

Study Series 15 Lesson 1: Revelation – Introduction, Purpose and Background

What is the Book of Revelation?

The book of Revelation is often called "The Apocalypse." This is derived from *apokalupsis* the first word of the book in the Greek text in which it was written. *Apokalupsis* is translated in our English versions as "The Revelation." The word means "an uncovering, or unveiling." It is used about a dozen times in the New Testament, and related words are used another 30 times. We refer to all the Bible as God's revelation and indeed it is, but there is one essential difference between the book of Revelation and the other books of the Bible. It was revealed by Jesus Christ to John through His angel (1:1).

The Revelation is an *uncovering*, or *unveiling* of impending events: *things which must shortly come to pass* (1:1) and *things which will take place after this* (1:19).

The book of Revelation is a book of warning. It warns five of the seven churches of Asia to repent, or else, and it warns those who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image of coming wrath (14:9-11).

The book of Revelation is also a book of comfort. What comfort indeed is pictured by the rejoicing of victorious saints before God's throne as they keep His commandments (22:14), overcome (21:7), and serve Him day and night in His temple (7:14-17). What a joy it is to be numbered among those saints! Surely, "the sufferings of this [that] present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be [was about to be] revealed in us [them]" (Rom. 8:18).

An estimated 300 to 400+ references to the Old Testament scriptures can be found in the book. Why did John make such an abundant use of the Old Testament scriptures? Surely, the answer is found in the fact that the Apocalypse is to be considered as the entwining fiber that brings together Old and New Testament prophecies to show their ultimate and complete fulfillment, thus magnifying the divine mind from where they came. The fulfillment of the

prophecies foretold In the Revelation serves to establish its own authenticity, as well as the rest of the Bible. By bringing the Old and New Testament prophecies together in this one book in which He declared their immediate fulfillment, God placed Himself in the position of affixing His divine stamp of approval upon His inspired revelation to man when the prophecies were historically fulfilled. Indeed, the Apocalypse is the crown of all revelation.

The Language of the Book

The language used by John in this book is unlike any other used in the New Testament. The message was **signified** unto John (Rev. 1:1), indicating the abundant use of **signs** and **symbols** in its presentation. Words and phrases are often used to **signify, symbolize** and reveal what is otherwise hidden truth (grave error is done with people who try to read this book with a literal interpretive methodology). This identifies the book more specifically in nature with the prophetic books of the Old Testament." This book speaks not the language of Paul as we see elsewhere in the NT, but rather the Old Testament prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel." Their writings portray God's dealing with the nations, particularly with Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem. It should be noted that the Revelation compares in language to the writings of these Old Testament prophets. The book is further identified in nature with the prophetic books of the Old Testament when the angel says to John, "...for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). After all, the book shows God's vengeance upon those who killed the prophets (Rev. 16:6, 18:24).

"The Book of Revelation is the most thoroughly Jewish in its language and imagery of any New Testament book." The **signs, symbols, types and language** are all Jewish. The use of the beasts, harps, vials, horses, winds, angels, trumpets, candlesticks, censers, incense, pit, lamb, altar, temple, and twelve tribes are Jewish. The song of Moses could only have meaning to Israelites. The book is completely saturated with Jewish thought, expression and symbology.

The people of that day would have understood the message more readily because they lived in the day and age when Jewish thought was still current, and their history was familiar with them. So, application of the language to its historical setting would have been more easily perceived.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

A study of the contents of the book of Revelation will not be able to be properly done until the ground work is completely laid and we understand fully the **mystery of God** - **the mystery to be finished when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet** (**Read** Rev. 10:7). To accomplish this, we must comprehend the meaning of the **mystery of God** and the word **finished**. (Refer to **Study Series 11 on Romans 11** under section **IV. Fullness of the Gentiles** for an in-depth study into this topic we have previously explored)

The word **mystery** (musterion) means "a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding; a hidden purpose or counsel; secret will" (Thayer, *MUSTERIN*, page 420). A mystery is that which is hidden from our knowledge, a secret not revealed or made known. This is the case with the **mystery of God**. Paul said that before it was revealed, it was "hidden wisdom ... which none of the princes of this world knew" (1 Cor. 2:7-8). It was "kept secret" (Rom.16:25), "hidden in God" (Eph. 3:9), "from ages and from generations" (Col. 1:26), and "not made known to the sons of men" (Eph.3:5). It is **NOT** a mystery any longer, however, for "God has revealed them to us through His Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:10), making them "manifest" and "known" unto us by His Spirit (Rom. 16:26; Col. 1:26), or by the "revelation" of the Spirit (Eph. 3:3, 5), so that "all men" can now "see what is the fellowship of the mystery" (Eph. 3:9), and be able to read and understand it (Eph. 3:4). Vine says, "In the New Testament it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the English word), but that which being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed." (Vine, Vol. II, page 97). The word mystery in the New Testament, then, comes to mean that which was secret but is now revealed unto us by the Spirit. All of the mystery - the total purpose of God toward mankind - has been revealed. Nothing has been kept hid. We now have "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). The mystery of God declared to God's servants the prophets has been made known (Rev. 10:7) and is revealed in the New Testament.

The word **finished** (teleo) means "1. to bring to a close, to finish...to end; 2. to perform, execute, **complete, fulfill**, (so that the thing done corresponds to what has been said, the order, command, etc.), i.e. a. with special reference to the subject-matter, to carry out the contents of a command ... b. with reference also to the form, to do just as commanded, and generally involving a notion of time, to perform the last act which completes a process, to

accomplish, fulfill...Rev. 10:7." (Thayer, TELEO, page 619). Accordingly, the mystery of God declared to the prophets was to be fully performed, accomplished, executed, or fulfilled when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet. Reference is not to the **revealing** of this mystery but to the **accomplishing** of it. As suggested, the mystery included the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. Both, "the mystery of God" (Rev. 10:7) and "all things which are written" (Luke 21:22) were to be fulfilled and accomplished in that destruction. Now, let us turn our attention to the Old Testament scriptures in search of **the things written** wherein the mystery of God concerning it is found.

The Formation of the Nation of Israel

From the very dawn of time, God has been bound by His own purpose and will (Eph. 1:9, 11). When man fell in the Garden of Eden, God began at once to reflect His purpose for the redemption of fallen man. God instituted substitutionary death that very day man ate from the tree to pay for their "penal" death, which provisionally forgave/covered his sin, or else he would have also physically died, thus sealing his eternal death/separation from God (Gen. 3:21). God pronounced a curse upon Satan (Gen. 3:15) in which He put in place a plan to crush Satan through the seed of woman. From Genesis through Revelation the Bible deals with the overthrow of Satan and the rise of fallen man from the pits of sin in which he was captivated (cf. Rev. 12:1-11). Throughout the Old Testament scriptures, we see God at work unfolding His plan and accomplishing His purposes to make it possible for fallen man to gain a victory over sin and Satan, a victory we now have through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Rom. 7:24-25, 8:1-2).

God's plan during the history of the Old Testament did not appear to them for what it really was. Paul said of them, that "But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Covenant, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." (2 Cor. 3:14-16). God's plan was a mystery. They could see, as through a veil, that something was in the working, but they could not tell what it was. Look at God's promise to Abraham. He promised him that, if he would leave his country and his father's house and go into a land that He would show him, He would make of him "a great nation" and that through him "all families of the earth" would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3).

Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah, and the promises made to Abraham were passed to him (Gen. 28:13-14). Isaac's son Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28), had twelve sons. They became known as the "children of Israel" and their distinctive families as "the twelve tribes of Israel." They left the land of Canaan during the trying time of a great famine and journeyed into Egypt by the providence of God where they were nourished in the land of Goshen. They were only 70 in number when they went into Egypt, but God blessed and multiplied them until they became the great nation the Lord had promised their father Abraham. Before Jacob died, he called his sons before him and blessed them.

To Judah he said, "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and **unto him shall be the obedience of the people**" (Gen. 49:10). It is veiled, yet God's purpose is seen at work. Jacob died, and then Joseph, and the time came when the children of Israel were looked upon as strangers in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh enslaved them in sore bondage. Two hundred and fifteen years they served the Egyptians until God saw their tears, heard their pleas, and sent Moses to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt. Under the leadership of Moses and the mighty hand of God, they crossed the Red Sea into the wilderness where they could at last sing **the song of Moses**, their song of deliverance.

Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness to Mt. Sinai. God had made them a great nation, but now He would prepare them for national importance for centuries yet to come. As he prepared to give them the law, He said unto them, "'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (Exod. 19:5-6; Peter quotes this was happening in the 1st century, 2 Pet. 2:9). God gave them the law with all its commandments and ordinances to guide them as a nation throughout their generations. It was through this nation that God would fulfill His promise to Abraham to bless "all families of the earth." Paul tells us that the law was given to bring Israel to Christ that the promise to Abraham "to bless all nations" might be fulfilled through Him (Gal. 3:16-19). These were God's intents and purposes in developing the nation of Israel. His purpose is reflected in the words of Moses: "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him" (Deut. 18:15; cf. vv. 16-19).

The Blessings and Curses of Israel

The children of Israel were promised abundant glory conditioned upon their continued obedience to God. Hear Moses as he warns (Please **Read**):

Deut. 4:1-9, 23-27 (cf. Lev. 26:3-46)

God further threatened to destroy Israel from off the face of the earth if they refused His commandments and served other gods. He said (Please **Read**):

Deut. 6:14-15, 8:19-20

There can be no question about it. In order for Israel to enjoy all the blessings promised of God, they would have to continue to obey Him.

As Moses came to the close of the great discourse delivered in the valley of Jordan, on the east side over against Bethpeor (Deut. 4:46), he again reminded them of the blessings and curses promised them. He elaborated upon the blessings first, saying (Please **Read**):

Deut. 28:1-2

Moses then enumerated the abundance of blessings that would be theirs if they obeyed Him (Please **Read**):

Deut. 28:3-14

Next came the curses - the reward for disobedience - in which we see the history of the nation of Israel for the next 1500 years flashed before them, for they were a disobedient and rebellious people. Moses continued (Please **Read**):

Deut. 28:15, 20-68

Surely, no one can look at the history of the nation of Israel through the years without knowing that God fully rewarded them according to His word.

God had Moses to instruct Israel further lest they forget or misinterpret these curses when they came upon them. (Please **Read**):

Deut. 29:18-29

Moses continued (Please **Read**):

Deut. 30:1-5

Upon this promise of the return from the captivities, Moses continued with promises of blessings to those who returned (cf. 30:6-14). Certainly, to those who are familiar with the history of the nation of Israel, God fulfilled His threats exactly as promised.

Just before Moses was ordered to Mt. Nebo to be gathered unto his people in death, God called him for one final warning to His people. While the reading of these accounts are laborious, it is essential to our understanding of "*the mystery of God*" concerning Israel and Jerusalem. In Deuteronomy 32:1-43, Moses gave us a picture of the complete and final end of Israel (Please **Read**).

The foregoing is one of the most amazing passages in all of God's word. It flashes before us the story of Israel for 1500 years from their deliverance out of Egypt until the nation's final destruction. God foresaw and foretold Israel's plagues of pestilence, consumption, fevers, inflammation, extreme burning, blasting, mildew, swords of oppression, hunger, famine, diseases, captivities, sieges, etc., as the consequences of rebellion against Him. The Old Testament shows it all graphically portrayed in fulfillment. God saw these things happening "until you are destroyed." He saw the "end," even the "latter end," some 15 centuries earlier and foretold how and why it would happen! Especially worthy of note is the reason given for this destruction: "for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries." Is not this also the theme of the book of Revelation? John's book tells about "the avenging of the Apostles and Prophets!" Moses' prophecies anticipated the Apocalypse revealed by John on Patmos. The purpose of the Apocalypse was to show the complete fulfillment of these things that were centuries before foretold (cf. Rev. 10:7; 11:3-12; Luke.21:22).

Jerusalem, The Holy City

(Early History)

One cannot read the scriptures without being impressed with the fact that Jerusalem is often called "the holy city" (Dan. 9:24; Matt. 4:5, 27:53; Rev. 11:2). The rich religious traditions of this city, from the very earliest periods of its history, had earned for it this designation. It was from here that Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the most high God, came to meet and bless Abraham as he returned from the slaughter of the kings (Gen. 14:18-19). About 450 years later, the city was identified as "Jebus" and "Jebusi" because it was inhabited by the Jebusites (Josh. 18:28; Judg. 19:10-11; 1 Chron. 11:4-5). When the Israelites invaded and then divided the land of Canaan by inheritance, the city was divided into two parts: the northern half going to the tribe of Benjamin and the southern portion going to Judah. Judah drove out the inhabitants of their section (Judg. 1:8) but Benjamin did not (Judg. 1:21). When David became king over all of Israel, he drove the Jebusites from Jerusalem and made it the capital of the nation (2 Sam. 5:5-10). David reigned 33 years in Jerusalem. From the time Israel conquered Canaan this stronghold was called Jerusalem. The completion of Solomon's temple exalted Jerusalem to both political and religious importance since the city then served as the capital of Israel and the center of worship. This earned for it the title: **the Holy City**.

God Chose Jerusalem

To understand the exalted position that Jerusalem came to hold, we should comprehend the background of the developments that made it great. When Israel set foot in the wilderness and reflected upon their deliverance from Egypt, the people sang the **Song of Moses**, a song of deliverance from the land of bondage. They said, "You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established." (Exod. 15:17). They were thinking, no doubt, of the promised land as the place of God's sanctuary but, since God later gave Moses the instructions for the building of the **tabernacle** (Exod. 25:8-9) in which He would dwell among them, it is apparent that their verse was prophetic in nature. It was before the door of this tabernacle that Israelites were to bring their offerings and sacrifices to offer them to God on the altar that God commanded (Exod. 20:24-26). As long as Israel wandered in the wilderness, the tabernacle was in their midst and God dwelt among them.

Moses said, however, “**When you cross the Jordan** and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security, **then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you:** your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you will vow to the LORD...” “Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see, **but in the place which the LORD chooses in one of your tribes,** there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you” (Deut. 12:10-11,13-14). To the place in the promised land where God would choose to place His name Israelites were to bring their tithes (Deut. 14:22-27), observe the Passover (Deut. 16: 1-2, 5-6), the feast of weeks called Pentecost (Deut. 16:9-11), and the feast of tabernacles (Deut. 16:13-16). The first place God chose to set His name in the Land was Shiloh (Jer. 7:12). Later the temple replaced the tabernacle, and Jerusalem became the permanent place which the Lord chose (2 Chron. 6:6).

Solomon’s Temple

Seven years were involved in building Solomon's temple. It was one of the most glorious wonders of the ancient world. When it was completed Solomon called all Israel together to dedicate it and said (Please **Read**):

2 Chron. 6:1-2, 4-6, 12, 14, 26-27, 34-39.

(It will be further helpful for you if you would read the complete context of Solomon's dedication of the temple, but the quoting of these excerpts helps us to understand the prominent position to which Jerusalem was elevated by the presence of the temple within the city, cf. 1 Kings 8).

Moses directed that all temple service would be performed in the city where God would choose to place His name. Solomon enjoined it and further instructed that all prayers be directed toward the holy city and the temple, even from foreign lands. Jerusalem was to become the most prominent city in the life of every Israelite. It was **The Holy City**, the center of life and service to God during the Old Testament era, a period of almost 1,000 years BC.

After Solomon completed the dedication of the temple and all Israel had returned to their homes, the Lord appeared unto Solomon and said (Please **Read**):

2 Chron. 7:12-22.

God fulfilled His promise and chose a place for His name. He wanted it clearly understood, however, that the blessings and curses which Moses had pronounced in the valley of Jordan shortly before his death were still in force and that God intended for them to listen.

Jerusalem's Greatness

David, who had first purposed to build the house for God, had envisioned that the temple would elevate Jerusalem to fame and glory throughout the world. He said, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands." (1 Chron. 22:5). Jerusalem, which God called "the gate of my people" (Mic. 1:9), became all that David dreamed. The Psalmist said, "Because of your temple at Jerusalem, kings will bring presents to you" (Psa. 68:29). The queen of Sheba came to see if it were true and testified, "The half was not told me" (1 Kings 10:7). Solomon "made silver as *common* as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland." (1 Kings 10:27). So great was Jerusalem that they sang of her beauty and glory (Please **Read**):

Psalm 48.

Oh, how Jerusalem beamed in the hearts of Israel! A little later, when the people were oppressed and the city afflicted, the Psalmist reflected confidence that God would again lift her up. He said (Please **Read**):

Psalm 102:11-16.

Jerusalem's First Destruction

During the reign of Solomon, Jerusalem, because of the temple, reached great heights of glory. Then came the dividing of the kingdom. The ten northern tribes broke from the union and formed their own kingdom, henceforth known as the kingdom of Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria. The southern tribes remained loyal to Solomon's posterity under Rehoboam and were from then forward known as Judah. Jeroboam, first king of the northern kingdom, reasoned, "If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, *even* to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." (1 Kings 12:27). So he made two golden calves, placing one in Dan and the other in Bethel, and said' unto the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt." (1 Kings 12:28).

Jeroboam's action helped take away the drawing power of the house of God and Jerusalem from the people and caused a decline in the prominence of the city though it continued as the capital of Judah. His action also plunged the northern kingdom Israel into idolatry, a plight from which the nation never recovered through 19 kings and 215 years. In 722 BC, the armies of the great Assyrian Empire marched into Samaria, destroying her cities, conquering her people and herding them off to Assyria in fulfillment of God's threat of curses, the reward for rebellion and idolatry. Judah and Jerusalem, while maintaining their loyalty to the Lord and to His temple, slowly drifted into idolatry also. After 20 kings and approximately 350 years, this southern kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians, the reward for their rebellion and idolatry. In 586 BC, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the people carried captive to Babylon in fulfillment of the curses promised 900 years earlier.

During the period of the divided kingdom, God sent His prophets in an effort to call the people to repentance lest His promised curses come upon them. Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah were sent to warn and call the people back to God. God gave them choice. They could either repent and return to God, or suffer the consequences of their rebellion and idolatry. Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem were all pictured as committing gross **harlotries/whoredoms**. Ezekiel presented them all in adultery/whoredom by an allegory of two women answering in comparison to **Samaria** and **Jerusalem** (Ezek. 23). Time and again

they were accused of harlotry/whoredom by the prophets until they were consumed and carried captive to foreign lands with their cities and land ravished, destroyed and lying desolate. The curses revealed to Moses and the children of Israel before they crossed the Jordan to possess Canaan are fully reflected in their fulfillments.

Restoration

In 539 BC, Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians and conqueror of the Babylonians, granted the captives of Israel permission to return to their home land to rebuild the temple (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). More than 42,000 banded together under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the prince, and Jeshua, the priest, and came to Jerusalem to undertake the work. During trying times and under difficult circumstances they worked diligently for 23 years until the temple was completed in 516 BC. It was rebuilt but not to its former glory. Jerusalem remained a heap of ruins. It was not until the days of Nehemiah, some 60 years later, that any determined effort was put forth to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and fortify it as in the days of its former glory (cf. Nehemiah). By and by, however, under Herod the Great, Jerusalem regained its beauty and position in the world. Herod tore down and rebuilt the city, replacing its structures with the most elaborate designs the architecture of his day could provide. He built his palaces in Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple to a degree of beauty and glory that would have rivaled that of Solomon. Jerusalem not only reclaimed the greatness that had once been hers but, far exceeding that, she also reached out to exercise world power and influence. Josephus said that "our city Jerusalem had arrived at a higher degree of great happiness than any other city under the Roman government." (Josephus, *Wars*, Preface, 4.)

Change in Israel

At this point we should understand a change that had taken place in Israel since the captivity. During their former glory the Israelites, for the most part, had remained within the territorial boundaries of the promised land. With the return of the captives from Babylon and the freeing of those who remained in Babylon, however, this situation changed, as God had predicted, **Jews had been scattered throughout the nations**. Josephus says, "Now these Jews are already gotten into all cities; and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by them." (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14,7,2.). Due to the large numbers transported there in the captivities who desired to remain there as free

persons, Babylon became a great center of the Jews (*Ibid.*, 15,2,2; 15,3,1.). Along with other cities of Egypt, Alexandria had also received large numbers of Jews fleeing from Babylonian oppressions. This city also became a great center of Jewish influence (*Ibid.*, 14,7,2.). Jews, then, were scattered throughout the world with the largest concentrations in Babylon, Egypt and Judea. Regardless of where they lived, the Jews dedicated themselves to God and to their worship of Him. Since the temple was located in Jerusalem, their first allegiance was there. This sequence of developments accomplished for Jerusalem great wealth, power and prominence, and simultaneously made it the most loved, feared and hated city in the world!

Jerusalem's Wealth, Power, and Authority

Jerusalem's wealth, until the city's destruction in AD 70, apparently exceeded that of the Romans. Titus, the Roman general who carried out the destruction of Jerusalem, in a speech delivered to the inhabitants of the city while being besieged, said that the Romans "have preserved the laws of your forefathers to you, and have withal permitted you to live, either by yourselves, or among others, as it should please you; and, what is our chief favor of all, we have given you leave to gather up that tribute which is paid to God, with such gifts that are dedicated to him; nor have we called those that carried those donations to account, nor prohibited them; till at length you became richer than we ourselves." (*Josephus, Wars*, 6,6,2.).

Jerusalem was rich because of the presence of the temple of God. Josephus says, "And let no one wonder that there was so much wealth in our temple, since all the Jews throughout the habitable earth, and those that worshipped God, nay even those of Asia and Europe, sent their contributions to it, and this from very ancient times." (*Josephus, Antiquities*, 14,7,2.). The dedication of the millions of devout Jews throughout the world, seeing that their tithes found their way to Jerusalem, made this city the richest and most lavish city for its size in the world. Of this city, Charles Merivale writes, "The palace of the kings of Judea I have already described as not less superior in magnificence to the abodes of Augustus and Tiberius. The whole city, upon which many despots have lavished their wealth, as far surpassed Rome, at least before Nero's restorations, in grandeur, as it fell short of it in size and population." (*Merivale, Charles, History of the Romans*,

Vol. VI, pg 454.)

Jerusalem's power and authority were as bountiful as was its wealth. While the days of authority as the capital of a kingdom were past, the authority that resided in the Law of Moses and its High Priest lingered. **The High Priest was the single most powerful figure in Israel**

during the days of Jesus. He had authority not only in Jerusalem and Palestine but over the Jews everywhere. It was from the High Priest that Saul received authority to go to the synagogues in Damascus, a foreign city, to bind Christians and bring them to Jerusalem for trial (Acts 9:1-2; cf. 22:4-5; 26:10-11). This authority residing in the High Priest was recognized, permitted, and upheld by the Roman government. Decrees permitting the continued exercise of these Jewish rights were published by the Roman authorities throughout the empire demanding their recognition and respect under the penalty of the law (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14,10,1-26; cf. 16:2,3.). With the authority and power of the High Priest and Jerusalem firmly established, Jerusalem ruled the Jews throughout the world. This they did through an elaborate network of courts.

There was the Sanhedrin composed of 71 members over which the High Priest served as head judge exercising complete authority. "The Sanhedrin held religious authority not only over Judea, but over the entire Jewry of the then-known world." It was the Supreme Court of the Jewish State. There were other courts in addition to this 71 member council. "A Sanhedrin composed of 23 members tried cases involving offenses such as homicide, incest, and profanation of the Sabbath publicly for which punishment incurring death was meted out. There was one such Sanhedrin in every important city of Judea." Such courts may have existed in cities outside Judea, for the Jews dragged Paul before Gallio, the deputy of Achaia, but Gallio refused to hear the case, saying, "But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters" (Acts 18:15). He thus recognized the right of Jews to judge matters pertaining to their law even in cities outside Judea. So the authority of Jerusalem as a city was universal. It extended to every city on earth where a Jew lived!

A Prominent City

Jerusalem was also a prominent city. It was the capital of the Jewish State and, therefore, the most important city in the world to the Jew. It was the city of God, the site of the temple of God; hence its title "the Holy City." Toward Jerusalem every Jew in the world prayed. To Jerusalem every Jewish male was to come and present himself to God three times a year. To Jerusalem the Jews were to come to offer sacrifices, make offerings, and observe feasts. This explains the presence of "devout men, out of every nation under heaven" in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in AD 30. Fifteen nationalities of Jews had come to the city to worship God from all parts of the Roman Empire.

This constant influx of tourist into Jerusalem made it a world renowned city. Since Jerusalem held such exalted esteem in the eyes of the Jews of the world, it was natural that the peoples among whom the Jews dwelled were well aware of Jerusalem's beauty, importance and fame. Possibly Jerusalem was more widely known than any other city in the world. Only Rome gave serious competition. Such recognition made Jerusalem the most loved city on earth to the Jews!

Feared and Hated

Notwithstanding her prominence, Jerusalem was one of the most feared and hated cities of the world (cf. 1 Thess. 2:15). She was feared by the Romans because her people were not contained within the boundaries of a small country. They were scattered throughout the world and the thought of an uprising by the Jews or against the Jews would have thrown the empire into instant conflict. Jerusalem was feared also because the political maneuvering of her leaders kept a constant threat of an explosion before the world. (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16,2,3; *Wars*, 2,10,3.) This was the type politics that gained for the city and her loyal children the envy of every nation under heaven. The Jews literally had favors extended to them that were denied every other nation. This led to their being hated by the rest of the world. Josephus graphically portrays this hatred for the Jews. They were permitted by the Romans to worship their different God in their different way, observing their different ways and days. Their treatment was different simply because they were Jews and therefore demanded to worship God as He directed. They either received these favors or gladly died for their convictions. This special treatment, afforded no other nation under heaven, caused the Jews and their holy city, Jerusalem, to be hated by the whole world.

Conclusion

Jerusalem, then, as the city of God sustained a relationship to the nation of Israel and the world that had never been held by any other city. Its position in relationship to Israel and the Jews was such that, in reality, one could not exist without the other. The nation supported and sustained Jerusalem which in turn was the fountainhead from which all the blessings flowed. It was self-evident that as long as Jerusalem stood, Israel as a nation stood. If, however, Jerusalem was subdued, the will of the people of Israel was also subdued. God had warned that if Israel rebelled against Him and served other gods He would bring curses upon

His people until they were utterly destroyed. God brought curses upon them many times and some were unusually severe as with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. When they returned to God in heart and spirit, however, He restored them to their land and their city. A second time they rebelled against God and, as He warned, God utterly destroyed Jerusalem and the temple which were never to be built again. By so doing, God utterly destroyed the **nation** of Israel never to exist again as God created it. Josephus says, "yet hath not its great antiquity, nor its vast riches, nor the diffusion of its nation over all the habitable earth, nor the greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed." (Josephus, *Wars*, 6,10,1.). This is the city, **Babylon the Great**, which exercised dominion over the kings of the earth seen by John destroyed in the Apocalypse (Rev. 17). She was the faithful city that turned harlot (Isa. 1:21) and **suffered the consequences of utter destruction that God had promised for His servants** (Deut. 28-32).

The Testimony of the Prophets

With the foundation laid, we come next to observe "***the mystery of God***" as declared unto God's servants, the prophets. Having received the law with its promised blessings and curses, the Israelites crossed the Jordan River in conquest of the land of promise. They inhabited the land and grew into a powerful and influential nation. After many years they desired a king that they might be like the nations around them. God granted them their wish and broadened their borders to include the fullness of all that had been promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18; 2Chron. 9:26). Jerusalem was established as the city of God and became the center of both political and spiritual activities. But the nation of Israel was a stiff-necked and stubborn people. Full of rebellion, their hearts and minds quickly wandered from the worship and service of God to the worship of the gods of the land. It was inevitable that the fullness of the curses that God promised Israel would eventually be the cup from which they would drink.

During the years following the dividing of the kingdom, God sent the prophets. Beginning with Elijah and Elisha (non-literary prophets), He warned the people of Israel of their plight unless

they repented. One after another they came - Joel (830 BC), Amos (760 BC), Hosea (750 BC), Micah (740 BC), Isaiah (740-690 BC), Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk (610 BC), and Jeremiah (626-583 BC), "The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy." (2 Chron. 36:15-16; d.2 Chron. 24:18-22; Neh. 9:26-32; Jer. 2:30,34, 7:25-26, 25:4, 26:4-6, 29:15-19, 35:15, 44:4-10; Lam. 4:13; Zech. 7:3-14; Matt. 5:12). The children of Israel forsook the Lord, so, He sent them the prophets to remind them that the curses He had promised in the valley of Jordan through Moses were at hand. Israel rejected the prophets and misused them until many of the promised curses came to pass, but not unto the latter end when the utter destruction God promised through Moses was to come. Of the punishment assessed Israel and Jerusalem for their rebellion and idolatry through the power of the Babylonian Empire, the Lord said, "The whole land shall be a desolation, Yet I will not execute a complete destruction. "For this the earth shall mourn and the heavens above be dark, because I have spoken, I have purposed, and I will not change My mind, nor will I turn from it." (Jer. 4:27-28).

Again He said, "How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by *those that are* not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were *like* well-fed lusty stallions; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish *them* for these *things*?" says the LORD. "And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this? "Go up on her walls and destroy, but do not make a complete end. Take away her branches, for they *are* not the LORD's. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously with Me," says the LORD... Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," says the LORD. "It *is* a mighty nation, it *is* an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say... "Nevertheless in those days," says the LORD, "I will not make a complete end of you." (Jer. 5:7-11, 15, 18).

It is apparent that the punishments inflicted upon Israel by God through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities were not to be understood as "the utter destruction" God had promised in the plains of Jordan. The 10 northern tribes "kingdom of Israel" was destroyed by the Assyrian armies in 722 BC, **never to exist again**, however, it was not the "full end" of all of the Old Covenant people at the time of Jeremiah's prophecy **because** the "promised Seed" had to come through the line of Judah and **all Bible prophecies fulfilled first**. The "full end" of the remaining 2 southern tribes "kingdom of Judah" **would come later**, in AD 70 at the Hand of God through the Roman armies.

Isaiah

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was sent to prophesy unto Judah and Jerusalem between the years 740 and 690 BC. They had rebelled against God and forsaken Him (Isa. 1:2). They had drifted so far from God that Isaiah was moved to say, "Except the Lord of host had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isa. 1 :9). But God spared Israel as He called upon them to *repent or perish*.

Isaiah's message is the most highly Messianic of all the prophets. Mingled with the promises of doom, despair, destruction, and the ultimate end of the nation are the promises of the coming Messiah. There are hundreds of prophecies in Isaiah which found their fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44). However, Isaiah's prophecy does not end with the advent of the Messiah but proceeds to declare the **utter end** of the nation of Israel.

Isaiah 64-65

In studying this noted prophecy careful readers will be impressed with the development of sequences that would result in the Gentiles being made partakers of God's blessings, Israel and Jerusalem being destroyed as vengeance from God, and the creation of new heavens and a new earth with the emerging of a new and different Jerusalem.

The prophecy begins with an affirmation that these things foretold are a **mystery**. "For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, Nor has the eye seen a God besides You, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him. (Isa. 64:4). In discussing the **mystery** which was ordained of God before the world began, the apostle Paul quotes this passage in order to identify it with those to whom "**the mystery of God**" is revealed (1 Cor. 2:9). There can be no doubt about the prophetic nature of Isaiah 64-65. After declaring that these things were a mystery, he then pictures the nation (Zion and Jerusalem) lying desolate (Isa. 64:9-11) and asks of God: "Will You restrain Yourself at these things, O LORD? Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure? (Isa. 64:12). The Lord's answer follows in the next chapter. "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here am I, here am I,' To a nation which did not call on My name. (Isa. 65:1). God's answer is simple. The Gentiles were to be called and they would answer. He then reasons as to why He would call the Gentiles. "I have spread out My

hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts, A people who continually provoke Me to My face, Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks,” etc. (Isa. 65:2-3). Continuing to show His displeasure, He reminded them of His threatened vengeance. “Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will even repay **into their bosom**, Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together,’ says the LORD. ‘Because they have burned incense on the mountains and scorned Me on the hills, Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom.’” (Isa. 65:6-7). It had been written about 700 years earlier in Deuteronomy 32:34-43 that God said He would recompense and avenge the iniquities of all the nation of Israel together at the same time **into their bosom**. This is the message of the Revelation (Rev. 18:20, 24).

The time for the avenging of God's servants, however, was seen as yet future. He said, “‘As the new wine is found in the cluster,’ And one says, ‘Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,’ So I will act on behalf of My servants In order not to destroy all of them. I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, And an heir of My mountains from Judah; Even My chosen ones shall inherit it, And My servants will dwell there.” (Isa. 65:8-9). The avenging of God's servants would **not** take place **until** He had brought forth the holy seed out of Jacob through Judah and the remnant had inherited His promised blessings.

God then sees the promised end: “‘But you who forsake the LORD, Who forget My holy mountain, Who set a table for Fortune, And who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny, I will destine you for the sword, And all of you will bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight And chose that in which I did not delight.’ Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry. Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart, But you will cry out with a heavy heart, And you will wail with a broken spirit. You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones, And the Lord GOD will slay you. But My servants will be called by another name. Because he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My sight!’” (Isa. 65: 11-16). **A more vivid picture of the slaughter, hunger, thirst, shame and vexation of the nation of Israel at Jerusalem in AD 70 could not be printed.** Nearly 800 years before it happened, God foretold it through Isaiah the prophet.

The closing scenes of this prophecy picture "new heavens and a new earth" followed by a new and different Jerusalem (Isa. 65:17-25). The destruction of the nation of Israel with their city of Jerusalem had just been pictured and there was promise of new and greater things to come in a new order. The prophecy is Messianic and finds its fulfillment in the church of Christ. It is interesting to note the similarity of the development of events in this prophecy with that of the Apocalypse of John. John first saw the destruction of a city called "Babylon the Great" and, then, his vision closed with "a new heaven and a new earth" which was followed by the "new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21: 1-2). Truly, the prophecy of Isaiah 64-65 is a foreshadow, if not a forecast, of the Apocalypse!

Daniel

Daniel, whose prophecies vibrate with mystery and intrigue, likewise foresaw the **end** of the nation of Israel whom he called the **holy people**. Daniel was among the first to be carried prisoner to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made his first sweep into Judah in 605 BC and subdued the people. Being one of the **princes of Judah**, he was taken by Nebuchadnezzar and groomed for service in his kingdom (cf. Dan. 1:4-6). From the beginning of his captivity in Babylon until the end of the 70 years of captivity (536 BC), Daniel prophesied. His prophecies of the nation's final destruction came at a time when Judah was prisoner to Babylon and Jerusalem lay waste from the power of the Babylonian armies. Daniel focused attention upon kingdoms, nations, powers, and kings which were yet to rule the world **until** the coming of the Messiah *and the final desolation of the holy people*. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2) realistically described the **future history** of the world for the next 600 years. Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon were seen as the first of four great world empires followed by the Medo-Persian Empire (539 BC), the Grecian, or Alexandrian, Empire (331 BC), and finally the Roman Empire beginning about 31 BC Daniel said, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44). More than six centuries later, this prophecy became a reality when Jesus Christ stated during his ministry in Matt. 12:28 that the establishing of His kingdom had come, and then later upon His resurrection from the dead He ascended to the right hand of God to begin His reign over that kingdom that had been in existence and growing since that time during His ministry (John 18:36; Acts 2:29-36; Co1. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 5:1-10, 11:15, 22:5).

It should be apparent from the prophecy just cited that Daniel's prophecies fit into **timetables** which pinpoint their expected fulfillment. This is true also of his prophecies of the **end** of the Jewish state. Mysterious clues are given that identify the time of their fulfillment. It is interesting to note that, when Daniel's prophecies are understood within the context of their intended meaning, the timetables given by Daniel work out perfectly. On the other hand, when the prophecies are interpreted in the light of *speculation and the future*, these timetables are shambles and must be rewritten to pacify the speculator. Since "all things written" (Luke 21:22) were to be fulfilled in or before the year AD 70, the events foretold by Daniel **cannot be projected beyond that date!** All of Daniel's timetables **must** end in AD 70. Let us examine some of Daniel's prophecies of *the end of the nation of Israel*.

Daniel 8

Near the end of the reign of Belshazzar, Babylon's last king, Daniel saw a vision of a ram with two horns pushing westward, northward and southward, and he became great (Dan. 8:3-4). While pondering upon the vision Daniel saw a male goat coming from the west with a notable horn between his eyes. The goat came in the fullness of his fury and clashed head-on with the ram, smote him, took away his power and domain, and ruled in his stead. While there is more to the vision, the explanation given by the angel Gabriel to make Daniel understand the vision should also give us understanding of the intended message. He said to Daniel, "'Son of man,' he said to me, '**understand that the vision concerns the time of the end...He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath**, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. **In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked**, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. **He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people**. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power. The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.'" (Dan. 8:17, 19-26).

Six hundred years before these things came to reality in fulfillment God showed them to Daniel. To those who know the history of the development of the world from the time of the Babylonians, the understanding of the vision is simple. The Medes and the Persians overthrew the Babylonians and ruled the world in their stead from 539-332 BC. In 331 BC, under Alexander the Great, the Grecians conquered the Medes and Persians and ruled the world. Alexander died in 323 BC His empire fell to his four generals who divided the kingdom into four sections and ruled as kings over them. Civilization remained in this divided state until the rise of the Roman Empire under Julius Caesar. The Romans conquered the world and ruled it with a rod of iron. These things were all fulfilled in AD 70 as God had said.

Daniel 9

In the first year of Darius, king of the Medes (539 BC), Daniel prayed unto God confessing his sins and the sins of the people of Israel. He prayed (Please **Read**):

Daniel 9:5-7, 10-13, 15-19.

The Lord heard the prayer of Daniel and while he was still praying sent Gabriel to give Daniel skill and understanding. Gabriel proceeded by giving the timetable for Israel's continued existence unto the final end. (Please **Read**):

Daniel 9:24-27.

The message of Gabriel was clear and simple. God had determined that the nation of Israel and Jerusalem, their city, would continue until He had brought to pass the things before appointed. Seventy weeks are allotted for the restoration and building of Jerusalem; the coming of the Messiah, the Prince; the finishing of the transgression; the making of an end of sins; making reconciliation for iniquity; the bringing in of everlasting righteousness; the sealing up of the vision and prophecy; and the anointing of the most Holy. After 69 weeks, or during the 70th week, the Messiah would be cut off or killed. This obvious reference is to the death of Christ and all that was accomplished by His death. It was during this 70th week that the prince would confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst of the week would cause the sacrifices to cease until the end results of the abominations of the nation

were brought to their completion in the utter desolation and destruction determined. **This prophecy is a complete forecast of the fulfilling of all prophecies, which would culminate in the end of the nation.** (For a more in-depth study into Daniel 9 please see Study Series 9 The Seventy Weeks of Daniel).

Daniel 10-11-12

Since the background has been set by the discussion of the prophecies of chapters eight and nine, the message of chapters 10-12 should be easy to understand. It is requested that you read these chapters for the completeness of the prophecy, since only portions of them will be discussed here.

It was during the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia, and Darius, king of the Medes, that Daniel saw the things revealed in these chapters. The year was 537 BC Daniel was in a trance when a messenger from God appeared unto him saying, "Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*... I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth." (Dan. 10:14, 21). The messenger continued as he gave Daniel a preview of the history of the world unto the end of the nation of Israel. Conflicts between Syria and Egypt over a period of 150 years are prophetically portrayed in unbelievable detail. The growing involvement of Rome in the world politics of the era is clearly seen (Dan. 11:18, 30). As the earlier chapters in Daniel show, it was by the power of Rome that God's appointed ***end for Israel*** would come. Her prophetic appearance in the midst of this chapter is designed to show the development of God's instruments of wrath by which Israel's punishment would come. Verses 36-45 appear to confirm this conclusion as they graphically picture the character of the Roman kings who ruled in their time. Of them Daniel says, "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done." (Dan. 11:36). This description, given prophetically 500 years ahead of time, pictures the Roman emperors who magnified themselves as gods (Rev. 13:4-6). Daniel further says, "But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses;" (Dan. 11:38). However, in doing these things Caesar would not realize that he would honour God even without intending to do so (cf.Rev.17:17).

As we come to the 12th chapter, a closer look is seen as the messenger focuses on the very end. "And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued" (Dan. 12:1). Just as powerfully important is that Dan. 12:2-3 also prophecies of the resurrection and the consummation of the Kingdom during this same time. Prophetically, we are introduced to The Great Tribulation described also by Christ in the discourse delivered from the Mount of Olives two days before his death - the tribulation from which the disciples would be delivered (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the time of the end; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase" (Dan. 12:4). Daniel's curious mind then asked, "How long *will it be* until the end of *these* wonders?" (Dan. 12:6). The answer comes, "it would be for a time, times, and half a *time*; and as soon as they finish *shattering the power of the holy people*, all these *events* will be completed." (Dan. 12:7). Well stated for us after the fact to understand, but for Daniel, he did not really understand. He said, "O My lord, what will be the outcome of these *events*?" (Dan. 12:8). The Lord replied, "*Go your way*, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the time of the end. "Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there *will be 1,290 days*" (Dan. 12:9-11). **In these few verses are contained the message of the Book of Revelation!** Let us understand it and reverently bow in awe before our God who revealed its message to His 1st century saints, and is forever now written in history for all of us to see and understand.

Zechariah

Zechariah, who prophesied while the temple at Jerusalem was being rebuilt (520 BC), begins his prophecy with a warning unto the nation of Israel. The word of the Lord came unto him saying, "The LORD was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Return to Me,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I may return to you,' says the LORD of hosts. 'Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed,' saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.'" 'But they did not listen or give heed to Me,' declares the LORD. 'Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers?' Then they repented and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.'" (Zech. 1:2-6).

After issuing this warning, Zechariah proceeded to tell them that God "shall choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2:12). He continued to show them prophecy after prophecy of the coming Messiah and all the blessings related to it.

Zechariah 12-14

In chapters 12 and 13 Zechariah began to show the blessedness of the new and different Jerusalem the Lord would create. He contrasted this Jerusalem with the existing one. In it there would "be great mourning" (Zech. 12:11) and the city rifled and destroyed (Zech. 14:2). It is often difficult to observe his transition from the new, different Jerusalem, to the old Jerusalem. For this reason, the prophecy must be carefully studied. It is clear, however, in the beginning of chapter 14 that he is discussing the old Jerusalem. "Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle." (Zech. 14: 1-3). The prophecy continues showing that a way of escape would be provided for the servants of God. Jerusalem, which at the time of this prophecy was still in ruins, was to be rebuilt and destroyed again. Half of the inhabitants would go into captivity and the rest would die there. This is precisely what happened to Jerusalem in 70 A. D.

As we come to the close of this section of our study, it is fair to say that the **mystery of God** declared to His servants the prophets included the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. In fact, these and other prophecies scattered throughout the Old Testament scriptures tell us clearly that the mystery of God was not finished until they were all fulfilled. Many others could be examined but these are sufficient to show that the events that happened to Jerusalem in AD 70 were of such importance in the scheme of things to merit special attention. This is why we believe that one entire book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, was written to show the completion of it all. When Daniel saw his visions, he was told to "shut up the vision; for it shall be for many days" (Dan. 8:26) and, again, to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). When John saw his visions, however, he was told to "seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10). The **end** had come! And John had just been privileged to see it beforehand and reveal it unto God's servants then living. In the section to come, let us examine some of the teaching of the New Testament relative to this notable event.

The Teaching of Jesus

The writing of the books of the New Testament did not begin until after AD 35 - 38, 5+ years after the New Covenant came into effect. The history of the life of Christ and the history of the beginning and spread of Christianity are all contained in the books written by the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The doctrine of the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem found its way into these books and is so woven into the fiber of their teaching that there can be no mistake about this doctrine's origin, purpose, or final execution. One has to blind oneself to try and not see this. Jesus dealt with it often, particularly during the last nine months of his personal ministry. We now observe some passages where he specifically dealt with this matter.

Luke 11:45-52

These words spoken by the Lord not long after His transfiguration in the regions of Caesarea Philippi were to show that the transgressions of the nation were coming to the "full" and that God would send them "prophets and apostles", some of whom they would persecute and slay, "that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world" might be required of **that** generation. He was specific about it. "It shall be charged against **this** generation." (Luke 11:51). The word **generation** means "the whole multitude of men living at the same time, ... a period ordinarily occupied by each successive generation, say, of thirty or forty years." (Vine, Vol. 1, page 42.) Jesus was saying that within the next 30 to 40 years God was going to require of the nation of Israel vengeance for the blood of the prophets. It came 40 years later - 70 A. D.

Luke 13:1-9

In this text Jesus discussed two incidents that happened in Jerusalem. (1) Pilate had slain some Galileans and mingled their blood with their sacrifices, and (2) eighteen persons had been killed by the fall of the tower of Siloam. Jesus said, "do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? "I tell **you**, no, but unless you repent, **you** will all likewise perish." While Jesus' words may also be applied to perishing in the Lake of Fire, it is more than apparent that He is talking about what would happen in Jerusalem in AD 70. He illustrated His point by a parable. "A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking

for fruit on it and did not find any. And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?' And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, *fine*; but if not, *cut it down*.'" Read and understand.

Matthew 22:1-10

As time drew near for the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus, He related a parable to illustrate the consequences of it all to the nation of Israel. He spoke of a certain king who invited many to a marriage feast for his son, but they refused, making light of it, mistreating, and even killing some of his servants. Jesus said, "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed **those** murderers and set their city on fire." He then invited other guests to come. The meaning of the parable is easy to comprehend. God was the king, Christ His son, and *Israel* the invited guests. But *Israel refusing to come* mistreated the prophets and servants of God. The end result was the destruction of **their** city, Jerusalem, as vengeance from God.

Luke 19:41-44

As Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Saturday of his last week, "He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If **you** had known in this day, even **you**, the things which make for peace! But now *they have been hidden from your eyes*. For the days will come upon **you** when **your** enemies will throw up a barricade against **you**, and surround **you** and hem **you** in on every side, and they will level **you** to the ground and **your** children within **you**, and they will not leave in **you** one stone upon another, *because you* did not recognize the time of your visitation.'" Read and understand.

Matthew 23:29-39; Luke 13:28-35

Their message is clear and can be summed up in these words: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and **you** were unwilling. Behold, **your** house is being left to **you** desolate!" Another parable spoken by Jesus within the same time frame and dealing with the same matter is found in Luke 20:9-18. The reader is requested to read this text also.

Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-36

Matthew, Mark and Luke give accounts of the discourse of Jesus as He left Jerusalem on His final day before His trial and crucifixion. In this discussion with His disciples He foretold the **end** of the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem and gave signs to precede the completion of these events. The reader is encouraged to read each of these chapters carefully and to consider the observations made herein concerning that discourse. Only portions will be quoted as we follow Matthew's account.

As Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple for the last time and observing the costly buildings pertaining to it, Jesus said, "Do **you** not see all these things? Truly I say to **you**, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." (Matt. 24:2). Arriving at the Mount of Olives, "the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell **us**, when will these things happen, and what *will* be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" (Matt. 24:3). From the questions recorded by Matthew some have incorrectly surmised that the disciples understood Jesus to have been talking about what would happen at some end of the world when all things would be burned up.

The questions as related by Mark and Luke clear up the matter: "Tell **us**, when will these things be, and what *will* be the sign when **all these things** are going to be fulfilled?" (Mark 13:4), or "come to pass?" (Luke 21:7). All the questions, in reality, refer to the **same event** and the answer given pertains only to one event, i.e., "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when **all these things** shall be fulfilled?" The questions concerning "thy coming" and "the end of the age" likewise had reference to the *same event*. Jesus had taught them these things before (Matt. 24:25). They understood that the **coming** of the Son of man was involved in the wrath that Jesus described. Only a few days before Jesus had said, "The days will come when **you** will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and **you** will not see it." Again, "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:" (Luke 17:22, 26). By these statements Jesus indicated that there would be **more than one day** of the Son of man. In the same context He says, "so will the Son of Man be in His day. Again, "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed." (Luke 17:24, 30).

When Jesus stood before the wicked council which falsely accused and finally condemned Him to death, He said, "hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." (Matt.26:64). Can there be any question about the **coming** here described? The **coming** of Matthew 24:30 is the same as Luke 21:22 said was to fulfill "**all things which are written**", it was the **one and only second coming**, and this coming would be when the city was to be destroyed without one stone being left upon another and was to occur in **that** "generation" (Matt. 24:34).

The disciples had asked Jesus for signs pertaining to the fulfillment of **these things**, and He proceeded to give them. He presented a number of general signs - identifiable events which would affect the world before **these things** were fulfilled. There would be the rise of false Christs and prophets (Matt. 24:4, 5, 11, 23-24), wars and rumors of wars (Matt. 24:6-7), famines, pestilence and earthquakes in divers places (Matt. 24:7) and, Luke adds, "terrors and great signs from heaven." (Luke 21:11)(Josephus, *Wars*, 6,5,2-3.). "But that is not yet the end." (Matt. 24:6). It is only "the beginning of birth pangs." (Matt. 24:8). Jesus then informed His disciples of signs that would affect Christians. The disciples would be afflicted, killed and hated of all nations for His name's sake (Matt. 24:9); many would be offended and would betray and hate one another (Matt. 24: 10); iniquity would abound; the love of many would grow cold (Matt. 24:12); "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world... and then the end will come." (Matt. 24:14; cf. Col. 1:23). Each and every one of these signs was fulfilled in glowing detail before Jerusalem was destroyed and can be documented as fulfilled either by the scriptures or by Josephus, the historian!

Jesus then gave His disciples a specific sign to look for and upon observing it, they were immediately to flee the region. Notice: "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains," etc. (Matt. 24:15-16). Luke explains the meaning of the passage by relating other words of the Lord so that the Gentile world might understand this sign. He said, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains," etc. (Luke 21:20-21). The "abomination of desolation," mentioned by Daniel, was the Roman army marshaled to destroy the city and make it desolate. It stood in "where it should not be (let the reader understand), " (Mark 13:14), or "the holy place" (Matt. 24:15), i.e., in and around the Holy City.

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:29-30). In these words modern speculators discard this thing: the language used here by Jesus is symbolic descriptive of doom and destruction as often used by the Old Testament prophets! The sun being darkened is symbolic of God's light "going out" on (in) a nation (cf. Isa. 13:10, 24:21-23, Jer. 15:9; Ezek. 32:4-8; Joel 2:1-11, 3:14-15; Amos 8:9; Rev. 6:12-13), and the moon refusing to give her light is symbolic of the same thing (Ibid.).

The stars of heaven falling is symbolic of dignitaries of nations falling or being brought to an end (cf. Dan. 8:10), and the powers of the heavens being shaken is symbolic of the great shaking up of governments. Such was the case in both the Roman Empire and the Jewish state. The idea of the passage is that the Son of man was coming to carry out God's judgment **upon the nation of Israel** (cf. John 5:22, 27) with the result that God no longer would permit His light to shine upon her. The end was near, even at the doors. Jesus said, "when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." (Matt. 24:33-34). There was to be no mistake about it. It would happen during the lifetime of some of those that heard Him deliver this discourse.

To emphasize the certainty of His message, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matt. 24:35-36). He then called upon the disciples to be watchful "for you do not know which day your Lord is coming" (Matt. 24:42), i.e., "come" in this horrible destruction of the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. He reasoned with them to be faithful and watchful, not only for this coming disaster, but also with the final judgment in view (Matt. 25: 1-46). It is often contended that Matthew 24:1-35 applies only to the destruction of Jerusalem but that the rest of the discourse must be applied to some separate second coming of Christ. A study of Luke 17:22-37 will reveal that the principles contained in Matthew 24:36-51 apply to the day of the Lord and, therefore, ***they too are applying to the destruction of Jerusalem.***

This discourse, delivered by Jesus to His disciples from the Mount of Olives, completely foretold in detail the end of the nation of Israel and the destruction of their city, Jerusalem. Forty years later, in AD 70, it was carried out to the full. More than any other monument, that historical event stands as a witness to the accuracy of the testimony contained in God's word. This is the message of the Book of Revelation as reflected in chapter five by the completely sealed (seven) book in the right hand of God! Those seals stand for the signet of God's full and final approval upon the word of God given through Jesus Christ. To interpret it in the light of anything else is to miss the glorious message of this marvelous book.

Luke 23:28-31

Two days after Jesus foretold Jerusalem's destruction in detail, He made His way to Calvary. A great company, including women who bewailed and lamented Him, followed. He turned and said unto them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for **yourselves and for your children**. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that 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 when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (directly quoting Isa. 2:10, 19, 21 describing Judah and Jerusalem's final end). Jesus said those women and their children would have something to weep about **in their generation**. And weep they did in AD 70 when the city was destroyed!

No less than a dozen occasions can be cited when Jesus discussed this notable event during His personal ministry. It was the source of many warnings and calls to repentance. The nation was doomed to destruction. Jesus died in the city to seal its **end** which followed in due time and marked the end of God's use of the nation of Israel in the scheme of things. Israel could no longer claim to be God's people and Jerusalem could no longer boast of itself as **the Holy City**. The church of Christ can now claim to be God's people as they inhabit the new and heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 21:1-22:15) which God promised from of old (Isa. 65:7-25). **This is the message of the Book of Revelation!**

The Apostolic Doctrine

New Testament teaching on this monumental matter - the destruction of Jerusalem - did not cease with the death of Christ. The disciples and the apostles of Christ continued to hold these things before the people of Israel. Following his healing of the lame man (Acts 3:1-10), Peter declared how God had fulfilled the prophecies of the things Christ was to suffer (Acts 3:18). He then said unto them, "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until *the* period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time" (Acts 3:19-21).

Peter said: Jesus would stay in heaven until the **restitution of all things** which God had spoken by the prophets! Restitution carries with it not only the idea of restoring but even the consummation or the completion of an agreement." So, the restitution of all things actually involved the fulfilling of God's promise to carry out His agreement with Israel unto the consummation of it (cf. Dan. 9:27; Isa.10:22-23). This happened in AD 70 when all things written were fulfilled (Luke 21:22; Rev.10:7)!

A short time later when members of the Jewish synagogue challenged Stephen and "were not able to resist the wisdom and Spirit by which he spoke, then they secretly induced men..." (Acts 6:10-11) to testify that he had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and God. As they brought him before the council, they set up false witnesses who said, "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us" (Acts 6:13-14). It is apparent from the charge that they did not misunderstand the message because the message of Stephen was the same as that spoken by the Lord during His personal ministry. They failed to understand that Stephen's words were not blasphemy but truth. Granted permission to speak to the council, he rehearsed the history of Israel from Abraham to Solomon showing how their fathers had rebelled against God, even giving themselves over to idolatry. Stephen, upbraiding them sharply, concluded by saying, "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did

your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it" (Acts 7:51-53).

Since hearing Stephen's message previously and using it as a basis for charging him with blasphemy, it is obvious why they so accused him. His sermon was the message of Israel's **utter destruction** found in Deuteronomy 28-32! Israel's doom was at hand but the national leaders refused to recognize it. Their hearts had become stones!

Approximately 20 years later the apostle Paul appealed to the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia to accept Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah and warned them of the consequences of rejecting Him: "Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you: 'BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH; FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU'" (Acts 13:40-41). Paul indicated that there was a "wrath" in the prophecies yet to be fulfilled. He quoted from Habakkuk 1:5 where God promised punishment to Israel through the Babylonians and implied **an identical thing to come on the Jews of his day**. It came in AD 70 with the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. Doubtless it was this kind of teaching that caused the Jews of Asia to accuse him, saying, "This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place" (Acts 21:28).

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul discussed God's true Israel (cf. Rom. 9). He says, "For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." (Rom. 9:6-7). Though they were the seed of Abraham physically, the Jews were not necessarily the seed of the promise. God's **spiritual** Israel are the seeds of promise (cf. Rom. 2:28-29, 9:8). Paul then raised the question, "You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for

destruction? And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, *even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles...Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, **THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.**" (Rom.9:19-24, 27-28; cf. Isa.10:20-23). There can be no mistake about it. Though Israel had long been fitted for destruction because of rebellion against God and idolatry, God had been patient **that the remnant might be saved**. However, the time of the **end** was *now near* and Paul was preaching that it was on its way.

About five years earlier he had written to the Thessalonians: "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost" (1 Thess. 2:14-16). Paul pictured the wrath God had promised as having already begun. The Holy Spirit interpreted the troubles the Jews were having in Rome during the reign of Claudius Caesar as the beginning of this "wrath" being poured out (cf. Acts 18:2). First Thessalonians, thought to be the first of Paul's epistles, was written about the time Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome. Hence, it is easy to interpret this action as an outpouring of God's wrath.

In Hebrews 10:30 the writer warned of the consequences of the Jewish rejection of Jesus Christ as their sacrifice for sin and as their High Priest. He said, "For we know Him who said, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.' And again, 'THE LORD WILL JUDGE **HIS PEOPLE.**'" He quoted from Deuteronomy 32:35, 36, the context of which foretold the **end**, even the **latter end**, of the nation of Israel. He then said, "FOR YET IN A **VERY LITTLE WHILE**, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL **NOT DELAY**" (Heb.10:37). This is the closing message of the Book of Revelation: "And behold, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:7, 20)! Later in the epistle to

the Hebrews, the writer said, "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned *them* on earth, much less *will we escape* who turn away from Him who *warns* from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, 'YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.' This *expression*, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." (Heb. 12:25-27).

The writer had just shown that the Jewish Christians no longer served under the Law of Moses (Heb. 12:18-21). "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, ...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant," (Heb. 12:22-24). Quoting from Haggai 2:5-9 (cf. 12:26), the writer then foretold the great shake up that would come in AD 70 when Haggai spoke the words quoted by the Hebrew writer he was encouraging the Jews to finish the work of rebuilding the temple destroyed by the Babylonians some 65 years earlier. God had promised them that the temple would be rebuilt, but, he said, "Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth." The Hebrew author says that "yet once more" **signified** "the removing of those things that are shaken!" They had been shaken in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and the city of Jerusalem. But God said that in the last shaking they would be **removed**. And removed they were, never to be built again, in AD 70, when the temple and the city were destroyed by the Roman armies!

The magnitude of the message from all of these passages should cause us to be in awe! The events which they foretold had a twofold design: to show God's wrath and to make known His power (Rom. 9:22). This is also the message of the Book of Revelation: to show God's wrath (Rev. 6:17, 16:1-21) and to make known His power (Rev. 11:15-18). The wrath of God poured out upon the nation of Israel was planned, promised and executed by the Throne of God. **There has never been a day of wrath before, or since, or ever will be again, which compares in magnitude to it!** Let each person carefully weigh these facts before considering the contents of the Book of Revelation for the book portrays the most monumental **day of wrath** ever executed upon mankind.

Prelude to War (some historical information)

The desolation of the nation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 were the culmination of predetermined events. The inevitable end to which the nation came was demanded by two basic factors: the justice of God which demands that rebellion and idolatry be punished, and the unique nature of the sovereign power of the Roman Empire which demanded that the state be served preeminently. Nothing could have prevented it. Once the course Israel would travel was set, these two forces worked together to bring about the end of the Jewish State.

Early in the rule of Rome, it was apparent there would be confrontations with the ruling powers over religious rights. Herod provoked the Jews first by introducing inscriptions and trophies into Jerusalem which the Jews considered images (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,8,1.). The Jews caused many disturbances because of them. Time and again Herod and his successors incited the Jews to rebellion but always withdrew their projects in time to avert all-out war.

Rome sought to exercise supreme civil authority over the whole world, including the Jews, but the Jewish Religion exercising absolute authority over the Jews of the world demanded primary allegiance to Jerusalem, the center of Jewish worship. A conflict of gigantic proportions developed. Of this, Solomon Zeitlin said, "There was a deeper basis for the growing antagonism between Jew and Roman, an antagonism rooted in different and conflicting ideologies. It was a conflict between Rome and Jerusalem, between the Jewish conception of the state and the Roman conception of the state. To the Jew, the state was subordinate to religion. Religion to the Jew was the supreme arbiter in the life of man. To Imperial Rome, religion was secondary to the state; the state was supreme. Therefore, an irrepressible conflict was in the making between the governors and the governed. The Jews considered the Romans not only as destroyers of their political independence but also as oppressors of their religion" (Zeitlin, page 54).

When Emperor-Worship was required and YHWY-Worship forbidden, fuel was added which made for an inescapable explosion. Upon his death, the Senate declared Augustus a god and divine honors began to be paid to him. "Temples were erected in his honor, and he was

worshipped as a god ... The practice was adopted for the successors of Augustus, and this worship of dead emperors soon became the most general and widespread religious rite in the Roman world, as well as a mighty bond of union (West, Willis Mason, *The Ancient World*, (Boston and Chicago: Allyn and Bacon, 1904), Sec. 476, page 403). It appears that all the nations subject to the Romans placed the images of Caesar in their cities and temples among the rest of the gods (Josephus, *Wars*, 2,10,3; Apion, 2,6.). Only the Jews refused to acknowledge his deity, even though they did offer two sacrifices daily in the temple to his honor.

The Jews did not purposely antagonize the Romans, but they did not tolerate interference with their religion! This is why the coming of Christ caught the Jews in a dilemma. If they accepted Him as the promised **King**, they would have found themselves in conflict with the ideologies of the Romans. If they had believed on Him as the promised **Savior**, they would have found themselves in conflict with their own ideologies - their own concepts of the teaching of the Law and the prophets. Their thinking is reflected by the council called to consider the question of what to do with Jesus. They said, "'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation'" (John 11:47-48). The High Priest, Caiaphas, who was also aligned with the Romans, said, "'You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish'" (John 11:49-50). Thus the death of Christ became both a political necessity and a religious expedient to the Jewish leaders.

During the reigns of Claudius and Nero the procurators became more and more intolerant. The death of Caius and the appointment of Agrippa I by Claudius had momentarily forestalled the inevitable confrontation between the Jews and Romans, but the sudden death of Agrippa in AD 44 had returned the government of the province to the procurators, thereby reviving the remaining fires of revolt. "The appointment of Fadus kindled anew the flaming passions of the people against the Romans (Zeitlin, page 56.). Skirmishes between the Jews and Romans began to break out on many fronts. There were **wars and rumors of wars**. Even though procurators were changed, hostilities were not resolved. Each succeeding ruler was worse than his predecessor and the fires of rebellion and revolt grew hotter and hotter. Many **false Christs** came among the Jews. Theudas, the sons of Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:37), and an Egyptian (Acts 21:38) were such. All promised deliverance by the power of God, but they were repressed and

the Jews were left still oppressed as slaves of Rome. From AD 61 to 66 Judea was ruled by Festus, Albinus, and Florus. Each continued the wicked policies of Pilate and Felix as they plundered and punished every Jew in whom was found any spirit to seek liberation from the Romans. The last and worst of them was Florus whose apparent aim as procurator was to prod the Jews into a war with Rome (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20,11,1; *Wars*, 2,14,2.). Conditions degenerated until war broke out in AD 66.

The Roman-Jewish War

During the years preceding the war several companies of renegade Jews took it upon themselves to oppose the Romans and the Jews in favor of submission to Rome. Festus corrected many of these disturbances by destroying these small bands of rebels, but when Albinus became procurator, he plundered, raped and robbed the people until many other such seditions were again at work. Josephus tells us that he tolerated their tyranny, permitting them to plunder and rob the people of Jerusalem (Josephus, *Wars*, 2,14,1.). Florus, who succeeded Albinus, was the worst of all. He openly robbed the people, and permitted and encouraged others to do the same by agreeing with them to share the proceeds of the robberies (*Ibid.*, 2,14,2.). In April of AD 65, during the Passover, the Jews complained of the cruel oppressions of Florus before Cestius Gallus, president of Syria. Florus laughed at their words and tricked Gallus into continued trust in him, hoping to induce the Jews to rebel (*Ibid.*, 2,14,3.). A short time later Florus returned to Jerusalem with soldiers and without provocation sent them into the market-place to plunder and rob the people, and to slay everyone they met. Three thousand, six hundred died in the melee of whom a large number were Jews of the Equestrian order (*Ibid.*, 2,14,9.). It was during this time that Bernice, the sister of Agrippa II, king of Calchis, came to Jerusalem to worship and saw all of these atrocities. She begged Florus to abandon this maliciousness, but he refused. Continually he sought ways to provoke confrontations (*Ibid.*, 2,15,1-6.). Soon, thereafter, Agrippa came to Jerusalem and also observed the sad state of affairs with the Jews. He knew that unless there was a rapid change in their thinking they were set for war. He addressed them, seeking to cool their tempers and discourage their intention for war with Rome (*Ibid.*, 2,16,4.). He succeeded briefly but, when he sought to encourage the Jews to obey Florus, they were again incensed - this time at Agrippa - and cast him out of the city, some even stoning him (*Ibid.*, 2,17,1.).

The die was cast. War was inevitable. The Jews would not submit to Florus. Together a few of them assaulted and captured Masada, slaying the Romans therein. In August AD 66 Eleazar b. Ananias, the captain of the temple guard stopped the daily sacrifices offered for Caesar and the Roman people. Thus the course of open conflict with Rome was set.

Josephus tells us that the affairs of the Jews in every place were in a state of disaster. The inhabitants of the cities of the empire took up arms against the Jews and slew many thousands of them without mercy (*Ibid.*, 2,18,1-11.). Cestius Gallus moved on Jerusalem, besieged and would have taken it, "But," Josephus says, "it was, I suppose, owing to the aversion God had already at the city and the sanctuary, that he was hindered from putting an end to the war that very day" (*Ibid.*, 2,19,6.). Gallus withdrew from the city for no apparent reason when it could have been his for the taking (*Ibid.*, 2,19,7.). The seditious among the Jews took courage, attacked the retreating Romans, destroying a considerable number. In fact, their assault upon the Romans was so intense, they were able to capture most of their heavy war machines for future use against them (*Ibid.*, 2,19,7-9.). Perhaps Josephus was right. This aversion was of God. Jesus had said, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains," (Luke 21:20-21). **This was it!** God had provided the proper time for those watching the signs to escape from Jerusalem and Judea. The point in time was when both the Romans and the seditious Jews had fled the area. Both groups would have prevented anyone from leaving Jerusalem, but the occasion provided for them the very moment to escape the doomed city.

The defeat of Cestius Gallus came in early October of AD 66, and it was only a matter of days until the news had reached Nero, then in Greece. Understanding the magnitude of the problem existing in Judea, Nero directed Vespasian, his most able general, to take command of the operation against the Jews. Vespasian accepted the challenge, moved into Syria, and with the assistance of his son, Titus, mobilized an army of more than 60,000 men for the war (*Ibid.*, 3,4,2.).

In the meantime the Jews were arming themselves for war. Immediately after the defeat of Gallus, the seditious among the Jews cleansed their ranks of all persons sympathetic toward the Romans.

The first line of defense was to be Galilee, and Josephus, author of the history bearing his name, was selected to mobilize an army in Galilee. He gathered and trained for combat an army of more than 100,000 from which he chose his fighting army of more than 60,000. He strengthened the cities of Galilee with their walls and fortified them for the war. The whole nation looked to Josephus and his army in Galilee for defense against the Romans. If Galilee stood, Jerusalem would stand; if Galilee fell, the hope of the nation would fall with it.

The conflict began in the spring of AD 67 and by the fall of the same year all of Galilee had been subdued. Except for Josephus, the General, the Jewish army had been completely destroyed. Josephus surrendered to the Romans and later became an informant to them. The remaining Jews yet strong enough to resist the Romans fled to Jerusalem in force. There they awaited the final battle of the war - the battle for Jerusalem.

At this point, the state of affairs with the Jews was bad everywhere. Josephus says, "There were besides disorders and civil wars in every city; and all those that were at quiet from the Romans turned their hands one against another. There was also a bitter contest between those that were fond of war, and those that were desirous for peace. At the first this quarrelsome temper caught hold of private families, who could not agree among themselves; after which those people that were the dearest to one another brake through all restraints with regard to each other, and everyone associated with those of his own opinion, and began already to stand in opposition one to another; so that seditions arose everywhere, while those that were for innovations, and were desirous of war, by their youth and boldness, were too hard for the aged and prudent men. And, in the first place, all the people of every place betook themselves to robbery after which they got together in bodies in order to rob the people of the country, insomuch that for barbarity and iniquity those of the same nation did no way differ from the Romans than by themselves (*Ibid.*, 4,3, (cf. Matt. 24:10-12)).

These seditionists within a short time converged on Jerusalem from every place and continued their ravaging of the people there. The Herodian Party under the leadership of Annas, the High Priest, sought to quell the power of the Zealots but, after a vigorous struggle, the Zealots slaughtered the leaders of the Herodians and became rulers of the city. But the Zealots were divided also. They were divided into three warring factions: those under Eleazer, the leader of the first Zealot sedition; those under John of Gishcala; and those under Simon, leader of the Idumeans. Each of these men sought control of Jerusalem. They divided Jerusalem into three sections, each ruled by a different man. All were at war among themselves while they prepared for war with the Romans.

Meanwhile, Vespasian, who had been leisurely waiting for the Jews to destroy themselves (*Ibid.*, 4,6,2.), received word of disturbances in Gaul which forced him to seek a speedy end to the conflict. In the spring of AD 68 he swept through the regions north of Jerusalem while another section of his army subdued Perea. He then conquered the remaining regions and was about to lay siege to Jerusalem when word came that Nero was dead. Delaying his plan for taking Jerusalem and contemplating the future of the empire, Vespasian patiently awaited new orders concerning the Jews from the new government of Rome. For many months he waited. Disorders and uncertainties characterized the Capital city. Meanwhile, Vespasian's soldiers prevailed upon him to go to Rome and claim the empire for himself. Sending part of his army through Asia Minor and Greece to prepare the way for his ascension to the throne, he took the southern route through Egypt to Alexandria. Here he received news that Vitellius, the ruling emperor, had been slain. Vespasian at the insistence of his soldiers went to Rome where he was acclaimed emperor. Upon his acceptance of the throne, he directed his son Titus back to Palestine to complete the task of destroying Jerusalem and subduing the Jews. Titus returned to Caesarea. Having gathered an army of more than 80,000 men, he began to attack Jerusalem about the first of April, AD 70, during the feast of unleavened bread. The siege continued approximately five months and the city was completely destroyed by the middle of August, AD 70.

The deed was done. The city was wrecked beyond recognition. Jesus had said, "not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down" (Matt.24:2). Josephus says, "Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple ... It was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited." (*Ibid.*, 7.1.1.) Jerusalem had been **utterly destroyed** and Biblical Israel ceased to exist. Both head and heart perished. God had demonstrated that "the heavens still reign" (Rev. 11:15). **He had fulfilled every promise and carried out every threat!**

Conclusion

As we approach a discussion of the text of the Revelation it is hoped that the material covered in this introduction will be kept clear in the mind of every one of us. With this background, both the message and one's understanding of the message of the Apocalypse can be greatly simplified.