The Judgments of Revelation:
The Tribulation’s silver lining—Page 10
The coming ‘perfect storm’—Page 18
And the trumpets shall sound—Page 24

Plus:
Judgments chart—Page 22
Remembering Miep Gies—Page 31
When Messiah reigns—Page 35
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Is Intentionally
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There’s a line in an old World War I song that urged people to prepare for the then-impending struggle in Europe: “So, prepare, say a prayer.” The articles in this issue echo those notes. And while many today would rather ignore the negative images of the last days, Scripture begs to differ. The opening words of the book of Revelation promise a blessing to those who read and heed its messages of future events. Yes, you will read about the seal, bowl, and trumpet judgments, but also the glories of the Lord’s promise to overcome. And in the mix are short, enlightening snippets you won’t want to miss. So read on. It’ll do you good and sharpen your appreciation for the pretribulational Rapture.

(Cover: Walter Homan/ FOI Image Archive; digital enhancement, Thomas E. Williams)
On my first trip to Israel in 1989, I remember thinking how much the Israelis struggled to live in the land of God’s promise. Soaring inflation, high unemployment, and persistent underemployment made life difficult for so many. And all faced internal and external threats to their personal and national security. In the years since, our “Up to Jerusalem” tours have witnessed dramatic developments in the economic infrastructure of this small nation, as well as vast improvements in the living standards.

Robust economic growth has transformed Israel’s landscape from an Old World look to a vibrant, modern country that has become the showcase of the Middle East. Construction activity has been so strong that Israelis jokingly say their national bird is the crane—not the tall, heron-like creature but, rather, the huge construction machine that lifts heavy objects into place in new buildings throughout Israel.

Communities are springing up on once-barren land—witness the modern city of Mod’in, between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Up-to-date highways cross the country, some of which employ cutting-edge electronic technologies, including license-plate scanning for toll collection. Even the automobiles have taken on a decidedly modern look.

Our “Up to Jerusalem” tour buses now drive through numerous reforestation projects of the Jewish National Fund. And formerly parched ground has become productive, as Israel uses the latest techniques of water-harvesting and irrigation to push back the desert and create lush farming fields.

It is not surprising that Israel’s rise to a world leader in innovation and technology has attracted the attention of authors who have responded with several important books. One of the better known is Start-Up Nation, which boldly proclaims on its cover, “The Story of Israel’s Economic Miracle.” Authors Dan Senor, adjunct senior fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, and Saul Singer, columnist, author, and former editorial page editor at The Jerusalem Post, dissect Israel’s entrepreneurial spirit and remarkable economic growth. According to Debbie Buchwald of the America-Israel Chamber of Commerce, “This book educates people about Israel’s successes in high tech, life sciences, and clean tech that benefit the world.”

George Gilder, author of 15 books including his international best-seller, Wealth and Poverty, takes it a step further in The Israel Test, which is available through The Friends of Israel. His opening words set the stage for Israel’s challenge to the countries of the world: “The real issue is between the rule of law and the rule of leveler egalitarianism, between creative excellence and covetous ‘fairness,’ between admiration of achievement versus envy and resentment of it.”

The exceptionalism of the Jewish people is a vital concept to Gilder’s analysis of Israel’s success: “Israel today concentrates the genius of the Jews.” And beyond Israel’s borders, he argues, Jewish successes benefit their respective countries. Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies reviewed Gilder’s work and concluded, “Indeed, he [Gilder] argues in The Israel Test that it [Israel] presents a moral and ethical challenge to all of us. Boldly, he states that we can either choose to support Israel or choose to reject justice, democracy, free-market economics, and excellence.”

As I reflect on the importance of what’s being said about the amazing story of Israel’s rise to economic prominence, I remember the late, legendary radio broadcaster Paul Harvey, whose famous segments on “The Rest of the Story” provided lesser-known endings to familiar news accounts. While Israel’s observers analyze the nation’s dramatic rise to world leadership in innovation and technology, Christians of biblical faith understand there is a vital “rest of the story” found in the Bible. Israel’s transformation from meager beginnings to a vibrant, modern state represents the fulfillment of God’s prophetic Word in our lifetime.

God promised to:

Regather Israel. “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land” (Ezk. 36:24).

Make Israel’s dry land blossom. “For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isa. 51:3).

Bring prosperity to a restored Israel and, through Israel, blessing to the world. “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing” (Gen. 12:2).

To understand Israel’s “rest of the story” is to appreciate that God is at work, accomplishing exactly what He promised.

William E. Sutter is the executive director of The Friends of Israel.
Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward (Ps. 127:3).

This message from God’s Word is worlds away from the message of a Palestinian mother who recently received word of her son’s death in an Israeli air strike. The Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) has reported that the woman had this to say:

We had always hoped for his [my son's] Martyrdom (Shahada), knowing he wanted to die as a Martyr (Shahid). Every time he went out, we would say to him, “May Allah be with you.” We knew that he wanted to die as a Martyr. Praise to Allah, he sought Martyrdom, and he achieved it. My message to every mother is to sacrifice her child for Palestine.

Her unbelievable words chill the hearts of everyone who loves children as commended in the Scriptures. In the world of radical Islam, however, her message is perfectly acceptable—even highly honored.

The Palestinian Media Watch has documented her ideas of life and death as the result of what has been taught for years in the Palestinian Authority through Hamas-originated television, school textbooks, music videos, and other sources of public information. The idea is that death is of higher value than life and that martyrdom leads to a wedding between the martyr and the virgins of Paradise.

Eighth graders in Palestinian schools learn from their textbooks that “death is not bitter in the mouth of the believers. These drops of blood that gush from your bodies will be transformed tomorrow into blazing red meteors that will fall down upon the heads of your enemies.”

In January PMW reported that a Hamas TV cleric described what he claims are six rewards in Paradise granted to martyrs:

- The shahid’s sins are forgiven.
- He sees his place in Paradise and lives a full life of joy with Allah.
- He is protected from “the Great Shock” on Judgment Day.
- He is crowned with a crown of honor.
- He marries 72 dark-eyed virgins.
- He will be able to intervene on behalf of 70 of his family members on Judgment Day, thereby ensuring them the reward of Afterlife.

Unfortunately, the mother’s distressing message proves how successful this theology has become. Another proof is the rash of Islamic suicide missions in Israel, the Middle East, Europe, America, Asia, and Africa. Islamic theological propaganda has convinced thousands to become terrorists, and they have killed thousands and crippled thousands more.

War stories of terrorist Islamist fighters callously using children as human shields are well documented. These innocent children were thrust into harm’s way by unscrupulous people who not only sought their own personal protection, but also the political fodder of blaming their enemies when the children were killed or injured. Such action, coupled with indoctrinating young hearts and minds to desire death, represents perhaps the greatest example of collective child abuse on the planet.

And to do all these things in the name of their god is an abuse beyond comprehension. This deluded mother is to be pitied. She is a victim of cruel and inhuman manipulation that beggars belief. One would wonder what a mother’s heart actually says to her and the hundreds of other women falling prey to such unnatural reasoning.

Children are “a heritage from the LORD”; and that fact is not altered by skin tone, nationality, religion, or social and political engineering. The ultimate issue the PMW report raises concerns the matter of responsibility. And for Christians, it means responsibility to pray compassionately for the mothers and children being so cruelly abused.

by Elwood McQuaid
Malevolent Momentum

Michael Freund writes in The Jerusalem Post, “Something is stirring in the Middle East.” How right he is. And it isn’t good for Israel or the nation’s supporters. “The winds of war are blowing,” Freund writes, “picking up speed with each passing day, and the threat to Israel is growing steadily more alarming.”

Freund’s analysis shows how anti-Israel sources are driving events to the precipice of a devastating confrontation. On February 22 the Simon Wiesenthal Center ran a report titled “Presbyterian Church USA Ready to Declare War Against Israel.” It appears the PCUSA’s theological, anti-Israel invectives have been incremental. Leaders have been testing the waters to see how far they could go at a given time.

Their 2004 move to divest from Israel, stalled by a displeased membership, was consequently rescinded. This setback, however, did not alter the determination of the denomination’s liberal leadership, which bided its time and is now, according to the Wiesenthal Center, on the verge of making its next move. A 2008 PCUSA report did the following:

- Called for the United States to withhold financial and military aid to Israel.
- Apologized to Palestinians for even conceding that Israel has a right to exist.
- Declared that Israel, if defined as a Jewish state, must be inherently racist.
- Embraced the Kairos Palestine Document, produced by Palestinian Christians, that calls for boycotts and sanctions against Israel and endorses a full Palestinian “right of return” to Israel, which would lead to the demise of the democratic Jewish state. (See “Christians Against Israel?” in the March/April 2010 issue of Israel My Glory.)
- Denied any connection between biblical covenants and the Jewish people. Israel’s history, it claimed, begins with the Holocaust. It is a nation mistakenly created by Western powers at the expense of the Palestinian people to solve the “Jewish problem.”
- The Wiesenthal Center sees the Presbyterian Church’s document as nothing short of a declaration of war against Israel and its friends—an action, by the way, encouraged by the World Council of Churches.
- On the political front, Michael Freund says, “From Beirut and Damascus in the north to Teheran in the east, and back to Gaza in the south, the ‘arc of hate’ surrounding the Jewish state is speaking openly and brazenly of conflict and destruction.”
- Freund reported that, in a conversation between Iran’s Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Hassan Nasrallah, Ahmadinejad told the Hezbollah terrorist, “This readiness [for war against Israel] must be at a level that they [the Zionists] will be finished off and the region will be rid of them forever.” And for good measure he added, “The regional countries need to eradicate them once and for all.”
- Israel’s enemies—religious, political, and military—appear to be convinced the time has come for them to make another run at destroying the Jewish state. This rationale is no doubt fueled by two elements: (1) the perception that the West is in denial, refusing to acknowledge the inherent peril Israel and the region are in, and (2) the belief that if Israel is attacked, there will be no appreciable reaction from America or Europe other than to ask with a whine, “What’s Israel done to cause such anger and frustration?”

The Iranians have tested these waters repeatedly as they have stalled for time to finish their nuclear projects. “Fearsome” UN talks about “crippling sanctions” are benign paths to nothing. They will merely buy Iran the time it needs to complete its doomsday weapons and then rewrite the future of the Arab world and region, destroy Israel, and bring the world beyond to its knees.

On a frigid January night, Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, stood somberly before the memorial plaques at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps in Poland. There he remembered what the world is choosing to forget. And he made a promise.

“Remember what Amalek did to you,” quoting from Deuteronomy. “I have come here today from Jerusalem to tell you: We will never forget. We will not allow the Holocaust deniers or those who desecrate [Jewish] graves and signs to erase or distort [our] memory.”

Mr. Netanyahu recognized that new Amaleks are on the prowl. And they are just as determined to annihilate the Jewish people as were their enemies of the past. It will not happen. It cannot happen. Nor can we here in America afford to let the memory of the 9/11 tragedy fade away. We must never forget or grow weary in the pursuit and orderly prosecution of Islamist Amaleks who slaughtered thousands within our shores. Should we do so, it will happen again.
This outstanding DVD by well-known prophecy scholars examines the major events that will unfold during the Tribulation. Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, and Ed Hindson have combined their considerable knowledge to develop this astonishing, 60-minute film that is sure to untangle the web of Bible prophecies.

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In the midst of the future Tribulation, as the Lord batters Earth with judgment after judgment, two extraordinary men will appear in Jerusalem. The Bible says they will have amazing powers, enabling them “to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire” (Rev. 11:6).

These judgments have been seen before when God used Moses to turn the Nile River to blood prior to the Exodus (Ex. 7:19–21) and when the prophet Elijah shut the heavens so there was no rain in the days of evil King Ahab (1 Ki. 17:1–16). Consequently, many identify these two witnesses as Moses and Elijah; but the Bible does not say who they are.

It does say, “If anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies”—something that did not occur with either Moses or Elijah (Rev. 11:5). The witnesses “will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth” (v. 3). Their prophetic ministry will last for 42 months, or half of the seven-year Tribulation. And, like the Jewish prophet Ezekiel, they will be testimonies to the fact that God never leaves this world bereft of truth.

“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth,” the Lord says, referring to these men (v. 4).

Thousands of years earlier, the prophet Zechariah received a vision involving olive trees and lampstands. He was awakened by an angel who asked,

“What do you see?” So I said, “I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.” So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, “What are these, my lord?” (Zech. 4:2–4).

Zechariah was confused, and the angel seemed surprised the prophet did not grasp the intent of the vision. So he explained: “These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth” (v. 14). The two here were Zerubbabel (heir to the throne of David) and Joshua, son of Jehozadak the high priest. They were the “olive trees” that produced oil that was carried by the pipes to the golden lampstand to bring light to a lost world. In other words, they were conduits of the Holy Spirit.

This is the same imagery of Revelation 11. The two witnesses are on Earth to bring light to the dark and dying world experiencing Almighty God’s holy wrath.

At the end of the 42 months, the Antichrist “will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem]” (Rev. 11:7–8). People will make merriment over the city, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth” (vv. 9–10).

Despite horrific, daily judgment, most of mankind will still reject God and His way of salvation. In a final attempt to show people that the witnesses were true prophets, the Lord will miraculously resurrect them after their decomposing bodies lay in the street almost four days: Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven (vv. 11–13).

God always reaches out to lost humanity and will continue to do so even during the bleak and awful days of the Tribulation. Some people will come to believe in Him then, but most will not. However, God will not leave them without a witness. As He told Ezekiel in exile in Babylon after the destruction of the first Temple in 586 B.C., “As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse . . . they will know that a prophet has been among them” (Ezek. 2:5).

by Thomas C. Simcox
In January the U.S. Supreme Court decided the case of **Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission**. Although the 5-4 decision narrowly upheld freedom of speech, it also made obvious the two conflicting worldviews on the court regarding free speech and the power of government.

The appeal revolved around a film critical of Hillary Clinton. It had been produced by a conservative, nonprofit organization that wanted it to air on video-on-demand immediately prior to the national primaries during the last election cycle. However, the film was blocked by a federal judge who ruled that the provisions of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) applicable to “corporations” prohibited it from airing within 30 days of a federal election. The Supreme Court reversed the lower court and struck down that part of the BCRA, noting that Congress has created a complex tangle of campaign reform regulations that have, in fact, given birth to a “vast” system of political “censorship.”

In the majority opinion authored by Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, the court ruled that the First Amendment prohibits the government from banning speech based merely on the fact that a speaker is organized as a corporation.

The minority opinion that dissented from this decision included President Barack Obama’s recent appointee to the court, Justice Sonia Sotomayor. She was joined by the other liberal associate justices: John Paul Stevens, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen G. Breyer.

They complained that the majority got it all wrong. They claimed the real issue was Congress’s attempt to curtail the corrupting influence of huge corporations that use their big money to cause a “distortion” in the democratic process. The case, they said, was not about free speech; it was simply about the illegal use of money during an election.

This view actually conceals a dangerous trend in Washington: the attempt to use the powerful engine of the federal government and increasingly complex regulations to crush viewpoints of citizens under the supposed guise of creating a better society. These people believe government officials, not citizens, have the right to decide what is best for our “democratic progress”; and if our most precious and fundamental freedoms suffer as a result, well, that is just the price that has to be paid.

The fact is, the *Citizens United* case was about freedom of speech. A nonprofit group wanted to use the broadcast medium to explain why it opposed Hillary Clinton, but a federal judge blocked the attempt. A clearer threat to freedom of speech (or, for that matter, freedom of the press) can hardly be imagined.

The irony is that the majority of corporations in the United States are not multinational entities with billion-dollar budgets. Many are small or medium-sized mom-and-pop businesses created in corporate form because of legal or tax advantages. The minority opinion admitted that the campaign law would silence not only the megacorporations on the New York Stock Exchange, but also the small, “closely held corporations . . . strongly identified with a particular owner or founder.”

Thus, if the liberal justices had their way, all local community businesses would be silenced four weeks prior to a national election. Even more surprising, the minority opinion conceded that, under this law, various “nonprofit corporations . . . created for an ideological purpose” would also be censored.

But it was the separate opinion of conservative Justice Clarence Thomas that gives us the best picture of how complex government regulations can ultimately suppress viewpoints. He pointed out how laws in California required public disclosure of donations (along with the names and addresses of donors) who supported or opposed Proposition 8, which declared that only the marriage of a man and a woman would be recognized as valid.

As a result, the identities of donors supporting Prop. 8 were disseminated to opponents who “blacklisted, threatened, or otherwise targeted [them] for retaliation.” Wrote Thomas: “The director of the Los Angeles Film Festival was forced to resign after giving $1500 [to a pro-Prop. 8 effort] because opponents threatened to boycott and picket the next festival. . . . And a woman who had managed her popular, family-owned restaurant for 26 years was forced to resign after she gave $100 because ‘throng[s] of [angry] protesters’ repeatedly arrived at the restaurant” and attempted to embarrass customers. In the end, he wrote, police in riot gear arrived to quell the mob.

We have reason to rejoice over the decision in *Citizens United*. However, President Obama denounced it, and some congressmen have vowed to sidestep the Supreme Court ruling with yet another campaign “reform” bill. If the First Amendment rights of Americans are to survive, our federal lawmakers must stop stifling us with regulations that suffocate freedom of speech.

**Craig L. Parshall**

Craig L. Parshall is a leading trial attorney who argues cases involving civil liberties, constitutional rights, and religious freedoms. He is also the senior vice president and general counsel for the National Religious Broadcasters. His newest novel, *Edge of Apocalypse*, coauthored with Tim LaHaye, is now available.


day in the life of a new immigrant.
There’s something to be said for the tear-engendering invitation, “Look for the silver lining.” Tear-engendering because, in times of deep distress and suffering, it almost seems a mocking platitude to tell people things will turn out all right. To those who will endure the terrors of the coming Tribulation—when numbing, catastrophic judgments and global, physical calamity will afflict the earth—it will appear that all is lost. And, in many respects, for a world in the throes of near absolute apostasy and out-and-out, God-defying rebellion, the sun of God’s mercy will, in fact, be blotted out.

Yet, though negative elements cascade from the Tribulation-related portions of God’s Word, we must remember that behind the woes there is promise, purpose, and consummation. In other words, God knows what He is doing; and His objective is the divine silver lining.
Ruin

Humanity hits the skids whenever it demands that God step aside and allow the created to assume the prerogatives of the Creator. “Let us do it our way,” the masses cry. And inescapable consequences are born whenever God leaves people to themselves. They inevitably chart a downward course until the only option for survival is for Him to step in and terminate the madness.

Contributing significantly to the contemporary course of events were liberal theologians whose moral, spiritual, political, and social apostasies now surge on the planet. The “God is dead” and “situation ethics” devotees of the 1960s actually surrendered to the radical young revolutionary forces who cast off all biblical, social, and traditional restraints in favor of free love and lust. Nihilism ran amok; people denied the existence of objective truth and thumbed their noses at traditional values and beliefs.

Neo-pop theologians spread the palaver that “living by the Book” was passe; and since modern man has “come of age,” “agape love” alone is relevant. Individuals, they said, should determine for themselves what is moral and right. As Situation Ethics author Joseph Fletcher wrote, “Anything and everything is right or wrong, according to the situation [as one interprets it].”

Although not the single engine of the brave, new, humanistic world philosophy that takes God and His Word out of the picture, Fletcher’s view does expose the core of the movement that ends in the incorrigible defiance of a world that has lost its way.

With such massive evidence all around us today, we can suppose the consequences of man’s going it alone. And though we are not yet in the Tribulation, we see a clarifying sequence of developments that provide snapshots of what will grow to maturity under the Antichrist.

Reconciliation

The second track of the Tribulation is Israel’s reconciliation to the Messiah. Those who claim Zionist Christians wish the Jewish people back in the land for their national destruction, so Christians can emerge triumphant, are maliciously misguided. Such has never been the objective.

We speak of God’s Chosen People as a nation with a divinely charted destiny to one day become a “light to the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6). As surely as the Lord has declared and effected their survival through centuries of torture and persecution, so, too, has He preserved them for a purpose unequalled by any other people in all of history.

A favorite verse of mine involving God’s higher purposes for His people is Deuteronomy 6:23. While wandering for 40 years in the fearsome tracks of the wilderness after being delivered from the cesspool of Egyptian slavery, Moses gave the people a silver lining: “Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers.”

Although a generation would pass away during the journey, the wilderness was not the nation’s final destination. The Israelites were moving on to the higher ground of the Promised Land. They had been brought out to be brought in. And that “bringing in” would not be denied.
In studying God’s Tribulation judgments, it’s often easy to forget how much God loves us. Many wonder how a caring God could allow such affliction on Earth.

Many years ago I saw the disgusted face of a young woman peering at me from the audience as I spoke of Christ’s blood atonement. She felt that if she tried to be a good person and to live by the Golden Rule, God would be happy with her and forgive her sin.

But God, who is holy, determines how He will forgive sin. The prerogative is His alone. He created the system; and in His profound love for us, He came to Earth and satisfied it Himself: “And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). His was the blood that was shed. His was the life that was given. Through the Levitical system He showed us the awfulness of sin and the requirements for forgiveness, and then He met the requirements with His own blood. What more could He do?

All He asks of us is to believe. Then He applies His blood to our account, removes our sin, and gives us the gift of everlasting life (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 1:7). And because He is God, He arose from the dead.

It seems incongruous that people who crave love so desperately reject the greatest love of all: the love of Christ. Many, determined to serve only themselves, degenerate into “wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness” and become “full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness” (Rom. 1:29–30). They become “backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things” (v. 30).

One day humanity’s iniquity will be full. And the God who so loved the world and gave His life for it will have no choice but to judge it.

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反弹的审判

第三和最终的事件是大审判的高潮。

“在那一天，他的脚将站在橄榄山的山顶上，那面对耶路撒冷的东面。主就是王，他要统治全地。在那一天，‘主是唯一的’，他的名也是一样的”（伯14:9）。

如果你相信耶稣的话，你就相信它。让经文为自己说话：

“但愿我的话像日头，出来要有光，像月亮，上升也有光辉。”（诗119:105）

Amen and amen!

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The last act of the Tribulation will be played out on a stage of triumphant restoration and reconciliation. I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, “This is My people”; and each one will say, “The LORD is my God.” But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Zech. 13:9, Jer. 31:33).

The New Testament puts it this way: “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins’” (Rom. 11:26–27).

Israel will finally be out of the fire and in an unprecedented era of peace and plenty.
The bloody war al-Qaida is waging against America and the Western democracies is relentless and indiscriminate. And though al-Qaida terrorists actually kill more Muslims than “infidel” Westerners, they make sure to massacre as many Christians as possible. Believers are not simply “collateral damage”—people who happen to be in the vicinity when suicidal jihadists detonate their weapons. They are intended prey. And the attacks are a prime indicator of the ideology driving the war against the West.

On February 1 Reuter’s reported that an al-Qaida group in North Africa has promised Nigerian Muslims training and weaponry to wage war on Christians in that country. “We are ready,” an al-Qaida statement said, “to train your people in weapons, and give you whatever support we can in men, arms and munitions to enable you to defend our people [Muslims] in Nigeria. . . . You are not alone in this test. The hearts of Mujahideen are in pain over your troubles and desire to help you as much as possible.”

Christians in Nigeria were already victims of Muslim violence before al-Qaida voiced its dedication to kill them. In an unprovoked outbreak of terror, young Muslims attacked a church in Jos in mid-January, killing two pastors and 46 other Christians; 27 believers are still missing. According to Compass Direct News, 10 churches were burned.

Reported Compass Direct: “The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) accused the state General Officer Commanding . . . and some Nigerian soldiers of taking sides in the clash. ‘Soldiers were seen in some parts of Jos watching Muslim youths shooting Christians and burning places without any efforts to stop them,’ read a PFN press statement.”

As the violence spread, police estimated as many as 300 lives were lost in Jos. Compass Direct reported the national president of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) said, “Many of our members whose houses were burnt have to date not been found, despite all efforts by the church and their relatives to find their bodies or know their whereabouts. ECWA suspects strongly that many of the dead bodies [were] hurriedly buried in mass graves by the Muslims including some of its members who were murdered within the Muslim neighborhoods.”

Two thousand years ago, defenseless Christian men, women, and children huddled on the floor of the Coliseum in Rome as wild beasts tore apart their bodies. It was the beginning of a relentless crusade to annihilate the followers of Jesus. That crusade is still going on, and it is increasing in ferocity. The members of the early church received no aid or comfort from the establishments of power. Two millennia later nothing has changed. The war goes on, led today by the fanatical elements of al-Qaida.

And while this atrocity transpires, leaders of the international body of nations are virtually silent. Even people in the religious establishments say or do little to aid the afflicted. How much more will it take to make Christians remember that God commands us to pray for and render aid to those who suffer for Christ’s sake?
The Beginning of the End

(Walter Homan/FOI Image Archive, digital enhancement, Thomas E. Williams)
The scene is set, and Earth’s events are directed from heaven. Revelation 4 contains the apostle John’s recorded vision of heaven’s throne room where God’s plans for restoring His earthly Kingdom unfold. Continual praise is offered to the supremely holy God whose rights as Creator are about to be revealed.

**The Sealed Scroll** *(Rev. 5:1–14)*

The scene focuses on a scroll that no one is able to open, held in God’s right hand. It contains the written account of God’s program for regaining the sin-cursed earth and establishing His reign of peace and righteousness.

One person alone emerges as uniquely worthy to take the scroll and open its seals: “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (v. 5). The reference is to Jesus the Messiah, the only One worthy to take the scroll of God’s master plan for Earth’s final destiny and open the seven seals that bind it. Jesus’ sacrificial death provided the basis for God’s final expression of judgment in human history as further described in the book of Revelation.

John set the stage and then focused on the scroll. His scene shows Christ breaking the seven wax seals that protect the written account on both sides—a message of judgment for sinners and blessing for God’s people. Each seal represents a different judgment. The first four seals are a unit and depict four horsemen riding throughout the entire earth, echoing Zechariah 1:8–10 and 6:1–8.

The remaining seals reveal broader scenes of God’s wrath, which places the world under judgment for seven years of devastation, ending life on Earth as we know it. Only after this event will Earth be prepared for the return of God’s Messiah, when believers “shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10).

**First Seal: Antichrist** *(Rev. 6:1–2)*

The first rider comes on a white horse. Unlike Revelation 19:11, where the rider is Jesus Christ, the rider in this context is the Antichrist. His role as conqueror dovetails with the Old Testament description of the endings times king who conquers his rivals to establish his own ungodly authority (cf. Dan. 7:8, 20–25).

**Second Seal: War** *(Rev. 6:3–4)*

Worldwide warfare breaks out, as symbolized by a rider on a fiery red horse. People will kill each other in war and violence, marking the beginning of the final period of world history.

**Third Seal: Famine** *(Rev. 6:5–6)*

A black horse appears with a rider holding a pair of scales that symbolize the inflated price of food as a result of the famine caused by the large-scale warfare of the second seal.

**Fourth Seal: Death** *(Rev. 6:7–8)*

Next comes a pale green horse. “And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him” (v. 8). It heralds the demise of one quarter of the world’s population due to the cumulative effect of war, poverty, and famine. In addition, wild animals will be let loose, adding to the human carnage.

Today’s world population stands at about 7 billion. To imagine the sudden death of more than 2 billion people—the combined current populations of China and India—is overwhelmingly frightening. This is only the beginning of God’s judgment on a fallen world in preparation for His coming Kingdom.

**Fifth Seal: Martyrdom** *(Rev. 6:9–11)*

Here the scene changes from Earth to heaven, as the voices of Tribulation martyrs in a disembodied state cry out to God for vengeance. This scene is both encouraging and sobering. It reveals that the Tribulation will produce many believers in Jesus Christ but that many of them will be put to death for their faith.

These believers reflect a desire for God’s justice, crying out “with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’” (v. 10). God tells us all, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

**Sixth Seal: Planetary Catastrophes** *(Rev. 6:12–14)*

Earth and heaven begin to react to God’s hand of judgment. A powerful earthquake reorients mountains and islands in conjunction with catastrophic solar and lunar disturbances, as God shakes heaven and Earth (cf. Hag. 2:21; Heb. 12:26). John used nonscientific language to describe the sun’s darkness, the moon’s redness, and falling stars: “There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind” (Rev. 6:12–13).

He described how these heavenly bodies will look as a result of the first four seals and their destructive effects on the atmosphere. Old Testament Scripture also reveals God’s severe judgment via cosmic disturbances (Ex. 10:21–23; Isa. 13:9–10; 34:4; 51:6; Ezek. 32:7–8; Joel 2:2, 31; 3:16; Amos 8:9; Zeph. 1:14–15). Jesus quoted Isaiah when He said, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Mt. 24:29).

By this point, terror will grip world leaders, who will be powerless
Believers in Christ have the promise of complete deliverance from God’s wrath on Earth and from the eternal Lake of Fire. “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Th. 5:9) who “delivers us from the wrath to come” (1:10). Even now sinners are “treasuring up for [themselves] wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5).

One day God will liquidate all sin deposits that unbelievers have made to their accounts. Those who enter the seven-year Tribulation will feel God’s wrath in unparalleled ways, culminating in a sentence of eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15).

**Seventh Seal: Silence**

(Rev. 8:1)

After an interlude in which the apostle John described the 144,000 Israelite “servants of our God” who are sealed (7:1–8) and a great multitude in heaven (vv. 9–17), the final seal is opened. Rather than containing a description of judgment, the result is “silence in heaven for about half an hour” (8:1).

The seventh seal reflects the Sabbath rest of the creation week, but in a completely different context. Following creation, everything on God’s Earth was “very good” (Gen. 1:31); here everything on Earth is far from good. The entire planet will be suffering under the curse of sin and the decree of God’s wrath. The silence is a quiet pause before the further outpouring of God’s wrath in the seven trumpets.

**William L. Krewson** is the director of the Bible and Israel Program at Philadelphia Biblical University.
Using salt when instructions call for sugar dramatically changes a recipe. Sugar and salt are not the same, and no amount of symbolic interpretation can make them so. You must take the words literally, or your recipe will not come out as intended. Literal interpretation is important because words mean something.

Unfortunately, many people forsake literalism when reading the Bible, creating confusion and an improper understanding of the text. This is especially true with the book of Revelation. In Revelation 7:1–8 and 14:1–5, the apostle John described in detail a specific group of 144,000 people. Many Christians say this is merely a large company of believers. Others, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, identify themselves as the group. But the words John used make it clear that not one of these options is valid. Here is why:

- These people are sealed, saved, and Jewish—coming out of “the children of Israel” (7:4).
- John specifically listed “twelve thousand” from “all the tribes” of Israel (v. 4; cf. vv. 5–8).
- They are men who were not “defiled with women, for they are virgins” (14:4).
- They are fiercely loyal to the Lord, described as “ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (v. 4).
- They possess integrity and impeccable character. “In their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God” (v. 5).
- They stand victorious at the end of Daniel’s 70th week (the seven-year Tribulation). They are safe in Jerusalem, singing a “new song” of praise and victory they alone can sing on Earth when the Lord Jesus returns at the Second Coming (vv. 1, 3).
- They are redeemed early, “being firstfruits,” in order to serve the Lord during Daniel’s 70th week (v. 4).
- They have been marked with a seal on their foreheads, insuring their protection (7:3).
- They preach with great chutzpah (gall, nerve, extreme self-confidence). They preach consistently and constantly, unafraid of the consequences during this extremely dangerous time. Their message is the gospel of salvation through Messiah Jesus, and they preach it to all people left on Earth after the Rapture of the church. It is a message for everyone, regardless of nationality or creed. The result: “a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (v. 9).
- They are a light to the nations, a “light to the Gentiles,” fulfilling a purpose God always had for His Chosen People (Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

Thus 144,000 Jewish men will be separated for service and used by God for His purpose during the Great Tribulation, the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), because that is exactly what the words of the Bible say. And that is exactly what they mean.
The Coming ‘Perfect Storm’

(Ship: Seth Resnick/Science Faction/Corbis. Ocean: Patrick McFeeley/National Geographic/Getty Images; digital composition, Thomas E. Williams)
The six Gloucester, Massachusetts, fishermen were doomed. Colossal 30-foot waves slammed against their swordfish boat, while wind gusts up to 80 knots (92 mph) battered their vessel, scuttling their desperate attempts to save themselves. It was October 30, 1991, and the Andrea Gail was lost. Sudden remnants of an unusual hurricane had created a fierce wind and sea surge. Meteorologists called it the “perfect storm.”

Others may call it a worst-case scenario, where events come together to make things as bad as they could possibly be. The book of Revelation describes such a time—a cataclysmic, seven-year period of judgment that will precede the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. This coming Tribulation will be the “perfect storm”—a tidal wave of wrath from the Lamb, God, and Satan, poured out on a world of unremorseful sinners.

The Wrath of the Lamb

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:15–17).

The Lamb is the Lord Jesus Christ who was slain as a sacrifice to redeem sinners (5:9). For this act He is worthy to stand?” (Rev. 6:15–17).

The Wrath of God

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth” (16:1).

God’s wrath is no temper tantrum. Rather, it’s His resolute response to sin. Wrote Bible expounder Arthur Pink (1886–1952):

The wrath of God is His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. It is the displeasure and indignation of Divine equity against evil. It is the holiness of God stirred into activity. Divine equity against evil. It is the moving cause of that just sentence which He passes upon evil-doers. God is angry against sin because it is a rebelling against His authority, a wrong done to His inviolable sovereignty. Insurrectionists against God’s government shall be made to know that God is the Lord. They shall be made to feel how great that Majesty is which they despise, and how dreadful is that threatened wrath which they so little regarded.

For centuries people have forsaken God for carnality and corruption. Therefore, there will be no place for them to hide from God’s fury. It will hit like a tempest (6:15–17).

The Wrath of Satan

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time (12:12).

Satan’s successful strategy has been to create a “great reversal.” He has influenced individuals, societies, and nations to challenge everything about God, His Word, and His plans. He has majored in making everything godly appear evil and everything evil appear good. The prophet Isaiah warned about this ruse: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20).

The consequence has been complete ethical chaos in every realm of society, from education to entertainment. Today this corrupt inclination is intensifying and will climax during the Tribulation.

But it will not go unpunished. God has declared, “I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” (13:11). This punishment will overtake the world like a ferocious tsunami and will involve an evil trinity: the Dragon (identified as Satan), the Beast known as the Antichrist, and a second beast referred to as the False Prophet (Rev. 12—13). Because his time will be short, Satan will be exceedingly wrathful on the inhabitants of the world, especially on the Jewish people (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:24; Lk. 21:23).

The floodgates will open wide with the convergence of the wrath of the Lamb, God, and Satan. “The great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hastens quickly... That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zeph. 1:14–15).
All six fishermen perished in the storm of 1991. In the coming “perfect tribulation storm,” two-thirds of Earth’s entire population will perish (Zech. 13:8). Today that figure would be 4.6 billion people.

The great hymn writer Ira Sankey (1840–1908) read about a favorite song the fishermen of Northern Great Britain often sang as they approached their harbors in the time of storm. Sankey composed a new melody for it, and it soon became a favorite during the great evangelistic meetings of Dwight L. Moody. It’s called “A Shelter in the Time of Storm”:

**The Lord’s our Rock, in Him we hide,**
**A Shelter in the time of storm;**
**Secure whatever ill betide,**
**A Shelter in the time of storm.**

**Refrain**

Oh, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land,
A weary land, a weary land;
Oh, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land,
A Shelter in the time of storm.

There was no escape for the Gloucester fishermen. But there is a way to escape the Tribulation. Jesus said, “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3). Jesus willingly became the final sacrifice for sin. He died that we might live. He arose from the dead because He is God. And when we place our faith in Him—not in our own good works—He gives us the gift of everlasting life: “The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life” (Jn. 6:37, 47). He is the greatest Shelter anyone can ever know.

ENDNOTES

1 "Quotes About Jesus Christ” <tentmaker.org/Quotes/jesus-christ.htm>.

Peter Colón is the Southeastern States director for The Friends of Israel.

**Netanyahu at Auschwitz: Never Again!**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in January at the monument to victims of the Nazi death camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Janek Skarzynski/ Government Press Office). May 14 will mark the State of Israel’s 62nd year as an independent nation.

The Jerusalem Post—In a much-anticipated speech at Auschwitz-Birkenau in January, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reassured the Jewish people’s right to self-defense amid increasing concern over the Iranian threat and growing controversy over the legitimacy of Israel and its military.

“From the cursed ground at Auschwitz, Birkenau and other camps rise the voices of our brothers and sisters, our people who choked to death and were burned and murdered,” said the prime minister in English, wishing “decency, truth and hope . . . for all mankind” before switching to Hebrew, “the language the Nazis sought to exterminate.”

“Remember what Amalek did to you,” cautioned Netanyahu, quoting a particularly ominous passage from Deuteronomy. “I have come here today from Jerusalem to tell you: We will never forget. We will not allow the Holocaust deniers or those who desecrate [Jewish] graves and signs to erase or distort [our] memory.”

He also warned that though the “Nazi Amalek” is a ghost of the past, “a new Amalek is appearing and once again threatening to annihilate the Jews. We will not allow it. . . . We will never forget and always stand guard,” he said.

“Murderous hatred must be stopped in its tracks, stopped right from the beginning. All countries in the world must learn this lesson, just as we did after losing a third of our people in blood-soaked Europe. We learned that the only guarantee for the protection of our people is the State of Israel and its army, the IDF,” Netanyahu declared, warning that never again would the existence of Israel and the Jewish people be threatened.

Israel, he said, must stand at the forefront of all civilized nations and warn them about impending danger, while also preparing to defend itself against all threats. “I promise, as head of the Jewish state, that never again will we allow the hand of evil to sever the life of our people and our state,” he solemnly added.

*Am Yisrael Chai* [Hebrew, “The nation of Israel lives”]. We have returned to our homeland, to the land of our forefathers, to Jerusalem, our capital. We have converged from all corners of the world, Holocaust survivors, Arab Jews, Jews from former Soviet Union states, Ethiopian Jews,” Netanyahu said, rebuking those who claim the Jewish population of Israel is comprised mostly of emigrants from Europe.

“We bow our heads in memory [of Holocaust victims] and raise our heads as our flag waves with its two blue stripes and the Star of David at its center. We still haven’t lost our hope.”
THE JUDGMENTS

1st Seal
ANTICHRIST

White horse; rider holding a bow and wearing a crown. (6:1–2)

2nd Seal
WAR

Red horse; rider takes peace from Earth. (6:3–4)

3rd Seal
FAMINE

Black horse; rider holding scales. (6:5–6)

4th Seal
DEATH

Pale (sickly green) horse named Death and Hades. (6:7–8)

The first four seals are commonly called the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

7th Trumpet

All nations now belong to God and Messiah; this trumpet unleashes the seven bowls. (11:15–19)

6th Trumpet

Four demons bound in Euphrates are freed; third of world’s population dies. (9:13–20)

5th Trumpet

Bottomless pit is opened, smoke fills air; locusts infest Earth and torment the unsaved five months. (9:1–11)

4th Trumpet

Third of the sun and stars are burned. (8:12–21)

The final three trumpets are also referred to as three woes.

1st Bowl

Loathsome sores appear on all who have mark of Beast. (16:2)

2nd Bowl

Rest of seas turn to blood; all life in the oceans die. (16:3)

3rd Bowl

Rest of fresh water turns to blood. (16:4–7)

4th Bowl

People scorched by fire. (16:8)

This chart is designed to help us visualize God’s many judgments in the book of Revelation. The scroll Messiah Jesus takes from God’s right hand begins the judgments as Jesus breaks each seal. The seventh seal actually contains the remainder of the judgments because the breaking of the seventh seal unleashes the seven trumpet judgments. In like fashion, the seventh trumpet unleashes the seven bowl judgments that conclude God’s wrath.
SOF REVELATION

by Thomas C. Simcox

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<th>1st Seal</th>
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<td>DEATH</td>
<td>MARTYRDOM</td>
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**Trumpet**

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**Bowl**

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And indignation on sinful mankind. Sometime after the seventh bowl, the Lord Jesus will return to Earth in glory: “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east . . . Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with [Him]. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Zech. 14:4–5; Rev. 19:16) (Top row, panels 1-5: Stan Stein. All other images: FOI Image Archive).
## Seals of Revelation

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<td>MARTYRDOM</td>
<td>COSMIC DISTURBANCES</td>
<td>UNLEASHES TRUMPETS</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd horse, rider</td>
<td>Souls slain for their faith; they receive white robes.</td>
<td>Great earthquake; sun darkens, moon becomes blood, stars fall from heaven, sky recedes as scroll.</td>
<td>Silence in heaven for half an hour.</td>
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## Trumpets

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## Bowls

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*mankind. Sometime after the seventh bowl, the Lord Jesus will return to Earth in glory: “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. . . . Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with [Him]. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Zech. 14:4–5; Rev. 19:16) (Top row, panels 1-5: Stan Stein. All other images: FOI Image Archive).*  

*by Thomas C. Simcox*
Hi. We’re knocking on doors around the area, hoping to secure donations and people to join us in protecting the oceans, rain forests, and all the animals that live in them. We’re worried about the ecosystem and global warming. Can we count on your help?”

The bright-eyed college coed and her male companion looked at me with genuine concern as they stood at my front door. She was holding a clipboard. He held an envelope for contributions, along with flyers for everyone who donated to the cause.

I have seen this scenario many times. I explained that, while I appreciate their desire to save the oceans, trees, and whales, there is looming a series of judgments from the Creator of all these things that will wreak havoc on the entire planet.

The apostle John, in exile on the isle of Patmos, received a vision from the Lord about “things which must take place”
Thus God’s first two trumpets alone destroy, on a worldwide scale, a third of all trees, grass, and seas.

The Third Trumpet

“Then 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 water” (v. 10). A great star, or possibly a comet, will fall to earth and ruin one-third of all fresh water, making it bitter. The Bible calls the star Wormwood.

Many believe this judgment will be some type of man-made disaster, like the Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident in 1986 in Ukraine; others feel it will be the result of nuclear fallout. The Bible is clear that this judgment is from God. The angel sounds a trumpet, and the judgment falls.

As with the previous two, this plague is global in scope, turning to poison a third of the world’s fresh drinking water. “And many men died from the water, because it was made bitter” (v. 11).

The Fourth Trumpet

The fourth trumpet blast will impact the solar system. The sun, moon, and stars will be dimmed by one-third. As people around the globe grapple with massive environmental changes, they suddenly will find themselves in a much darker world: “A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night” (v. 12).

Daytime will be darker and shorter, while night will be darker and longer. Historically, darkness has increased the difficulty of accomplishing anything. During the First Gulf War in 1990, for example, the majority of allied air strikes against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq took place with the morning light. Perhaps this particular judgment will help struggling Tribulation believers as they try to hide from the Antichrist.

After describing this judgment, the apostle John wrote, “I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying . . . ‘Woe, woe, woe to . . . the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet’” (v. 13).

The Fifth Trumpet

This judgment is different from its predecessors: “A star [falls] from heaven to the earth. To him [the star] was given the key to the bottomless pit” (9:1). It appears this judgment unleashes Satan on the earth. Wrote Walvoord: “This star, probably representing Satan cast out of heaven at the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 12:9), was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.”

Once opened, the abyss releases smoke that rises “out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace” (9:2). It brings additional darkness, enshrouding the planet in something akin to smog but far worse and on a far greater scale.

But things get worse still: “Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth” (v. 3). They are unique in appearance:

The shape of the locusts was like horses . . . On their heads were crowns . . . and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. And they had breastplates . . . of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots . . . They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails (vv. 7–10).

Their king is identified as “Abaddon, but in Greek . . . Apollyon” (v. 11). Wrote Walvoord: “Though Satan is sometimes portrayed as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), here Satan and his demons are seen for what they really are, destroyers of people.” They will torment unregenerate humanity for five months: “Men will seek death and will not find it” (Rev. 9:6).

The Sixth Trumpet

The scene now shifts as the sixth angel’s trumpet unleashes “four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates” (v. 14). These are clearly demons, as holy angels are not bound. They will “kill a third of mankind” (v. 15). Nevertheless, people will not “repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons,
The invention of locks and keys is extremely ancient. But it was the Romans, nearly 2,000 years ago, who refined and developed their use. Because togas normally lacked pockets, they created the key ring.

In biblical imagery, keys signify status, power, and authority. “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He [Jesus] who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David”' (Rev. 3:7). The apostle John used the phrase key of David as a metaphor to declare a definite doctrine for the whole Church Age through the church in Philadelphia.

The source for the motif key of David is from Isaiah 22:22: “The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open.” The one who possesses the key has the authority to establish and rule the earthly Kingdom to come.

The vital message for the church today is that, despite the tributial judgments to come, Israel’s national hope will not be frustrated. God will keep His promises. That is why Jesus is presented preliminarily as holy and true. To the church and Israel that means He is El k’dosh Yisrael, “the Holy One of Israel,” and Elohim Emet, “the God of Truth.” Therefore, He alone holds the key.
Many find this teaching repulsive and unacceptable, but it reveals the profound nature of God’s wrath. This sobering doctrine comes also from the lips of the Lord Jesus: “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Mt. 25:41, 46). The Beast, False Prophet, and Devil whose abominations filled the earth will already have been cast into the Lake of Fire. Then all who are there will be “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). This punishment is known as “the second death” (v. 14). The first death is that of the body, which all people experience.

History will end with the judgment of all the wicked throughout the ages, a sobering event described by the apostle John in Revelation 20:11–15. This final judgment will occur at the end of the 1,000-year Messianic Kingdom, after God judges Satan and the fallen angels (v. 10).

All of the dead from all time will be gathered before God who will be seated on His pure and holy “great white throne” (v. 11). Their bodies will have been resurrected from the land and sea, and their souls brought from Hades where they had previously been in torment. They will appear as complete human beings before the Lord of the universe and their Creator, Jesus Christ.

Books will be opened in which the details of every person’s life have been recorded. Each person’s heart of unbelief, as verified by his or her actions, will form the basis of God’s judgment: “The dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (v. 12).

Final judgment is based on an individual’s deeds because works reveal the heart’s true condition (Mt. 16:27; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 22:12). To confirm guilt, another book will be opened, the Book of Life, containing the names of all who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and received the gift of eternal life. “Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

Two earlier prophecies of this judgment are recorded in Scripture. One was from the prophet Daniel: “The Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame. . . . Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake . . . to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 7:9–10; 12:2).

The other came from Jesus Christ: “The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth— . . . those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (Jn. 5:28–29).

All judged at the Great White Throne will experience conscious, eternal punishment. Just as Moses saw a bush that burned without being consumed (Ex. 3:2), so will the Lake of Fire punish unregenerate sinners forever without consuming them.
Beware the Bowls!

(Walter Homan/FOI Image Archive; digital enhancement, Thomas E. Williams)
Warning! Danger ahead! Warnings are common today. Highway signs warn of dangerous road conditions. The news media alerts us to tainted food. Healthcare providers caution us about health hazards. You can hardly make a move today without running into a caveat about something.

Perhaps one of the most important warnings came 2,000 years ago from Jesus. Speaking to the multitudes, He declared, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” (Lk. 12:4–5). A time is coming when God will punish a world that has rejected Him, and people will come face to face with the seven bowl judgments of Revelation 15–16.

The bowls will bring God’s severest wrath on the earth near the end of the seven-year Tribulation. The apostle John called the angels and bowl judgments another “great and marvelous” sign in heaven. The first sign is “a woman clothed with the sun, and on her head a garland of twelve stars” (12:1); and she is about to give birth to a child. She is a picture of God’s marvelous work of redeeming Israel out of this sin-cursed world.

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The first five bowls bring extreme suffering and destruction. The sixth brings the world’s armies together for God’s judgment, and the final bowl leaves Earth radically changed.

- **First Bowl.** Foul-smelling, extremely painful sores break out on all who took the mark of the Beast or worshiped his image (16:2).
- **Second Bowl.** The seas of the world become like the blood of a dead man; and every creature living in them dies, producing a horrendous stench (v. 3).
- **Third Bowl.** The rivers and springs become blood, leaving only blood to drink. This judgment is a response to the shed blood of the martyred Tribulation saints (vv. 4–7).
- **Fourth Bowl.** The sun produces such tremendous heat that it scorches people. This plague is all the more intense because the previous plague destroyed mankind’s source of drinking water (vv. 8–9).
- **Fifth Bowl.** A deep darkness envelops Earth and causes distress so severe people gnaw their tongues (vv. 10–11).
- **Sixth Bowl.** The great Euphrates River dries up, opening the way for the kings of the East and their armies. Three demons go out: one from Satan, one from the Antichrist, and one from the Antichrist’s False Prophet. They lead the kings of Earth to the Valley of Jezreel in Israel for the Battle of Armageddon (vv. 12–16).
- **Seventh Bowl.** This final judgment, marked by God’s words *It is done!* brings lightening, thunder, and a great earthquake unlike any humanity has ever seen. It will reshape Earth’s topography, eliminating islands and leveling mountains. The “great city” (Babylon) will be divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations will be destroyed. Additionally, large hailstones weighing approximately 100 pounds each and measuring about 20 inches in diameter will fall on people (vv. 17–21).

Sadly, despite all these judgments, people will blaspheme God and refuse to repent (vv. 9, 11, 21). They show no remorse in the face of their well-deserved suffering and pain.

Were God to permit sin to continue on Earth, people would persist in rebelling against Him. God’s judgments teach us that His fierce and mighty wrath is not sufficient for sinners to repent. Only the saving work of the Holy Spirit can open someone’s eyes to the need of God’s infinite grace and mercy.

**ENDNOTES**

3 Levy, 177.
4 Walvoord, 2:966.
5 Levy, 187.

James A. Showers is vice president and chief financial officer for The Friends of Israel.
The first line of the play The Diary of Anne Frank demonstrated Miep Gies’s concern about the well-being of others. “Are you all right, Mr. Frank?” she asks a broken Otto Frank as they reunite in the secret annex after World War II. Mrs. Gies and her husband, Jan, helped hide Anne Frank and her family, as well as four other Dutch Jews, in the annex above Otto’s office in Amsterdam from July 1942 to August 1944. She died on January 11 at the age of 100.

An employee and trusted friend of Otto, Anne’s father, Mrs. Gies gladly agreed to help shelter the family as the Nazis tore through Europe in search of Jewish people to exterminate. She risked her life each day, knowing she faced certain death if the Gestapo discovered what she was doing. A special friend to Anne Frank, Mrs. Gies helped her through the difficult teen years with stories of dresses and parties, even bringing Anne her first pair of high-heeled shoes. In her diary, Anne described the little things that made Miep and the others who helped her, heroes:

> Our helpers…have pulled us through up till now and we hope they will bring us safely to dry land. Otherwise, they will have to share the same fate as the many others who are being searched for. Never have we heard one word of the burden which we certainly must be to them, never has one of them complained of all the trouble we give.

They all come upstairs every day, talk to the men about business and politics, to the women about food and wartime difficulties, and about newspapers and books with the children. They put on the brightest possible faces, bring flowers and presents for birthdays and bank holidays, are always ready to help and do all they can. That is something we must never forget; although others may show heroism in the war against the Germans, our helpers display heroism in their cheerfulness and affection.

Mrs. Gies, however, saw herself differently. In her memoir, Anne Frank Remembered, published in 1987, she wrote, “I am not a hero. I stand at the end of the long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more—much more—during those dark and terrible times years ago, but always like yesterday in the hearts of those of us who bear witness.” While in her 80s, she travelled the world, speaking against intolerance.

Born February 15, 1909, as Hermine Santrouschitz, Mrs. Gies was the last survivor among Anne Frank’s protectors and the Jews of the secret annex. On August 4, 1944, the Gestapo raided the Franks’ hiding place and arrested its eight occupants. Anne’s diary and writings were left behind. Mrs. Gies was spared from arrest, perhaps because of her Austrian heritage.

She found Anne’s writings, hoping to give them back to her after the war. But Anne Frank died of typhus at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at age 15, as did her sister, Margot, at age 19. Her mother, Edith, died at Auschwitz. Otto Frank was the sole survivor.

Mrs. Gies was reunited with Otto after the war and gave him Anne’s diary, which was published in the Netherlands in 1947. It was first published in English in the United States in 1952. Over the years it has been translated into 50 languages and sold more than 25 million copies, making it one of the most significant works to emerge from the Holocaust.

ENDNOTES


by Bonnie Pearson, field representative with The Friends of Israel in New Jersey.
The church is not Israel, and Israel is not the church. However, more and more Christians today fail to see the distinction. They have been so indoctrinated into Replacement Theology that they see themselves as the “new Israel” and the Jewish people as forsaken.

How did this belief become so deeply established in the church, particularly when it was not the theology of the apostles or the first- or second-generation church leaders? Because it justified prejudice against the Jewish people.

Replacement Theology began developing in the second and third centuries of the church, becoming established about 200 years after the church began. It did not arise from a careful study of Scripture. In fact, the position was formulated first, and then Scripture was located to support it. This is the wrong way to devise a theology. Theology should result from a thorough study of God’s Word. People should not define their theology first and then go on a Scripture hunt to find justification for it.

One reason Replacement Theology has become so prevalent is its great intellectual charm, so to speak. Arguing for it requires doing mental gymnastics with God’s Word to develop a complex argument. Even then, Scripture does not fully support it. But for many people, the exercise is appealing.

Initially, Replacement Theology developed to justify prejudice against the Jewish people in the years of the early church. It became a core doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church; and though the Reformation fathers corrected much bad theology when they formed the Protestant movement, they brought Replacement Theology with them.

From Jewish to Gentile

The church began in Acts 2 in Jerusalem with the coming of the Holy Spirit, and its early leadership was Jewish. It was a Jewish body composed primarily of Jewish people who had placed their faith in Jesus the Messiah. But around A.D. 70 a transition began. Jerusalem and the second Temple were destroyed, the church in Jerusalem was scattered, and Gentile leaders began to take over. By
the end of the first century, there were an estimated 100,000 Christians in the Roman Empire and about 6 million Jewish people.

But by the end of the second century—a mere 100 years later—the church had grown to about 7 million Christians, equal to the number of Jews then. Almost all church growth had occurred among the Gentiles, who were now dominating Christianity.

Meanwhile, a Roman law contributed to the Christian animosity toward Jewish people. According to the law, any religion that predated the Roman Empire was legal and could function openly. But any religion that began afterward was illegal and needed to be snuffed out. Christianity began long after the Roman Empire, but Judaism predated it by many centuries. So Rome considered Judaism legal but Christianity illegal and began to persecute the Christians.

Christian leaders argued that Christianity was merely a sect of Judaism. But since Jewish leaders did not support the position, Rome disagreed; and great persecution came on the church. Christians resented the fact their Jewish neighbors did not come to their defense and began to view Judaism as a threat. They thought all Jews should embrace Jesus Christ as Messiah and that Judaism should be snuffed out. Christianity for Christians, not Jews, and that only Judaism predated it by many centuries. So Rome considered Judaism legal but Christianity illegal and began to persecute the Christians.

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The early church fathers distanced themselves from everything Jewish, seeing the Bible as a wholly Gentile document. And they searched Greek culture to find a way to take Scriptures that clearly show God still has a plan for Israel and use them to argue exactly the opposite. To accomplish this feat, they turned to allegory.

Allegory ascribes nonliteral, spiritualized meanings to literal words and phrases. It became popular in the Roman Empire when intellectuals began using it to reinterpret various Greek classics, like Homer’s iliad, to make them more appealing to the society of the day. Some church fathers began applying the same method to Scripture, especially unfulfilled prophecy. Origen (A.D. 185–254) was the first to develop a system that systematically applied allegory to unfulfilled prophecy. He argued that Scripture has two meanings: the literal and the so-called spiritual; and he gave higher value to the “spiritual.” Consequently, literal interpretation became associated with weaker Christians, and allegorical interpretation became associated with “deeper,” more “intellectual” Christians.

Unfulfilled prophecy, taken literally, threatened Replacement Theology because it speaks of a glorious future for Israel and a coming Tribulation and Millennial Kingdom on Earth.

A problem with allegory is the absence of uniform rules for applying allegorical interpretation to literal Scripture. One person may say a passage means one thing, and another may say it means something else. And neither individual can prove the other wrong.

In the fourth century, Augustine (A.D. 354–425) came along. He was strongly influenced by both Ambrose of Milan, a church leader who argued that the Jewish people were irrevocably perverse and not worthy of any good thought, and Origen’s use of allegory to interpret Scripture. Augustine used allegory to formulate the system we today call Amillennialism.

Augustine’s book The City of God still influences the church today. He also wrote Tract Against the Jews in which he argued that Jewish people should be treated unmercifully because they have no value and deserve no consideration.

Augustine’s contemporary, John Chrysostom (A.D. 347–407), a famous preacher and great orator, preached a series of sermons against the Jewish people, accusing them of murdering their offspring and worshiping devils. He called their synagogues brothels and dens of robbers and claimed God hated the Jewish people because, in his view, they murdered Jesus. Here was his conclusion: since God hated the Jews, Christians are obligated to hate them as well. Do you want to be a good Christian? Then you had better hate the Jews, he said, because God does. Sadly, anti-Semitism and Replacement Theology overtook the church.

However, until this point, Christianity was still illegal in the Roman Empire. The church had no power to do anything about what it believed. But all that was about to change.

continued next issue
Satan’s Punishment

If living in this sin-cursed world gets you down, there’s good news. Satan—the father of lies, deceiver of nations, and despiser of men’s souls—will one day be judged. Although many people doubt his existence or consider him a myth or symbol of wickedness, Satan is very real indeed. Both Old and New Testaments verify his existence, and the New Testament speaks of his end.

God created Satan as the highest of all angels. In his original state, he was perfect in wisdom, beauty, and in all his ways (Ezek. 28:12, 15). Granted special privileges from God, he dwelt in God’s presence to proclaim God’s holiness (v. 14) and was appointed guardian over the entire angelic host.

The prophet Ezekiel called him the “anointed cherub” (v. 14); and Isaiah called him Lucifer, meaning “brightness” or “a shining one” (Isa. 14:12). God gave him enormous power to function throughout the universe.

Scripture does not explain exactly how Satan fell but simply reveals “iniquity was found in [him]” (Ezek. 28:15). Precipitated by pride, his heart became lifted up because of his beauty, resulting in the corruption of his nature and wisdom (v. 17). His pride then led to rebellion, causing him to seek the establishment of his throne above that of the Most High God (Isa. 14:13–14).

Satan’s fall brought God’s immediate judgment. Lucifer lost his beauty and holiness, his power was restricted, he was stripped of his privileged position near God’s throne, and he was cast from heaven to Earth and ultimately banished from God’s presence (Ezek. 28:16–17). His depraved nature filled him with violence and has destined him for the Lake of Fire (Mt. 25:41). Jesus spoke of seeing Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Lk. 10:18).

Although Satan’s position and power have been restricted, he is still extremely mighty; and his activity extends throughout the universe. His major objective is to overthrow God and His program, gain worship for himself, and annihilate all who possess faith in Jesus Christ. He works through a host of fallen angels known as demons. It is believed that, when Satan fell, one-third of all the angels God created followed Satan into wickedness (Rev. 12:4).

Satan and his demons are cunning and formidable, but they have been defeated by Jesus Christ; and their doom is sealed. Although Satan bruised Christ’s heel (Gen. 3:15), Christ will crush Satan’s head and win total victory over him. Christ became human to destroy the Devil and his works (1 Jn. 3:8), a feat He accomplished on the cross (Heb. 2:14).

Although Satan has been judged (rendered powerless), the ultimate implementation of his sentence is still future. During His earthly ministry, Christ demonstrated His power over Satan when He cast demons out of individuals and confined demons to the abyss.

The Bible mentions four judgments of Satan and his demons:

- Some demons are temporarily bound in the abyss (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 9:1–3) while others are bound in the Euphrates River (Rev. 9:14–19).
- During the Great Tribulation, Michael the archangel will fight against the Dragon (Satan) and his angels (demons) and cast them from heaven to Earth, forever terminating Satan’s access to God (12:7–9).
- During the Millennium (Messianic Kingdom), Satan and his demons will be confined to the bottomless pit for the entire thousand years (20:1–3).
- Jesus said the Lake of Fire was created especially for the Devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41, 46). Satan and his kingdom of demons will meet their final judgment when they are cast alive into the Lake of Fire, to be tormented throughout eternity (Rev. 20:10).

by David M. Levy
The grand inauguration of the Messianic Age will begin when Jesus Christ returns to Jerusalem as promised (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:10–12). The remnant of Israel that will have withstood the Time of Jacob’s Trouble (seven-year Tribulation) will “look on Me whom they pierced,” said the Lord, “and mourn for Him” (Zech. 12:10). Then the Messiah will establish His literal 1,000-year reign on Earth from Jerusalem (Isa. 16:5; Rev. 20:4), fulfilling the long-awaited Jewish expectation referred to in Hebrew as Ha-Olam Ha-Ba (“the World to Come”), or the Messianic Era.

Features of this age include:

- Israel being reunited as a nation and dwelling in peace in its land (Isa. 32:18).
- Universal peace (2:4).
- A world blessed through Israel (Mic. 5:7).
- Wild animals tamed (Isa. 11:6–9).
- Human longevity increased (65:20–23).
- Satan confined to a bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1–3).
- Worldwide knowledge of God (Isa. 11:9).
- Righteousness and justice (Jer. 23:5).

As wonderful as this 1,000-year Kingdom will be, it too, will end in judgment. Satan will be released from the bottomless pit that will confine him during this Messianic Age, and he will deceive the nations (Rev. 20:7–8). A global army will besiege Jerusalem but will disintegrate in a flash of fire from heaven (v. 9). Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire (v. 10); and the wicked dead will be resurrected, judged at the Great White Throne, and cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity (vv. 11–15).

Then the glory of Jerusalem will be magnificent. The rabbis taught three things about the future Jerusalem, all of which are confirmed by Scripture:

- The city will become a great light to all the nations. Scripture says,
  
  Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, ‘Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, and seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also.’ Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD” (Zech. 8:20–22).

- Jerusalem will become the world’s capital. Scripture teaches,
  
  At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts (Jer. 3:17).

- In the Jerusalem of the world to come, only the invited may enter. Scripture teaches that Jesus alone cleanses from sin and is the sole means of entrance: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6). In that day, Israel will finally be reconciled to its Messiah and will dwell in its land safely forever:
  
  In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land, I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up (Zech. 13:1; Jer. 24:6).

by Peter Colón
Christ’s Superior Ministry

Hebrews 9:11–22

Hebrews 9 begins with a description of the earthly Tabernacle and its ministry through the Levitical priesthood under the first (Mosaic) covenant. Both the Tabernacle and its services were temporary and functioned as an external figure (shadow) to represent spiritual truths pointing people to a new and superior program.

Since the sacrifices were powerless to take away sin, worshipers were continually plagued by a guilty conscience and lack of peace. A new, better program was needed because the Levitical system was insufficient and incapable of bringing the Israelites into a right standing before God. Therefore, God abolished the first covenant and replaced it with an eternal New Covenant implemented through Christ’s ministry.

Beginning with 9:9, the book of Hebrews explains the New Covenant’s power to remove an individual’s sin through Christ’s superior ministry.

Christ in a Superior Sanctuary

The phrase but Christ came as High Priest (v. 11) is the hinge upon which the argument swings as the author contrasted the old ministry under the Mosaic Covenant and the new ministry under Christ.

The focus is now on Christ’s heavenly ministry as “High Priest of the good things to come” (v. 11). These “good things to come” were what Christ accomplished through His more perfect ministry in the heavenly Tabernacle: (1) a better covenant, (2) the purging of a guilty conscience because of sin, (3) personal access and communion with God, and (4) prophetic blessings yet to come.

Christ’s ministry functions in a “greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” (v. 11). The Tabernacle Christ entered was not physical or created from earthly materials visible to the human eye. He entered the sanctuary of heaven itself to dwell and serve at the right hand of God the Father. Hebrews 8:2 calls Him “a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.” Christ functions as High Priest in the very presence of God, making His ministry both effective and meritorious on behalf of mankind, whereas the Levitical system was not.

Christ’s Superior Sacrifice

“Not with the blood of goats and calves [bulls], but with [by] His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place [Holy of Holies] once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (9:12). The phrase having obtained eternal redemption has a twofold emphasis. First, the Aaronic high priest had to offer animal sacrifices annually on the Day of Atonement for his sins and those of the Israelites. If his offerings were sufficient to remove sin, they would not have been offered annually. In contrast, Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice was efficacious and sufficient to provide eternal redemption. He had no sin and, therefore, no need to offer sacrifice for Himself, but only for the people. His one-time sacrifice was sufficient for all who would ever live.

Second, this single act of sacrifice purchased “eternal redemption” for all people everywhere, doing away with the need for an annual atonement in an earthly Tabernacle by a sinful high priest for sinful mankind. However, though Christ’s sacrifice provided
Christ Secured a Superior Sanctification

The Levitical animal sacrifices—such as the sacrifice of “bulls and goats” and the “ashes of a heifer,” referring to the ordinance of the red heifer (v. 13; cf. Num. 19)—provided ceremonial cleansing or external purification for the nation of Israel (Heb. 9:13; cf. Lev. 16). These cleansing offerings were merely purified “the flesh” (Heb. 9:13). If any priest touched a dead body or tomb, he was considered ceremonially unclean and could not enter the Tabernacle for service (Num. 19:13).

The word unclean refers to being unhallowed or profane and thus unfit for service. Priests could be brought back into fellowship only through “the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean” (v. 13; cf. Lev. 16:3, 14–15; Num. 19:9–17). The blood of animals merely sanctified (set apart) the priest, making him externally pure and fit to serve in the Tabernacle.

For a man to be cleansed from a sin-ridden, guilty conscience would take much more than external cleansing via animal blood. It would take “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14). Only Christ’s shed blood on the cross is able to “cleanse [one’s] conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (v. 14).

A number of contrasts can be made between the two types of blood sacrifices.

1. Animals themselves are under the sin curse (Gen. 3:14), so their blood can never provide internal cleansing from sin; but the blood of Christ can.

2. If the blood of insensible animals, offered involuntarily, could cleanse the flesh from defilement, imagine how much more Christ’s blood, offered voluntarily, can cleanse from defilement.

3. If beasts without merit (although qualified under Law to be offered for sin) could provide external cleansing, imagine how much more the sinless Christ (who offered Himself to God) can cleanse from sin.

4. If the blood of animals purged the Israelites from ceremonial defilement, imagine how much more Christ’s blood can purge an individual’s conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

5. No matter how meticulously the Levitical priests performed their duties, they always bore a sense of guilt and defilement; but in Christ, believers are liberated to experience perfect peace.

Christ’s Sacrifice Is Superior in Scope

Because of its nature and type, Christ’s blood sacrifice was superior to the animal sacrifices under the first covenant. Through His death, Christ became “the Mediator of the new covenant . . . for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). Through His death, Christ inaugurated a New Covenant that secured eternal redemption for all believers—those called under the first covenant, as well as those who, in the future, would believe.

The author drove home his point with an illustration: “For where there is a testament [covenant], there must also be the death of the testator” (v. 16). An inheritance can be acquired only upon the death of the one bequeathing it. The testament in this instance is a covenant that was inaugurated with the death of Christ, through His blood sacrifice on the cross. To activate the covenant, it was absolutely necessary for Christ to die, since He was the One inaugurating it.

Thus the New Covenant could legally take effect only on Christ’s death: “For a testament is in force after men are dead, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.’ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry” (vv. 18–21).

Even the first covenant did not become effective until Moses read it to the people, who agreed to keep its precepts (Ex. 24:3–8). Then Moses sprinkled the book (covenant), people, Tabernacle, and vessels of ministry with blood and water. To become binding, the covenant needed to be ratified by blood because “according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission [forgiveness of sin]” (Heb. 9:22).

In like manner, Christ has provided for the removal of sin through a New Covenant that He ratified by voluntarily offering, not the blood of animals, but His own uncorrupted blood. He confirmed this truth when, at His final Passover, He declared, “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt. 26:28). Therefore, the New Covenant is eternal and unchangeable and provides eternal redemption because it was ratified by Christ alone, who is eternal.

What a wonderful and superior plan God inaugurated through Christ’s shed blood for our eternal redemption!

correction: The previous installment of this series contained a typographical error that read, “The censer was 36 inches high and 18 inches square.” It should have read, “The golden altar of incense was 36 inches high and 18 inches square.” We regret the error.

David M. Levy is the director of International Ministries for The Friends of Israel.
Specific Reasons for God’s Anger and Wrath - Part 2

Previously we examined the ultimate reason for God’s anger and wrath and several specific reasons for His wrath against Israel. Now we will observe additional specific reasons.

**Specific Reasons for God’s Wrath Against Israel**

**Provocations of King Manasseh.** “The LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him” (2 Ki. 23:26).

Second Kings 21:2–9 provides the tragic record of those provocations. Manasseh “did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel” (v. 2).

For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put My name.” And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spirits and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. He even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD had said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; and I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers––only if they are careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them.” But they paid no attention, and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel” (vv. 3–9).

Because of these provocations, God said, “I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, ‘My name shall be there’” (23:27).

Mocking and scoffing at God’s prophets and despising God’s words.

King Zedekiah “stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel” (2 Chr. 36:13). Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem. And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy (vv. 14–16).

**Becoming like dross.** “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt it; so I will gather you in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you. Yes, I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in its midst’” (Ezek. 22:19–21).

**Profaning the Sabbath.** After the end of the Babylonian Captivity, Nehemiah accused the Jewish people of bringing additional wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath. They were treading winepresses on the Sabbath; bringing in sheaves; and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and other merchandise that they brought into Jerusalem to sell on that day. Men of Tyre brought in fish and all types of goods to sell on the Sabbath to the children of Judah and Jerusalem (Neh. 13:15–18). They were changing the specific day God intended to be holy (different) into a common business day.

**Refusing to meet the spiritual requirement of repentance to enter the future theocratic Kingdom of God.** When John the Baptist came as the forerunner of the Messiah, he preached the following message in Judea: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Mt. 3:1–2). That Kingdom was at hand because the Messiah, who could establish it, was in Israel. John’s message indicated the people of Israel needed to meet the spiritual...
requirement of repentance for God’s promised Kingdom to be established.

When many of the Pharisees and Sadducees and multitudes of people came to John, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Mt. 3:7; Lk. 3:7). In referring to the wrath to come, John apparently had in mind the wrath of God that would fall on those people of Israel who would not repent of their rebellion against God and His Messiah during the offer of the future theocratic Kingdom.

Trampling underfoot the Son of God, counting His shed blood as common, and insulting the Spirit of grace.

Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:28–31).

Instruments of God’s Wrath

In the eighth century B.C., God used Assyria as His instrument of wrath primarily against the northern kingdom of Israel and somewhat against the southern kingdom of Judah. He called Assyria “the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets” (Isa. 10:5–6).

In the late sixth century and early seventh century B.C., God used Babylon as His instrument of wrath against the southern kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem (Jer. 21:4–7).

Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand. And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia (2 Chr. 36:17–20).

Lamentations 2:2–3 expresses the result of God’s wrath: “The Lord has swallowed up in wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Jacob; He has brought them down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. He has cut off in fierce anger every horn of Israel; He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire devouring all around.”

Jeremiah 50:17 states, “Israel is like scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away. First the king of Assyria devoured him; now at last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken his bones.”

God withdrew His wrath from Judah when He ended its Babylonian Captivity and restored it to its homeland (Ps. 85:1–3).

Because the generation of Israel to whom Jesus presented Himself as the promised Messiah failed to meet the spiritual requirement necessary for the promised theocratic Kingdom of God to come, Jesus foretold of severe, divine judgment (Mt. 23:34–36). That judgment came when Rome crushed the Jewish revolt that culminated with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and second Temple in A.D. 70 and the massacre of more than 1 million Jewish people. (See Luke 19:41–44.)

Jesus indicated that, at His Second Coming to Earth as the Messiah after the unparalleled time of trouble for Israel and the world, His angels will gather together all the Jewish people scattered throughout the world (Mt. 24:21, 29–31) in preparation for the establishment of God’s promised theocratic Kingdom. (See Matthew 25:31–34.)

In conjunction with this event, God issued the following warning to the people of Israel:

“As I live,” says the Lord God, “surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,” says the Lord God. “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD” (Ezek. 20:33–38).

The fact that God will remove them from the countries where they have been living but not allow them to enter Israel seems to indicate that those who persist in their rebellion will be removed from Earth in judgment. This will be the tragic consequence of refusing to meet the spiritual requirement necessary to enter God’s theocratic Kingdom.

God’s Commitment to Israel

Despite God’s many reasons for meting out wrath on Israel, He is wholly committed to that nation: “For I am with you,” says the Lord, “to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished” (Jer. 30:11).

Renald E. Showers is an author and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel.
Bibi’s in-law speaks out

Arutz-7—Dr. Hagai Ben-Artzi, Prime Minister Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu’s brother-in-law, has called U.S. President Barack Obama an anti-Semite. Netanyahu immediately rejected the remarks.

“The time has come to tell the truth,” Ben-Artzi told Arutz-7 radio. “I understand the prime minister’s reaction to me, but the truth must be told. Obama is an anti-Semite.” He said Israel is dealing with “a president who was educated by anti-Semitic preacher Jeremiah Wright.”

He also told Israel Defense Forces Army Radio that Wright is “anti-Israeli, anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic.” Obama was a devotee of Wright for two decades but distanced himself from the preacher during the presidential campaign two years ago.

Ben-Artzi told Arutz-7 the United States is important to Israel, but if Obama is looking for a crisis over Jerusalem, “then a crisis is what he will get.”

Father, daughter attacked in car

Arutz-7—Yitzchak Levi, a designer of the parochet (Holy Ark curtain) for the recently rebuilt Hurva synagogue, and his 18-month-old daughter were attacked recently while driving through a Jerusalem neighborhood.

Levi had visited the Hurva and, to avoid traffic, drove through Emek Yehoshafat (Wadi Joz), a primarily Arab neighborhood. It “is considered a calm area,” he said. “Suddenly, about 100 Arab rioters attacked us with a barrage of hundreds of rocks. The car was warped by the blows, and then a boulder hit the front windshield and smashed it.”

Levi’s baby, in the back in a car seat, was only scratched. “We were afraid they were going to lynch us. They approached until they were right next to us, which meant the rocks were not thrown so hard, but even so, they smashed all the windows. I felt like they were going to slaughter us,” Levi said. He screamed for help, which distracted the attackers long enough for him to slam on the gas and speed away. But when he reached the police station, he said, the police were apathetic and told him to go to an Arab neighborhood to file a complaint. He did not do so.

Emek Yehoshafat is the Valley of Jehoshaphat where the nations will be brought for judgment, according to the prophet Joel. Located between Mount Scopus and the Herod Gate in the Old City walls, it is the site of the Rockefeller Museum of Antiquities and a center for car repairs. It is normally considered a safe neighborhood, but this could be a sign of things to come, Levi warned.

IDF may need to reenter Gaza

Arutz-7—The Gaza front is heating up again. Rockets fired at Israel in March killed a Thai worker. Col. Rabbi Moshe Hager, a former deputy commander in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), said Israel will soon have no choice but to return to Gaza for another round of fighting.

“We must remember what it was like in Judea and Samaria eight years ago,” Hager told Arutz-7. “It was a time when even in Gilo [in southern Jerusalem] one could not walk upright for fear of Arab rockets from nearby Beit Jala, and there were terror attacks almost every day. Operation Defensive Shield brought about a total change.”

Asked why Defensive Shield had such an effect while last year’s Operation Cast Lead in Gaza did not, Hager said, “It’s very simple: The IDF remained in Judea and Samaria afterwards and continued doing the dirty work, day and night, of making arrests and not allowing the terrorists to reorganize. But after Cast Lead, the IDF did not remain in Gaza, and that’s the whole difference. Wherever we are not present, the security gets worse, and their rockets and terror capabilities get better. We cannot solve the problem without being on the spot.”

Hager is convinced Israel will be forced to return to Gaza. “It is unthinkable to continue as is, with rockets randomly fired at Israel whenever the terrorists feel like it. The State of Israel is responsible for the security of its citizens.”

Attack averted

Arutz-7—A terrorist attack was averted recently near the main highway between Hadera, Afula, and Beit Shean south of the Galilee. Two pipe bombs were discovered at a bus stop on Highway 65 near the entrance to the community of Mei Ami.

People noticed the suspicious-looking, abandoned packages and quickly alerted police. A large police detail that included several sappers raced to the scene to defuse the bombs. Highway 65 was immediately closed, and news broadcasts told drivers to avoid the area until the bombs were removed.
I raeli-American relations have gone from bad to worse as the United States demands that Israel not build new housing in Ramat Shlomo, a totally Jewish neighborhood of Jerusalem that would be part of Israel in any peace settlement. And Israelis are telling their prime minister to hang tough.

Ramat Shlomo residents would like to see the prime minister “show some spine,” reported Arutz-7. Shmuel, a student in one of the neighborhood’s many yeshivas, told Israel National TV, “Today there is a serious housing shortage in Jerusalem, and the new housing units are very necessary. I think that there must be a clear statement: Jerusalem is ours and no one else’s!”

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu echoed those words to a cheering crowd of 7,000 at an American Israel Public Affairs Committee gathering in Washington in March. “Jerusalem is not a settlement; it’s our capital,” he said. Arutz-7 reported that he received a standing ovation when he said the Jewish neighborhoods where the Obama administration opposes further building “are an integral and inextricable part of modern Jerusalem. Everyone knows that these neighborhoods will be part of Israel in any peace settlement.”

According to Arutz-7, Netanyahu “pointed out that Israel has made constant concessions to the United States and Palestinian Authority but drew the red line at Jerusalem, reasoning that building houses for Jews in all of united Jerusalem ‘in no way precludes the possibility of a two-state solution.’”

Knesset Member Ze’ev Elkin is gathering signatures to show that support for Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel crosses political lines. American leaders mistakenly think there is no Israeli consensus when it comes to Jerusalem, Elkin said. “We have to act within the Knesset to show them that the reality is different,” reported Arutz-7.

Ironically, Israel’s construction force is largely made up of Palestinians. The building freeze enacted last year in Judea and Samaria (West Bank) under U.S. pressure put many of them out of work. According to a January article in the Christian Science Monitor, a Palestinian worker commented, “The settlement freeze has only brought more poverty.”
It is written in Proverbs 19:21, “There are many plans in a man’s heart, nevertheless the LORD’s counsel—that will stand.” We cannot know what tomorrow will bring, so we must be ready to serve the Lord each day, remembering our days are numbered. But many people do not think this way. They act as though they will live hundreds of years, and they are confident in themselves and do not consider the Lord.

Sometimes these people try to make trouble for those of us who believe in Christ. Not long ago a 75-year-old ultra-Orthodox woman brought her Orthodox lady friends to my home, determined to do a great mitzvah (good deed) and show them how active she is in opposing Jewish people like me who believe in Jesus.

Because I am her neighbor, she did everything in her power to drive me from my home. But I have lived in this neighborhood of Jerusalem for more than 35 years and am not about to leave. So she came to my home one day with some of her friends.

“I have an open door. You are welcome,” I told them. Immediately she began attacking me and telling me long stories that she heard from her rabbis, trying to display her knowledge. But I spoke to her using only the Bible.

“You see,” she told the ladies. “He is trying to make us Christians. He is using a Christian book. He is reading to us from one of his Christian books.”

Then a woman asked, “Can you show us what you are reading?”

So I showed her my Bible; and they all saw I was reading from Deuteronomy 6, where it is written, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” (v. 4). They looked at the lady with confusion; and one said with surprise, “He is reading from our Bible!”

“Yes,” I said, “because there is only one God and only one Holy Bible, where it is written about Him.”

So they began to ask me many questions and wanted to know how I came to believe in “This One,” meaning Jesus. “You are not the first people to ask this question,” I said.

“Of course, now you will try to tell us that it is also written about Him in the Bible,” one of the ladies said.

“You see,” I replied, “I am not like you. I do not follow after old stories told by rabbis and dreams told by men who claim to be holy. You follow them. And you believe what you hear. Look at the Book from which I am reading. It is
the Holy Bible, the Word of God. Is it not kosher [suitable] enough for you?

“You put your faith in stories, not in the Word of God. And soon your lives will be over. And then what will happen? What will become of you after you leave this life? Have your teachers prepared you to receive everlasting life according to the Bible? Or will you end up facing (as we say here in Israel) the seven halls of hell?”

They were surprised to hear me speak with such directness. Soon they began to wonder why this woman brought them to me. I told them, “The Word of the Lord is eternal. It is written, ‘Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven’” (Ps. 119:89).

The women were in our home for a few hours and left on friendly terms. Later I learned the 75-year-old woman had died. She had no one to help with her affairs. So I helped. Because everyone knew I was her neighbor, they asked me to come to her home during the seven days of mourning and speak to everyone. So I went, and I spoke about the faith and about the One who “was wounded for our transgressions, . . . bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5). About Him it is written, “The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (vv. 5–6).

One of her friends asked me, “How can you be so friendly to people who are so against you?”

I replied, “This is also a big part of our faith in the Lord. It is written, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mt. 22:39). I told her I was happy to come and speak about true faith in the Lord. And she told me everyone gladly received what I said from the Bible.