

Parousia

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The Prophetic Pillars of the Prewrath Position

PART 4:
God Almighty
Takes Back His
Rule of Earth
After the
Seventieth
Week of Daniel,
But Before
Armageddon

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The Fourth Prophetic Pillar:

GOD ALMIGHTY TAKES BACK HIS RULE OF EARTH AFTER THE SEVENTIETH WEEK, BUT BEFORE ARMAGEDDON

by Charles Cooper

Introduction

I returned home after a ten-day trip to India when my first child was eight months old. I was eager to get back home to see her, but she had trouble remembering me. As soon as I walked into the house, she screamed. She would not allow me to hold her or talk to her. She would not even look at me. It took several days for her to grow close to me again. Recently, after returning home from a ten-day trip, as I walked through the kitchen door, I heard a loud scream, “dah-dee!” Then came the sound of little feet running toward me. That same little girl had arms lifted high, a big smile on her face and all the evidence necessary that she had missed her dah-dee. I received a hug and big-fat-wet kissi-kissi. What a difference six months made! The first time she broke my heart. The last time she blessed my heart.

Having watched for twenty-five years the erosion of the Judeo-Christian values that formed the basis of these United States, I yearn for the “good old days.” Men have always sinned, but when caught, they usually admitted it and repented. Now we lie under oath and quibble about the definition of the word *is*. The years have shown that the time when the Christian’s God was honored in America has long since passed. Government and morals are decaying, and cities are increasingly engulfed in spiritual darkness. Bible teaching in the minds

of many is something that can be relativized and subjectivized and, where “necessary,” improved. Men say that the Bible is not God’s word, but rather the word of men.

In the West, we are for the most part, living in post-Christian secularism. In two-thirds of the world, it is the non-Christian faiths that are gaining converts. As these non-Christian religions take on new life and energy, some Christians are mesmerized by the thought that their first duty is to appreciate all that is good in them. We are to look for grounds of commonality and compromise for the good of humanity. We are to enter therefore into dialogue with the atheist, agnostic, and relativist for this compromised purpose and to postpone the evangelistic attempts until an appreciative dialogue is well established.

In light of the present situation, I hope you can understand my longing for *Abba* (dah-dee) to come home. God Almighty has promised to return to the earth to physically reclaim His rightful rule over creation. Scripture declares that “the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him (Dan. 7:27).” That which has remained beyond human reach—a perfect man in a perfect world—will then become reality.



The Problem

That God will one-day reclaim His rightful rule over the earth is well accepted in the evangelical community. However, the question concerning when God Almighty reclaims His rightful rule over the earth during the sequence of end-time events does not share a consensus. The timing of God's reclamation is *no small matter*. Two immediate problems arise when one fails to understand the timing of God's reclamation of the earth. Confusion about the sequence of end-time events in relationship to Daniel's Seventieth Week is the first problem. The second problem concerns the correct interpretation of the book of Revelation and its correlation with the seventh chapter of Daniel.

Revelation 11:15-18 is a critical text. Notice,

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time *came* for the dead to be judged, and *the time* [came] to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." (italics added)

The critical questions regarding this passage are these: (1) when will the events depicted in verses 15-18 actually take place, (2) what will be the sequence of those events, and (3) what is the relationship between the end-time sequence in Daniel 7 and the end-time sequence of Revelation 10-11?

David E. Aune, in his three-volume commentary, argues that the sequence of events in Revelation 11:18 "appears to be out of chronological order."¹ He insists that the "reign of God must be considered the closing act in [the] eschatological drama..."² Yet, in the book of Revelation, John lists the act of God's reclamation before Armageddon. Aune also indicates that "the eschatological events are all described... as though they were events of the *past*..."³ In other words, Aune feels that the events in Revelation 11:15-18 are described as if they have already happened, but in reality, they all happen later in the end-time sequence of the book of Revelation. Simply stated, Revelation 11:15-18 in Aune's view is a preview of what is to follow in chapters 12 through 22 of the book of Revelation.

Robert L. Thomas, in his two-volume commentary, concurs with Aune. Thomas states, "The replacement of the kingdom of the world... does not occur chronologically at this point in the series of visions."⁴ In his commentary on Revelation, Robert H. Mounce states this same opinion when he writes,

The declaration of triumph by the heavenly hosts (vs. 15) and the anthem of praise by the worshipping elders (vss. 17-18) introduce the great themes of the following chapters. The extensive use of the aorist tense conveys a sense of absolute cer-

tainty about the events yet to come... As the drama of the consummation moves toward the final scene, the host of heaven proclaim it *fait accompli*.⁵

Mounce's view is summarized in the phrase *fait accompli*. *Fait accompli* is a Latin expression defined by Webster's dictionary to mean "an accomplished and presumably irreversible deed or fact." John F. Walvoord, a premillennialist, agrees with Mounce, an amillennialist, on this point. Walvoord states,

The question that remains, however, is how can the kingdoms of the world become at this point the kingdoms of Christ when, as a matter of fact, the seven vials seemingly are still to be poured out? The answer as indicated previously seems to be that just as the seven trumpets are comprehended in the seventh seal so the seven vials are comprehended in the seventh trumpet. The process of destruction of earthly power is therefore already under way.⁶

One might be inclined to think that with such authors as Walvoord, Mounce, Aune and Thomas in agreement concerning problems with the chronology and timing of Revelation 11:15-18, the debate is settled. In contradistinction, however, the prewrath position would argue that Revelation 11:15-18 refers to the actual time when Almighty God reclaims His rightful rule over the earth. We would further argue that the sequence presented in Revelation 11:17-18 is the correct sequence of events following the sounding of the seventh trumpet and lastly that the timing of God's reclamation in Daniel seven harmonizes perfectly with the timing of God's reclamation in Revelation eleven. The remainder of this article will prove these conclusions.

AN OVERVIEW OF DANIEL 7 AND REVELATION 10-11

An Overview of Daniel 7

Few conservative evangelicals would debate that Daniel "chapter 7... plays a key role in [one's] understanding of biblical eschatology."⁷ Daniel 7 and the Revelation follow a similar format in presenting the end-time sequence. First, a general overview of the end times is given (Dan. 7:1-14 and Rev. 6:1-11:18). Following the general overview, a detailed presentation of Antichrist, and his campaign of terror against God's "saints" is presented (Dan. 7:15-27 and Rev. 11:19-13:18). The end-time sequence concludes with a presentation of God's wrath (the Day of the Lord). Daniel 7 focuses on the consummation of God's wrath, which includes the destruction of Antichrist and the establishment of the Son of Man's kingdom (Dan. 7:26-27). The Revelation concludes with the judgment of Antichrist and his kingdom (Rev. 14:1-19:21) with the millennial kingdom and a new heaven and earth rounding out the sequence (Rev. 20:1-22:21).

A closer examination of Daniel 7 reveals the exact timing of God's reclamation of the earth during the end times. Daniel 7:1-14 depicts human history following a pre-ordained sequence. First, four beasts (king and empire) would arise out of the sea (Dan. 7:3, 17, 23). The fourth and final beast with ten horns would rise from the sea (Dan.

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7:7). After the ten horn kingdom arrives, a small horn will arise, subdue three of the original ten horns (kingdoms) and begin persecuting the saints (Dan. 7:8, 21). During the little horn's persecution of the saints, the "Ancient of Days" will take his seat on a great throne (Dan. 7:9-11) and the little horn's dominion will be taken away and destroyed forever (Dan. 7:11, 26). After the destruction of the little horn, "One like a Son of Man" will receive a kingdom and the "saints of the Highest One" will reign upon the earth (7:13, 26). Daniel clearly indicates that the Ancient of Days (God the Father) will take his seat before Antichrist is destroyed (7:9-10, 26).

An Overview of Revelation 10-11

The timing of God's reclamation found in Daniel 7 can be found in Revelation 10-11. Revelation 10 opens with "another strong angel coming down out of heaven."⁸ The first "strong angel" appears in Revelation 5:2 in connection with the first scroll and proclaims with a loud voice the question, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" The second "strong angel" appears in Revelation 10:1 in connection with the anticipated opening of the second scroll and proclaims with a loud voice an unrecorded message. John is not permitted to record the first statement of the "second strong angel," but is permitted to record his second statement, which is the cessation of a delay and the completion of the mystery of God.

John is then told to take the scroll from the "strong angel" and eat it. The scroll was sweet to his taste, but bitter in his stomach. Chapter 10 concludes with a re-commissioning of John to prophesy concerning many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings. Revelation 11 begins with an explanation of the nature and time of ministry of the two witnesses and concludes with a description of God's reclamation of the earth. Revelation 11:15-18 declares that God Almighty will take back His rightful rule over the earth at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which is clearly before the destruction of Antichrist.

THE TEMPORAL SEQUENCE OF THE EVENTS OF REVELATION 10-11

This article asserts that the events depicted in Revelation 10-11 occur after the completion of Daniel's Seventieth Week and culminate with the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ.⁹ Based on Daniel 12:11-12, we believe seventy-five days transpire between the end of the Seventieth Week of Daniel and the beginning of the millennial Kingdom. Revelation 10-11 focuses specifically upon the events that constitute the first thirty days of this seventy-five-day period.

How the Seventieth Week of Daniel and the seventy-five days that immediately follow it correlate with the content of the Lord's Revelation to John is an important question. Perhaps no aspect of the interpretation of the book of Revelation is more difficult to grasp than understanding the temporal sequence, a reference to the timeframe during which the events depicted in the Revelation will occur. Having previously argued in the first prophetic pillar of the prewrath position that the Seventieth Week of Daniel is yet future,¹⁰ we believe that the events depicted in Revelation 6 through 9 cover the entire seven-year period. In fact, we understand Daniel's Seventieth Week to conclude

with the sixth trumpet judgment detailed in Revelation 9:13-19. It is during the first thirty days of the seventy-five days (that immediately follow the conclusion of the Seventieth Week) that God will take back His rightful rule over earth, secure the salvation of national Israel, reward the righteous in heaven and punish the murderous living earth-dwellers. The evidence that the timing of the events of Revelation 10-11 coincide with the completion of Daniel's Seventieth Week and initiation of the seventy-five days that immediately follow it rests on the following proofs.

PROOFS FOR THE TIMING OF REVELATION 10 AND 11

The Strategic Placement of the Three Woes

The first proof that the timing of the events of Revelation 10-11 coincides with the completion of Daniel's Seventieth Week (which initiates the seventy-five days that immediately follow it) is the strategic placement of the three *woes*. The three woes, first referenced in Revelation 8:13, establish a very important sequential marker in the Revelation. The first four trumpets and the final three trumpets are significantly different. There is a marked degree of difference in the intensity between the first four trumpets and the final three trumpets. The first four trumpet judgments affect a third of nature (earth, salt water, fresh water, and stars) the final three trumpet judgments focus on mankind. The fifth trumpet, which is the first woe, torments without killing mankind in general for five months. The sixth trumpet, which is the second woe, kills a third of mankind. The seventh trumpet, which is the third woe, consists of seven bowls that directly punishes, but not exclusively,¹¹ Antichrist, his kingdom, and his stamped followers (the living earth-dwellers).

The placement of the three woes establishes a very important fact: the first six seals do not correspond equally to the first six trumpets nor to the first six bowls. The fact that the completion of woes one and two follows trumpets five and six, respectively, clearly and unmistakably demands a chronological sequence to the seals, trumpets, and bowls. The seventh seal inaugurates the seven trumpets. The seventh trumpet inaugurates the seven bowls. The intensity of God's wrath demonstrated in the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets is unparalleled in the first six seals and the first four trumpets. Therefore, the clear dissimilarity between the seals, trumpets, and bowls demonstrates that they are not coincidental and in fact proves them to be chronological in sequence.

The Significance of the Three Woes

If, in fact, the seals, trumpets, and bowls are sequential then the seventh trumpet must stand outside the Seventieth Week of Daniel. The completion of the second woe is pronounced just after the death and resurrection of the two witnesses. Revelation 11:3 indicates that the ministry of the two witnesses lasts for one thousand two hundred and sixty days or the equivalent of three and a half prophetic years of 360 days, which is 42 months. Therefore, the three and a half-year ministry of the two witnesses might start at the beginning, during or at the middle of Daniel's Seventieth Week.

The pronouncement that “the second woe is past” (Rev. 11:14) immediately following the ministry of the two witnesses argues against starting the ministry of the two witnesses at the beginning of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. The reason being that the three and a half-year ministry of the two witnesses would have to transpire between woes one and two, therefore causing the events depicted in the seals to transpire before Daniel’s Seventieth Week even begins. Another alternative would be to run the seals and trumpets concurrently. However, this approach robs the Revelation of any chronological development. Equally, starting the ministry of the two witnesses at some point during the first half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week is unattractive. This approach would demand that some of the seals must occur before Daniel’s Seventieth Week begins or that the seals and the first four trumpets occur in rapid succession or overlap. This would demand that the third woe, which consists of the seven bowls, cover the remaining time left in Daniel’s Seventieth Week. Such conclusions create more problems than they solve.

The prophet Daniel indicates that the beast does not turn hostile against the Jews until the midpoint of Daniel’s Seventieth Week (9:27). If the two witnesses prophesy during the first three and a half years, it would be very difficult to explain why the Jews would be caught off guard when the Abomination of Desolation occurs. Surely, the two witnesses would have warned the people of this great event yet to come. The only logical conclusion is that the two witnesses must prophesy during the second three and a half-year period.¹² Therefore, the seven-year period known as Daniel’s Seventieth Week must conclude with the death of the two witnesses. Consequently, the sounding of the seventh and final trumpet must stand outside the Seventieth Week during the seventy-five days that immediately follow it.

The Unique Length of the Ministry of the Two Witnesses¹³

The unique length of the two witnesses’ ministry is our third proof that Revelation 10-11 coincides with the end of Daniel’s Seventieth Week and the beginning of the seventy-five day period that immediately follows it. God states in Revelation 11:3 that He would “grant authority to my two witnesses and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days...” Twelve hundred and sixty days is equal to forty-two months, three and a half years or “time, times, and half a time.” These particular time references are explicitly identified only in the books of Daniel and Revelation.¹⁴ In every case, the same prophetic period is indicated—the second half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week (Dan. 9:27). Daniel 7:25, 12:7 and Revelation 13:5 indicate that “time, times and half a time” or “forty-two months” is the amount of time given to Antichrist to persecute the saints of God. Daniel 9:27 indicates that Antichrist will have half a week, which is three and half years, to persecute the people of God. Revelation 12:6 and 14 indicate that “twelve hundred and sixty days” or “time, times, and half a time” is the amount of time God will protect “the woman” in the wilderness from Antichrist’s persecution. There is no significant debate, among those who hold to the futurity of Daniel’s last week of prophecy, that the six references above refer to the second half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. Revelation 11:3 is the seventh explicit reference to a three and a half year period in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The burden

of proof that Revelation 11:3 does not refer to the second half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week lies with those who would argue differently. This question might have been left in the unsolvable category if it were not for the three woes. The strategic placement of the ministry of the two witnesses between woes one and two prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the ministry of the two witness must occur during the second half of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. The death of the two witnesses coincides with the end of the Seventieth Week and initiates the final phase (God’s reclamation of earth) of the end times.

The Termination of the Gentile Dominance over Jerusalem

The fourth proof concerns the issue of Gentile dominance over Jerusalem. Revelation 11:2 states that the “court which is outside the temple... has been given to the nations [Gentiles]; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.” This is the eighth and final reference to a three and half year period in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Here, we are given the length of the dominance of Gentiles over Jerusalem.

However, this cannot be the total time of Gentile dominance over Jerusalem. Daniel 9:24 indicates that Gentile dominance over Israel and Jerusalem would continue for 490 years. Luke 21:24 states that Gentile dominance over Israel and Jerusalem would continue “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Therefore, the Seventieth Week of Daniel (the final seven years of Israel’s initial 490-year prophetic delay) and the “times of the Gentiles” must end at the same time. Revelation 11 indicates that that end occurs between trumpets six and seven.

The Delay Ended and the Mystery of God Completed

The fifth proof that the timing of the events of Revelation 10-11 coincides with the completion of Daniel’s Seventieth Week (initiating the seventy-five days that immediately follow it) concerns the termination of God’s delay in punishing “those who dwell upon the earth” and the completion of the mystery of God. The strong angel who comes down from heaven immediately following the events of the sixth trumpet announces “there will be delay no longer” (Rev. 10:6b).¹⁵ There is debate about the meaning of the term *χρονος* (*chronos*) translated *delay* in the New American Standard Bible. The choice is either *time stops*, *time is up*, or *delay*. Some church fathers from the third century onward incorrectly understood the meaning to be the cessation of time in general. However, this view makes no sense in light of the fact that the seven bowl judgments, Armageddon, and the millennial reign of Christ follow the sixth trumpet. Time does not stop! A simple announcement that *time is up* and the final eschatological events are beginning does not have much validity given that the seals and the first six trumpet judgments precede the announcement. One would have expected such an announcement much earlier in the book if that were the correct understanding of *chronos*. Most commentators agree that *chronos* means *delay* in Revelation 10:6b, however, there is no consensus about what was delayed.

Robert L. Thomas indicates that Revelation 10:6b is the termination of the delay announced by God to the fifth seal martyrs of Revelation 6:9-11.¹⁶ This author agrees. The fifth seal martyrs ques-

tioned God about His “judging and avenging” their deaths. The martyrs’ question focused on the judgment of “those who dwell on the earth.”¹⁷ This phrase is a technical term in the book of Revelation that is “always [used] in the negative sense of non-Christian persecutors of Christians.”¹⁸ Specifically, they are the living worshipers of the Beast who persecute the righteous up to and including death. These living earth-dwellers who are responsible for the death of the martyrs who are under God’s altar also wonder at the wound of the beast, celebrate the death of the two witnesses, and have their punishment first delayed and then delivered after the sounding of the seventh trumpet.¹⁹

That the bowl judgments follow the blowing of the seventh trumpet, which follows the angelic announcement of the termination of the delay of God’s avenging judgment against the murderous earth-dwellers is easily proven. The Greek word for *avenging* used in Revelation 6:10 also occurs in Revelation 19:2. There “a great multitude in heaven” three times shouts *Hallelujah* in praise to God, the Father, because “He has *judged*... and *avenged* the blood of His bond-servants on her (the great harlot).” (italics added) The judgment of “the great harlot” is the culmination of God’s judgment of Antichrist and his programs just before Armageddon. Bowls one through five are directed specifically upon Antichrist, his kingdom, and those who take his mark or worship his image.²⁰ The specific judgment of “the great harlot” is first alluded to in the seventh bowl (Rev. 16:19) and detailed in Revelation 17 and 18. The bowls are clearly defined as the final wrath of God (Rev. 15:1).

Revelation 6:11 indicates that the reason a delay of God’s punishment of the living earth-dwellers remains in affect at the fifth seal is because the number of martyrs to be killed is not yet complete. The language clearly and incontrovertibly indicates that God has a “pre-determined number” of believers who will die before it will be time to “avenge [their] blood on those who dwell on the earth.” Therefore, the death of the martyrs is part of a divine plan. What plan or program of God is so important that it includes the death of some of God’s faithful servants?

The Completion of the Mystery of God

Revelation 10:6-7 gives us the answer. It says, “...there will be delay no longer...then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.” This is the reason. The completion of the mystery of God is necessary before God’s ultimate punishment of the living murderous earth-dwellers can take place. What, then, is the *mystery of God*? The answer to this question will prove that the sixth trumpet concludes the Seventieth Week of Daniel and inaugurates the seventy-five days that immediately follow.

The Greek phrase το μυστηριον του θεου (the mystery of God) occurs three times in the Greek New Testament.²¹ The most important passage is Colossians 2:2 because there the apostle Paul defines *the mystery of God*. However, is the phrase *the mystery of God*, as used by Paul, referring to the same thing that the apostle John is referring to in the Revelation? A careful investigation reveals a positive affirmation.

In Colossians 1:24-2:2, the apostle Paul writes,

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions. Of *this church* I was made a minister... so that I might fully carry out the *preaching* of the word of God, *that is*, the mystery [of God] which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery [of God] among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him... so that we may present every man complete in Christ... For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf... that [your] hearts may be encouraged... *resulting* in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, *that is*, Christ *Himself*... (italics added)

In Colossians 1:26, Paul declares the Word of God, which he preaches, to be a mystery. “This mystery is so rich with glory that God desired to make it known to the saints (1:27).”²² He states, “the mystery is, *Christ in you* (Gentiles), *the hope of glory*.” Again in Colossians 2:2c, Paul states that Jesus Christ is the mystery of God. An obvious question concerns whether these two occurrences refer to the same thing. The context indicates that Jesus Christ is the primary focus of the first two chapters of Colossians. His special work among Gentiles is Paul’s primary concern. The particular passage quoted above could be summarized as follows: Paul preaches Christ among the Gentiles because God has a plan to present many Gentiles in glory when Christ returns. So, the mystery of God is God’s special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory. The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 1:9-10, “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” (NIV) When the mystery of God (God’s special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory) is finished, then God will bring “all things in heaven and on earth together under one head.”

Acts 15:14-16 states that “God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name,” and “after these things, I will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David...” This passage establishes a very important connection between God’s special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory and Israel’s restoration. Similarly, Romans 11:25b-26 states that the mystery of Israel’s partial hardening will continue “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved...”²³ This passage highlights two facts. First, God has determined a specific number of Gentiles to be saved,²⁴ and second, the completion of the salvation of the Gentiles will lead to Israel’s salvation.

However, because of Daniel 9:24, we know that the salvation of national Israel cannot occur until the completion of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. The 490-year plus delay that Israel is currently suffering under will be removed at the end of Daniel’s Seventieth Week, which coincides with God’s removal of Gentile dominance over Israel and Jerusalem.

Therefore, the mystery of Israel’s partial hardening and the mystery

of God (God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory) are intricately tied together, one directly affecting the other. Once God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory is finished God extends salvation to national Israel. Therefore, the sixth trumpet must end the Seventieth Week of Daniel, which coincides with the completion of the mystery of God, which initiates the events that constitute the seventy-five day period that immediately follows Daniel's Seventieth Week. With the completion of God's mystery (God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory) will come the salvation of national Israel, God's rule over physical earth reclaimed, and consequently, the cessation of the delay of God's judgment of the living earth-dwellers.

Scripture indicates a difference in the timing of the Rapture and the timing of the completion of the mystery of God. The completion of the mysteries of God, both God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory and the removal of Israel's blindness, occurs after the sixth trumpet, but before the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The sixth trumpet therefore finishes the mystery of God (Rev. 10:7). The seventh trumpet *finishes* the wrath of God (Rev. 15:1). The Rapture occurs after the sixth seal,²⁵ but before the breaking of the seventh seal. The sixth seal is the sign signaling the beginning of the eschatological Day of the Lord spoken of by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:29-31. The seventh seal *begins* the wrath of God. If the mystery of God is God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory, and if the Rapture follows the events of the sixth seal as taught by Jesus and Paul and John, then two questions come to mind. First, why does the mystery of God not end with the Rapture and second, why does God allow some believers to be killed after the Rapture?

The reason the mystery of God (God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory) does not end with the Rapture is twofold. First, there is no explicit scriptural promise or intimation that God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory must end with the Rapture. Jesus clearly indicates that there will be conversions subsequent to the Rapture as indicated in the sheep and goat judgment of Matthew 25:31 that immediately precedes the beginning of the millennial kingdom. God's continual work of "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14)" must be included in the "fullness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:25-26) because Scripture indicates that these believers *inherit* (Matt. 25:34) and *reign* (Rev. 20:4) with Christ in His kingdom. The sheep of the "sheep and goat judgment" must be Gentiles saved after the Rapture, including those alive (Matt. 25:32) and those dead (Rev. 20:4), since by the time the sheep and goat judgment begins all surviving Jews have been judged and saved.

The second reason the mystery of God does not end with the Rapture is because God must remain faithful to His word. Two prophecies come to mind. First, the Rapture must occur *before* the commencing of the Day of the Lord (God's wrath, 1 Thess. 5:9). Second, Daniel 7:25 and 9:27 indicate that the persecution by Antichrist of the "saints" is three and a half years in length. The Lord Jesus indicates in Matthew 24:22 that the persecution by Satan/Antichrist of God's elect will be cut short. If God had not cut short the persecution by Satan/Antichrist, "no life [of the elect] would have been saved (physically delivered)..." God will remove the current object of

Satan/Antichrist's persecution (the elect), but will allow Satan's authority to persecute any/all resisters to his authority until the end of the three and a half years (originally promised in Dan. 9:27, Rev. 12:12 and 13:5). Therefore, in order to show mercy to His elect and to remain faithful to His word, God removes the persecuted believers before they are completely annihilated, but allows the persecutor to continue until his appointed end.

Those saved after the Rapture will not experience God's wrath just as those before the coming of God's wrath will not experience it (Rev. 9:4). However, those saved after the Rapture will continue to face the persecution of Antichrist just as each generation saved before the Rapture potentially might face it. The possibility of death faces both groups. Revelation 20:4 indicates a resurrection of beheaded martyrs near the beginning of the Millennium. John writes,

Then I saw thrones, they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

This passage indicates that John saw two groups in this important vision. One group consists of those seated on thrones with a judging responsibility. This group is the raptured saints who have been resurrected, judged, and rewarded.²⁶ John describes a second group. This group has not been resurrected, judged, and rewarded. He sees the "souls" of beheaded followers of Christ. This special group of martyrs must have been killed after the Rapture or they would have been taken with the rest of the living and dead saints who rise at the Rapture as revealed through Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

While the martyrs of the fifth seal cannot be limited to the period of persecution by Satan/Antichrist, which occurs following "the abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15) and up to the Rapture, the martyrs of Revelation 20:4 must be limited to that period of time subsequent to the Rapture and up to Armageddon. These martyrs are specifically identified as "those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand..." This places them clearly within the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week and the fact that they are not taken at the Rapture demands that they are killed after the Rapture occurs.

This group of martyrs is further limited by the classification "beheaded." Unlike the martyrs of Revelation 6:9 who were slain in various ways,²⁷ the martyrs of Revelation 20:4 are specifically identified as *beheaded*. We know that some Gentiles will trust and follow Christ after the Rapture or there would be no need for the "sheep and goat" judgment (Matt. 25:31 ff.) immediately preceding the beginning of the Millennium. After the Rapture and up to the salvation of Israel which immediately follows the Seventieth Week (Dan. 9:24-27), there will be many opportunities for Gentile believers to risk their lives to help Jews who are hungry, thirsty, naked, and imprisoned.²⁸ Some will be killed and others will not, but both will be rewarded at the "sheep and goat" judgment.

With the completion of God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory, which coincides with the completion of the Seventieth Week of Daniel, comes the salvation of Israel as taught by the apostle Paul in Romans 11:25-27. God, then, reclaims His rightful rule over the earth and begins the final events of the consummation, not the least of which involves his punishment of Antichrist, the false prophet and the murderous living earth-dwellers.

GOD'S RECLAMATION OF THE EARTH

Revelation 11:15 opens with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. "Loud voices in heaven" proclaim, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." Israel (the nation), thus far, has waited nearly four thousand years to hear those words. The church has waited nearly two thousand years. God Almighty has taken back His rightful rule over physical earth. That Revelation 11:15 describes the actual event of God's reclamation of the earth from Satan to Himself immediately following the conclusion of the Seventieth Week of Daniel is supported by the following facts.

First, the construction of the Greek language in Revelation 11:15 signals the beginning of God's physical reign over the earth. The correct interpretation of the verb *has come* is a matter of debate. David E. Aune writes for the majority opinion when he states,

Although εφωδνετο (has come) is an aorist and therefore refers to God's assumption of kingship as a fact of the past, the context makes it clear that εφωδνετο is used proleptically,²⁹ like the *perfectum propheticum*, "prophetic perfect," of a future event that prophetic certainty speaks of as an event of the past...³⁰

However, Aune's designation of the aorist here, as an example of a proleptic aorist, is not correct. A proleptic aorist describes "an event that is not yet past as though it were already completed." For example, when the final payment is due on your car loan, you write the check and mail it. You might say to yourself, "It feels so good to pay that car off!" Now the check still has to reach the creditor, be cashed and the final paper work finished, but you speak of it as paid in full. This is the sense of the proleptic aorist.

The aorist tense, in and of itself, says nothing about the time of an event, but merely states the "fact of the event."³¹ The use of the aorist tense in Revelation 11:15 gives no clue concerning when the event of God's reclamation of the earth occurs in the sequence of end-time events.

The notion of time, when considering the aorist, must be determined from the context and the kind of the verb that is used. The verb *has become* (NASB) is εφωδνετο, the aorist form of γινωμομα (*ginomai*), which is a stative (a state) verb and means *to become, to be, to be born or to be created*. The fact that a stative verb is used argues for the ingressive use of the aorist tense instead of the proleptic usage. Not only does the rarity of the proleptic use in the New Testament argue against understanding εφωδνετο as proleptic in Revelation 11:15, but the relative abundance of the ingressive use of the aorist with sta-

tive verbs in the New Testament argues for the ingressive understanding. In addition, the aorist tense is the predominant tense used with stative verbs when the stress is on entrance into a state.³² At the heart of this verb is the notion of change. To become something, by definition, means that a change has occurred. In Revelation 11:15, the change involves a transfer of "the kingdom of this world" from Satan (2 Cor. 4:4) to "our Lord and of His Christ." The emphasis is on the entrance into a state rather than a preview of what is to come or an event that has occurred in the past.

Further support for this conclusion follows in Revelation 11:17. Immediately following the "loud voices in heaven" proclaiming God's reclamation of earth, the twenty-four elders break forth in hymn. The elders proclaim, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were..." The reason the elders give thanks to God, the Father is "because You (God, the Father) have taken Your great power and have begun to reign." As reflected in the New American Standard Bible, the emphasis of the verb is ingressive. The elders are thankful for an event that has just transpired.

Second, the context of Revelation 11:15 argues for the actual physical reclamation of earth to God immediately following the conclusion of the Seventieth Week. The pronouncement of the completion of the second woe in Revelation 11:14 signals the beginning of the third and final woe. As with the beginning of the first and second woes, only the sounding of the respective trumpets is given. There is no textual evidence that the woe has begun. We are only told that the first woe has ended in Revelation 9:12 and that the second woe in 11:14 "is past." Therefore, we must conclude that Revelation 11:15 is the beginning of the third woe, just as Revelation 9:13 is the beginning of the second woe and Revelation 9:1 is the beginning of the first woe. We must also conclude that God's reclamation of the earth is the very first event of the third woe. John is not offering a preview of events to come, rather, he is indicating the actual event that begins the third and final woe upon "those who dwell on the earth."

Third, the content of Revelation 11:18 argues that the physical reclamation of earth by God immediately follows the Seventieth Week. The hymn of the elders contains six proofs of God's reclamation of the earth.

First Proof: A Direct Statement

The first evidence of God's physical reign on earth is the direct statement by the elders—"You have taken Your great power and begun to reign." Taken at face value the elders proclaim a fact.³³ Since God has always been the King of the universe (Ps. 93:1, 96:10, and 97:1), this can only refer to the Lord's kingship becoming effective over the earth, a post temporarily usurped by Satan (Col. 1:13).

Second Proof: The Hostile Response of the Nations

The second evidence of God's reclamation of the earth is the hostile response of the nations. The relationship between Revelation 11:17 and 18 is not certain. The grammar does not indicate whether verse 18 is a continuation of verse 17 or a divinely revealed comment by John. However, there is biblical evidence that when God Almighty and His Messiah's reign begin on earth, the nations respond with hostility.

ty. Psalm 2 prophetically indicates as much. Focusing on “God’s universal reign,” Psalm 2 offers Davidic kingship as “a prototype of the expected messianic kingship at the end of times, when the reign of God will be established in the whole world.”³⁴ Psalm 2 records the hostile response of the nations, “Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!” (Ps. 2:3) In the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) Psalm 99:1 states, “The Lord has begun to reign; the people are enraged.” In both passages, a relationship is established between the beginning of God’s reign on the earth and the hostile response of the nations.

Third Proof: The Wrath of God Comes

The third evidence of God’s reclamation of the earth is His wrath against the wicked. God responds to the hostility of the nations with His own hostility. The Revelation indicates “Thy (God’s) wrath came” (Rev. 11:18a). Given the nature of the fifth and sixth trumpets, this reference to the wrath of God coming focuses on its consummation. This is confirmed in Revelation 16:1-17. There the writer indicates that the seven bowl judgments, which are the contents of the seventh trumpet, is the end of the wrath of God.

Fourth Proof: The Time to Judge the Righteous Dead Comes

The fourth evidence of God’s reclamation of the earth is the judgment of the dead. Revelation 11:18 states, “and the time *came* for the dead to be judged...” The most obvious question at this point is whether the dead refers to the righteous dead, the wicked dead, or both. Maintaining the sequence of Revelation demands that this reference to the judgment of the dead must refer to the righteous dead. Revelation 20:11-15 indicates that the wicked dead will not be judged until the end of the millennial reign of Christ. However, the rewarding of the righteous dead then must precede the battle of Armageddon.

Fifth Proof: The Time to Reward the Faithful Comes

The fifth evidence of God’s reclamation of the earth is the rewarding of the faithful. Revelation 11:18d states, “and [the time came] to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great...” The first issue of concern regarding this passage is the number of groups referred to here. The Greek literally says, “and to give the reward to the slaves of you to the prophets and to the holy ones and to the ones who fear the name of you, the small and the great.” This author agrees with Robert H. Mounce who writes, “A reasonable translation would be, “To your servants the prophets, and to the saints—those who fear thy name, both small and great.”³⁵ Consistent with the whole of the book of Revelation, this maintains two groups of believers—prophets and saints.³⁶ Prophets and saints are further defined as those who fear or reverence the name of the God, both the small and great, which is a figure of speech that means *everyone*.

Sixth Proof: The Time to Destroy the Destroyers Came

The sixth and final evidence of God’s reclamation of the earth is the destruction of the destroyers of the earth. Notice Revelation 11:18, “and [the time came] to destroy those who destroy the earth.” A real

question looms concerning who the *destroyers* are. The verb literally means, “to destroy utterly,” but it also has figurative meaning, which is “to deprave, or ruin morally.”³⁷ Aune argues that, in a play on words, both the literal and figurative meaning is intended, i.e. that God will physically destroy those who have morally depraved the earth.³⁸ This author is inclined to agree with Aune, particularly given that Revelation 19:2 identifies the “great harlot” as one “who was corrupting the earth with her immorality.”³⁹ The destruction of the Beast, the false prophet, and the living earth-dwellers is the focus of the bowl judgments as He promised in Revelation 6:9-11 that takes place immediately following God’s reclamation of the earth. These are the destroyers of the earth.

CONCLUSION

When God reclaims His rightful rule over the earth, after the Seventieth Week of Daniel is complete, which was delayed by God’s special work in Christ among the Gentiles, and after the salvation of the nation of Israel has occurred, then God will punish the living earth-dwellers in the bowl judgments. The bowl judgments will fall upon Antichrist, his kingdom, and all those who receive his mark or worship him. Those martyrs under the altar of God who were told to “rest for a little while longer” will finally see justice done. God’s punishment of the earth-dwellers will be the most dreadful demonstration of God’s wrath the world will ever see. It will culminate with the long anticipated battle of Armageddon, which we shall look at in detail in the fifth and final pillar of the prewrath position in our next issue of *Parousia*. ■

ENDNOTES

1. David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, Vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1998) 636.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, 637
4. Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995) 106.
5. R.H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, in NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977) 230.
6. J.F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989) 184.
7. Richard D. Patterson, “The Key Role of Daniel 7”, *GTJ* 12 (Fall, 1991) 246.
8. The identity of the strong angel cannot be dogmatically asserted. Robert Van Kampen in his book, *The Sign*, argues that Jesus Christ is “the strong angel.”
9. The only exception to this claim is the ministry of the two witnesses, which concludes the Seventieth Week. The significance of its placement in Revelation 11 is its overlap with the second woe, which is the sixth trumpet judgment.
10. Please refer to *Parousia*, issue number 11 for a defense of the futurity of the Seventieth Week of Daniel.
11. Given the sheep and goat judgment that follows the battle of Armageddon, every single person does not worship Antichrist or take his mark. Every single person certainly will not trust Christ as savior. Therefore, there will be some people on the earth who are not believers and yet are not worshippers of Antichrist.
12. Some might be tempted to argue that the ministry of the two witnesses overlaps the midpoint of Daniel’s Seventieth Week. However, the

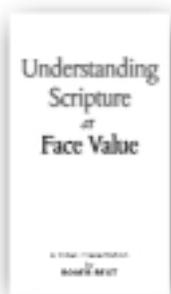
consistent use of time, times and half a time, one thousand two hundred and sixty days, and forty-two months in both Daniel and Revelation refer to the first or second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week. The burden of proof lies with those who would insist upon the overlap of the witnesses' ministry.

13. The importance of chapter 10 in Revelation must not be under-appreciated. This chapter indicates that a second major phase of the end-time sequence is initiated. It might first appear odd that John would discuss the ministry of the two witnesses and God's reclamation of the earth at this point in the sequence of the Revelation. However, this concern is removed when one understands that the ministry of the two witnesses connects the first phase of the end times (Daniel's Seventieth Week) with the second phase of the end times (the seventy-five days that immediately follow the Seventieth Week of Daniel). The connection is seen in the fact that the witnesses are killed on the last day of the Daniel's Seventieth Week and are raised up to heaven three and a half days later at the beginning of the seventy-five day period that immediately follows it (Rev. 11:11).
14. Time, times and half a time: Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Rev. 12:14; Twelve hundred and sixty days: Rev. 11:3 and 12:6; Forty-two months: Rev. 11:2 and 12:5.
15. The word *that* which appears in the NASB's translation is misleading. Since the Greeks did not use quotation marks to indicate a direct quote, it should not be included in the translation. Instead of quotation marks, the Greeks used the word οὐδὲν to indicate direct address.
16. R.L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995) 68.
17. This phrase occurs in Revelation 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10[twice]; 13:8, 14[twice]; 17:8. These are living earth-dwellers that oppose God and support Antichrist.
18. David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, Vol. 52A, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1997) 240.
19. The martyr's question and angelic promise of Revelation 10:7 should settle the debate concerning whether the first six seals are the wrath of God. The only logical conclusion is that God's "judging and avenging" of the martyrs has not begun by the fifth seal.
20. The first bowl specifically names "those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image" as its target. The second and third angels strike both salt and fresh-water sources, which "an angel of the waters" indicates is justifiable repayment of the murdering living earth-dwellers. The fourth angel scorches "the men" (living earth-dwellers) with fire. The fifth angel punishes the beast's kingdom with darkness, which results in great pain.

21. There is debate about the correct reading in I Corinthians 2:1. We will concern ourselves with Colossians 2:2 for the moment.
22. *Ibid.*, 232
23. See *Parousia*, issue number 14, for a detailed discussion of this passage.
24. See a defense of this position in the previous issue of *Parousia*.
25. For a defense of this position, please see *Parousia*, issue number 13.
26. This group cannot be the twenty-four elders. See a defense of this position in Jack S. Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," *BSac* 135 (January '78) 72.
27. The particular term in Revelation 5:9 is used to describe the death of Abel (1 John 3:12), Christ (Rev.5:6), and the death of all believers killed upon the earth. Clearly, the term used in Revelation 5:9 covers all methods of putting one to death. However, the term used in Revelation 20:4 is limited to only one method of death—beheading. A face value interpretation demands that these martyrs died by being beheaded only.
28. Matthew 25:32 indicates that the "sheep and goat" judgment concerns "all the nations." The fact that three groups are mentioned (Sheep, goat and my brethren) demands that the nations refer to gentiles. Logic requires that if the sheep are the righteous then "my brethren" must refer to a group not included in the righteous. "My brethren" could be used in a spiritual sense (believers) or in a physical sense (Jewish brothers). Given that the salvation of Israel occurs before the battle of Armageddon and the sheep and goat judgment occurs after Armageddon, then "my brethren" must be Jewish brothers in a physical sense.
29. For more information on this matter, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Raids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) 563.
30. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 638.
31. Charles R. Smith, "Errant Aorist Interpreters," *GTJ* 2 (Fall, 1981) 208.
32. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 558.
33. The use of the perfect tense along with the aorist argues strongly for an accomplished fact, which hastens the initiation of God's reign upon the earth.
34. Leopold Sabourin, S.J., *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* (New York: Alba House, 1974) 338-339.
35. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977) 232.
36. Revelation 16:6 refers to saints and prophets. Revelation 18:24 refers to prophets and saints. Both the prophets (Rev. 10:7) and the saints (Rev. 2:20) are described as bondservants.
37. BADG, διαφθειρω
38. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 646.
39. The same Greek root word is used.

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Thank You, Roger Best

Eight years have come and gone since Robert Van Kampen and Roger Best first launched **The Sign Ministries**. In the early years, Roger was The Sign Ministries—answering phone calls, writing letters, conducting conferences, and continuing to study and refine the prewrath understanding of Christ's return along with Mr. Van Kampen. Roger met with pastors and church leaders all over the United States. His home was his office as much as airports, planes, and hotels, and in those days, his wife Bertha was his secretary.

After many years of serving the Lord in the pastorate and then in the crowning work of his life with The Sign Ministries, Roger, continuing in good health, has stepped into retirement. The ministry today is due substantially to his love for the work, his commitment to the prewrath understanding of the end times, and his tireless efforts in teaching what the Scriptures say about the return of Christ. Thank you Roger for your

dedication and years of loving service! You will be missed.

Little did Roger and Mr. Van Kampen realize what the 800-number in the back of the book *The Sign* would produce. Since those early days, a teaching staff of three full-time individuals has joined the ministry as well as five full-time support staff. And today, an office complex in western Michigan is now home to the ministry.

Since 1992, the ministry has held conferences of one kind or another in thirty states and in over ten foreign countries. Today, the average volume of phone calls has grown from a handful to over 400 per month. And our growing quarterly newsletter, *Parousia*, is mailed to nearly 10,000 addresses. Pastors and congregational members continue to call us for clarification of prophetic passages and to purchase materials. We also receive invitations from around the world to present conferences and seminars and to address pas-



tors' gatherings. Whenever possible, we try to accommodate.

You are invited to send a personal note to Roger and Bertha here at the ministry and we will be more than happy to pass them on. And then, join us, won't you, in praying for The Sign Ministries and the staff as this ministry continues to move forward, that we will know the Lord's guidance in all we do and that we'll walk and work in His wisdom in this challenging hour of history.

Kenya Trip 2000

Ham jambo wote! In Swahili, that means, "Greetings to all of you!" The Sign Ministries completed another "first" during the month of May. Kenya Highlands Bible College in Kericho, Kenya, invited a ministry team to come and present the prewrath teaching of Christ's return to nearly 70 college students and staff May 22-28, 2000.

Charles Cooper and Bill Lee-Warner both addressed the college community during several chapel and classroom sessions. Additionally, opportunity was given to address the 1500-member Immanuel Africa Gospel Church on Sunday morning. Charles preached to a combined congregation of English and Swahili-speaking members and twice the team spoke to the leadership of the church.

The Kenya Highlands Bible College student body represents four African countries: Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda. Some of the students will pursue pastoral and church-related ministries. Others will seek

college and university teaching positions and a host of other leadership positions in their representative homelands. Only the Lord knows where The Sign Ministries' teaching will ultimately go in the years to come, affecting the lives of many.

Charles and Bill were hosted by the school's senior teaching lecturer, OE Joseph and his wife Mariam. Their graciousness and kindness to the team went far beyond the call of duty. Their spiritual heartbeat and love for the students and ministry was very evident and explains why the staff and students hold them in such high regard.

As the Biblical message of Christ's return from the prewrath perspective continues to expand in the United States and around the world, calls to our office to present the teach-



ing continue to be received. Our desire is to be as responsive to each invitation as is humanly possible. Once again, we in The Sign Ministries acknowledge our dependence on the Lord for His guidance and strength and as well, we are grateful for the many supporters with whom God has blessed us. We thank you for your kindness' to us and your many faithful prayers. **Asante sane!** (Thank you very much!) May we each continue to be about the Lord's business in these momentous days.

They received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

— A C T S 17 : 11 —



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