

## Chapter 12

### Peace and Safety

After John was given the letters to the seven Asian Churches outlining the status and future history of the Church age, he was shown what would follow that age—or more precisely, what would follow the sixth phase, the Church of Philadelphia, which was to be “kept out of the hour of trial that would test the whole earth.” What he saw was not for the faint of heart.

**“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’ Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance....”** (Revelation 4:1-3) We’re not in Patmos anymore, Todo. John has been whisked directly into the throne room of Yahweh Himself. You’ve got to give him credit for holding himself together enough to record what he heard and saw—you or I would have crumbled.

The One he saw sitting upon the throne was described as looking like “jasper” and “sardius” stone. It’s not entirely certain what precise minerals John meant to refer to (we’ll see them again in our final chapter), but it’s obvious they were both very precious and exceedingly beautiful. Sardius was the first stone used in the High Priest’s ephod (see Exodus 28:17) and the sixth stone used in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20). It was blood red in color, symbolic, I believe, of the sacrifice of Christ. Jasper was the first stone listed in the heavenly city’s foundation and the last in Aaron’s ephod—reminding us of the risen Christ’s self-description: **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says Yahweh, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”** (Revelation 1:8) The stone is again associated with the glory of God in Revelation 21:11, where it is described as being “clear as crystal.”

**“And there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.”** (Revelation 4:3-6) The central throne—obviously that of Yahweh—was bathed in the glow of an emerald-like rainbow. The emerald was the stone linked in Aaron’s ephod to Judah, whose name means praise. The rainbow itself speaks of the covenant of God—His unbroken Word. The seven-fold spirit of God, you’ll recall, is explained in Isaiah 11:2. I get the feeling our imaginations and John’s

vocabulary aren't quite up to the task of describing the beauty and majesty of God's throne, but the symbols tell us a great deal nevertheless.

The twenty-four thrones are occupied by twenty-four elders. Who are they? Two different lines of enquiry lead us to the same conclusion. First, they are reminiscent of the priesthood—those who minister in the presence of God. In I Chronicles 24, David divided the Aaronic priesthood into twenty-four groups, or courses, each of which was to serve for two weeks per year. But look at what the priest/elders are wearing: white robes (meaning their sins have been forgiven), and golden crowns (Greek: *stephanos*, meaning Olympic-style wreaths of victory—but of gold, indicating royalty). This in turn reminds us of what Peter wrote: **“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light....”** (I Peter 2:9) “You?” Peter was talking to Christians—those who trust and rely on their relationship with Yahweh through Yahshua's sacrifice. I can only deduce that the twenty-four elders represent the redeemed of all ages—Old *and* New Covenant saints, including the raptured Church.

A second, and admittedly simpler, theory brings us to the same place. Twelve of the elders represent the redeemed of Israel's twelve tribes, and twelve are the true Ekklesia (represented by the apostles). Again, the white robes represent their redemption, and the crowns represent victory. Please note, by the way, that this scene is taking place in heaven. The Church is already there when the events “after these things,” i.e., after the Church age, begin to happen.

Let's return to John's narrative. **“And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come! ‘Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.’”** (Revelation 4:6-11)

These four “living ones” (Greek: *zoa*) are representative of Yahshua. The four gospels present him in these same four character profiles: the lion is symbolic of power, or authority; so Matthew's gospel presents Christ as King. The calf (or ox) speaks of service, and this is the emphasis in Mark. Luke presents Yahshua in his humanity; thus the third being had the face of a man. The eagle is master of the heavens, hence John emphasizes Christ's deity. And notice one more thing. The four living beings (“Creatures” is a truly unfortunate translation: these are not

created entities, but are indicative of deity) are not only *around* the throne of God, they are also seen “in the midst” of it. In other words, Yahshua occupies the throne of Yahweh Almighty. So much for the “Jesus-was-a-great-teacher-but-he-wasn’t-God” myth.

**“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it....”** Yahweh presents a scroll to the assembled saints and angels. The scroll represents the just sentence of divine retribution upon a wicked earth. But the scroll is sealed; only One who is worthy—holy and perfect before God—can break the seals and execute righteous judgment. The sealed scroll was a common form of official communication in John’s day. The message was written on a large piece of parchment or papyrus and then rolled up. But it was sealed—that is, wax was melted onto the surface and the sender’s seal, the impression of his signet ring, was stamped into the hot wax. This was a warning that the document was not to be read by anyone without the proper authority. What you’d do was break the first seal, unroll the first part, and read what you could until you reached the next seal. Each seal required further authorization. We can surmise from what we’ve observed about the number seven that for anyone to lawfully open this entire scroll, He would have to be perfectly, completely, worthy before God.

No one among the redeemed saints is found worthy to open God’s scroll. None of the angels are qualified, either. And John, frustrated and grieved at the injustice he has seen in his time, bursts into tears. Can no one right the wrongs? Will the sin of Adam leave earth’s title deed in the hands of Satan forever? **“But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”** (Revelation 5:1-10)

Another being now appears: a Lamb, bearing the marks of its sacrificial slaying, symbolic of the risen Christ—which is why the angel referred to Him as

“the *Lion* of the tribe of Judah.” Note that this Lamb, like the four living ones, is “in the midst of the throne,” where only Yahweh can be. His deity is further confirmed by his possession of the seven Spirits of God. Stuck here in our feeble, mortal bodies, it’s hard to comprehend this, but the picture we’re seeing is that of God appearing before God in the presence of God. Count ’em up: we’re seeing *seven* manifestations of Yahweh together in the same room. I’m supposed to come up with something eloquent to say here, but I’m speechless.

The elders, however, know exactly what’s going on: Yahshua alone is worthy to judge the earth because He alone has redeemed mankind from the curse of sin. Naturally, they fall before Him in worship. And then they state a remarkable fact: because of what Yahshua has accomplished, they (i.e., *we*—the redeemed ones) will “reign on the earth” as kings and priests as part of Christ’s government. Wow! Who saw that one coming?

**“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.”** (Revelation 5:11-14) John now gets a glimpse of eternity: every creature, from the lowliest virus to the mightiest angel, acknowledges that Yahshua the Messiah is in fact God Almighty. I have a feeling that man is the only part of God’s creation that hasn’t known this all along. But the day is coming when *every* knee shall bow. By the way, the word for “worshipped,” *proskynesis*, doesn’t fly in the face of the scriptural truth that God’s children are to walk upright, to be at ease and conversant with Yahweh in our daily lives—avoiding obsequious obeisance. As the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* points out, this concept is found in the Gospels and Revelation, but *not* the epistles. “*Proskynesis* demands visible majesty before which the worshipper bows. The Son of God was visible to all on earth (the Gospels) and the exalted Lord will again be visible to His own when faith gives way to sight (Revelation).”

I don’t know if I’m reading too much into this, but it seems that we, the creatures, have the privilege of bringing, as our gifts to the Lamb, blessing (that is, happiness), honor, and glory. We find ourselves exercising His power as well, a concept that I admittedly have a hard time fully comprehending. The angels also list several things that the Lamb derives directly from the throne of God: riches, wisdom, and strength.

Anyway, this brings us back to where we were in our story. John's vision now intersects with our timeline: we are witnessing the beginning of the Tribulation, as seen from a heavenly perspective. **"I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."** (Revelation 6:1-2) *That doesn't sound so bad*, you say. No, it doesn't. The rider sounds like a winner—powerful, successful, and popular. The white horse was the ride of preference for conquering heroes returning to Rome. And we see this rider with a *stephanos*—a victor's crown. Could this be the Messiah?

Well, that's what he'd like the world to think. The rider on the white horse is actually none other than the Antichrist, Satan's counterfeit savior. He will enter the world's scene looking like the answer to everyone's problems. He has a bow, but he keeps his arrows hidden. After all, he's a "peacemaker" in the most politically correct sense of the word. Never mind the fact that he's just engineered the overthrow of three governments and has assumed control of the world's newest superpower. People everywhere are desperate for leadership, and this fellow looks like the very man who can give it to them.

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**"The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing [Yahshua] asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red"; and in the morning, "It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening." Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.'" (Matthew 16:1-3)**

To my mind, one of the most obvious indicators that the Church will be taken out of the world before the beginning of the Tribulation is that hardly anyone will discern that the end is approaching. If they did, they would surely make some adjustments in their lives. Millions of Christians today are familiar with the broad outline of Biblical prophecy—familiar enough to "discern the signs of the times." At the very least, they have a vague feeling that we are nearing the end, and if they've studied the subject carefully, the feeling isn't vague at all. So if a world leader emerged from a ten-nation European confederacy, one in which three nations have ceased to be viable entities, they'd know that this man matches the prophetic profile of the coming Antichrist. They'd know that this man, whatever the world perceives him to be, is bad news. And if this charismatic diplomat engineered a seven-year treaty guaranteeing the security of the nation of Israel,

they'd *know*—if they were still here—that the world was now a time bomb, that the clock was ticking on the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel's prophecy.

That scenario, however, would be tantamount to calling Yahshua a liar, for He plainly stated that His called-out assembly, represented by the Church at Philadelphia, would be “kept out of the hour of trial which is to come upon the whole world,” a period of time that is defined by Daniel's final “week.” And as we have seen, you can set your watch (or at least your calendar) by the precision of God's prophecy fulfillments. It's pretty hard to sneak up on an unsuspecting world like “a thief in the night” if millions of Christians know when you're coming. But when the Christians are raptured, the world will be instantly plunged into a new dark ages—a sophisticated, high-tech, spiritual blackout.

By the time this 70<sup>th</sup> week, the Tribulation, starts, some of those left behind will have already discovered their error (and as mistakes go, that one's a doozy). Even though they know they're too late to avoid the coming storm, they'll turn to Yahshua for salvation—forming the fledgling fellowship of repentant Laodicea. But they won't be part of any organized religion. The “church,” in fact—that powerful religious conglomerate Yahshua left behind when he caught up His people to be with Him in the clouds—will be first in line to persecute and harass this dangerous new heresy. They will make the believers' troubles in the days of Nero and Diocletian look like a Sunday School picnic. *This hateful and intolerant new cult*, they'll say, *must be hunted down and eradicated—they're threatening world peace*. Yahshua, teaching in the context of these days, warned his disciples, **“The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.”** (Luke 17:22) There will be no Yahshua walking among them, no experienced believers to mentor them. Yes, the Holy Spirit will be dwelling within them providing comfort and guidance—after all, they are part of the Ekklesia. But they will be few and scattered at first, powerless, ineffectual, and not a little confused.

Just as the beginning and ending points of the first sixty-nine weeks were clearly defined, the starting event of the final week is plainly stated: **“Then [that is, after the first sixty-nine weeks, after Messiah has been cut off, and after the people from which the Antichrist will emerge has destroyed Jerusalem and the temple] he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.”** (Daniel 9:27)

There's a lot implied in those few words. “He,” in context, is the Antichrist, called here “the prince who is to come.” The whole passage is about Daniel's people, the Jews, so it can be safely assumed the “covenant” (Hebrew *beriyth*: a blood oath or compact, hence a serious matter) is with or about the nation of Israel. “Many,” however, means just that—more than just the Antichrist and Israel, but rather numerous nations. (It could mean many *people*, but a covenant

made between a political leader of one country and many of the people of another one is pretty hard to imagine.) My guess is that the “covenant with many” will be a United Nations resolution, one with teeth, a pledge to protect the nation of Israel with U.N. military forces for seven years, probably with an option for extensions. I’ll provide some specifics in a moment. That theory is bolstered by looking at the Hebrew word for “confirm.” *Gabar* means to strengthen, be great, to prevail, or be valiant. The U.N., by this logic, could see itself as Israel’s champion (just as they did in 1948), strengthening and confirming any of several previous resolutions upholding Israel’s right to exist. For any normal country, of course, that would be a no-brainer. But there are a billion Muslims living next door who believe they’re commanded by God to “wipe the infidels out to the last,” (Qur’an 8:7) starting with the Jews.

This covenant, or treaty, *could* merely be brokered between Israel and the Muslim block, *dar al-Islam*, but that would leave no enforcement provision. That’s why I see a U.N. peacekeeping force put in place to make sure the covenant sticks. One thing is clear, however. This covenant is not a compromise plan forced down the throat of one party by the other. In order for it to have a prayer of success (which it doesn’t, by the way) all of the primary participants must agree to its conditions—or at least pretend to.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter made history when he brought Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat together to sign the Camp David Peace Accords—beginning a process that eventually won Carter the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. Let’s forget for the moment that the price of the deal was over two billion dollars a year from the pockets of American taxpayers into the coffers of the Egyptian government. Ignore the fact that no less than \$1.3 billion of that goes to its *military* every year. Most published sources report that Egypt spends seven to ten percent of its GDP on its war machine—three times the world average. The reality, however, is much worse when you add it all up: a whopping *twenty-eight percent* of its GDP goes to armament—though this nation has no enemies other than its tiny neighbor Israel (which it is being paid handsomely not to attack). Does all that seem a bit odd to anyone but me? (In fairness, it should be noted that Israel spends a similar percentage on defense, but they are surrounded by enemies sworn to destroy them, enemies who have already tried to do just that on numerous occasions.) During the ’90s, Muslim nations accounted for forty-two percent of the world’s arms purchases—twenty times the global average! But like I said, forget all that for a moment and ponder this. What sort of accolades would be showered upon a world leader who got not *one* Muslim nation, but *all* of them, to agree to live with Israel in peace and harmony? He wouldn’t have to wait any twenty-four years for his Nobel Peace Prize, I can tell you that.

That's the kind of diplomatic magic act I envision as the fulfillment of Daniel 9:27. What would it take to pull it off? Both sides want something the other isn't willing to give. For its part, Israel's needs are simple. They want to live their lives in peace and safety, free to worship their God—or no god—as they see fit. They want to go to bed each night secure in the knowledge that they won't awaken to Syrian tanks or Egyptian warplanes breaching their borders. They want to be able to go to a restaurant or to a movie without worrying about Islamic suicide bombers ruining their whole evening. And they want their capital to be in the city of their greatest king—Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Muslims want a homeland of their own, but they insist that it must be within Israeli territory. (They're already a majority in Jordan, but that's not good enough.) The West Bank and Gaza Strip look like likely spots, though any dedicated Palestinian will tell you that in the end they'll settle for nothing less than the whole enchilada. And they want their capital to be in the city visited by their prophet on his mythical night's journey—Jerusalem. Muhammad never came anywhere near Jerusalem, you understand. His wife reported that he never left his bed that night; it was all a dream. But delusions routinely pass for facts in *dar al-Islam*.

That Jerusalem issue is the tricky one. Neither side appears ready to budge. But I have no doubt that the Antichrist, clever lad that he is, will figure out a solution. Perhaps he'll slice it in two, Solomon-style. (Bear in mind that the temple mount is in east Jerusalem, on the Arab side.) Perhaps he'll get everyone to agree to make it an "international city," a "common house of prayer," or some such rubbish. I have a feeling politically correct rhetoric will commonly be mistaken for intelligent thought in these times. One thing I know for sure: Jerusalem will be ground zero for Satan's schemes until the very end. **"Behold, I [Yahweh] will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness [or trembling] to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it."** (Zechariah 12:2-3)

Neither the Jews, the Muslims, the U.N., nor the Antichrist will know that, of course. To them, it's all negotiable. But here's the rub. The Israelis have been lied to so often by their Muslim neighbors, they don't (or at least they *shouldn't*) feel they can take any of their promises of peace seriously. With the exception of Egypt and Jordan, none of the surrounding Muslim nations have even formally declared that Israel has a right to exist (and Anwar Sadat, you'll recall, got himself assassinated for doing that). The 1993 and 1995 Oslo accords were a dismal failure. *Jihad* raged unabated. In fact, during the "peace" years between Oslo I and Oslo II, the number of terrorist attacks rose 745% over the previous

decade—a decade in which the first *intifada*, or organized Muslim uprising, was in force!

Nor do the Jews feel they can trust the United Nations, or even the United States—not completely. Can't say I blame them. The Israelis, therefore, might welcome some little token of the Muslims' sincerity. For example, "*How about you let us rebuild our temple on Mount Moriah, right next to the Dome of the Rock. We'll all worship our own god in our own way. There's plenty of room up there. What do you say?*" It's not that the Jews really *want* a temple. Most of them couldn't care less. But there is nothing—*nothing*—that would more convincingly demonstrate the Muslims' commitment to the peace process than giving up their exclusive control of the temple mount. Of course, no one remembers that Muhammad declared, "War is deceit." The fact that Muhammad even agreed to abandon the exclusive worship of Allah in exchange for money, political power, and sex (in the incident popularly known as the "Satanic Verses" episode) demonstrates the lengths Muslims are willing to go to get what they want. *Promise the Jews anything if it'll get 'em to give us land and drop their guard.*

I'll admit I didn't think up the temple scenario all by myself. Look again at the end of Daniel 9:27: "**But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.**" For the Levitical sacrifices and offerings to be brought to an end, they have to be going in the first place, and for that to happen, there has to be a temple in Jerusalem. Muslim control of the "Jewish" temple mount is the result of an historical fluke. At the end of the Six Day War in 1967, Israel's top general, Moshe Dayan (an atheist), turned over control of the mount to the Muslims as a bribe to ensure their good behavior. So for the Jews to have access to their own temple mount would actually be a big step forward for the them.

For most Jews, though, the temple is not the issue. They've gotten along without one for almost two thousand years now. The issue, rather, is the "refugees." Since the birth of the nation of Israel in 1948, the displaced Palestinian Arabs have been the perennial bargaining chip for the surrounding Muslim nations. For over half a century, they have been demanding that Israel provide a homeland for the Arab refugees—within their two-tenths of one percent of the real estate in the Middle East, never mind the fact that a similar number of Jews were evicted from their homes in Muslim lands upon Israel's declaration of statehood. Right at the outset, we need to clear the air about this. The Arab "refugees" were created in 1948 by the *Muslim* armies invading the infant state of Israel when they ordered the Arabs to leave Palestine so they could do a more efficient job of killing Jews. They were told they could come back in a few weeks after the armies of Islam had driven the Israeli infidels into the sea. But the Jews, after offering full citizenship to any Arab who wanted to stay, won that war, and

the next one, and the next one, and the next one. Now the Muslims insist that all they want is pre-1967 borders and restoration of the property the Arabs abandoned in 1948. But if that's so, they need to explain why they waged war on the Jews in 1967.

Truth be known, the surrounding Muslim nations have never really been interested in a "Palestinian homeland" for Arabs in Israel. What they want is a bone of contention, bargaining chip, a reason to attack Israel again and again, and that issue serves nicely. The Palestinian leadership has proven time after time that they have no interest in governing (except in the role of warlords). As a matter of fact, you can track the frequency of suicide bombings in Israel by looking at the times sanity threatened to break out. Every time a peace overture or political development promises to bring some stability to the Palestinian cause, Hamas or one of the other Islamic fundamentalist groups sends a pair of suicide bombers to the nearest bus stop or night club. Unlike the Israelis, peace is the last thing they want.

So what would possess the Muslims to sign a peace accord that gave Israel the legal right to exist on planet earth? One theory is that the Antichrist will get Israel to call their bluff: they will actually accept the land-for-the-promise-of-peace deal the Muslim nations have insisted for decades that they want for the Palestinians. The West Bank. The Gaza Strip (oops, that's gone already). The Golan Heights. All of it will be turned over to the Muslims in exchange for a spot on the temple mount and a solemn promise of peace. I know; it sounds suicidal. But factor in this. Remember what I said about the Arabs who stayed in Israel in '48 being offered full citizenship? Some of them did, of course, and they became the best-educated, most-prosperous Arabs in the entire Middle East, even though they were by any standards second-class citizens in Israel. What the Jews didn't count on was the Muslim birth rate. Even before the first *intifada* started in 1987, the Muslim birth rate climbed to seven or eight children per household—four times that of the Israelis. Do the math. These Arab-Israeli citizens will be able to *vote* the Jewish state out of existence in the Knesset by perhaps 2030 or 2035. So for the Jews, giving away through negotiation what they can't hope to keep anyway may seem to make perfect sense.

But if that's true, why would the Muslims make any concessions at all? Because a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. They know that if they have official U.N.-sanctioned control of the West Bank they are facing an enemy that is only nine miles wide at its narrowest point. Secure in the knowledge that they now have the overwhelming military superiority they lacked in 1967, they will make plans to drive to the sea straight through Tel-Aviv, where seventy percent of the Jews in Israel reside, splitting the nation in two: divide and conquer. *Conquer? Wait a minute! What about all the promises of peace? What about the*

*covenant?* Oh, didn't I tell you? The Islamic scriptures declare that it's alright for a Muslim to break any treaty he's made with an infidel if it's in his advantage to do so. In breaking the treaty, they'll merely be following the example of their esteemed prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him). The broken covenant of Hudaibiyah set the precedent. It was recorded in the Qur'an thus: "An announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the Great Pilgrimage is that Allah and His Messenger dissolve treaty obligations with the Pagans." (Qur'an 9:3)

I'm not just guessing, by the way. As we shall see a few chapters down the road, the house of Islam *will* attack Israel. The ensuing madness will consume a significant part of the world and fulfill significant portions of Bible prophecy. The details are admittedly a matter of conjecture, but the broad outline of this scenario is supported by both scripture and current events. I should emphasize, however, that this is only one of many possible ways it could all play out. Variations on the theme, any one of which could end up fulfilling the prophecies, are too numerous to count.

I don't really want to flog this horse to death, but allow me to demonstrate what I mean. Since a large percentage of the West Bank is already under the administrative, if not military, control of the Palestinian Authority, it's not beyond the realm of possibility that the Palestinians will be given the West Bank before—*years* before—the Antichrist starts having delusions of grandeur (and as I noted, the Gaza Strip is already in Muslim hands). It could happen before the ink is dry on this tome of mine. What then? The scenario shifts. Try this on for size: since the terrorist activity against Israel and the rest of the world hasn't abated as promised (surprise, surprise), the Antichrist comes in and negotiates the annexation, the absorption, of "Palestine," the new Arab state carved out of Israel, into Egypt in the south and Syria and/or Jordan on the north and east. Makes perfect sense, since the Palestinians were never a separate people anyway, but merely Arabs living in the land that became Israel in 1948. The "covenant with many," in exchange for parking a nation with the awesome military might and historic bad attitude of Syria five miles from downtown Tel-Aviv, gives Israel a world-sanctioned U.N. Peacekeeping force to ensure their security, and the right to rebuild their temple on its traditional site. The Syrian, Jordanian, and Egyptian governments could care less about that little detail (though their imams would have a fit). The deal lets the Antichrist's U.N. forces swarm all over what's left of Israel—precisely as they did several decades earlier in Lebanon, which suits Israel's neighbors just fine, since there the U.N. forces served as little more than lackeys for Muslim interests anyway. Ironically, the Palestinians, like the Philistines of old, are history.

Well would you look at that—the horse is still quivering. So let's beat it once more for old times' sake. A third scenario: the “covenant with many” turns out to be either U.N. Security Council Resolution 181 or 242. 181, if you'll recall, was the historic partition plan for Palestine that was voted in with a 2/3 majority on November 29, 1947, defining the borders of the soon-to-be sovereign Jewish state of Israel. It gave the Jews the Negev (a hunk of worthless desert south of the Dead Sea), a six or eight mile wide strip running up the coast from halfway between Gaza and Tel-Aviv to Haifa, and a similarly anorexic strip of land running down the west bank of the Jordan River near the Sea of Galilee. Jerusalem was supposed to be an “international city.” Funny thing about U.N. 181. The Jewish leadership voted for it, but it was rejected—unilaterally declared invalid—by every single Arab U.N. member state, who invaded Israel a few months later on the day the Jews declared their independence. That was when the “peace-loving” Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al Hussein (Yasser Arafat's uncle and a close confidant of Nazi big shots Himmler and Eichmann, I'm told) stated to his followers (exactly as Muhammad had thirteen centuries previously), “I declare a holy war, my Moslem brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all!” Ironically, though the entire Muslim world rejected U.N. 181, it is to this day referred to by them as the only legitimate borderline for the state of Israel.

When the infant Israelis finished beating back the Arabs' attack (against incredible odds and suffering incredible losses) their borders were considerably plumper. The armistice agreement of 1949 gave Israel the Gaza strip, the entire area between Galilee and the Mediterranean, a more robust buffer around Tel-Aviv in its midsection, including, most significantly, the southern outskirts of Jerusalem. These were the borders to which the U.N. demanded Israel withdraw following the Six Day War in June 1967 (Resolution 242). The Israelis politely declined to do so.

So back to our prophetic scenario. The Antichrist gets the U.N. to “confirm” Resolution 181 (which was never abrogated, by the way) or perhaps 242, a scenario I find even more likely, since Muslim rhetoric of late has seemed to fixate on the terms of that resolution, which (unlike 181) the Israelis never agreed to. He shoehorns Israel back into their former skinny little country, and turns Jerusalem back into an international city. But to sweeten the poison for the Jews, he sees to it that they are given the go-ahead to rebuild their temple next to the Dome of the Rock on the temple mount.

I found it instructive indeed to examine the actual text of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. It seems to fit the Daniel 9:27 parameters like a glove. I have italicized the sections I found particularly interesting:

**U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242**  
**NOVEMBER 22, 1967**

The Security Council,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,

Emphasizing the *inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war* and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security,

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

Affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of *both the following principles*:

*Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;*

*Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;*

Affirms further the necessity

For guaranteeing *freedom of navigation* through international waterways in the area;

For achieving a just *settlement of the refugee problem*;

For guaranteeing the *territorial inviolability and political independence of every State* in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

Requests the Secretary General to designate a *Special Representative* to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;

Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

A couple of factors bear mentioning. First, no nation, *ever*, has achieved the “acquisition of territory” by any means *other than* war, except in those rare instances (like the Louisiana Purchase) where a nation *bought* territory from another who had in turn acquired it through usurpation or war waged upon its previous occupants. I really don’t know what the guys on the Security Council are smoking, but it seems to be doing the trick.

Second, the resolution calls for the Israelis to give back all their territory gained when they had to beat back the June, 1967 Islamic invasion. Most

significantly, this would include the West Bank and the Golan Heights, which would presumably be pressed into service as a Palestinian refugee homeland, arbitrarily displacing hundreds of thousands of Jews who purchased the land with coin and blood. This is what passes in the U.N. as a “just settlement.”

Third, the Islamic nations in the area would all have to officially recognize Israel’s right to exist and observe their anorexic new borderline. But remember, the Treaty of Hudaibiyah which Muhammad ratified with the Meccans was violated dozens of times by the Muslims before they threw it out on a pretext and invaded the city. According to Sharia law, Muslims are not required to keep the terms of treaties they’ve signed with “infidels.” By their own definition, they can’t be trusted.

Fourth, the United Nations would take upon itself the responsibility for maintaining the “territorial inviolability and political independence” of Israel. In other words, Israel would for all intents and purposes be surrendering its sovereignty and defense to others.

Fifth, guaranteeing “freedom of navigation” would preclude the interception of arms-laden vessels like the *Karine A* by Israeli forces. In case you’ve forgotten about that incident, the Israeli Foreign Ministry reported, “On January 3, (2002) the Israeli Navy seized control over the *Karine A*, a ship that was sailing in international waters on its way to the Suez Canal. The shipment included both 122 mm. and 107 mm. Katyusha rockets, which have ranges of 20 and 8 kilometers respectively. It also contained 80 mm. and 120 mm. mortar shells, various types of anti-tank missiles, anti-tank mines, sniper rifles, Kalashnikov rifles and ammunition.” Only God knows how many Israeli lives were saved by the interception of these weapons. 242 makes such intervention illegal.

Sixth, the resolution calls for a Special Representative to direct operations and report progress and problems to the Security Council. Who are they going to assign for this monumental task? I can *guarantee*, they’ll pick someone *very close* to the diplomatic genius who got the Muslims and Jews to consent to this solution—the Antichrist.

The bottom line, as far as Biblical prophecy is concerned, is exactly the same for all of these scenarios: the Jews get to build their temple, but they move inexorably toward a state of total national helplessness and dependence on foreign armies for their very survival. By now, any historian worth his reading glasses knows its only a matter of time before the Jews are once and for all driven into the sea by the peace-loving Muslims. But because of the ironclad guarantees of security the Antichrist has promised, the Jews suspend reason and make themselves believe they have negotiated a position assuring lasting security and “peace in our time” (a phrase I borrowed from Neville Chamberlain, spoken after he engineered a similarly disastrous land-for-peace deal with Adolph Hitler over

Czechoslovakia in 1938. *That* “peace” lasted one year and precipitated the bloodiest war in history. Will this one be any different?)

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The Tribulation, then, begins with a harbinger of a bright new tomorrow, a “rider on a white horse.” A peace treaty that promises to end the strife in the Middle East is brokered by the charismatic new European leader, and the whole world breathes a sigh of relief. Whereas the region had for years been a powder keg threatening to ignite the earth in another global war, now all of the parties insist they have agreed to compromise, to solve their differences amicably, to let bygones be bygones. And this time, everyone is convinced the peace will stick. Peace and safety are at hand.

The ripple effect is immediate. No longer worried by threats of Islamic terrorism, stock markets soar. Consumer confidence reaches the highest levels in years. A technology boom the likes of which the world has never seen promises to solve age-old problems—feeding the hungry masses, curing persistent diseases, breaking the world’s dependence on fossil fuels. Oil prices plummet as the leaders of OPEC rush to compete with clean, cheap new energy sources. Utopia is just around the corner.

A new spirit of cooperation begins to permeate all facets of society, not just in the west, but worldwide. Neighboring nations formerly at odds with each other spontaneously use the “Jerusalem model” as a starting point toward solving their own differences. Peace is breaking out everywhere. With the Evangelical/Fundamentalist Christians gone and the Muslims appeased, the world’s religions suddenly find they have far more in common than they previously thought. A worldwide ecumenical council is convened in—*where else*—Jerusalem, where all of the world’s religions agree to respect and even support each other. A universal creed is drafted and enthusiastically signed by everyone in attendance, stating that *all roads lead to god; it doesn’t really matter what you believe or what your liturgy entails, for god is within each one of us—from the most dedicated Islamic Mullah to the most irreligious secular humanist. We should each do what feels right to us, for therein lies true worship!*

The charismatic new European leader, of course, is an active participant, and he is the first to point out that the religious differences that have been the root of so much strife in years past must now be set aside. Hostility between Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Sikhs—anybody and everybody—is set aside in the new realization that god can be whoever and whatever you want him (or her) to be.

As the summit progresses, another bright star rises: the host/moderator of the council is a secular Jew who emerges as the most respected religious thinker on earth. Through diplomacy and tact, this man teaches the world's top religious leaders how to think and act as one, how to appreciate their points of commonality and live in peace with their differences. The new mantra is "Tolerant Diversity." Even the Muslims find themselves nodding in agreement with him. Before the council is over, he is being hailed by all as a new prophet for a new age—the religious counterpart of the great political peacemaker, the hero from Europe....

Granted, all of that is speculation. But as a possible scenario, it fits the truth of scriptural prophecy like a glove. Not only does the breaking of the scroll's first seal reveal someone who looks like a hero, not a villain, but we also have this tantalizing hint from the apostle Paul: **"The day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."** (I Thessalonians 5:2-3) Just as the amillennialists of centuries past were wrong when they saw history marching inexorably toward a Christian utopia, so also are those wrong who predict a steady downhill slide until the bitter end. The fact is, the Tribulation is Satan's golden opportunity to show what he can do. He said he wanted to be "like God." This is his big chance. People desperately want "peace and safety." Satan thinks he can give it to them—living vicariously through the Antichrist. I give him six months—a year at the outside—before the fallacy of "good without God" comes crashing down around his ears like a house of cards.

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Consider this: the rebuilding of the temple has never been a political demand of the modern state of Israel, though it is a recurring dream among small groups of Jewish faithful. (Orthodox Jews long ago created the "alternate reality" of the Mishnah and Talmud in order to avoid the painful paradox of a Torah without a temple or priesthood.) The government, however, has never even suggested rebuilding the temple. So why do I think they will make it an issue during the Tribulation? Actually, I don't. Rather, I see the *Antichrist* tossing this volatile chip into play. He will be the one to suggest, quite reasonably, that it's the only way the Muslims can prove to the world that they're serious about peace. But what is he really thinking? The answer can be found in Jewish Messianic expectations: **"Thus says Yahweh of hosts, saying: 'Behold, the Man whose name is the Branch! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of Yahweh. Yes, He shall build the temple of Yahweh. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne. So He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between**

**them both.”** (Zechariah 6:12-13) The “Branch” is understood to be the Anointed One (the “branch” of the root of Jesse, David’s father). Therefore, the Antichrist knows that if *he* can build the temple on Mt. Moriah, he will be hailed as the Messiah; he will be glorified; he will rule and be worshipped as God. And that’s all he really wants.

Everything he does contributes to this goal. He knows the Jews have hopes and expectations, so his actions will be designed to fulfill the prophetic picture they have of their Messiah, starting with giving them their temple. In a twisted sort of way, Adolph Hitler did more than any man in history to secure a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. The Antichrist will continue in that noble tradition, facilitating the return of persecuted Jews all over the world to their homeland. Why would he do this? Because the Jews expect it of Yahweh. How better to pass himself off as God’s Anointed than to do what the Messiah is expected to do? **“For thus says Yahweh: ‘Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations. Proclaim, give praise, and say, “O Yahweh, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!” Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.’**

**“Hear the word of Yahweh, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’ For Yahweh has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of Yahweh—for wheat and new wine and oil, for the young of the flock and the herd. Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden, and they shall sorrow no more at all.**

**“Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together; for I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow. I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says Yahweh.”** (Jeremiah 31:1-14) I wouldn’t be the least bit surprised to see the Antichrist’s people passing out brochures with this passage in it to all the Jewish refugees flowing into Tel-Aviv and Haifa—reminding them who their “real” savior is. Clever move.

The words will sound so pious on his lying lips: **“For Yahweh [he’ll call him “the Lord,” of course] will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under one’s feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the justice due a man before the face of the Most High...”** (Lamentations 3:31-35)

I imagine he will do what he can to construct his own reputation upon the miraculous foundation God built for Israel in the twentieth century. **“Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children. Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?’ says Yahweh. ‘Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?’ says your God.”** (Isaiah 66:7-9) This, of course, is a perfect description of the birth of the modern state of Israel in 1948.

**“Return, O backsliding children,’ says Yahweh; ‘for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.”** (Jeremiah 3:14-15) The Antichrist will persuade many that he’s the chief shepherd. His words will be so smooth, so reasonable, it will be hard to doubt his honorable intentions. Those who see what he’s accomplishing day by day will say, as did the men of Yahshua’s day, **“When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than these which this man has done?”** (John 7:31)

Because they expect it, the Antichrist will counsel the returning Jews like a wise father, admonishing them to honor their Jewish heritage and religion. He knows full well that the closer they get to their religion, the farther they’ll be from their true God. **“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: “Return, backsliding Israel,” says Yahweh; ‘I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,’ says Yahweh; ‘I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against Yahweh your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,’ says Yahweh.”** (Jeremiah 3:12-13) If he can get them to disavow the old false worship practices that their ancestors indulged in (and replace them with all new false worship practices based on the old ones) the Antichrist figures he’ll be one step closer to successfully impersonating the Messiah.

The plan depends upon convincing the Jews that he’s operating in the power of Yahweh. He therefore must project himself into the role of deliverer. **“Your right hand, O Yahweh, has become glorious in power. Your right hand, O Yahweh, has dashed the enemy in pieces; and in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You. You sent forth Your wrath; it consumed them like stubble... Who is like You, O Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them. You in Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation. The people will hear and be afraid....”**

Of course, it means he will eventually have to stand up to the Muslims—something the Americans were never willing to do. **“Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; the mighty men of Moab,**

trembling will take hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them. By the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as a stone, till Your people pass over, O Yahweh, till the people pass over whom You have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Yahweh, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary... which Your hands have established. Yahweh shall reign forever and ever.” (Exodus 15:6-7, 11-18) *A little political maneuvering, a little saber rattling, a little arm twisting, and the apple of Yahweh’s eye will fall right into my fruit basket, muses the man of the hour. This is too easy.*

The key to winning over Israel to “the dark side” is convincing them that God, in the person of the Antichrist, has regathered them and blessed them—so they by definition must be back in His good graces, just like Moses predicted: “Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where Yahweh your God drives you, and you return to Yahweh your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that Yahweh your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where Yahweh your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then Yahweh your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live....” *All I’ll have to do, muses the Antichrist, is to bring a bunch of Jews back here to the Land and tell ‘em they’re my chosen people, and maybe talk tough to the Muslims a little. Then they’ll love me with all their heart and soul. Passing for the Messiah should be a piece of cake.*

“Also Yahweh your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of Yahweh and do all His commandments which I command you today. Yahweh your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For Yahweh will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul. For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.” (Deuteronomy 30:1-14) Of course, the last thing the self-proclaimed liberator wants is for the Jews to actually obey

Yahweh. But his plan requires that they believe they're in His blessing, so they must be okay. And for that to happen, they must feel secure: "peace and safety."

The Psalmist says: **"Have mercy on me, O Yahweh! Consider my trouble from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death, that I may tell of all Your praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. I will rejoice in Your salvation."** (Psalm 9:13-14) The Antichrist is thinking, *They will see me as their savior, their Messiah, the one worthy of their praise.* **"You shall keep them, O Yahweh. You shall preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked prowls on every side, when vileness is exalted among the sons of men."** (Psalm 12:7-8) *Okay, I'll preserve them—I'll keep the Muslims at bay. And when I do, the Jews will kiss my feet.*

**"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity. There is none who does good. God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. Every one of them has turned aside. They have together become corrupt. There is none who does good, no, not one."** *Sure, there's a God—he's whatever you want him to be, the spirit of peace living within each one of us—Boy, I can't believe we got them to swallow that.* **"Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon God? There they are in great fear where no fear was, for God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you. You have put them to shame, because God has despised them. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad."** (Psalm 53) *They want their salvation to come out of Zion, do they? Then I'll set up my headquarters in Jerusalem and use my troops to "scatter the bones" of anybody dumb enough to attack me. I will make them worship me by bringing the rest of the world's Jews back to Israel—they'll come whether they want to or not.*

**"But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Yahweh, in the acceptable time; O God, in the multitude of Your mercy, hear me in the truth of Your salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; Let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the floodwater overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up; and let not the pit shut its mouth on me."** (Psalm 69:13-15) *They're expecting a deliverer—I'll convince them I'm their deliverer. How hard could it be?*

**"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces.' For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, 'Peace be within you.' Because of the house of Yahweh our God I will seek your good."** (Psalm 122:6-9) *These Jews don't want much, do they? Antichrist will muse. Peace in Jerusalem? Okay. I can arrange that. I'll even give 'em a new house for their God. Anything they want.*

**"Yahweh has done great things for us, and we are glad. Bring back our captivity, O Yahweh, as the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with**

rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Psalm 126:3-6) *I’ll bring you back from your captivity, all right. Having all you Jews in one place will make you easier to keep an eye on (and, if you refuse to worship me, easier to eliminate).*

“And it shall come to pass in that day that Yahweh will thresh, from the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day: the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship Yahweh in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 27:12-13) *Not if I have anything to say about it. The Jews will worship me—they’ll accept Me as their Messiah. ME!*

“Will Yahweh cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?” (Psalm 77:7-9) *The Antichrist breathes a heavy sigh. Grace? Mercy? Keeping promises? Good grief. This is getting to be too much like work. These stupid sheeple are going to have to settle for signs and wonders like everybody else.*

There’s one obvious question at this point. Why would the Antichrist care if the Jews worship him? Christians (even those saved after the rapture), Muslims, or Hindus I could understand—there are billions of them. But there are only about thirteen million Jews in the entire world—about two tenths of one percent of the global population. Statistically, they’re insignificant. There are more people living in Guatemala! Israel wouldn’t be worth a second glance if Yahweh hadn’t chosen them as His own people. This points out a very important fact to us: the Antichrist is under the influence of Satan—doing his bidding, running his agenda. Face it: the only conceivable reason anybody would go out of their way to curse such an irrelevant population is Satan’s jealousy of their place in Yahweh’s heart. The devil used Hitler’s holocaust in an attempt to eliminate them once and for all. That backfired, giving the few Jews who were left their own homeland. Next time, Satan will use the Antichrist to attempt to seduce them. That too will backfire.

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The Jewish Messianic perceptions upon which the Antichrist will capitalize to gain their trust—and ultimately their worship—are based upon scriptures describing Yahweh’s eventual salvation of His people. But it’s painful for the Jews to look at the prophecies of events that will transpire between their fall and their restoration. So naturally, they ignore them. We won’t make the same mistake.

Though it will start off benignly enough—promising a new era of peace and prosperity—the Tribulation in reality will be exactly what its name implies. **“For thus says Yahweh: ‘We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child. So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.’”** (Jeremiah 30:5-7) After all the Jews have been through, calling a future seven-year period “the time of Jacob’s trouble” tells me this is going to be really rough—worse than the inquisition, the pogroms, and even the holocaust. And yet, right at the outset, Yahweh tells us that the Jews will come through it—not without severe losses, mind you, but the remnant of the nation of Israel *will* be saved. But as we shall see, that’s going to take some doing.

**“‘For it shall come to pass in that day,’ Says Yahweh of Hosts, ‘That I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds. Foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve Yahweh their God, and David their king, Whom I will raise up for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says Yahweh, ‘nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,’ says Yahweh, ‘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....’”** The prophet continues with a bird’s eye view of the whole thing: the Jews will finally become free; they will serve the true and living God and recognize their true Messiah. (His ancestor, David, is more than a Messianic symbol here, but we’ll have to save that discussion for later.) Then they’ll live at last in peace and safety—this time, the real thing. But here God gives them some back-handed encouragement: “I will not make a complete end of you.” *Gee, thanks, that’s swell.* However, I have a feeling that after finally figuring out that their Messiah was Yahshua after all, they’ll be ready for anything.

Jeremiah isn’t done. **“For thus says Yahweh: ‘Your affliction is incurable, your wound is severe. There is no one to plead your cause, that you may be bound up. You have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you; They do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased. Why do you cry about your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable. Because of the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased, I have done these things to you. Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity. Those who plunder you shall become plunder, and all who prey upon you I will make a prey. For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds,’ says Yahweh, ‘because they called you an outcast saying: “This is Zion; no one seeks her.”’”** (Jeremiah 30:8-17) Remember what I said about God waiting until things looked impossible before

He acted? That's what He's saying here: *You're toast, Israel. Kiss your nation goodbye. You've been painted into a corner from which there is no escape—and because of your sins, I, Yahweh, have let this happen to you. Even your staunchest allies—like America—have betrayed you. There's no one left to turn to...except Me.*

God has a lot to say about His people in this “time of trouble.” Jeremiah reports: **“Thus says Yahweh: ‘They shall thoroughly glean as a vine the remnant of Israel; As a grape-gatherer, put your hand back into the branches.’** So far, this doesn't sound too encouraging. When they harvest grapes, they try not to miss much. **“To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of Yahweh is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of Yahweh. I am weary of holding it in. I will pour it out on the children outside, and on the assembly of young men together....”** The prophet sounds frustrated. *Nobody's listening to me, but I'm going to give 'em both barrels anyway. Repent or die!*

**“For even the husband shall be taken with the wife, the aged with him who is full of days. And their houses shall be turned over to others, fields and wives together; for I will stretch out My hand against the inhabitants of the land,”** says Yahweh. **‘Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace.’**” (Jeremiah 6:9-14) God is angry because even those who are supposed to be pointing the way toward Him, the priests and prophets, the preachers and politicians, are only in it for what they can get out of it. So when the Antichrist pulls off his big diplomatic coup, they're all chanting, “peace, peace.” But it's an illusion, just as it was in Jeremiah's day, right before the Babylonian conquest. God knows it, and they ought to know it. It's their job to sound the alarm, but they don't. Instead, they're helping their brothers and sisters into the boxcars, reassuring them that the weather is lovely in Auschwitz this time of year.

Their houses and fields in the West Bank—otherwise known as Judea and Samaria—will be “turned over to others” Who? Muslims. But their *wives*? Surely their wives won't be taken by the Muslim hordes as well. Why not? Muhammad's behavior as recorded in the Hadith provided ample precedent. Listen to what *The National Review* reported about a telethon for Palestinian “martyrs” hosted by the Saudi ruling family. The sheik that they chose to promote this fund raiser, one al-Buraik, intoned, “O, Muslims, don't take the Jews and Christians as allies. Muslim brothers in Palestine, do not have any mercy, neither compassion, on the Jews, their blood, their money, their flesh. Their women are yours to take, legitimately. Allah made them yours. Why don't you enslave their women? Why don't you wage *jihad*? Why don't you pillage them?”

God never intended that the Jews should be put into this kind of pickle, you understand. What happened? Same old story. He let them choose between good and evil, and they chose poorly. Yahshua's earthly ministry was performed almost entirely among the Jews, and it was they who rejected him first. **"Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you [Jews] first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so Yahweh has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"** (Acts 13:46-47; cf. Isaiah 42:6, 49:6) Bear in mind that any Jew who received Yahshua as his Messiah prior to the rapture is already gone from the earth at this point—with the rest of Yahshua's called-out assembly. Since the resurrection of Yahshua, there has been neither Jew nor gentile—only saved people and lost people.

Paul wrote, **"What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction...that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"** (Romans 9:22-24) **"For if [the Jews'] being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"** (Romans 11:15) I don't want to get sucked into the whole foreknowledge vs. predestination thing. Suffice it to say that God has known from the beginning which of us would accept His mercy, and has noted with sadness which would not. And He has foreseen that a significant remnant of the Jewish nation will, in the end, turn to Yahweh and His Messiah in repentance.

Lest we Christians become proud of ourselves for seeing the truth that the Jews did not, Paul offers this admonition: **"You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.' Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 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.'" (Romans 11:19-27) Yes, the Jews are blind today. But I know Someone who can open the eyes of the blind. Soon they will too.**

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Perhaps we should take a moment to discuss the difference between tribulation and *the* Tribulation. Webster defines tribulation as: “That which occasions affliction or distress; severe affliction, distress, trouble, trial.” In other words, when bad stuff happens to you, that’s tribulation. The Church was never told it would escape this ordinary garden-variety tribulation; in fact, Yahshua told us to expect it: **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”** (John 16:33)

Luke reports how Paul and Barnabas became the personification of Yahshua’s prediction. **“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’”** (Acts 14:21-22)

Indeed, it was Paul who pointed out that tribulation—even to death—was incapable of parting us from the love of God that we experience in our walk with Christ, for after all, for us to be absent from the body is to be present with Yahweh. It’s a win-win situation. In other words, persecution may not be much fun, but it sure can be rewarding. **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Romans 8:33-39)

But *the* Tribulation, a.k.a. the time of Jacob’s trouble, is a specific, future, seven-year-long period in which “separation from the love of God” is the whole point. Last-days Man wants to live without God; he doesn’t like the idea of a supreme deity who’s got standards and moral absolutes—they’re so inconvenient. The intriguing fact, however, is that man’s very concept of what’s right and what’s wrong is merely a fuzzy picture of that which came from Yahweh—from Judeo-Christian traditions if not his own conscience. Is murder bad? Yes—that’s why we try to hide the bodies and cover our tracks. Is adultery bad? If we didn’t know it was, deep down inside, we wouldn’t feel like we had to sneak around in order to do it.

Satan wants a shot at running the planet as if he were God. When he said “I will be like the Most High,” it wasn’t an idle daydream. So God is going to give man and devil what they both want—for a little while, anyway. When the time is right, Yahweh intends to take His hands off the levers and His foot off the brake pedal, and let Satan’s little choo-choo roll down the track without Him. And the same men who wanted the Engineer to get off the train will feel ill-used when it crashes. Go figure.

Descriptions of the Tribulation are scattered throughout scripture. It’s not like we weren’t warned. **“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ Says Yahweh, the Lord of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch.”** (Malachi 4:1) Who will get burned? **“All the proud; all who do wickedly.”**

And what places will be affected? **“Now therefore, do not be mockers, lest your bonds be made strong; for I have heard from Yahweh, the God of hosts, a destruction determined even upon the whole earth.”** (Isaiah 28:22) You want specifics? **“Behold, the days are coming,’ says Yahweh, ‘that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised—Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.’** (Jeremiah 9:25) Jews and gentiles alike, those who don’t pretend to keep the Law of God in their hearts, and those who *do* pretend, will all be punished. **“But Yahweh is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.”** (Jeremiah 10:10) Do you get the feeling that Yahweh isn’t too happy with us?

The description continues: **“The great day of Yahweh is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of Yahweh is bitter. There the mighty men shall cry out. 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, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Yahweh; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Yahweh’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land.”** (Zephaniah 1:14-18)

I’ve got to stop for a minute. Is any of this getting to you like it’s getting to me? What is it going to take to wake us up? How much clearer could God make it? Judgment is coming. It doesn’t matter whether you like the idea or not. It doesn’t matter how rich or powerful you are. It doesn’t matter if your dizzying intellect leads you to deduce that since Yahweh says He’s a loving God He would never punish people for their sins. Just because these scriptures have been lying

there—mostly unread—for over 2,500 years, that doesn't mean the judgment they predict is any less real.

Zephaniah talked about darkness and gloominess. Joel expands the thought: **“I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of Yahweh. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as Yahweh has said, among the remnant whom Yahweh calls.”** (Joel 2:30-32, cf. Acts 2:14-21) Here the prophet refers to the “day of Yahweh” as the climax of the Tribulation—the triumphal return of Christ to the earth. So we're getting a glimpse of what's to come as the seven years wear on. As the end approaches, the signs in the earth and heavens will make it increasingly hard to deny the reality of God's presence—or his mood. But notice: His mercy will be offered to everyone—right up to the end.

God won't just break rocks and make for weird weather during the Tribulation. He will rearrange the earth's political landscape as well. **“I will shake heaven and earth. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.”** (Haggai 2:21-22) The prophet is predicting that Yahweh will bring down governments, but the tool He uses to do it will be man. Can you imagine civil war on a global scale? So much for “peace and safety.”

And lest you think the Tribulation is any less real because it's an “Old Testament” doctrine, and thus somehow out of date, think again. **“And a great multitude of the people followed [Yahshua as he bore His cross to Golgotha], and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, “Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!” Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!” For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?’”** (Luke 23:27-31) If man, after witnessing the perfect life of the Son of God walking among them, is arrogant enough to crucify Him, what will happen when Yahweh removes His Spirit from the earth altogether?

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Okay, so we've established that the Tribulation will be a time of destruction, burning, earthquakes, blackened skies, and global war. Its benign beginning, then, is a ruse, the calm before the storm. It's obvious that God is angry with the earth.

He has decreed that its time is up; its “iniquity is full.” But what does He plan to accomplish with this seven-year Tribulation period? Actually, there are several objectives.

The first, as we saw in Daniel 9, is to finish up God’s dealings with the Jews. They will be tested one last time, and this time—for the *first* time—they will pass the test. **“And it shall come to pass in all the land,’ Says Yahweh, ‘That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: 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, “Yahweh is my God.””** (Zechariah 13:8-9) Eight million Jews dead? That seems to be a heavy price to pay, doesn’t it? But considering Satan’s insanely jealous animosity toward the Jews and the fact that God’s Spirit will have been removed from the earth, the real miracle is that any Jews at all will be left at the end. This is but one of many passages that predict the eventual repentance of the Jews as a nation.

Part of the reason for the Tribulation is good old-fashioned punishment. **“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.”** (Isaiah 13:11) Or how about, **“Come, my people [Israel], enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, Yahweh comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.”** (Isaiah 26:20-21) The repentant Jewish remnant is instructed to hide out for a while. But that doesn’t mean Yahweh’s punishment is just for the gentiles. **“Hear this word that Yahweh has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: ‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”** (Amos 3:1-2) As it is said, from he who is given much, much will be required. Yahweh will therefore hold the Jews to the highest standard of all, purging them of their rebels.

I know, I know. The world doesn’t want to hear it. *How can a loving god punish people? It’s not fair.* Actually, it’s the *only* fair course of action. Point one: Yahweh created us; therefore He has the right to define our standards of right and wrong. Point two: we have all fallen short of the standards our maker has set for us. The penalty for our crimes is separation from Yahweh, for He is a holy God who cannot coexist with sin any more than light can coexist with darkness. Point three: He loves us in spite of our faults; therefore He paid our penalty so we could once again live in His presence. Point four: some of us have accepted this gracious gift, and some have not. For those who have not, the penalty of separation still remains. The “punishment” of God during the Tribulation is not some nasty new thing that’s being inflicted upon us by some vindictive heavenly

bully; it's merely a statement of the facts as they are, a revealing of the status quo. If those who reject God's grace think the world stinks during these seven years, they'll have no one to blame but themselves. Yahweh won't force anyone to choose Him.

And what are these standards that Yahweh has set? The Bible's pretty clear about it. Some things, however, He singles out because they're particularly destructive to us. (None of these things hurt Him in the least, you understand.) **“And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear [i.e., respect] Me,”** says Yahweh of hosts. **‘For I am Yahweh; I do not change. Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.’**” (Malachi 3:5-6)

It could be argued, of course, that people who aren't familiar with the Bible couldn't possibly know what God wants them to do. (This line of reasoning is invariably promulgated by those who know exactly what it says and still don't like it.) Paul pointed out the fallacy of that argument: **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts.”** (Romans 1:18-24) Yahweh built every one of us with a *neshamah* (see Genesis 2:7), a “God-sense,” a conscience if you will, that tells us in a still, small voice that there is a God, that He loves us, and that we are to do right and not to do wrong. We can either listen to the voice or ignore it. The bottom line? **“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law... in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”** (Romans 2:12, 16)

I'll admit that there are many places in scripture that speak of God's judgment as a proactive thing, not just a passive leaving-a-guilty-world-to-its-fate sort of affair. But from our perspective, they're exactly the same thing. What we often fail to realize is that the mercy of God is what holds the universe together. If and when He stops actively pouring out His love upon us, we are in hell. **“Your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure...[are] manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation**

**those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ....”**

And how does this “vengeance” manifest itself? What is the eternal retribution for refusing to obey the gospel? Is it being consigned to a nasty environment whose torments are arranged in nine increasingly demented punishment levels matched to your particular shortcomings in this life? No, that’s Dante’s imagination working overtime. Is it being slowly roasted over an open fire? Having boiling pitch poured down your throat? Being given thorns to eat? No, sorry. That’s the Muslim description of hell, in which Allah himself personally administers the unceasing torture to the people whom he gleefully predestined to go there. (Neither their choices nor their deeds have anything to do with it, and grace is a concept foreign to Islam.) It’s just the opposite of what the Bible teaches, that the only real punishment is being separated forever from Yahweh: **“These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of Yahweh and from the glory of His power.”** (II Thessalonians 1:4-9) Frankly, the Bible’s version is worse.