

INTRODUCTION:

In Part-4 we covered the breaking of the first six seals (Chapter 6) and the interlude between the sixth and seventh seal (Chapter 7). You will note that the plagues associated with the first four seals were primarily earthly, and although caused by the influence of Satan through the “spirit of the antichrist,” they are inflicted by people following his influence. During this time of great tribulation many will not recognize or acknowledge that Satan is the root cause. War, famine and death have always been a part of this world, and therefore do not require belief in invisible forces of good and evil, of God and Satan. Part-5 will consist of chapters 8 through 11, which cover the breaking of the seventh seal and the seven trumpets that follow. The breaking of the seventh seal seems to be in stark contrast with that of the sixth, causing not massive destruction or cosmic disturbances, but bringing only silence in heaven. But the seventh seal does seem to open a door and mark a transition. The wrath being poured out upon the earth will now shift from being man-made to cosmic and supernatural in nature. The first four trumpets will cause destruction to rain down upon the earth from the heavens destroying a third of the plants, a third of the sea and all that lives in it, poisoning a third of the waters that provide us drink, and darkening a third of the sun, moon and stars. The darkening of the sun, moon and stars may create some confusion because with the previous sixth seal the sun was already darkened, the moon turned to blood and the stars had fallen from the sky. We will address this seeming contradiction below. The first four trumpets are horrific, but those that follow are much worse and are given more extensive descriptions. The fifth trumpet unleashes the horror of darkness and affliction from the bottomless pit. Likewise, the sixth trumpet unleashes the four angels of destruction and an army of 200,000,000 supernatural warriors to kill a third of mankind that have survived to this point. The final and seventh trumpet is like the seventh seal. It does not bring further destruction but marks another transition. It heralds the announcement that the reign of Christ will now begin. Let us now examine these chapters searching for answers and meaning that will inform our faith. May we also find further assurance that even in God’s administration of justice, He continues to provide opportunity for repentance and mercy to those who will turn back to Him.

CHAPTER 8:

This chapter describes the first four trumpets and the breaking of the seventh seal which seems to be the doorway through which the seven trumpets enter. The plagues associated with the first four seals can be assumed will stretch over a period of time but may happen rapidly. They may already be happening. War and the famine and death that follow it take time to take their toll. Many believe the breaking of the seals marks the first three and half years of the Tribulation, which is also understood to be the less severe portion. The trumpets may occur at a faster rate and it is clearly implied they will be much worse.

The Seventh Seal:

Revelation 8:1, states: ***“And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”*** The breaking of the sixth seal brought forth cosmic events in the heavens and an earthquake that moved every mountain and island out of their places. But with the breaking of the seventh sea we are given only ***“silence in heaven.”*** We are not told that the earth is silent but only heaven. Perhaps heaven stands in silence in anticipation of all that is about to follow. Some believe the silence is provided to allow God to hear the praises and petitions of the saints requesting that final judgment be administered. Silence can also be clearly symbolic for death. Psalm 115:17 reads: ***“The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence.”*** Perhaps God waits in silence listening for the voice of repentance, but the souls of the unrepentant are dead and the dead make no sound of praise or repentance. Note that the time is limited to only about a half-hour. God will no longer allow delay. It is time for the wicked to be punished.

Revelation 8:2, states: ***“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them.”*** This is the first mention of “seven angels” standing before God, but there have been several references to the seven Spirits of God. The only previous reference to seven angels in Revelation were the seven angels of the seven churches, which we were told were represented as seven stars in the right hand of the One upon the throne. But we have seen how all of these are interconnected in that God sent His seven Spirits to dwell in the seven churches, which are seven golden lamp stands, which hold seven lamps, which are the seven Spirits of God. Revelation 1:20, stated: ***“As***

for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp stands are the seven churches.” Revelation 4:5 completed the circle stating: *“And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”* We cannot be certain but perhaps the seven angels are the seven angels of the churches empowered by the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 8:3-4, states: *“And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel’s hand.”* In Revelation 5:8 we were told that the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders before the throne of God were given *“golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”* A censer is a device which holds fire and on which incense is placed. The fire heats the incense creating a sweet smelling smoke. A censer with incense was used in the worship of God, and these are still used by many churches. In some cases a censer with incense was used to intercede with God. Such is the example found in Numbers 16:46 when Moses ordered Aaron to use one to make atonement for the congregation to prevent them from suffering God’s wrath because they had grumbled against Moses and Aaron. In this case, the prayers of the saints may contain their petitions for justice such as we heard in their voices in Revelation 6:10.

Revelation 8:5, states: *“And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.”* Wow, what a contrast! The same censer that has just been used to offer the prayers of the saints to God is now refilled with fire from the altar and thrown to the earth. The thunder, lightning and earthquake also stand in stark contrast to the half-hour of silence. The prayers have been heard and punishment is about to be heralded through seven trumpets.

Revelation 8:6, states: *“And the seven angles who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.”* Some see the seven trumpets as something separate from the seventh seal, but others believe the seven trumpets represent the

sevenfold calamity of the seventh seal, seven woes spoken against the wicked. I use the term “spoken” because as we heard in Revelation 1:10 and 4:1, God’s voice is like the sound of a trumpet. I believe the seven trumpets are seven woes resulting from the breaking of the seventh seal. I believe they are directed at the wicked and not the righteous. I am not convinced that all of God’s children will be taken to heaven through the Rapture. I believe this is possible, but I am more inclined to believe that righteous witnesses will remain on earth until the very end. But I am absolutely certain, even though many righteous will suffer and die during this time for their faith, that in the end God will protect His children wherever they are—in heaven or on the earth.

The First Four of Seven Trumpets:

Revelation 8:7, states: ***“And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned.”*** The rain of hail and fire is similar to the seventh plague which fell upon Egypt as found in Exodus 9:13-26. This plague did not only destroy grass and trees but killed people and livestock which were not brought under cover. God warned His people before the plague came so only those who disbelieved became victim of the plague. Likewise, God made a distinction, having the plague fall upon Egypt but not upon Goshen where the sons of Israel were. The mix of blood was not mentioned in Exodus. This plague in Revelation could be much more severe or the blood could be a reference to the death that will come upon those who disbelieve, and do not seek shelter from the hail storm. It could also be connected to the blood of the saints which cried out for justice, and the wicked to be punished. It should be noted that while only a third of the earth was burned up, all of the grass was burned. Grass is the food of livestock, so it might be implied that this plague on the land is intended to cut off the food we receive from the land, both meat and vegetation.

Revelation 8:8-9, states: ***“And the second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood; and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.”*** The description of a great mountain burning

with fire leads many to believe this will be like a meteor or asteroid, but the emphasis is not placed on the destruction such an impact would cause, but a poisoning of the sea. Whatever strikes the sea will destroy ships, so there will be a physical destruction associated with its striking, but it will also change the water into blood and kill one third of all sea life. In the first plague against Egypt as found in Exodus 7:19-21, the waters were turned to blood. The real implication, like with the first trumpet above, is that a third of our food from the sea will be cut off. With each trumpet blast our source of food provided by God from the creation of the world is diminished. What God provided to mankind to sustain us is being systematically taken away at the end.

Revelation 8:10-11, states: ***“And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.”*** This is the third time that something burning with fire has fallen from heaven. Peters says, ***“The present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men”*** (2 Peter 3:7). The first fire destroyed the plants, the second destroyed the fish of the sea, and now the third will poison a third of the drinking waters of the earth. This plague seems to fulfill God’s promise through the prophet Jeremiah regarding how He will punish those who spread false prophecy or false teachings. God said, ***“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, ‘Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood and make them drink poisonous water, for from the prophets of Jerusalem pollution has gone forth into all the land’*** (Jeremiah 23:15). We do not know the form of this pollution, but we may have a clue in the word Chernobyl, from the Ukraine Bible, which means “Wormwood.” The nuclear accident at Chernobyl polluted the ground water, and the radiation caused thousands to die, and tens of thousands to become sick. Will some future nuclear exchange or accident pollute one third of the drinking waters of the world?

Revelation 8:12, states: ***“And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.”*** It is difficult to know exactly how to reconcile this scene with the previous

description of the sun being darkened, the moon being turned to blood, and the stars falling from the sky found with the breaking of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:12-13. We can only assume that these signs were temporary, and the lights of the sky have reappeared. What is different this time is that the light is not dimmed (a reduction of quantity) but cut back in length (a reduction of time). In other words the day and night have become one-third shorter. Because in the creation God gave us the sun, moon and stars to measure time and seasons, the message here may be that “time is being shortened.” Also with the reduction of light, there would be a reduction in growth in the food we grow which requires earth, water and sunlight. With the sounding of the third trumpet, all food and water had been reduced by one third. Is the punishment perhaps fitting? The wicked have starved the righteous and shed their blood. Now the wicked will go hungry and be forced to drink blood (water turned bitter by wormwood).

Revelation 8:13, states: ***“And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”*** The first four trumpets have rendered only partial destruction falling down upon the earth. All have fallen from the sky and may be supernatural rather than natural events. Some believe that it is angels who have fallen; bringing and spreading the plagues. This would make sense in that the plagues are not localized, as could be expected if a natural object such as a meteor struck the earth from space. The nature of these first three trumpets is not to kill but cause suffering, even though we are told some will die as a result of these plagues. Perhaps God does not want the wicked to escape through death but to suffer. Or perhaps God is providing a continuing opportunity for repentance. Verse 13 provides another interlude and a warning that the three remaining plagues will be much more severe. It is hard for us to believe that in light of all of these signs and plagues, people would not repent and turn to God for safety. Perhaps by this time, the separation of good from evil will be so complete, that no one will be willing to change. Perhaps the pride of the wicked runs so deep that they would rather die than change... would rather curse God than surrender to Him and receive life.

CHAPTER 9:

Chapter nine contains the description of the fifth and sixth trumpets, which are the first two of the final three and most severe punishments. The fifth trumpet opens the bottomless pit and “releases” locust-like creatures which torment mankind for five months. The sixth trumpet “releases” four angels and their supernatural army of two hundred million who kill a third of mankind still remaining. It is very important to note that the torture and death inflicted by these two events is not directed to the faithful but the unrepentant. Chapter 9 ends stating that the people did not repent but continued to worship demons and idols and live immoral lives.

Revelation 9:1, states: ***“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.”*** You will note that the key to the bottomless pit is given to ***“a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth.”*** It seems clear that this must be a “fallen angel” and perhaps even Satan himself who is leader over the fallen angels. Part of our interpretation of this can be supported by words found in Isaiah 14:12-15, which states: ***“How you have fallen from heaven, o star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.”*** While Isaiah is actually speaking about the king of Babylon, he may also be speaking of the evil one who influences and leads earthly kings against God’s people. One thing is certain. God is in control. The fallen angel cannot open the pit unless he is given the key or the permission of God. This is similar to the story of Job, when Satan could not inflict hardship upon Job without God’s permission and could only harm Job to the degree God allowed.

Regarding the pit, some scholars believe this is neither Sheol, the temporary dwelling of the spirits of the dead from the Old Testament, nor is it the place of final and eternal punishment, which in Revelation is described as the lake of fire, the equivalent of Hell. They believe it is a holding place where demons are imprisoned. For example, Revelation 20:1 speaks of an abyss where Satan will be bound in chains for a thousand

years. In Luke 8:31 the demons possessing the man asked Jesus to cast them into the pigs rather than ***“command them to depart into the abyss.”*** Also supporting this place as a place where fallen angels are sent, in 2 Peter 2:4 Peter states: ***“God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment.”*** Of course, we find ourselves at this point in Revelation at the time of “the judgment,” so this may also imply that what is released from the pit are fallen angels, which we better know as demons.

The Fifth Trumpet:

Revelation 9:2, states: ***“And he opened the bottomless pit; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.”*** As stated above, the bottomless pit, also translated as the pit or the abyss, is a place where angels and perhaps others are held awaiting the judgment of God. It is a terrible place of fire and smoke, therefore when it is opened, smoke rises from this place blocking out the sun and creating darkness.

Revelation 9:3, states: ***“And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.”*** We are reminded of the eighth plague, which was the plague of locusts that fell upon Egypt, causing the sky to darken (Exodus 10:4-15). Likewise, swarms of locusts are predicted in Joel 1:2-11 and 2:1-11 as precursors of the day of the Lord. These are not ordinary locusts but have been given the power or perhaps permission to sting and torment man.

Revelation 9:4, states: ***“And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth; nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.”*** Again, normal locusts eat green vegetation and do not have stingers and do not harm people. These locusts are commanded by God not to harm plants, but to inflict pain on people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Their purpose is only to inflict pain and torment on the unrepentant.

Revelation 9:5, states: ***“And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.”*** Here we hear the limitations that are placed on the locusts. They cannot kill but only torment, and they can do so for only five months. The sting of a scorpion is very painful and feels like a great burning, but is rarely fatal. This plague will be

terrifying in that mankind will be inflicted with terrible pain which comes out of, or is perhaps hidden in darkness for five months. I do not know if the “five month” length of time is significant and can find no similar reference in Scripture other than that Elizabeth was in seclusion for “five months” after she became pregnant with John the Baptist.

Revelation 9:6, states: ***“And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die and death flees from them.”*** The torment of this time will indeed be severe if men will prefer to die than to suffer it, but they will not be able to escape it through death. This seems clearly a supernatural event because even suicide is no longer an option. People cannot end their physical lives—they cannot escape punishment through death. Verses 20-21, which will follow, make it clear that this time of torture without death is a final time given to allow man to repent of his sins.

Revelation 9:7-10, states: ***“And the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. And they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. And they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.”*** The locusts are described as armored and winged cavalry horses with long hair, large teeth, human faces, and stinging tails. They are not real locusts but supernatural beings and most likely demons who have been given power to harm men. The gold crowns they wear may be symbolic of the authority they have been given to do harm.

Revelation 9:11, states: ***“They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.”*** The literal meaning of the names “Abaddon” and “Apollyon” are respectively, “destruction” and “destroyer.” The Hebrew word “Abaddon” is found six times in the Old Testament. In Job 31:12 it means “destruction” or “ruin.” In Job 28:22 it equates to “death.” In Psalm 88:11 it is comparable to the “grave.” In Job 26:6 and Proverbs 15:11 and 27:20 it refers to the region of the damned. The Greek equivalent word of “Apollyon” has very similar meaning, but rather than “destruction” or “death” it more literally means “the

destroyer,” which is a good description of Satan. In any case, the king of the locusts is certainly one who brings destruction.

Revelation 9:12, states: ***“The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.”*** As we have seen numerous times throughout Revelation, some verses are set as boundaries, marking the completion of one event and warning of what will follow. Of the final three woes brought about through the seven trumpets, one is now complete, and the other two are about to follow. These announcements indicate a pattern of warnings by which man has opportunity to reflect on what has happened and repent.

The Sixth Trumpet:

Revelation 9:13-14, states: ***“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”*** It is not clear if these four angels are the same four angels found in Revelation 7:1-2 who were ***“holding back the four winds of the earth”*** and were ***“granted to harm the earth and the sea.”*** These angels are bound, or held back from releasing their destruction, at the great river Euphrates, which is located north and east of Israel. This river ran through ancient Babylon and today runs through the regions of Kuwait, Iraq and Syria. This may mean that the area around the Euphrates River is where destruction will begin, come from, or be centered. Two Old Testament Scriptures seem to connect with Revelation 9:13-14. First, in reference to the deliverance of Israel in a day when a “great trumpet” will be blown, Isaiah 27:12-13 states: ***“And it will come about in that day, that the Lord will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. It will come about also in that day a great trumpet will be blown; and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.”*** This passage seems to support the notion that final punishment will begin in the Middle East in the nations which today are predominately Islamic and enemies of Israel. At the same time God will gather and protect the people of Israel, and they will worship on His holy mountain in Jerusalem. The second reference centers on punishment which will come upon the

arrival of the great Day of the Lord. Jeremiah 46:10 states: ***“For that day belongs to the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes; and the sword will devour and be satiated and drink its fill of their blood; for there will be a slaughter for the Lord God of hosts in the land of the north by the river Euphrates.”*** Again, this passage seems to indicate that punishment will begin or be focused in the Middle East near the Euphrates River. Also in reference to Islam, Hebrews provides evidence that judgment will be most fierce against those who have rejected the Son of God. Hebrews 10:28-31 reads: ***“Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge His people.””***

Revelation 9:15, states: ***“And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind.”*** Clearly, God has set a very specific time for punishment. It will begin at a particular hour, day, month, and year that He has chosen. Different from the fifth trumpet which brought about pain without death, the sixth trumpet marks the beginning of a great but still limited slaughter of humankind. We are told the angels are to kill only one third of all men, which we presume are of those who are not marked as belonging to God.

Revelation 9:16, states: ***“And the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.”*** The number may be symbolic, being twice ten thousand times ten thousand. Many think this vast army will come from China because it is the only country in the region with a large enough population to produce such a vast army, but the description which follows in verse 17 would suggest that these are not human but supernatural beings. In either case, it is the most massive army that ever marched into battle taking the greatest toll ever afflicted on humankind.

Revelation 9:17, states: ***“And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their***

mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.” Fire is red, hyacinth is a deep blue and brimstone is associated with sulfur, which is yellow. The significance of these colors is not clear, but a lion was equated as a symbol of power and authority, and thus it is from the mouth of the lion head that destruction comes forth in the form of fire, smoke and brimstone.

Revelation 9:18, states: ***“A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths.”***

God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with a rain of fire and brimstone. It is interesting, that along with smoke, these three elements are designated as “three plagues.” Clearly, people are to be killed by fire and by brimstone and by smoke.

Revelation 9:19, states: ***“For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads; and with them they do harm.”*** It is important to note that it is not the riders who kill but the horses. Power is in their heads and tails (which have heads). Death comes from the lion heads and harm from the serpent tails. The description we have from verses 17 and 19 do not correlate with any modern soldier or machine of war. We have to stretch the symbolism to make it fit any man made weapon of war we have today. It is more likely that the description is of supernatural beings and probably demons of some form given permission by God to destroy one third of humankind.

Revelation 9:20-21, states: ***“And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.”*** These verses give us insight to why God’s punishment has been only partial up to this point. Mankind is still being given opportunity to repent and stop sinning against God. But we are told that mankind fails to repent of the ***“works of their hands.”*** This means that man’s “actions” or “works” continued unrepentant. It is not enough to simply repent with words. Words must become manifest in our actions. As long as we put material things before God we are guilty of idolatry. As long as we act selfishly, harming others and taking from others for personal gain, and as long as we put our faith in things other than God, we remain

unrepentant. The message of Revelation continues to be a call for repentance while there is still time, because at some point, time will run out and judgment will come.

CHAPTER 10:

As the opening of the seventh seal was delayed by two scenes in chapter 7, so the blowing of the seventh trumpet must wait upon the scenes in 10:1—11:14. What we see in chapter 10 are very similar images as those seen in Ezekiel, chapters 1 through 3. Chapter 10 forms an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets. Here we have the only thing that remains sealed and is not revealed. When John heard the voice of the seven thunders, he started to write, but he heard a voice from heaven saying to him, ***“Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, and do not write them”*** (Rev. 10:4). In this chapter, we also read of a little book which was as sweet as honey in John’s mouth, but which became bitter in his stomach. Chapter 10 will proclaim that with the seventh trumpet, delay of punishment will end, but also will end the time and opportunity for repentance.

Revelation 10:1-3, states: ***“And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book which was open. And he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.”*** The imagery in these three verses is similar to imagery found in the first three chapters of Ezekiel.

Regarding the angel coming down out of heaven clothed in a cloud, Ezekiel 1:4 states: ***“And as I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire.”*** God has often appeared clothed in a cloud. In Exodus 19:9, 16 we see God clothed in a cloud with flashes of lightning and thunder as He descends upon His mountain to speak through Moses. God also appears and speaks from a cloud during the Transfiguration. The one descending is said to be a strong angel rather than God Himself, but it seems clear that he acts for God.

Regarding the angel’s face being like the sun and his feet like pillars of fire and his having a rainbow upon his head, Ezekiel 1:27-28 states: ***“Then I noticed from the***

appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” Ezekiel believes the One who appears to him is the Lord. Many see this as a Christophany (appearance of Christ in the Old Testament). Again, John says the one who comes down from heaven is a “strong angel” rather than Christ, although some scholars believe that this is Christ. This is further supported by the fact that in Revelation 5:7 Christ has taken the scroll out of the hand of God and has possession of it. Other scholars believe it is more consistent with Scripture that Christ’s final descent to earth comes at the end of time when He comes to gather His elect, and therefore, He sends a strong angel in His stead.

Regarding the little book in the hand of the angel, Ezekiel 2:9 states: ***“Then I looked, behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll was in it.”*** In Revelation 5:1 we saw God holding a book (scroll) with words front and back and seven seals. In Revelation 5:2 we heard a “strong angel” proclaim with a loud voice, ***“Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals.”*** Now a “strong angel” (perhaps the same one, or perhaps the Christ) cries out again like a lion as he holds a little book. We do not know if this is the same book that was sealed with the seven seals or a different book. Jesus often used the phrase “as it is written” when revealing God’s truth. The importance of the scroll in Ezekiel, and the book with seals, and the little book found in chapter 10 is that they contain the Word of God—what God has spoken and therefore either already has or will definitely happen.

Regarding the significance of the angel standing with one foot on the sea and the other on the land, this may simply mean that God has dominion and power over both land and sea, or the truth being revealed will apply everywhere—on both land and sea.

Regarding the seven peals of thunder which utter their voices when the angel cries out, when God speaks from heaven in John 12:28-29 the people around Jesus who heard God’s voice said it sounded like thunder. Job 37:5 states: ***“God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend.”*** Psalm 29:3 states:

“The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord is over many waters.” We might be safe to equate the seven peals of thunder with the seven fold voice of God.

Revelation 10:4-7 states: *“And when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, and do not write them.” And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to his servants the prophets.”* This scene is similar to one found in Daniel 12:7-9, which states: *“And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and a half a time; and as soon as they finished shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?” And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.”* Both in Daniel and in Revelation we are told that there is a final mystery that will remain sealed and will not be revealed until the very end of time. In Daniel, the angel assures Daniel that the mystery of God will be fulfilled. In Revelation we hear that with the blowing of the seventh trumpet assurance that there will be *“delay no longer.”* We also hear that with the blowing of the seventh trumpet the *“mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.”* There are many examples throughout the prophets of the Old Testament that God’s deliverance and judgment will be heralded by a trumpet blast. In Matthew 24:31 Jesus states: *“And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”* It would appear that the seventh trumpet completes the trumpets or the seven-fold trumpet of God.

Revelation 10:8 states: *“And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book which is open in the hand of*

the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.” In Ezekiel’s vision it is the prophet Ezekiel who receives the scroll (book) from the hand of the Lord. In Revelation 5, Jesus Christ, the worthy Lamb of God receives the book with its seven seals from the hand of God the Father. Here it is John who receives a little book from a strong angel sent by God.

Revelation 10:9-11 states: ***“And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, “Take it, and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.””*** Again, there is a striking similarity to this event to that found in Ezekiel 3:1-7, 14, which states: ***“Then He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. And He said to me, “son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.” Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth. Then He said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. For you are not being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language, but to the house of Israel, nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate... So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of the Lord was strong on me.”*** Both in Ezekiel and Revelation the scroll or book is sweet in the mouth but bitter in the stomach. Eating the book is taking the word (written word) of God into one’s self. Hearing God’s justice in that He is about to punish the wicked is sweet to the taste, but learning that there are those who claim to belong to God will receive punishment is bitter in the stomach. The scroll or word of God is given to the prophet so that it can be proclaimed that people might hear and repent from their evil ways. In the case of Ezekiel the word is to be proclaimed to the house of Israel who are an intelligible people who should understand and be able to receive the word, but Ezekiel

is told they will not receive and this leaves him bitter. In Revelation, John is given the word that he may prophesy to many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. Again the witness is so that people can hear and repent, but again, they will not. Some believe that John finds the book bitter because he is now aware of the suffering that Christians will have to undergo before God's final judgment. The delay is required to allow all those who will repent opportunity to repent. But the delay causes many Christians to suffer and reminds us that Christ said we must be willing to take up our cross and follow Him. We must be willing to suffer as our Lord Jesus Christ suffered so that as many as possible will have opportunity for repentance and salvation. Finally, Psalm 119:103 states, ***"How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"*** We understand that God's word is sweet to those who receive it and obey it. But for those who reject God's word, they will face the bitterness of punishment. As is said in Jeremiah 4:18, ***"Your ways and your deeds have brought these things to you. This is your evil. How bitter! How it has touched your heart!"***

CHAPTER 11:

In this chapter we will finally hear the Seventh Trumpet sound, which heralds the "kingdom of the world" becoming the "kingdom of our Lord." But first we will hear of a measuring of the temple and of two witnesses who will prophesy for 1,260 days. We must remember that the events which are depicted are not necessarily linear or occurring in sequenced fashion one after another. Our human thinking tends to arrange things in order with a desire for laying them out on a progressive time line. Given the interlude which fell between the breaking of the sixth and seventh seal, and the interlude we have been in the midst of between the sixth and seventh seal, it seems that the Lord is pausing to give us deeper insight and assurance of what is to come. The 1,260 days of prophesy by the two witnesses does not mean that a minimum of 1,260 days will transpire between the sixth and seventh seal. On the contrary, Jesus told us in Revelation 1:1 that these things must take place "shortly" which we came to understand as happening quickly once they begin. Revelation seems to depict a number of events occurring in an overlapping fashion, some occurring over a longer period of time leading up to and overlapping with a series of sudden and quickly moving events at the end. Both long and short term events are falling into place as God's plan reaches its final destination.

Revelation 11:1-2, states: ***“And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it. And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.”***” At the time of John’s writing of Revelation there is no temple in Jerusalem to measure for it has already been destroyed by the Romans, dismantled stone by stone as Jesus had told His disciples would happen in Matthew 24:2. Therefore, the temple John is asked to measure is not a building built by man. Scripture bears witness that Jesus said that if His temple were destroyed He would rebuild it in three days. The temple He spoke of was not a building but His own body. Likewise, the apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 3:16, ***“Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”*** And Peter also says in 1 Peter 2:5, ***“you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”*** Perhaps the temple which John is being asked to measure is the church, but what about the outer court? John is told not to measure the ***“court which is outside the temple”*** because it will be ***“tread under foot”*** for a period lasting ***“forty-two months.”*** Speaking of the end times, in Luke 21:24 Jesus says, ***“Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”*** In Daniel 12:7b the length of time is recorded saying, ***“it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.”*** The Temple and inner court were reserved for Jews only and the outer court was a place where Gentiles were allowed. From this perspective one might conclude that the Jews are being measured and the Gentiles left outside to be trodden upon for forty-two months. But the separation has become not one of lineage but one of faith. The faithful take refuge in the shelter of God and become part of the body of Christ. The unfaithful are often viewed as those on the outside who do not believe or have rejected the faith.

One clue that may help determine what is happening here is the “measuring” itself. From Ezekiel 40:3—42-20 and 47:1-12 we see the measurement of the temple taking place just before God restores it and fills it with His Presence. Also in Zechariah 1:16 and 2:2-8, and in Jeremiah 31:39 we see measurement as preparatory to the

restoration and rebuilding of the temple. Whether the measurement in Revelation is in reference to the Jews, Christians or both, it is likely a precursor of God's restoration of His people, which include Jews and Christians.

Revelation 11:3, states: ***“And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”*** For a period of 1,260 days, which would be exactly forty-two months under the Jewish lunar calendar, two witnesses are to prophesy prior to final judgment and reward. This witness may be intended as a last chance to hear God's Word and repent, or it may be offered as a final exhortation of all that God has done and why what is about to happen is righteous and just. There has been some speculation regarding the identity of the two witnesses. Some believe they are Enoch (Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). Others believe they are Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:3). The reason some believe it is Enoch and Elijah is because they are the only two people in the Bible that never died, but instead, were taken into heaven by God while still alive. Because God has declared that man is given only one life to live (Hebrew 9:27), many believe that the two witnesses who are killed, must be Enoch and Elijah who have not previously died. Others believe that they are Moses and Elijah, who are seen to represent the Law and the Prophets—the two primary Old Testament witnesses of God's truth. Jesus said that He came ***“not to abolish the Law or the Prophets”*** but to ***“fulfill them”*** (Matthew 5:17). Still others believe that the two witnesses are the Church, and within this view perhaps the two witnesses represent the Old and New Testaments, which provide for us the prophetic word fulfilled in Christ. In any case, the fact that they are clothed in “sackcloth” would indicate a time of lament and mourning and/or a call for repentance.

Revelation 11:4, states: ***“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.”*** This is a continuing reference to the “two witnesses” and we look to Zechariah, chapter 4 for explanation. First, the book of Zechariah begins with a call to repentance to God's chosen people, and an expression of His favor and love for them. In the midst of this call God describes a single lampstand with seven spouts between two olive trees. When Zechariah asks regarding the lamps, God says, ***“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit”*** (Zechariah 4:6) and ***“these are the eyes of the Lord which range to and fro throughout the earth”*** (Zechariah 4:10).

When Zechariah asks: *“What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?”* (Zechariah 4:12), God answers saying, ***“These are the two anointed ones, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth”*** (Zechariah 4:13). Understandably, the olive tree produces oil that is burned in lamps to produce light. Therefore, the two lamps and olive trees may represent Moses and Elijah as Law and Prophets, or the Old and New Testaments as prophecy and prophecy fulfillment, representing both sources and instruments of the light that illuminates understanding and brings us to repentance. Of course the ultimate source of all that gives light is God Himself, the One who provided the Word and fulfilled the Word when the Word became flesh—the incarnate Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus’ words in John 8:12, saying, ***“I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”*** And Jesus has imparted His Light unto the Church as we can hear in His proclamation and instruction to His disciples in Matthew 5:14, 16: ***“You are the light of the world...”*** and ***“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*** The two witnesses bear witness as the Church to the glory of God.

Revelation 11:5-6, states: ***“And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.”*** This description provides further support for Moses and Elijah being identified as the two witnesses. Moses, as God’s instrument in delivering God’s people from Egypt, turned water into blood and brought ten plagues upon Egypt (Exodus 7:17-19). Elijah, as God’s prophet, shut up the skies so rain didn’t fall for three and a half years, which is forty-two months (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17). Elijah also brought forth fire from heaven to destroy God’s enemies (2 Kings 1:10-13), only in this case fire come from their mouths. This seems to be a fulfillment of what is stated in Jeremiah 5:14, which states: ***“Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, “Because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them.”*** The similarities are striking but we must remember

that Moses and Elijah were only instruments for God, and that it was the power of God's Word spoken through the prophets that shut up the sky, turned the water into blood, and brought forth plagues as witness of His power.

Revelation 11:7, states, ***“And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.”*** The two witnesses are not only witnesses but also to be “martyrs.” The particular Greek word translated as “witnesses” in 11:3 can be equally translated as “martyrs.” The beast from the “abyss” or the “bottomless pit” arises to wage war against and kill the witnesses of God. This is the first of four depictions we will be given of Satan. The others will be as the dragon in 12:3, the beast with ten horns and seven heads in 13:1, and as the beast with two horns who spoke like a dragon in 13:11. This first appearance of the beast may be best identified as the Antichrist, who wages war with the God, Christ, and the Christian Church on earth. This verse may be intended to convey that at some point the beast will defeat the church, or at least it will appear that he has done so.

Revelation 11:8, states, ***“And their bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”*** We know the identity of the place the witnesses are killed because we are told it was where the “Lord was crucified” which was in Jerusalem. The “great city” which is “mystically” called “Sodom and Egypt” is likely not a reference to a place but a condition. Sodom was a place of great sin, and Egypt a place of great persecution. Sodom and Egypt probably here represent the characteristics of the evil “great city” which is actually the world which crucified Christ and continues to persecute and kill His witnesses. We might be reminded of Paul's words in Romans 8:36, which state: ***“For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”***

Revelation 11:9-10, states, ***“And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.”*** Only today, in our age of television, satellites, and the internet is it possible for ***“peoples and tribes and tongues and nations”*** to ***“look”*** upon such a scene within such a brief time period as ***“three and half days.”***

The two witnesses were sent to “witness” but given power to protect themselves and cause plagues to get the peoples’ attention as part of their calling them to repentance. God has frequently used trials to call people to repentance. But the people have not repented and now celebrate the death of God’s prophets who **“tormented those who dwell on the earth.”** The people are self-centered, celebrating the death of those who caused them discomfort. Christians are called to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

Revelation 11:11-12, states, **“And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.”** Just as Satan may have believed he defeated Christ at the crucifixion, on the third day Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven in a cloud. Here, after three and a half days, we see the two witnesses rising from death to life and then ascending into heaven in a cloud. Christ was victorious over Satan through His death and resurrection. Paul states in Romans 8:11: **“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.”** Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 15:54: **“But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”** Looking forward to Revelation 12:3 and in reference to the victory God’s witnesses will have over Satan, the accuser, we hear: **“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.”** The two witnesses did not die in vain but accomplished their witness both in life and through their death, that God is greater than death and has defeated death.

Revelation 11:13, states, **“And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”** Regarding the earthquake, Ezekiel 38:19 describes a great earthquake in Israel at the time God’s judgment is poured out, saying, **“And in My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there**

will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.” In regard to *“a tenth of the city fell,”* this may not necessarily be a reference to Jerusalem alone. As you may remember from the explanation of the “great city” in verse 11:8 above, many scholars believe this a reference to the evil world that opposes Christ. Therefore, this could be a reference to an earthquake that starts in Israel and shakes the whole world, causing a tenth to fall. In reference to the *“seven thousand people”* who are killed in the earthquake, a literal translation of the Greek would be, “names of men, seven thousand.” Many scholars believe that the seven thousand is not simply every day people but celebrities—people who have recognized names and are considered important. Again, this may be intended to get people’s attention. In our indifferent world no one seems to care when thousands die of hunger in Africa, but when a celebrity dies it is news around the world. Finally, we are told that those who remained *“gave glory to the God of heaven”* but we are not told they repented. They recognize God’s power, and they fear God, but they express no evidence of changing their wicked ways as Nineveh did when God pronounced judgment against it through His prophet Jonah. When Nineveh repented, God withheld judgment, but judgment will not be withheld at the time of the end because the people will fail to turn back from their evil ways and repent.

Revelation 11:14, states, *“The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.”* In Revelation 8:13 we heard the angel exclaim “woe, woe, woe” prior to the sounding of the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets. The fifth trumpet and first woe came with the opening of the bottomless pit and the plague of demonic locusts. The sixth trumpet and second woe came with the army of 200,000,000 originating at the Euphrates River and killing one fourth of all mankind. The killing and resurrection of the “two witnesses” and the great earthquake that follows “in that hour” now completes the second woe. The third woe we are told will come quickly or without delay.

Revelation 11:15, states, *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.””* The seventh trumpet brings the heavenly proclamation that the prayer the Lord Jesus Christ taught us has been answered and is fulfilled. As part of the Lord’s Prayer we say: *“Thy kingdom come, Thy*

will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The reign of Christ over heaven “and earth” will now begin.

Revelation 11:16-17, states, ***“And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign.”*”** Notice in the elders’ thanksgiving that something has changed. Before they worshiped the one “who was, who is, and who is to come” (1:4, 8; 4:8), but now they omit the phrase referencing the future—“who is to come.” This verse marks Christ coming. From this point onward the future reference is eliminated (16:5).

Revelation 11:18, states, ***“And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”*** Notice that the world does not embrace the coming of Christ or His reign, but rather is ***“enraged.”*** The world that is in Satan’s control, where God’s people are being persecuted and killed, and are self-centered rather than God-centered, does not welcome Christ but is angered by His coming. This verse continues to speak of all the things that will come after Christ’s return, including: God’s wrath; judgment of the dead; reward of the faithful; and final destruction of all that destroyed the earth. This verse, located in the center of the Book of Revelation, provides a concise summary of all that has been prophesied to come with Christ’s return and much of which the remaining chapters will depict.

Revelation 11:19, states, ***“And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”*** The temple curtain was torn in two opening the inner room, holy of holies, when Jesus died on the cross. This earthly symbol represented the removal of the barrier of our sin which separated us from God. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price for our sin and made it possible for us to be restored and redeemed through His sacrifice on the cross. The appearance of the temple of God in heaven being opened marks the completion of what began at the cross. The time of grace and of harvest is ending.

(End of Part-5)