

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE CLIMACTIC COMING OF CHRIST

BY WITNESS LEE

If we are going to know the prophecy concerning the consummation of this present age, we need to know the truth concerning the four “sevens” in the Bible. The prophecy of these four “sevens” is related to the Messiah (Christ), the nation of Israel, the New Testament believers, and the church.

The Seventy Weeks in Daniel 9


The seventy weeks are related to the great tribulation and are apportioned into seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week. In Daniel a week is seven years, so seventy weeks is four hundred ninety years. Seven weeks are forty-nine years, sixty-two weeks are four hundred thirty-four years, and the last week is seven years. The last week of the seventy weeks will be the last seven years of this present age, the age of the church. After these coming seven years God’s kingdom will be on this earth, and that will be the thousand years for Christ to reign in the millennium.

The last week of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9 will be cut in half. The last half of this week is three and a half years, referred to by Daniel as “a time and times and half a time” (7:25; 12:7). If we are going to understand the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls, we have to understand the last half of the last week of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9. This will be the last three and a half years of this present age. The overcomers will be raptured before these last three and a half years. The believers on earth at that time who are not matured will be left on earth to pass through the last three and a half years, which will be the time of the great tribulation. We must understand the prophecy concerning this period of time because our destiny lies there.

John and Daniel Being One

The apostle John and the prophet Daniel were one in the prophecy concerning the consummation of the present age.

“A time and times and half a time” in Revelation 12:14 is a quotation from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. “A time” is one year, “times” is two years, and “half a time” is half a year. John’s quoting of Daniel in this way shows us that he was one with Daniel and that his prophecy was given based upon Daniel. Another evidence of John being one with Daniel is that the beast in Revelation 13:1 corresponds with the fourth beast in Daniel 7:7. In Revelation 13 there are two beasts. The first beast, referred to in verse 1, is the Antichrist, and the second beast is the false prophet. In Daniel 7 there are four beasts. These four beasts correspond to the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. This fourth beast, which signifies the Roman Empire, is mentioned in Revelation 13 as the beast with seven heads and ten horns, signifying the coming ten kings of the revived and restored Roman Empire.



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The ten horns, the ten kings, and the beast in Revelation 17:12 correspond with the ten horns, the ten kings, and the beast in Daniel 7:23-24. John and Daniel's being one in their prophecy can also be seen by the fact that the text of John 5:28 and 29 corresponds with that in Daniel 12:2. John 5:28 and 29 speak of the two resurrections. The resurrection of life is the resurrection of the saved believers before the millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6; 1 Cor. 15:23, 52; 1 Thes. 4:16), and the resurrection of judgment is the resurrection of the perished unbelievers after the millennium (Rev. 20:5, 12). Daniel 12:2 also speaks of these two resurrections. One is to life eternal, and the other is to reproach, to eternal contempt. This again shows the oneness of Daniel and John.

Daniel was in captivity in Babylon (Dan. 9:1-2a); his heart was fully on God and His people, His temple, and His holy city for God's kingdom on the earth (vv. 2b-19); and he was in his spirit, fully occupied with prayer and supplications to God (vv. 20-23). We may be interested in prophecy, but what is our heart occupied with? Is our heart like Daniel's? Our heart has to be fully on God and His desire in order for us to receive the revelation and see the vision.

John was in exile on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9b); his heart was for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus in participating in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus (v. 9); and he was in spirit on the Lord's Day, seeking after the Lord and looking to His appearing (v. 10). Daniel and John were the same in their standing and angle, so they saw the vision.

The Seventy Weeks Unveiled to Daniel

The seventy weeks unveiled to Daniel were apportioned for the people of Israel and for the holy city, Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24-27). At the time Daniel saw the vision of these seventy weeks, the country of Israel was lost into the hands of the Gentile nations. These nations were Babylon and then Medo-Persia. The holy city was destroyed, the holy temple was devastated, and the people of Israel were in captivity for about seventy years. Daniel was in such a situation. Daniel had no heart to be there, but what could he do? He could not do anything except pray. He prayed again and again. Then a vision came to him. Something secret was unveiled to him—the seventy weeks. These seventy weeks were apportioned to close the transgression. They were also apportioned to make an end of sins. Furthermore, they were apportioned to make propitiation for iniquity.

The seventy weeks were apportioned to bring in the righteousness of the ages (2 Pet. 3:13). The transgression will be closed, sins will be ended, and iniquity will be propitiated. The righteousness of the ages will also be brought in. This is the righteousness of the ages, or the eternal righteousness, which will be in the millennium as well as in the new heaven and new earth. In the millennium Christ will be the righteous One (Jer. 23:5), and He will rule the thousand-year kingdom in righteousness (Isa. 11:4-5). In 2 Peter 3:13 Peter says, "We are expecting new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." Today there is injustice everywhere. But there will be an age, which will be the age of the ages, the age of the new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

The seventy weeks were also apportioned to anoint the Holy of Holies (Dan. 9:24). Before the seventy weeks are over, the temple will be rebuilt. Later, Antichrist will devastate and contaminate the temple. He will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, setting up his image in the temple as an idol to defile the holy temple of God (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13:14-15; 2 Thes. 2:4). After the final three and a half years of this age, Antichrist will be completely destroyed, and the temple will be cleansed and cleared up. Then the Holy of Holies will be anointed. When the Holy of Holies is anointed, the service of offering sacrifices and the oblation will be recovered.

The three and a half years of the great tribulation are referred to as forty-two months (Rev. 11:2), or twelve hundred sixty days (12:6). But Daniel 12:11 and 12 say, "From

the time that the daily sacrifice is removed and the abomination that desolates is set up, there will be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits and reaches the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days!" In these verses twelve hundred ninety days and thirteen hundred thirty-five days are mentioned. The ones who wait until the thirteen hundred thirty-fifth day will be blessed.

At the end of the twelve hundred sixty days, Antichrist will be fully destroyed by Christ. Then thirty more days are needed to clear up the contaminated, devastated, and defiled temple. Therefore, at the end of twelve hundred ninety days, the temple will be cleared up. But still there will be no sacrifices or offerings. This service will need setting up. This will take another forty-five days, which makes thirteen hundred thirty-five days. Once this service is set up, all the people will be blessed in the offering of the sacrifices and oblations to God. For the children of Israel to be blessed is to enjoy the offerings. That blessing will be taken away by the Antichrist. From the time that Antichrist causes the offerings to cease to the day the Israelites enjoy the offerings again will be thirteen hundred thirty-five days.

The first seven weeks—forty-nine years—were for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and were fulfilled (9:25). The next sixty-two weeks—four hundred thirty-four years—were to the cutting off (the crucifixion) of Messiah (v. 26). History tells us that from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the year that Christ was crucified was exactly four hundred thirty-four years. After the sixty-two weeks and before the last week of the seventy weeks, there is an interval, the length of which is not revealed and in which was the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary by the people of the prince (the Roman army of Titus) in A.D. 70; and the end of it will be with a flood, and even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined (v. 26). The interval after the sixty-two weeks and before the last week of the seventy weeks is the age of grace and the age of the church. This is also the age of mysteries. In this interval everything that God did, is doing, and will do is a mystery. In this interval Christ is the mystery of God (Col. 2:2), and the church is the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4). Christ and the church are the great mystery (5:32). Revelation 10:7 says that these mysteries will be completed, finished, and over at the trumpeting of the seventh trumpet.

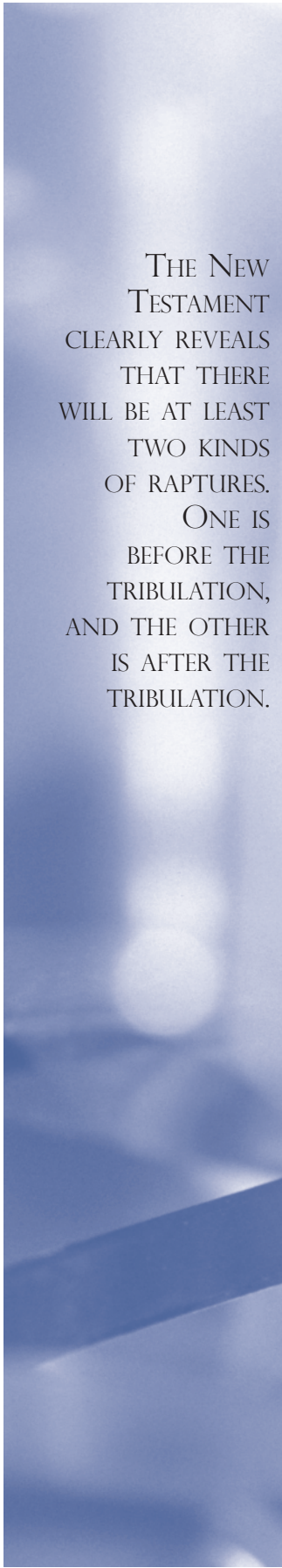
In this interval was the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by Titus with the Roman army in A.D. 70. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells of how Titus devastated Jerusalem and the temple. This was a fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy in Matthew 24:2 concerning the temple: "Truly I say to you, There shall by no means be left here a stone upon a stone, which shall not be thrown down." Daniel prophesies further that there will be war until the seventy weeks are completed. From the destruction of Jerusalem until today, there has been war after war.

The Last Week of the Seventy Weeks

At the beginning of the seven years of the last week of the seventy weeks, Antichrist will make a firm covenant with Israel, and in the middle of the week he will break the covenant. Daniel 9:27 says, "He will make a firm covenant with the many for one week; and in the middle of the week he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease and will replace the sacrifice and the oblation with abominations of the desolator, even until the complete destruction that has been determined is poured out upon the desolator." Titus is a type of Antichrist. He destroyed, devastated, the holy city and the holy temple, and Antichrist will do the same thing. Titus killed and persecuted the holy people, and Antichrist will do the same thing. Daniel's prophecy [in chapter 9] considers them as one. The person referred to in verse 27 is the prince in verse 26 who will destroy the city and the sanctuary. That prince was Titus. But verse 27 refers to the coming Antichrist.

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the oblation to cease (12:7, 11). He will replace the sacrifice and oblation with abominations, that is, idols, of the desolator, that is, Antichrist (v. 11; Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13:14-15; 2 Thes. 2:4). In Matthew 24:15 the Lord spoke of “the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place.” According to Revelation 13:14 and 15, the abomination of desolation is Antichrist’s image, which is set up in the temple as an idol. Then 2 Thessalonians 2:4 tells us that Antichrist will sit in the temple to claim that he is God. Daniel 9:27 refers to the “abominations [plural] of the desolator.” These abominations may refer to Antichrist himself, to his image, and to idols that he will put into the temple.

These idols will remain in the holy place, in the temple, even until the complete destruction that has been determined is poured out upon the desolator, that is, Antichrist (v. 27; 2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 17:11; 19:19-20). In other words, the idols will remain in the temple for three and a half years until Antichrist is fully destroyed by Christ. Christ will wipe him out with the appearing of His parousia, His coming.

The seven years of the last week will be the last seven years of the present age of the mysteries of God, concerning Messiah (Christ), the children of Israel, the believers, and the church. The last week of the seventy weeks will be cut into two halves by Antichrist’s breaking of the seven-year covenant that he will make with Israel (Dan. 9:27). The first half will be before the sixth seal of the supernatural calamities on the earth and heaven (Rev. 6:12-17). During the sixth seal the earth will become a place that is not suitable for man to live on. The sixth seal will be the initiation of the great tribulation of three and a half years, the last half of the last week. The second half of three and a half years is referred to in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. This second half will be counted from the ceasing of the sacrifice and the oblation and the replacing of these with abominations, idols, by Antichrist probably at the time of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17). On the one hand, God will shake the earth and the heaven, making the earth an unsuitable place in which to live. On the other hand, Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, and he will persecute the Jews and devastate the temple.

The second half of the last week, the last three and a half years of this age, will be the time of the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21, 15), beginning from the sixth seal of the seven seals (Rev. 6:12-17) and ending at the seventh bowl of the seven bowls (16:17-21), which will be “the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth” (3:10). The first five seals have nothing to do with the great tribulation. The great tribulation will be initiated by the sixth seal. The seven bowls will be the last woe of the great tribulation, and this tribulation is referred to as “the hour of trial.”

Before the three and a half years of the great tribulation, the overcomers among the believers will be raptured into Christ’s presence (parousia) in the heavens (12:5-6; 14:1; Luke 21:34-36; Matt. 24:36-44). At the end (it should be in the last year) of the three and a half years of the great tribulation, the majority of the believers, both the dead and resurrected and the living, will be raptured into Christ’s presence (parousia) in the air (1 Thes. 4:16-17; Rev. 14:14-16; 2 Thes. 2:1, 3-4, 8). The New Testament clearly reveals that there will be at least two kinds of raptures. One is before the tribulation, and the other is after the tribulation. The one before the tribulation will be for the overcomers, and the one after the tribulation will be for the majority of the believers.

The fact that the universal woman, who symbolizes the majority of the saints, will be nourished for three and a half years in a place on the earth prepared by God for the living saints (Rev. 12:6, 14) indicates and proves that the majority of the living saints will be raptured after the fulfillment of the three and a half years of the great tribulation; that should be in the last year of the three and a half years. The harvest, which symbolizes the majority of the living saints, being reaped (14:14-16) after the worship of Antichrist and his image (vv. 9-13) also indicates and proves that the majority of the living saints at

the Lord's coming (v. 14) will be raptured after the great tribulation of three and a half years. During the time of the great tribulation God will prepare a place to nourish His people who remain. This shows how kind our God is. This is similar to the way that the Lord took care of the children of Israel when they were in Egypt. God judged the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues, but the children of Israel were kept in a place called Goshen where they were covered, protected, and preserved.

These facts, which will transpire, prove that the majority of the saints who will not be matured before the great tribulation will be left on this earth to go through the time of the great tribulation. As we have pointed out, the earth at that time will be an unsuitable place in which to live. Those who have to pass through the time of the great tribulation will suffer something. The overcomers will have been raptured, and there will be many supernatural calamities. It will be hard for the believers to love the world during that time.

Spiritual Lessons in Seeking the Lord's Appearing

In seeking the Lord's appearing, there are some spiritual lessons. First, we need to give heed to the prophetic word as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts (2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16; 2:28). Preceding the Lord's open coming, the Lord will appear as the morning star in the darkest hour of the night to those who are watchful and looking for His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8). They have been enlightened by the shining of the prophetic word, which is able to lead them to the dawning day and to the rising of the morning star in their hearts.

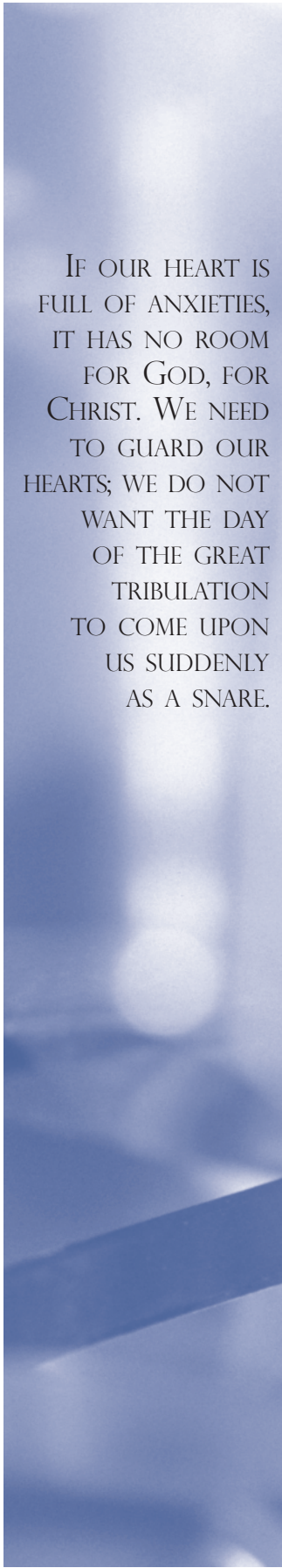
The day and the hour of the overcomers' rapture are not knowable to us (Matt. 24:36-44), but the year of the rapture of the majority of the believers can be figured out by us according to the last week of the seventy weeks, by the parable of the fig tree predicted by the Lord in Matthew 24:32-33. These verses say that the fig tree will become tender and put forth leaves. Then the Lord said that when we see this, we should know that the summer is near. In Matthew 24:32-33 the fig tree signifies the nation of Israel, becoming tender signifies the coming back of life, and putting forth leaves signifies the outward activities.

In view of the Lord's coming back, we need also to consider the world situation today. The tendency of the development in the political, economical, and military situation in Europe is toward that of a strong man rising up. This strong man will be the one who will sign the seven-year covenant with Israel. From the day that this strong man, Antichrist, signs this covenant with Israel, there are seven years left to the end of the present age. After three and a half years he will break this covenant, and the second half of three and a half years will be the time of the great tribulation. Just before the initiation of the great tribulation, the overcomers of Christ will be raptured. If the believers who are alive at that time are not ready and matured, they will be left on the earth to pass through the time of the great tribulation. The tribulation will come from three directions: from God, from Antichrist, and from Satan. God will judge the entire universe by supernatural calamities, making the earth unsuitable for living. Satan and Antichrist will do their best to destroy and damage mankind.

We need to watch and be ready to be taken, by being "stolen" by the appearing Lord as the secret "thief," into His presence (parousia) in the heavens (vv. 40-44). A thief comes to steal precious things at an unknown time. The Lord will come secretly as a stealing thief to steal us if we are so precious.

To avoid the great tribulation, we need to take heed to ourselves lest our hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day of the great tribulation come upon us suddenly as a snare, as it will come in upon all those who dwell on all the earth; and furthermore, we need to be watchful at every time, beseeching that we would prevail to escape all the things of the great tribulation in the last three and a half years of the last week of the present age and to stand before the Son

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of Man, Christ (Luke 21:34-36). We need to be on guard that our hearts would not be weighed down with debauchery, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life. Debauchery is indulgence in drinking and feasting. If our heart is full of anxieties, then it has no room for God, for Christ. We may even come to a meeting, but our heart is not in that meeting, because it is preoccupied with worldly things. We need to guard our hearts because we do not want the day of the great tribulation to come upon us suddenly as a snare. This day will be like the flood that came suddenly to the people at Noah's time. We need to watch and pray that we may prevail to escape all these things and stand before the Son of Man. This corresponds with Revelation 14:1, which indicates that the raptured overcomers will stand before the Savior on Mount Zion in the heavens before the great tribulation (cf. 12:5-6, 14).

We also need to keep the word of Christ's endurance that we may be kept by Him out of the hour of trial, which will come on the whole inhabited earth, to try those who dwell on the earth (3:10). Today the word we keep is the word of endurance. As long as we keep the word of God, we will suffer. People will persecute us. Even our parents and relatives may despise us. We need to keep the Lord's word of endurance so that we may be kept out of the time of the great tribulation as a trial that will come on the whole inhabited earth to try those who dwell on the earth. We have to be watchful and ready to learn the spiritual lessons. To become matured is not an overnight matter. Therefore, we have to prepare ourselves for His coming by loving Him so that we can grow in Him and be matured for His appearing.

The Last Three and a Half Years of the Present Age

The three and a half years mentioned in Daniel and Revelation will be the consummation (end) of the present age (Matt. 28:20; 13:39-40, 49; 24:3; Dan. 12:13). The word *consummation* means that there is a process that will be brought to completion, or fulfillment.

The last three and a half years are for the Lord, on the negative side, to clear away all the negative persons and things, leaving only the dead unbelievers and the demons to be cleared away through the judgment at the great white throne after the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:11-15). The world is becoming more evil as time goes on. It is full of evil persons and evil things. In the last three and a half years the Lord will use a "universal broom" to sweep away all the negative things on the earth. Only the dead unbelievers and the demons will be left to be judged after the millennium at the great white throne and to be cast into the lake of fire.

The last three and a half years will be for the Lord, on the positive side, to bring in His eternal kingdom and the eternal righteousness (11:15; Dan. 9:24). When the Lord returns and the age is consummated, there will be no more unrighteousness. The earth today has really been corrupted. There is no present remedy to its unrighteous and evil situation. Eventually, however, the Lord will sweep away all the evil persons and things into the lake of fire. Then there will be the eternal kingdom of Christ with His righteousness, which is the righteousness of the ages, the eternal righteousness.

According to the Lord's promise to the overcomers in Revelation 3:10—that the overcomers will be kept out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth—the rapture of the overcomers, both the man-child in Revelation 12 and the firstfruits in Revelation 14, must be before the sixth seal, the supernatural calamities on the earth and on the heavens (6:12-17). It is not reasonable to believe that the Lord would leave His overcomers to pass through the supernatural calamities of the sixth seal. Furthermore, according to Joel 2:30-31, there will not be much difference in time between the sixth seal and the first five trumpets (Rev. 9:1-11). Joel 2:30-31 first has the "blood" of the first and second trumpets, the "fire" of the first, second, and third trumpets (Rev. 8:7-10), the "smoke" of the fifth trumpet (9:1-3), and then the "sun" and "moon" of the sixth seal (6:12). Revelation 9:4 compared with 7:3 indicates that the fifth trumpet is very close to the sixth seal. The first five trumpets are a direct continuation of

the sixth seal. Therefore, the sixth seal is the initiation of the great tribulation and should be considered as a part of "the hour of trial." The initiation of the great tribulation, as the supernatural calamities that take place in the sixth seal, may occur immediately before the three and a half years or just at the beginning of the three and a half years.

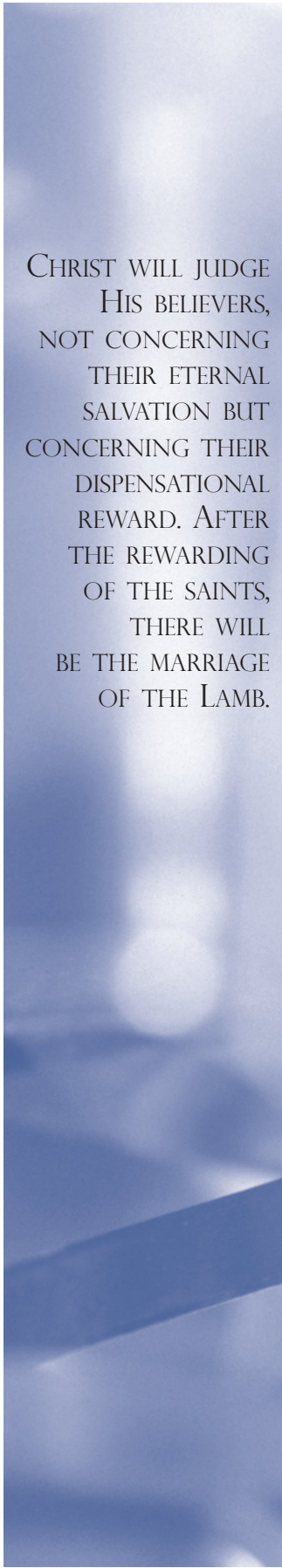
The record of a great multitude standing before God's throne and before the Lamb in Revelation 7:9-17, given immediately after the sixth seal, implies that the rapture of the believers should begin before the opening of the sixth seal. This record presents a picture in a general way of all of God's people raptured to heaven from the time before the sixth seal to their enjoyment in eternity. This is a vision inserted between the sixth and seventh seals.

The first four trumpets, consisting of the four aspects of the intensified supernatural calamities on the earth and on the heavens (8:7-12), will take place at the very beginning of the three and a half years, as a direct continuation of the sixth seal, the initiation of the supernatural calamities, and will probably all be trumpeted on the same day. The last three trumpets will be the three woes (v. 13). The calamities of the first four trumpets will touch only the earth and heaven, whereas the woes of the last three trumpets will hurt man's body. The fifth trumpet, as the first woe, will be brought in by Satan, who as a star will fall out of heaven to the earth at the beginning of the three and a half years and will collaborate with Antichrist, the angel of the abyss, to torment men by the demon-possessed locusts for five months (9:1-11; 12:9, 11-12). The sixth trumpet, as the second woe, will be the plague of the four angels who are released from their bonds at the great river Euphrates to kill the third part of men for thirteen months, one day, and one hour, by two hundred million horsemen (9:12-21). These thirteen months plus the five months of the fifth trumpet will be one and a half years of the three and a half years of the great tribulation. The locusts of the fifth trumpet only torment men for five months, whereas the two hundred million horsemen kill the third part of men. This means that the woe of the sixth trumpet is more severe than that of the fifth. Christ will come to the air probably before the trumpeting of the seventh trumpet (10:7), for the purpose of taking full possession of the earth (vv. 1-7). He will come down to the air and get everything ready so that He can come to the earth directly to take full possession of it.

The city of Jerusalem will be trampled by Antichrist for forty-two months, that is, a thousand two hundred sixty days, during the great tribulation, and the two witnesses of the Lord will prophesy during that time and will be killed by Antichrist and resurrected to be raptured into Christ's parousia (presence) in the air (11:1-12). There will be a great earthquake, the tenth part of the city of Jerusalem will fall because of the earthquake, and seven thousand will be killed in the earthquake (v. 13).

The first item on the positive side is the finishing of God's mystery. This is declared in Revelation 10:7. Daniel 9:24 says that the seventy weeks were apportioned to seal up vision and prophet. To seal up vision and prophet is to finish the mystery of God. In the church age, the age of grace, everything concerning Christ and the church is a mystery (Eph. 5:32), but when the seventh trumpet is sounded, the age of mystery will be over. The seventh trumpet comprises the resurrection of the dead saints and their being raptured with the majority of the living saints into Christ's parousia (presence) in the air (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thes. 4:16-17; Rev. 14:14-16). Included in the seventh trumpet is the rapture of the two witnesses into Christ's parousia (presence) in the air (Rev. 11:12). The two witnesses will probably be raptured on the same day as the majority of the saints. Revelation 12:6 says that the woman, symbolizing the majority of the saints, will be nourished in a place prepared by God for a thousand two hundred sixty days, or three and a half years. Therefore, their rapture must be on the last day of those three and a half years. The two witnesses prophesy a thousand two hundred sixty days (11:3), so they must also be raptured on the last day of the three and a half years. Thus, both the majority of the saints and the two witnesses will be raptured on the last day of the great tribulation. Then there will be the giving of reward to the saints at the judgment seat of Christ in the air (v. 18; 2 Cor.

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5:10). Christ will judge His believers, not concerning their eternal salvation but concerning their dispensational reward. After the rewarding of the saints, there will be the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:5-10). Christ will marry the overcomers as His bride.

The above items are the positive side of the seventh trumpet. Now we need to see the negative side. The seven bowls are the third woe (11:14), the last seven plagues to finish the fury of God (15:1), as God's most severe judgment on men, the main part of the plagues of the seventh trumpet (15:7—16:1). After the seven bowls God's fury will be finished. The first four bowls consist of the four aspects of the most severe supernatural calamities on the earth and on the heavens (vv. 2-9). Thus, supernatural calamities will occur three times: in the sixth seal, the first four trumpets, and the first four bowls. The sixth seal is the initiation of supernatural calamities, the first four trumpets are the intensified supernatural calamities, and the first four bowls are the most severe supernatural calamities. These calamities will damage the earth and the heavens, making the earth an unsuitable place in which to live.

When the fifth bowl is poured out, the kingdom of Antichrist will be darkened (vv. 10-11). When the sixth bowl is poured out, the great river Euphrates will be dried up, and the way of the kings from the rising of the sun will be prepared (v. 12). In Revelation 9:14-16 we read that the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates will be released to stir up the kings to send their armies, the two hundred million horsemen, and in Revelation 16:12 we are told that at the outpouring of the sixth bowl, the water of the Euphrates will be dried up so that these kings and their armies may pass over it. Hence, the sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl are related to each other. Then there will be the gathering for the war at Armageddon. This war will be waged by Antichrist, his false prophet, the ten kings, and their armies (vv. 13-16), who will be defeated by Christ and His overcomers (17:12-14; 19:11-21), in the treading of the great winepress of the fury of God (14:17-20; Isa. 63:2-3). The seventh bowl will be the greatest earthquake and the great hail of the exceedingly great plague (Rev. 16:17-21). The city of Jerusalem will be divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations will fall (v. 19). The physical Babylon the Great, the city of Rome, will be destroyed (v. 19). Every island will flee, and the mountains will not be found (v. 20). The weight of every hailstone will be a talent (v. 21).

All the above positive and negative items of the seventh trumpet should take place on the same day, that is, the last day of the great tribulation. The negative side of the seventh trumpet also includes the binding and imprisoning of Satan in the abyss for one thousand years (20:1-3). Following the defeat of Antichrist, Satan will be bound and imprisoned to clear up the rebellious earth so that the kingdom of Christ may come (vv. 4-6).

At the very beginning of the three and a half years of the great tribulation, Satan and his angels will be cast to the earth and will persecute "the woman," consisting of the majority of the believers (those who remain and have the testimony of Jesus and the Jews who keep the commandments of God), until the end of the great tribulation (12:9, 12-13, 15-17). The remaining believers, "the woman," will be kept and nourished for a thousand two hundred and sixty days, that is, the three and a half years of the great tribulation, in a place prepared by God, where they will bear the testimony of Jesus (vv. 6, 14, 17). The overcomers will be raptured, and the majority of the living saints will be left to pass through the great tribulation. But God in His mercy will bring them to a place prepared by Him, the "wilderness," where they will be nourished until the last day of the great tribulation, when they will be raptured to Christ's parousia (presence) in the air. Due to their testimony, some will believe in the Lord Jesus. Their testimony will not be totally in vain. The word *nourished* means that they will be fed and taken care of by the Lord and somewhat preserved from the plagues of the great tribulation.

Antichrist, as the beast coming out of the sea, will revolt against God and persecute the saints for forty-two months, the entire time of the great tribulation (13:1-10). The sea is the Mediterranean Sea, out of which Antichrist will come. In Revelation 9:11; 11:7; and 17:8 we are told that Antichrist will come up out of the abyss. This indicates that the

sea is the mouth of the abyss, because the abyss is in the heart of the earth (Rom. 10:7; Matt. 12:40), and the sea is above the earth. Antichrist will be a very demonic, devilish, and extraordinary person. His spirit, which has been existing in the abyss before he is born, will come up out of the abyss (see my notes on Revelation 17 in the *Recovery Version*: note 1 on verse 8; note 1 on verse 10; and note 1 on verse 11). His body will come from one of the Gentile nations around the Mediterranean Sea. In biblical figure the land signifies the nation of Israel, and the sea signifies the Gentile nations (v. 15).

The believers, the late overcomers, who will overcome the worship of Antichrist and his image and will be resurrected and raptured to the air over the lake of fire, signified by the glassy sea, will sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb to praise God and glorify His name (15:2-4).

The Shining and Warning of the Prophetic Word in the Scriptures Made More Firm

As mentioned above, the three and a half years are for the Lord to clear away all the negative persons and things, leaving only the dead unbelievers and the demons to be judged at the great white throne after the millennium. On the positive side, these three and a half years are to bring in Christ's eternal kingdom and the eternal righteousness. The last three and a half years of the present age are also for the purpose of putting the Christians, the Jews, and the Gentiles into their proper posts. In the three and a half years of the great tribulation, God will deal with the Gentiles. First, they will be dealt with by the seven trumpets of the seventh seal. The first four trumpets are supernatural calamities on the earth and the heavens. The last three trumpets, the three woes, will touch man directly. The third woe is composed of the seven bowls as God's most severe judgment on men.

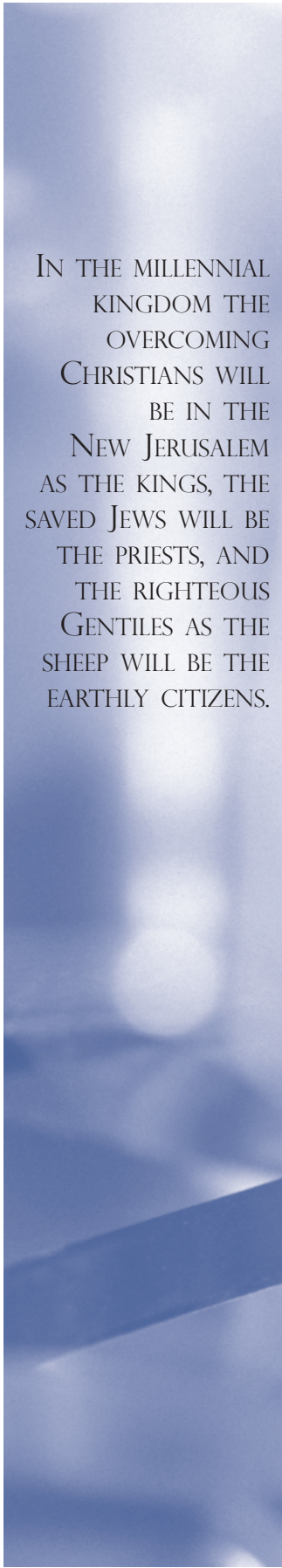
There will also be the war at Armageddon, waged by Antichrist, his false prophet, the ten kings, and their armies. They will be defeated by Christ and His overcomers in the treading of the great winepress of the fury of God. Revelation 14:20 says, "The winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the bridles of the horses for a thousand six hundred stadia." The city here is Jerusalem. A thousand six hundred stadia is the distance of one hundred eighty-two miles from Bozrah (Isa. 63:1) to Armageddon (Rev. 16:16). Many will be killed in this war.

When Christ returns, He will set up His throne of glory to judge the nations who remain (Matt. 25:31-46). Those who are the goats will be cast into the lake of fire. Those who are the sheep will enter into the millennial kingdom to be the citizens. This is the way in which God will deal with the living Gentiles. The dead unbelievers will be judged at the great white throne after the millennium and will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

The faithful Israelites who keep the commandments of God during the great tribulation will be transferred into the millennium as the priests on this earth (Zech. 8:20-23; Isa. 2:2-3). The overcoming Christians will be raptured before the three and a half years of the great tribulation, being kept out of the hour of trial. The majority of the saints who remain will be raptured at the end of the three and a half years. Then all the Christians will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). Some will be rewarded to share in the reign in the kingdom of a thousand years as the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens (Rev. 20:6), whereas others will be disciplined to be matured during the thousand years (Matt. 25:30).

In the millennial kingdom the overcoming Christians will be in the New Jerusalem as the kings, the saved Jews will be the priests, and the righteous Gentiles who are the sheep will be on the earth as the citizens. Then there will be a new universe—the new heaven and new earth with the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God.

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After Israel was taken over by the Romans, the Israelites were eagerly expecting their Messiah to come and rescue them out of the hands of the Roman imperialists. Yet many of them missed the coming of their Messiah in their time because of Christ's appearing from Galilee instead of from Bethlehem (John 7:40-42; cf. Matt. 2:1-12, 19-23; Luke 2:39; Matt. 3:13). They did not know the Old Testament so finely or accurately. Some of them knew that according to Micah 5:2, the Messiah would come from the city of David, Bethlehem. But Jesus, the Messiah, was born in Bethlehem in a somewhat hidden way that did not attract people's attention. Both His mother and her husband were poor. They lived in Galilee, a despised region. When the time came for Christ to be born, the Roman Empire decreed that the first census be taken. All the citizens were required to go to their own country and city. Thus, Mary and Joseph went from Nazareth to Bethlehem, their fathers' city, that the Savior might be born there for the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the place of His birth.

After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had to take Him and flee to Egypt because of the persecution of Herod (Matt. 2:13-18). This was the fulfillment of a prophecy concerning Christ in Hosea 11:1 (cf. Matt. 2:15). After Herod died, they returned to Nazareth, "that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, He shall be called a Nazarene" (v. 23). Apparently, Jesus came from Nazareth, but actually, He was born in Bethlehem, fulfilling the prophecy in Micah 5:2. The chief priests and the scribes missed His coming, but magi from the east saw His star and came to worship Him. Also, the elderly Simeon and Anna, who were in real fellowship with God, received the revelation that Mary's child was the Messiah (Luke 2:25-38), but most of the waiting ones did not recognize Him as God's anointed One.

The second half of the last of the seventy weeks, prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27, has been made more firm by the Lord's words in Matthew 24:15 and Revelation 11:2 and 13:1-8 and by the apostle's word in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10. The three and a half years of the great tribulation, the second half of the last of the seventy weeks, is very much defined, made more firm to us, in the New Testament. Today I have the boldness to say that the majority of the saints will be raptured on the last day of the three and a half years because Revelation 12:6 says that they will be nourished for a thousand two hundred sixty days, which is three and a half years. They will have to pass through the entire three and a half years. Then their nourishing will be finished, and they will be raptured. I also have the boldness to say that the last trumpet will be trumpeted on the last day of the great tribulation. According to 1 Corinthians 15:52, the saints will be resurrected at the last trumpet. The last trumpet will be the seventh trumpet. This understanding makes the prophecy of the consummation of the age more firm to me. I also have seen that the two witnesses will be raptured on the same day as the majority of the saints because they will prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days. After these days are completed, they will be raptured to the air into Christ's parousia, presence.

The resurrection of the dead, prophesied in Daniel 12:2, has been made more firm by the Lord's words in John 5:28-29 and Revelation 20:4, 6, 11-15 and by the apostle's words in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 52, and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. All these Scripture references show how fine the New Testament prophecy is concerning the resurrection of the dead.

The rapture of the overcomers, prophesied by the Lord in Matthew 24:39-42 and Luke 21:36, has been made more firm by the Lord's words in Revelation 3:10; 12:5; and 14:1-5. In Revelation 3:10 the Lord says, "Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth." As mentioned above, the hour of trial is the three and a half years of the great tribulation, including its initiation with the shaking of the earth and heaven in the sixth seal, which will be the beginning of the supernatural calamities. Revelation 12:5 speaks of the man-child being raptured to the throne before the three and a half years of the tribulation. After this rapture the woman, signifying the majority of the remaining saints, will be nourished for a thousand

two hundred sixty days, or three and a half years. Then Revelation 14:1-5 reveals that the firstfruits, the living overcomers, will be standing on Mount Zion in the heavens, having been raptured to the heavens before the great tribulation (vv. 6-13) and the harvest of the majority of the saints (vv. 14-16).

The rapture of the majority of the saints, prophesied by the apostle in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, has been made more firm by the Lord's words in Revelation 14:14-16; 15:2; and 20:4, 6. Revelation 14:14-16 speaks of the harvest of God's crop on this earth, that is, the rapture of the majority of the saints living on earth. Then Revelation 15:2 depicts the overcomers who have passed through the tribulation and the persecution of Antichrist. These ones have been raptured and are standing on the glassy sea. The glassy sea mingled with fire is a miniature of the lake of fire and eventually becomes the lake of fire. The late overcomers' standing on the glassy sea indicates that they have overcome the lake of fire.

Revelation 13:1 says, "I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and on his heads names of blasphemy." The beast, which is the fourth beast mentioned in Daniel 7:7, is Antichrist. The sea is the Mediterranean Sea, out of which Antichrist will come. The territory of the Roman Empire in ancient times surrounded the Mediterranean Sea. Antichrist will be a Caesar of the restored Roman Empire.

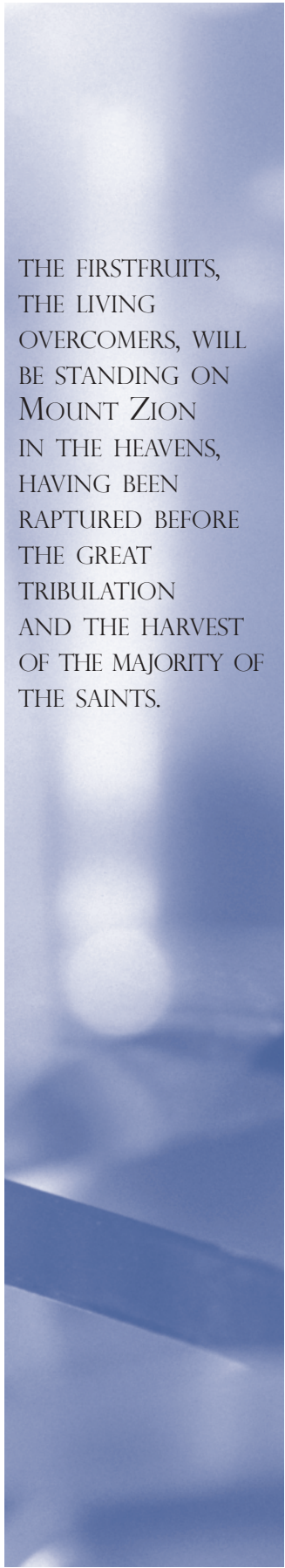
Antichrist is a little horn coming up among the ten horns of the beast (vv. 7-8). The ten horns signify the ten kings of the restored Roman Empire (Rev. 17:12). These ten kings, ten horns, are also likened to the ten toes of the great image seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream (Dan. 2:42). They will submit themselves and their kingdom to Antichrist.

Antichrist comes up out of the abyss underneath the sea (Rev. 17:8). On the one hand, Revelation tells us that Antichrist will come up out of the abyss (9:11; 11:7; 17:8). On the other hand, it tells us that he comes up out of the sea (13:1). This indicates that Antichrist will come from two sources. His spirit, which has been existing in the abyss before he is born, will come up out of the abyss. His body will come from one of the Gentile nations around the Mediterranean Sea.

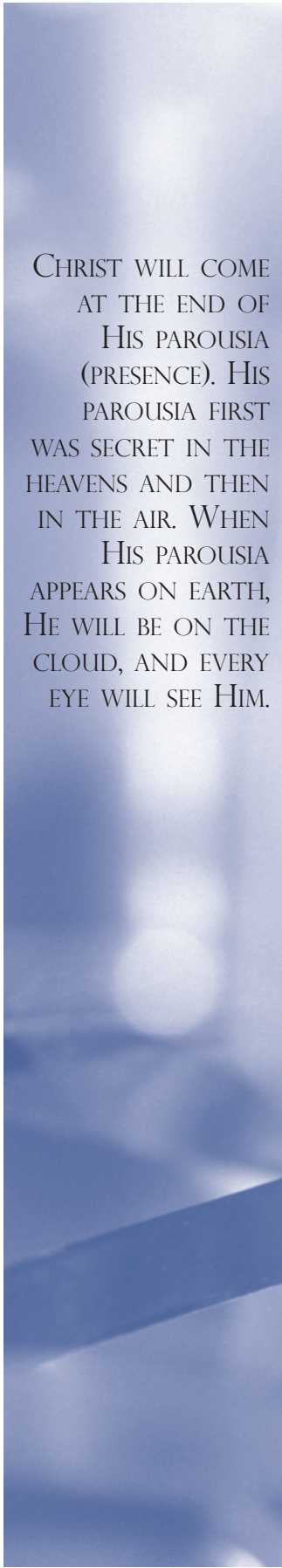
Antichrist, as the seventh Caesar of the Roman Empire, will be killed and resuscitated with the spirit (from the abyss) of Nero, the fifth Caesar of the Roman Empire, to be the eighth Caesar of the Roman Empire (17:8, 10-11; 13:3). Revelation 17:8 says, "The beast that you saw was and is not and is about to come up out of the abyss and go into perdition." The beast, who is Antichrist, "was" in the person of Caesar Nero before John wrote Revelation. He "is not" at the time of John's writing, because Nero died by that time. He "is about to come up out of the abyss." This implies that Nero's spirit is now in the abyss and is about to emerge from it to take possession of the body of the slain and resuscitated Antichrist, as indicated in Revelation 13:3.

Revelation 17:10 says, "Seven kings: five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a short time." The seven kings are the seven Caesars of the Roman Empire. The first five have fallen; that is, they have died unnaturally (Judg. 3:25; 2 Sam. 1:10, 25, 27). They are Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, all of whom either were murdered or committed suicide before John wrote Revelation. The sixth one, Domitian, who was also murdered, was living when Revelation was written; therefore, it was said of him that he "is." The "other," the seventh, who will be Antichrist, had "not yet come" at that time. "When he comes, he must remain only a short time," and he will be slain and resuscitated with the spirit of the fifth, who is Nero, to be the eighth.

Revelation 17:11 says, "The beast who was and is not, he himself is also the eighth and is out of the seven and goes into perdition." Antichrist will be the coming seventh Caesar. But he "is also the eighth." According to Revelation 13:3, Antichrist will be slain and



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CHRIST WILL COME
AT THE END OF
HIS PAROUSIA
(PRESENCE). HIS
PAROUSIA FIRST
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resuscitated. In that resuscitation the spirit of Nero (the fifth Caesar), which comes up out of the abyss, will animate the dead body of the seventh Caesar, Antichrist. This one, composed of the fifth and seventh Caesars, is the eighth. Hence, he "is out of the seven." It is no wonder that people will marvel at the sight of such an extraordinary being (17:8). Revelation 13:3 says that when Antichrist is resuscitated from death, the whole earth marvels after him.

We can say that the spirit of the coming Antichrist is the spirit of Caesar Nero because of Revelation 13:18: "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six." The number represented by the letters of the name Caesar Nero in Hebrew is six hundred sixty-six. By this we know that the eighth Caesar, the coming Antichrist, the beast, will have the spirit of Caesar Nero.

The war at Armageddon is Christ's treading of the great winepress of the fury of God (14:18-20; 19:13-15), which will begin from Bozrah (the royal city) of Edom (Isa. 63:1-6) and extend to Megiddo, a distance of one thousand six hundred stadia, that is, one hundred eighty-two miles, the city of Jerusalem being in the middle of this distance (Rev. 14:20). Revelation 19:13 says that the returning Christ is "clothed with a garment dipped in blood." The garment of Christ is dipped in blood and becomes red by His treading of the winepress of the fury of God at Bozrah, where the blood will rise "up to the bridles of the horses for a thousand six hundred stadia" (14:20).

The Appearing of Christ

Christ will come with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him (1:7). The tribes of the land are the twelve tribes of the Holy Land. Christ will come at the end of His parousia (presence). His parousia first was secret in the heavens and then in the air. At that time He is clothed with a cloud (10:1). When His parousia appears on earth, He will be on the cloud (14:14; Matt. 24:30; 26:64), and every eye will see Him.

Matthew 24:26-28 says, "Therefore if they say to you, Behold, He is in the wilderness, do not go forth...For just as the lightning comes forth from the east and shines to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there will the vultures be gathered together." Lightning is concealed in a cloud, waiting for an opportunity to flash forth. Christ also will be clothed with a cloud in the air for a time and then will suddenly appear like a flash to the earth. Hence, the lightning will be a sign of the end of the Lord's parousia.

Antichrist as the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him by the breath of His mouth and bring him to nothing by the manifestation of His coming (2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-20). *Manifestation* implies the thought of shining or brightness. The shining of the Lord's coming will bring Antichrist to nothing, destroying him.

The appearing of the Lord's coming, His parousia, will be at the end of the three and a half years of the great tribulation.

A study of the prophecy of the four "sevens" in the Bible is timely, especially because of the world situation today. The world situation is under the Lord's sovereign arrangement. He is working to arrange the world situation for the fulfillment of His prophetic word.

We need to see the matter of the shining of the prophetic word in the Scriptures being made more firm. Second Peter 1:19 says, "We have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." The Old Testament prophecies were

made firm by Jesus Christ the Lord and by some of the apostles in the prophecies of the New Testament. The New Testament prophecies confirm the prophecies of the Old Testament. In other words, the New Testament prophecies make the Old Testament prophecies firm. What we have today is the prophecies made more firm to us. In the New Testament age the shining of the prophetic word is stronger, and the warning is also stronger.


At the time of Christ's first coming, the people of Israel were expecting the coming of their God-promised Messiah (Luke 3:15; John 1:19-25, 45-46). Before the Lord Jesus was born, a number of the children of Israel were expecting to meet their Messiah because they came to know, at least partially, the prophecies of the Old Testament, which spoke of God giving His people a Messiah, the anointed One. Today we have to learn the lesson of knowing the prophecies in a proper way. We may know them in a general way, but we may not know them so finely or accurately. Today we have the prophetic word made more firm than the prophecies in the Old Testament. I am doing my best to help us know these prophecies in a fine way, not just in a general way.

Peter likens the word of prophecy in the Scripture to a lamp shining in a dark place (2 Pet. 1:19).

The prophetic word of the Scripture, as the shining lamp to the believers, conveys spiritual light to shine in their darkness (not merely knowledge in letters for mental apprehension), guiding them to enter into a bright day, even to pass through the dark night until the day of the Lord's appearing dawns and the morning star rises in their hearts.

Because of the prophetic word, the Lord warned us to watch. In Matthew 24:42 the Lord said, "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes." In Luke 21:34 the Lord warned us to take heed to ourselves lest perhaps our hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day come upon us suddenly as a snare. We also need to be watchful at every time, beseeching that we would prevail to escape all the things which are about to happen and stand before Christ (v. 36). To escape all the things which are about to happen is to be raptured to the heavens before the great tribulation to meet Christ at the beginning of His parousia.

In addition, we have to keep the word of Christ's endurance (Rev. 3:10). Every word that the Lord has spoken in the Bible is a word of endurance (cf. Rom. 15:4). If we keep what the Lord says, we will suffer. The Lord today is still suffering rejection and persecution with His endurance. We are the fellow partakers, not only of His kingdom but also of His endurance (Rev. 1:9). Hence, His word to us today is the word of endurance. To keep the word of His endurance, we must suffer His rejection and persecution.

We also have to overcome and keep the Lord's works until the end (2:26). The Lord's works are the things the Lord has accomplished and is doing. These works include all His doings to accomplish a full redemption for us. He died and resurrected to redeem us. He is still doing something today to sanctify us, transform us, and conform us to His image. These are the Lord's works that we have to keep. Many Christians have been enlightened to realize something of the Lord's works, but because of the world's attraction, they would not keep His works. Instead, they would deny and forget about what Christ has accomplished for them. If we are the overcomers, we will not neglect the Lord's works. We will keep the Lord's redemption, telling people that Christ died and resurrected for us and that today He is still working within us to sanctify us, to transform us, to renew us, and to conform us to His glorious image. If we keep the Lord's works until the end, He will be the morning star to us at His appearing (v. 28). 

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