed in a robe splattered all about with blood**, and His Name has [always] been called, “The Word of God”. (14) And His armies were following Him in the sky [mounted] on white horses, [and] clad in linen white and pure. (15) And **a sharp broadsword proceeded from His mouth wherewith to smite the nations**, and He Himself will shepherd them with an iron staff, and **He Himself will trample the winepress** of the furious wrath of God the Almighty. (16) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written: “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”. (17) And I saw a single angel having taken his stand in front of the sun. And he cried out in a loud voice, saying to all the birds flying in the sky, “Come, gather together for the great banquet of God, (18) that you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of generals, and the flesh of horses and those who ride upon them, and the flesh of all [these wicked men], free and slave, small and great [alike]”. (19) And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with the One riding on the [white] horse and with His army. (20) And the beast was snatched up and the false prophet along with him, the one who had performed the signs in his presence and had thereby deceived those who had received the mark of the beast, even those who were worshiping his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with sulfur. (21) And the rest [of the beast’s forces] were **killed by the broadsword which came forth from the mouth** of the One riding on the [white] horse. And all of the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.
Revelation 19:11-21

As our context given above again in toto shows, the battle of Armageddon is described as the trampling down of the vintage of grapes in a winepress, a process which cannot help but splatter the one doing the crushing with the “blood of the grape”. This extremely vivid image is meant to impress us with the graphic nature of our Lord’s slaughter of the armies of the beast. For the

⁷⁷ This “judgment on the nations” is likewise a prophesy of Armageddon where all the nations will assemble against Jerusalem (cf. the many prophecies against the nations: Is.14-27; Jer.46-51; Ezek.25; 35; Amos 1-2; Obadiah; Zeph.2).

victory of Jesus Christ at Armageddon will prove beyond any doubt the folly of opposing Him. Thus, His millennial reign, built upon a decisive victory carried out by irresistible force, will set the tone for a time of unparalleled prosperity during our Lord's perfect rule wherein no disobedience or rebellion will be tolerated (thereby allowing the righteous to live in peace).

He (i.e., Judah, and thus the Messiah) will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch (cf. Matt.21:1-8); **he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.**

Genesis 49:11 NIV

(1) Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, **with his garments stained crimson?** Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." (2) **Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress?** (3) **"I have trodden the winepress alone;** from the nations no one was with me. **I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing.** (4) For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. (5) I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so **my own arm** (i.e., the Messiah) worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. (6) **I trampled the nations** in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground."

Isaiah 63:1-6 NIV

(30) "Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: "'The Lord will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who **tread the grapes**, shout against all who live on the earth.

(31) The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth, for the Lord will bring charges against the nations; he will bring judgment on all mankind and put the wicked to the sword,'" declares the Lord. (32) This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Look! Disaster is spreading from nation to nation; a mighty storm is rising from the ends of the earth."

Jeremiah 25:30-32 NIV

(12) Let the nations be roused [from their places], and let them come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat (i.e., the valley of "the Lord will judge"). For there I will sit in judgment over all the nations on every side. (13) **Send forth the sickle for the harvest is ripe!** Come down **into the winepress for it is full and the vats overflow.** For great is their wickedness. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of doom! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of doom. (15) The sun and moon will darken, and the stars will gather up their light. (16) Then the Lord will roar from Zion, and from Jerusalem He will let sound His voice, and the heavens and the earth will quake.

Joel 3:12-16

(17) Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

(18) And another angel came out from before the altar, [the one] having authority over the

fire (i.e., of judgment), and he shouted in a loud voice to the [angel] with the sharp sickle, saying “Send forth your sharp sickle and **gather up the clusters of the earth’s vineyard, because its bunches [of grapes] are ripe**”. (19) And the angel cast forth his sickle onto the earth, and **he gathered up the vintage of the earth and threw [it] into the great winepress of God’s wrath**. (20) And **the winepress was trodden down** outside of the city. And **blood from the winepress went forth** up to the horses’ bridles for a distance of twelve hundred stadia (i.e., approx. 143 miles).

Revelation 14:17-20

As in the case of the destruction of Pharaoh’s army, this slaughter will be complete, leaving no survivors. All who participate on behalf of antichrist and his father the devil are deemed fully culpable for their actions, and will pay with their lives.

(2) The Lord is angry with the nations; His wrath is upon all their armies. He will **totally destroy them**, He will give them over to slaughter. (3) Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood.

Isaiah 34:2-3 NIV

(21) I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign Lord. Every man's sword will be against his brother. (22) I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; **I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur** on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. (23) And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.

Ezekiel 38:21-23 NIV

2) The Plague and the Madness:

The soldiers of the beast’s armies who are not destroyed by the Lord Himself, by His terrible swift sword or the plague of hail and burning sulfur (Ezek.38:21-23; cf. Is.29:6), and all who do not perish at the hands of the reinvigorated Jewish army, will fall by the swords of their very own fellow soldiers (cf. Judg.7:22; 1Sam.14:20; 2Chron.20:23; Is.19:2), or else will rot in place while still standing on their feet, until every last enemy of the Lord has been destroyed. This *combination* of such divinely inflicted madness and this terrifying plague are unique in human history. Such is the folly of opposing the Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

(12) And this is the plague with which the Lord will smite all the peoples who marshal themselves against Jerusalem: **Their flesh will rot even as they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths**. (13) And it will come to pass on that day that **a great madness** from the Lord will fall upon them, so that everyone will grab hold of the hand of his comrade and will lift up his hand against his comrade (i.e., they will attack each other). (14) And Judah also will fight in Jerusalem. The wealth of all the nations round about will be gathered up, their gold and silver and clothing in abundance. (15) And thus also a plague will befall their horses,

mules, camels, donkeys, and all [the other] animals in their camps just like this plague [that befalls the soldiers].
Zechariah 14:12-15

I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, ***each by the sword of his brother.***
Haggai 2:22 NIV

On that day, says the Lord, ***I will strike every horse with confusion and every rider with madness.*** But toward the house of Judah I will open my eyes. But I will strike with blindness the eyes of every horse of all the peoples [gathered against her].
Zechariah 12:4

(24) Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives rescued from the fierce? (25) But this is what the Lord says: “Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save. (26) ***I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh; they will be drunk on their own blood, as with wine.*** Then all mankind will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”
Isaiah 49:24-26 NIV

(21) I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign Lord. Every man's sword will be against his brother. (22) ***I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed;*** I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. (23) And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.
Ezekiel 38:21-23 NIV

3) The Winepress of Armageddon

(12) Let the nations be roused [from their places], and let them come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat. For there I will sit in judgment over all the nations on every side. (13) Send forth the sickle for the harvest is ripe! ***Come down into the winepress*** for it is full and the vats overflow. For great is their wickedness. (14) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of doom! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of doom.
Joel 3:12-14

The valley of Jehoshaphat, mentioned only here in scripture and meaning “The Lord will judge”, is a poetic designation for the system of ravines and wadis sloping down from Jerusalem

generally westward (and branching off to the north and south as well).⁷⁸ As the natural highways of approach, these areas will be filled with antichrist's forces, from his forward combat units to their rearmost logistical tails.

(2) The Lord is angry with the nations; His wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, He will give them over to slaughter. (3) Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; ***the mountains will be soaked with their blood.***
Isaiah 34:2-3 NIV

As this passage shows, the slaughter will not be limited to the network of valleys to the west of Jerusalem, but will cover the entire area wherein the forces of antichrist are amassed. Since the ridges separating the valleys are the high ground whereon the defense will no doubt be concentrated, these obviously cannot be ignored in the assault on Jerusalem. We may expect some of the best shock units to be assigned the task of clearing the ridges, working their way towards Jerusalem in this manner. The total area of deployment necessary for assembling the world's armies and organizing an attack on the entire Judean hill country will thus of necessity be quite large indeed. The book of Revelation itself gives some very specific details about the extent of this "winepress" or "killing field", the place of the last stand of the devil's earthly armies under his son the beast.

(17) Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.
(18) And another angel came out from before the altar, [the one] having authority over the fire (i.e., of judgment), and he shouted in a loud voice to the [angel] with the sharp sickle, saying "Send forth your sharp sickle and gather up the clusters of the earth's vineyard, because its bunches [of grapes] are ripe". (19) And the angel cast forth his sickle onto the earth, and he gathered up the vintage of the earth and threw [it] into ***the great winepress of God's wrath.*** (20) And ***the winepress was trodden down outside of the city.*** And blood from the winepress went forth up to the horses' bridles for a distance of twelve hundred stadia (i.e., approx. 143 miles).
Revelation 14:17-20

Centered on Jerusalem, this distance covers from the northern part of contemporary Israel from a point roughly even in latitude with the Sea of Galilee, to a point some twenty miles south of the southern most extremity of the Dead Sea.

(3) God will come from Teman, even the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory will cover the heavens, and His praise will fill the earth. (4) His splendor will shine forth like the light [itself] (i.e., brighter than the sun). Rays [of light will shoot forth] from His

⁷⁸ As to the eastern approaches of the Kidron valley which separates the city of David from the Mount of Olives, although this is often conjectured to be the valley referred to here, the fact that the population of Jerusalem will have to flee *across* the Kidron valley through the split-open Mount of Olives is a fatal flaw for that particular interpretation.

hand, and there His hidden power [will be revealed]. (5) Plague goes before Him, and bolts of lightning follow in His train. (6) He will take His stand, then take the measure of the earth. He will take in the sight, then cut off the nations.
Habakkuk 3:3-6

Temán and Mount Paran are located in the Negev (or, alternatively, in biblical Edom) south of the Dead Sea and thus south of Jerusalem,⁷⁹ and mark the southern boundary of the beast's major military deployments. In these verses we see our Lord's campaign of annihilation of the armies of antichrist being carried out in complete consonance with the other passages quoted above, only here the direction of the assault is made clear: it will begin with the southern flank of antichrist's armies and finish in the north (exactly as in the case of Joshua's campaigns to occupy the promised land: Josh.6-12; cf. Judg.5:4; Ps.68:4-17; Is.40:3-5).

(20) I will drive the northern army far from you, pushing it into a parched and barren land, with its front columns going into the eastern sea and those in the rear into the western sea. And its stench will go up; its smell will rise." Surely he has done great things.

Joel 2:20 NIV

The armies of the beast are described in toto here as "northern" because that is the compass point from which most of them will enter into the land of Israel.⁸⁰ Here we see the reaction of the nations to the terrifying sight of our Lord in all His glory cutting a wide swath through the very heart of their army. In their crazed panic, many will flee to the west and northwest and perish in the Mediterranean Sea, while many others will flee to the southeast and perish in the Dead Sea (again, reminiscent of the panic and demise of the Egyptian army; cf. Ex.14:24-25).

(27) See, the Name of the Lord comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; his lips are full of wrath, and his tongue is a consuming fire. (28) His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck. He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; he places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that *leads them astray*.

Isaiah 30:27-28 NIV

Still others, fleeing from the advancing terror, will flee into the trackless desert of the Negev directly south of Jerusalem, far from any civilized habitation. Ezekiel 39:11 describes a probable specific concentration of the slaughter of the southern wing, the valley of "Hamon-Gog" (i.e.,

⁷⁹ See M.F. Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody, 1981), *in loc*.

⁸⁰ Antichrist is also described as "king of the north" in Daniel for the same reason (Dan.11:21-45). In the earlier context of our present passage, Joel 2:11, we see a rapid-fire switch from the description of the locust to this section dealing primarily with the 2nd Advent, a common phenomenon in biblical prophecy according to the Day of the Lord paradigm as we have seen now many times in our study of the Coming Tribulation (see part 1, section IV.1.b).

“Gog’s multitude”) which will be given as a burial place generally for the remains of antichrist’s soldiers in order to cleanse the land of ritual pollution (Ezek.39:12-16). Connecting the idea of the winepress with this otherwise unknown southern valley, we may perhaps identify it very tentatively as the “Great Crater” (or, more literally, “Great Mortar”) south of present day Dimona, a geographical feature which resembles an ancient wine-press and whose general location, orientation, and physical features certainly fit a scenario which finds a large portion of the southern wing of the beast’s army pouring headlong into this inescapable killing field in a manner comparable to their comrades’ rushing into the Dead Sea to their deaths. The following chart summarizes the information we are given about the Messiah’s campaign, the winepress of Armageddon.

See figure #2 at rear: “The Winepress of Armageddon”

After splitting the Mount of Olives and securing the safe retreat of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, our Lord will “pass over Jerusalem” (Is.31:4-5), breathing courage into its defenders and sowing intense panic in the hearts of its assailants. Then He will begin His campaign of destruction, heading first to the south and the slaughter of the southern winepress, turning then to the north and the remaining wing of the beast’s army, all the while driving the terrified survivors fleeing in a deranged panic to their deaths in the eastern and western seas, and ending His flying campaign of slaughter in Jerusalem, where, all His enemies destroyed, He will take His seat in the temple as the true Messiah to rule Israel and the entire world from Jerusalem during His blessed millennial reign. Between the swift sword which will proceed from our Lord’s mouth, the inspired counter-attacks of the Jewish army, the plague that will smite down many who will rot while yet standing on their feet, and the uncontrollable madness and panic which will drive the rest into the waters of the Mediterranean and Dead seas westward and eastward, the forces of antichrist will be utterly destroyed – there will be no survivors.

(12) Oh, the raging of many nations – they rage like the raging of the sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples – they roar like the roaring of great waters! (13) Although the peoples roar like the roar of surging waters, when he rebukes them they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills, like tumbleweed before a gale. (14) In the evening, sudden terror! Before the morning, **they are gone!** This is the portion of those who loot us, the lot of those who plunder us.

Isaiah 17:12-14 NIV

In this way too, our Lord will see to it that the land of Israel will be kept from being so entirely polluted by the slaughter of Armageddon that functional life in its aftermath might be impossible. Those enemy soldiers not driven into the seas or deserts or consumed by the plague will be feasted upon by the carrion eating birds of the entire world, summoned to Israel by angelic agency for just this purpose (Ezek.39:1-5; 17-20; Rev.19:17-18). The remainders of the slaughter, the bones of the dead, will be systematically purged from the land, buried in the “valley of Hamon-Gog”, far from the populated areas of the land. Though this army shall have

been the largest ever assembled in one place in human history, in short order nothing will remain.⁸¹

(7) And the hordes of the nations mustering against Ariel will become like [just] a dream in the visions of the night, even all those who camp against her and her fortress and besiege her. (8) And it will be as when a hungry man dreams he is eating, but when he awakes his appetite remains unfulfilled, or as when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking, but when he awakes his thirst remains. This is how it will be for the multitude of all the nations who are going to marshal themselves against Mount Zion.

Isaiah 29:7-8

6. The Humbling of the Wicked and the Joy of the Redeemed.

The complete defeat and total annihilation of antichrist along with all his earthly forces, the concomitant defeat of Satan and his legions and their removal from the world (to be covered in the following installment of this series), and our Lord's vindication of all the words and promises of God evidenced by this awesome victory, followed by His session in the temple of Jerusalem as the true Messiah – all of these things will be a cause of utter terror to the wicked who remain (Rev.6:16-17; cf. Is.2:10-21; Hos.10:8; Mal.3:2; Lk.21:25-27; 23:30), of abject humiliation to the proud who had cast their lot with the beast (Is.2:9-22; 5:15-16; 13:11-12; 23:9; 26:1-5; Zeph.3:11; Mal.4:1; cf. 1Sam.2:1-10; 2Sam.22:28; Lk.1:51-53), but of unrestrained joy and jubilation to the people of God (as attested by the many hymns in scripture which anticipate that great Day of Days: e.g., Ps.9:7-8; 45:1ff; 75:1ff; 76:1-3; 93:1-100:1ff; Is.9:2-7; 12:1ff; 14:1ff; 25:1-27:1ff; 30:27-29; 35:1ff; 52:7-10).

(1) "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. *All the arrogant and every evildoer* will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. (2) *But for you who revere my name*, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. (3) Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the Lord Almighty.

Malachi 4:1-3

The time has now come for the meek to inherit the earth (Matt.5:5; cf. Ps.37:11; Zeph.2:1-3), and our Lord Jesus Christ's astoundingly blessed millennial reign will begin with the unleashing of a torrent of emotion, as the way of the world as it seemingly always has been is turned on its head (cf. 2Pet.3:3-13). Many who were first will be last, and the last first as the promises of retribution upon the wicked who oppose God find their experiential fulfillment at last (Matt.19:30; 20:16; Mk.10:31; Lk.13:30), while those who have now set themselves to seek God

⁸¹ Not even the naval forces of the beast will be immune from this total annihilation: Ps.48:4-7 [Hebrew]; Is.2:16-17; cf. Ps.72:10; Is.33:21-23; 43:14.

in humility and truth experience the relief, the deliverance, and the joy of “God with us” in the Person of the Savior Himself, come to rule the world in righteousness (cf. Is.51:14; 61:1-3).

(14) They raise their voices, they shout for joy; from the west they acclaim the Lord’s majesty. (15) Therefore in the east give glory to the Lord; exalt the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea. (16) From the ends of the earth we hear singing: “Glory to the Righteous One.”

Isaiah 24:14-16a NIV

Despite the amazing might of the beast and all his depredations, despite the harsh rule of his father the devil over this scarred world for some six thousand years, in the end, the day came when all their fortresses fell (Is.30:25; 31:9; Dan.11:38-39; Zeph.1:16; 3:6; 3:15; cf. Is.2:15; 23:11-14; 25:2; 25:12; Amos 1:10; 6:8; Ob.1:3; Mic.5:11; Zech.9:3), at the hands of the One who died for us that we might live for Him.

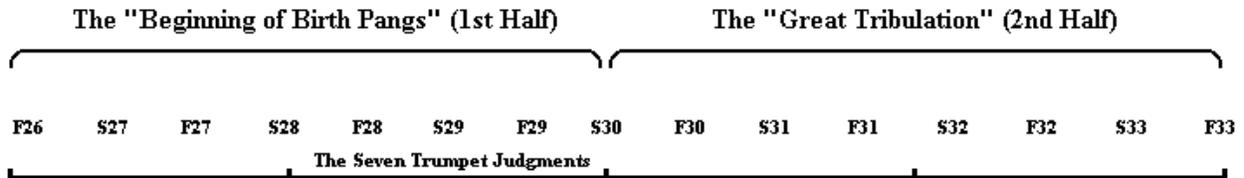
(24) The Lord Almighty has sworn, “Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. (25) I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down. His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders.” (26) ***This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations.*** (27) For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

Isaiah 14:24-27 NIV (cf. Prov.21:30)

The Seven Bowl Judgments

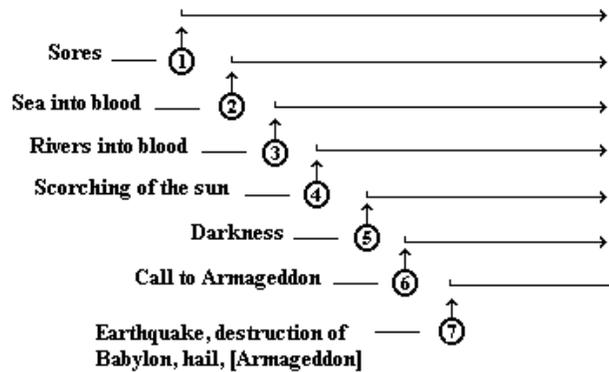
Revelation 15:1 - 16:21

— The Tribulation —



- Bowl #1 = 12 months
- Bowl #2 = 11 months
- Bowl #3 = 10 months
- Bowl #4 = 9 months
- Bowl #5 = 8 months
- Bowl #6 = 7 months
- Bowl #7 = 6 months

63 months of judgment
(same as trumpet judgments but concentrated in a one year period)



The Winepress of Armageddon

