



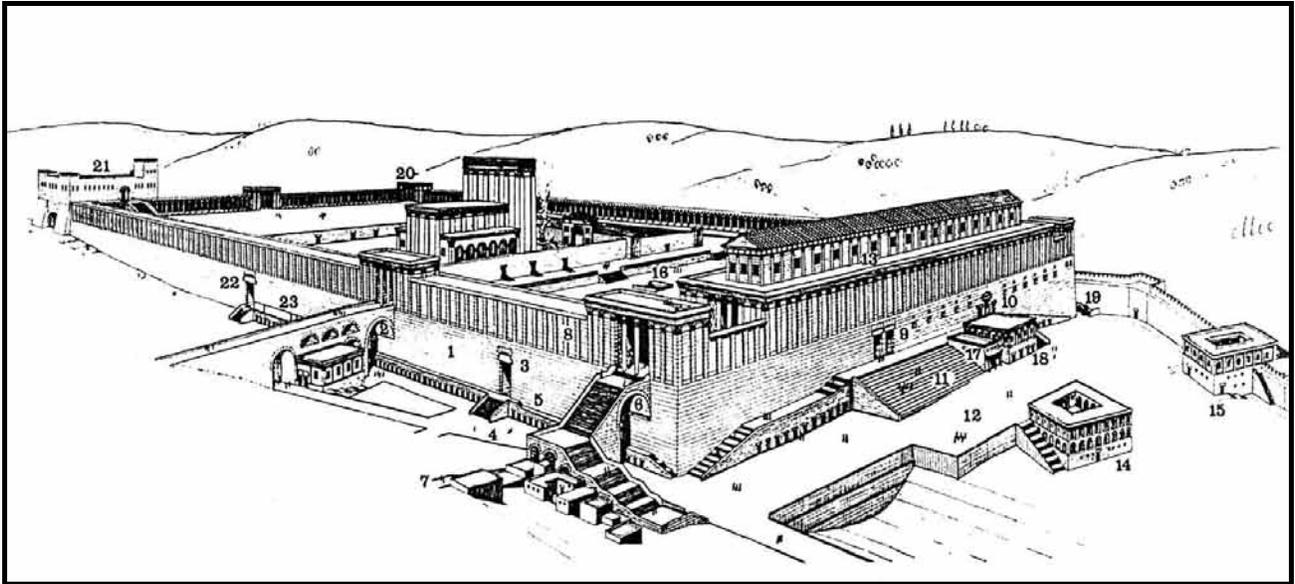
“The Two Witnesses” by Lucas Cranach

The Measurement of the Temple and the Two Witnesses Revelation 11:1-14

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm

them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the water into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the streets of the great city which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days, men from every people, tribe, language, and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. But after the three and a half days, a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed. The third woe is coming soon.

"I was given a reed like a measuring rod..." - The focus now shifts to the status of the church during the unfolding judgements of the seven trumpets. What is the fate of the people of God while these horrors and woes are being poured out upon the unbelieving mass of mankind? The ongoing, irrepressible witness of the church is clearly affirmed in the interlude of the measuring of the temple and the two witnesses. The role of the Revelator continues to be more active than that of a mere observer. John has become an actual participant in the visions which unfold before him. The symbolic action of measuring the temple is drawn from the prophecy of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40-48) and Zechariah (Zechariah 2:1-5). The prophetic measuring of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in the Old Testament was a promise of divine protection and restoration. That remains its significance here in Revelation. Amid all the judgement plagues that are coming upon the earth the church of Christ shall stand safe and secure. The imagery is clearly symbolic. The great temple of Herod in Jerusalem had been smashed to ruins along with the rest of the city decades earlier by the legions of Titus. Those who fantasize today about literal reconstructions of physical temples have completely missed the point of the symbolism. All the people of God in Christ are the temple in the New Testament era. This crucial theological



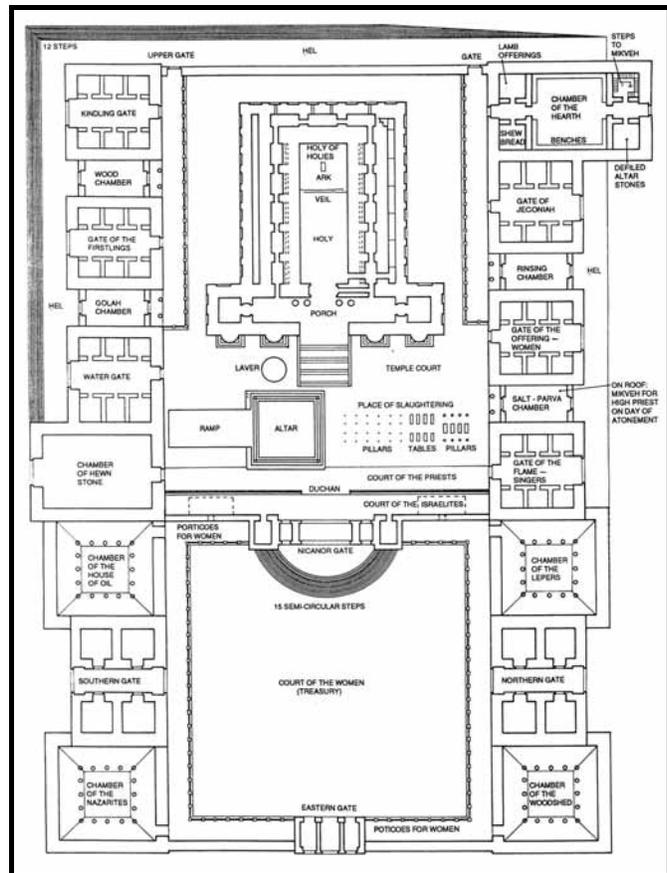
“Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem” by Leen Rittmeyer

insight is nullified or ignored by those who suggest the need for a reconstructed temple in Jerusalem. The temple, unlike the churches of our day, was designed as the sacred dwelling place of God. It was not intended to accommodate a congregation for worship. It was instead a dark and remote place cut off from the people by the massive curtain that veiled the Holy of Holies. When Jesus died on the cross that massive curtain was ripped apart, signaling the removal of the barrier of sin. Now God dwells among us in the person of His Son. ***“For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said, “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they will be My people.”*** (2 Corinthians 6:16) Writing to the congregation in Ephesus, St. Paul declares:

“Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22; cf. also 2 Thessalonians 2:4)

In the same way, the writer to the Hebrews affirms that you have come to ***“Mount Zion,” “the heavenly Jerusalem,” “the city of the living God”*** which is ***“the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven.”*** (Hebrews 12:22)

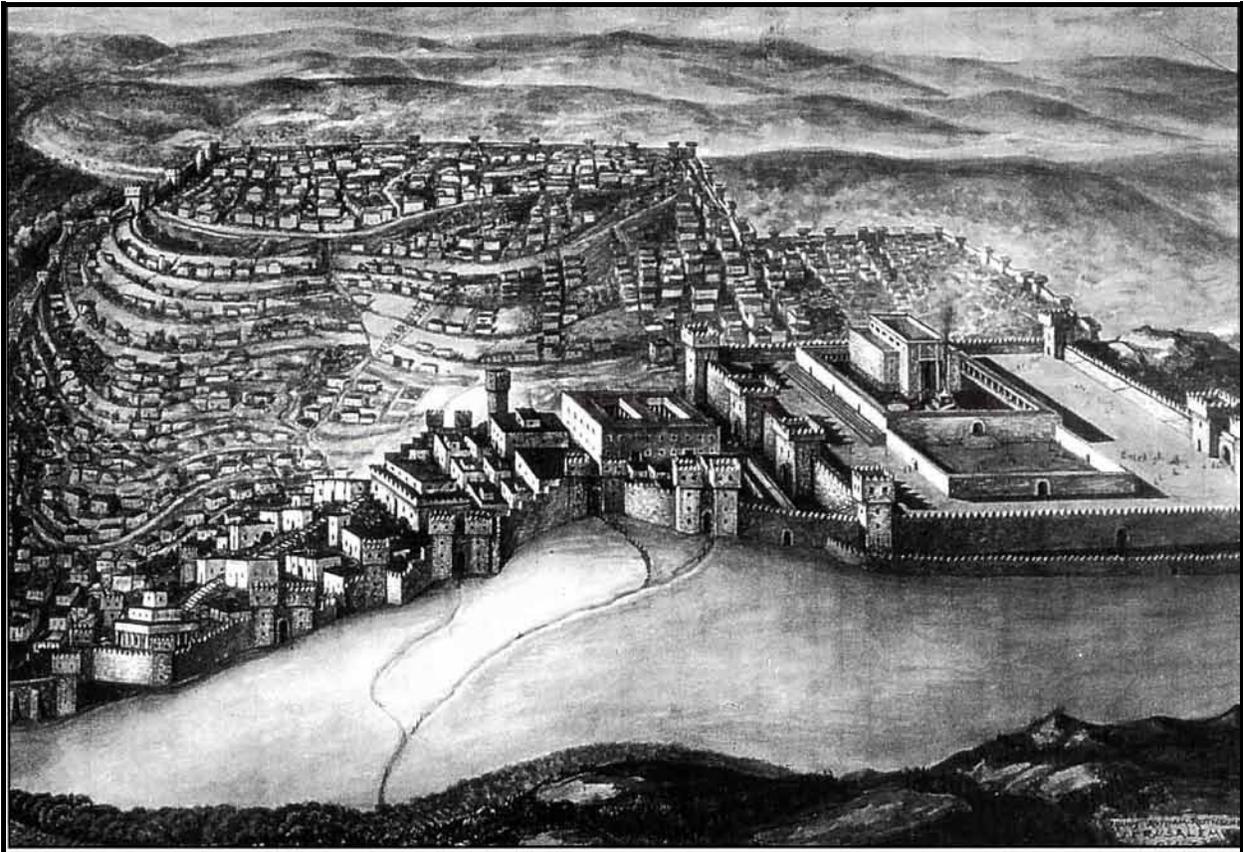
John is given *“a reed like measuring rod.”* The lightweight stalk of this marsh plant, which sometimes grew to the height of 15 to 20 feet, was often used as a measuring tool. The measuring reed used by Ezekiel was about nine feet long. John is directed to measure *“the temple of God and the altar.”* The temple in Jerusalem was a series of ornate colonnades and porches surrounding the Sanctuary itself which housed the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In this context, as verse 2 will specify, the reference is to the Sanctuary itself and not to the entire complex. The *“altar”* in question is the golden altar of incense (Greek - *“thysiasterion”*) which was located inside of the Holy Place of the Sanctuary. The incense rising from the altar signified the prayers of God’s people (Revelation 5:8; 8:4) The specific inclusion of the incense altar in the measurement may have been designed to emphasize the ongoing worship of the church which will continue without interruption throughout the New Testament era. In addition to these measurements, John is also instructed to *“count the worshipers there.”* As the 144,000 were sealed before the throne (Revelation 7:1-8) so now those who worship in the temple of God are carefully counted and enumerated. Our God knows each and every one of those who are His own. Not one will be overlooked or forgotten. The temple and the altar are meticulously measured - the worshiping congregation is precisely counted - the symbolism repeats and reinforces itself. God will guard and protect His people even as the trumpets of judgement continue to sound throughout the world.



A Diagram of the Inner Courts of the Temple in Jerusalem

“But exclude the outer court; do not measure it because it has been given to the Gentiles...” - John is emphatically instructed not to measure the outer courtyard of the temple. The ground plan of each reconstruction of the temple since

its original design by Solomon included an increasingly exclusive series of courtyards, gates, and buildings with the Holy of Holies at its heart. In the temple of Herod, the huge outer courtyard which occupied most of the temple mount and surrounded the inner courts and the sanctuary, was designated as the “*Court of the Gentiles.*” John makes effective use of that structure to symbolically point out that while God will protect and preserve His Church, He will not render her immune from



“The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem”

persecution. We have God’s promise that He will surely carry us through all of the tribulations and trials of the last days, but those tribulations will have to be endured nonetheless. The outer court of the temple is not to be measured because “*it has been given to the Gentiles.*” In this context, “*Gentiles*” should be understood in a spiritual sense as “*pagans*” or “*unbelievers*” rather than in an ethnic sense as “*non-Jews.*” The worshipers before the altar who were measured and counted included believers of all races and ethnic backgrounds, Jews and Gentiles alike. Accordingly, the “*Gentiles*” to whom the outer court has been given and who will “*trample on the*



*“Roman Troops Pillage the Holy of Holies”
15th Century Illumination*

“holy city for forty-two months” are the unbelieving mass of mankind from all races and ethnic backgrounds. In the imagery of John’s vision, the sanctuary, the altar, and the worshiping congregation are measured and counted - *“the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.”* But the outer court and the city are given over to be trampled upon by the enemies of God. The faithful people of God will be called upon, again and again, to offer the good confession in the face of bitter opposition; to endure bloody persecution as the devil and those who are his struggle with increasing desperation to stifle the message of the Gospel. In reality, the testing of that persecution will only serve to strengthen and renew the faith of God’s people. Tertullian, the great historian of the early church said it well” *“The more you mow us down, the more we grow - for the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”* The devil’s assault will never penetrate beyond the outer court. He can persecute and

oppress the church - but he cannot destroy it. He can torture and torment God's people. He can kill their bodies. But he cannot destroy their souls (Matthew 10:28). The sanctuary remains inviolate. The language of the text - "**They** (the Gentiles) **will trample on the holy city for 42 months**" - is strongly reminiscent of the words of Jesus: "**Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**" (Luke 21:24) Jerusalem, "**the holy city**" is often identified with the people of God in Scripture. It is a prevalent Biblical symbol for the church. In the closing chapters of Revelation "**the new Jerusalem**" becomes the eternal dwelling place of God's people in the new heaven and the new earth. In this scene, the trampling of the holy city, extends and reinforces the symbolic presentation of the church's persecution at the hands of the unbelieving world.



“Antiochus Epiphanes Pilfering the Temple Treasury” - 15th Century Illumination

The duration of the persecution is specified as “**42 months.**” The prophecy of the two witnesses will last for the same period - “**1,260 days.**” The same time frame occurs three more times in Revelation (12:6; 12:14; 13:5). Whether measured in days (1,260), months (42), or years (3 ½) - the time period is the same. The numerology is derived from the prophecy of Daniel (Daniel 7:25; 12:6,7,11). Three and a half is half of the perfect seven, the number which symbolized absolute perfection and completion. It therefore came to represent a limited time period, only a portion of the greater whole. Among the Jews the number three and a half was directly associated with a limited period of persecution or suffering because of the three and a half years of drought and famine during the ministry of Elijah (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1,42-45; Luke 4:25; James 5:17) and the three and a half year

reign of terror during which the sacrifices in the temple were suspended by Antiochus Epiphanes in the days of the Maccabees. The use of this symbolic number in any of its variations is consistent throughout the Book of Revelation. Three and a half represents a time of suffering and persecution which is limited by the sovereign power of God. It will not continue forever. God has established its termination. In the context of this vision, the 42 months, the 1,260 days, represent the entire New Testament era, the period between the first and second comings of Christ, during which the church will be called upon to patiently endure persecution and opposition. When that limited period is over, ***“Then the end will come.”*** (Matthew 24:14)

“And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth.” - The symbolic representation of the church which has characterized this vision continues with the appearance of the ***“two witnesses.”*** These are not particular individuals or specific prophets from the Old Testament. ***“The two witnesses are not individual prophets...Rather they represent the whole community of faith, whose primary function is to be a prophetic witness.”*** (Beale, pp. 572-573)

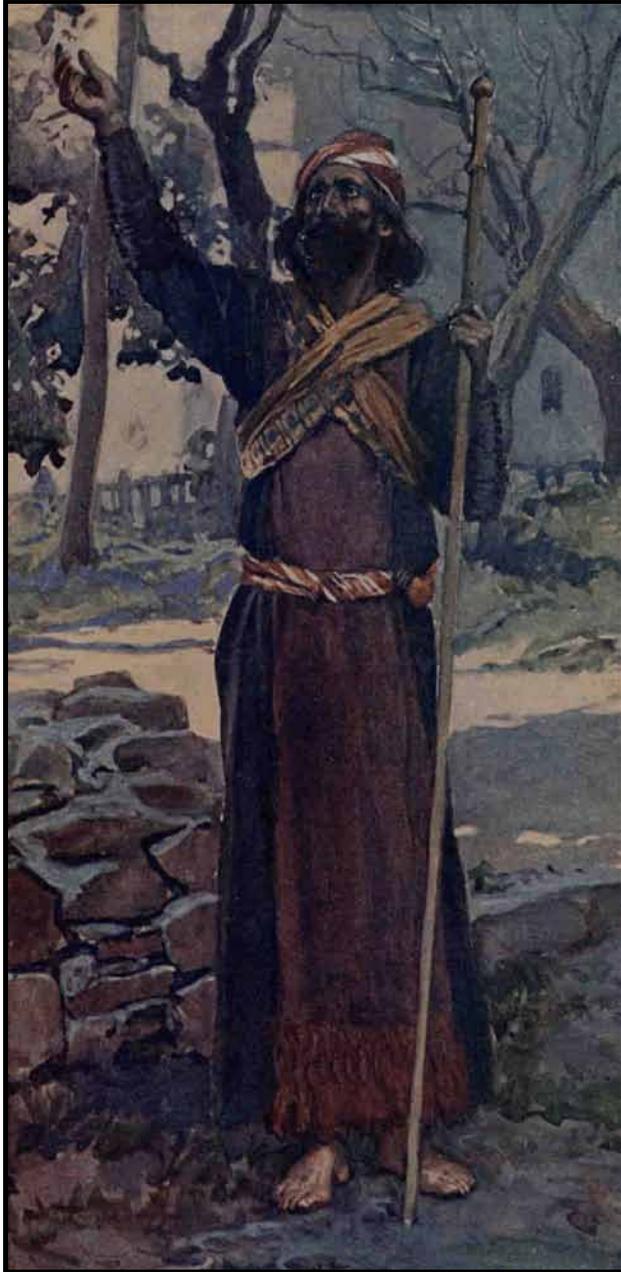
However, their description is certainly patterned after the ministries of Moses and Elijah, the two pre-eminent prophets of the Old Testament, who stood by the side of our glorified Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). Dr. Brighton correctly contends:

“The two witnesses are not actually Moses or Elijah, nor any other OT prophets. For in the same way that John the Baptist was in spirit that Elijah who was foretold,



“The Martyrdom of the Two Witnesses”
15th Century Bible Illumination

so now these two prophetic witnesses are in the spirit of Moses and Elijah as they symbolize the church. For the church carries out that prophetic ministry in the same spirit of Moses and Elijah, which spirit is now symbolized by the two witnesses.”
(Brighton, p. 294)



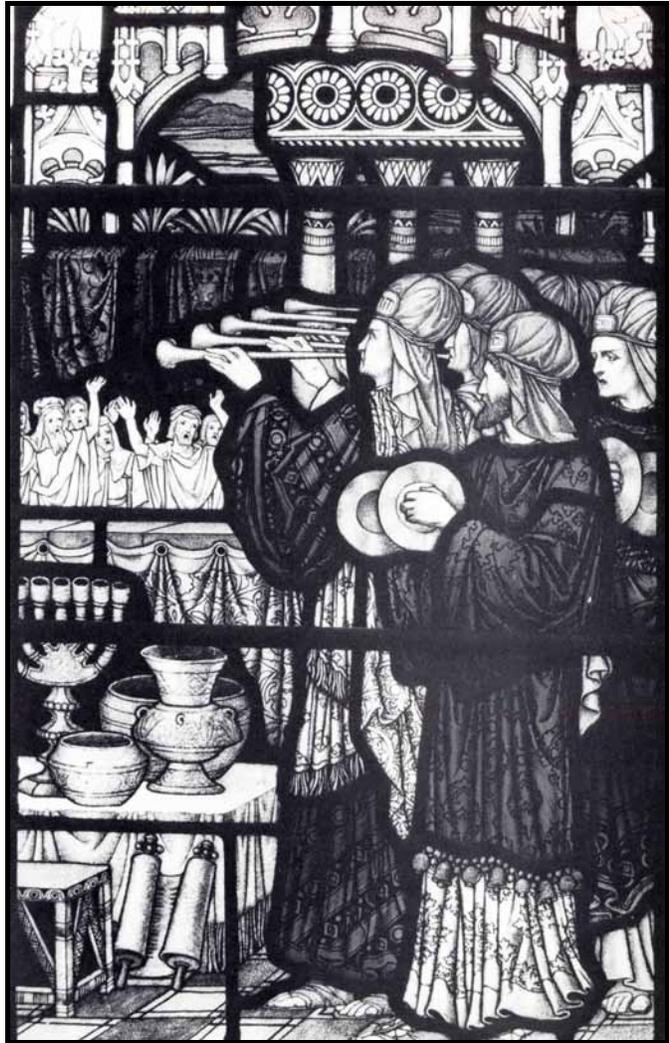
“The Prophet Zechariah” by J. James Tissot

The two witnesses who step forward are given power by God to speak on His behalf - **“they will prophesy.”** They are dressed in **“sackcloth,”** the traditional vesture of repentance and sorrow for sin (cf. Genesis 37:34; 2 Samuel 3:31; Lamentations 2:10; 1 Chronicles 21:16; Psalm 30:11; Jonah 3:5-8; Matthew 11:21) as a reminder that the confession of the church must always remain a humble call to repentance and forgiveness. Sackcloth, a coarse dark colored fabric made of goat or camel hair which was originally used for making grain sacks, was also the historic garb of a prophet (cf. Isaiah 20:2; Zechariah 13:4; Mark 1:6). The witnesses are two in number not to designate two particular individuals but in order to provide competent legal testimony which must be established with the corroboration of at least two witnesses. (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6,15,19). The activity of the two witnesses is to continue throughout the New Testament era - **“they will prophesy for 1,260 days.”**

“These are the two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.” - The imagery of **“olive trees”** and **“lampstands”** is freely adapted from Zechariah 4:2-14 where the

prophet is shown a golden lampstand with seven lamps that has an olive tree growing on either side of it. The golden lampstand represents Israel, the people of God. The

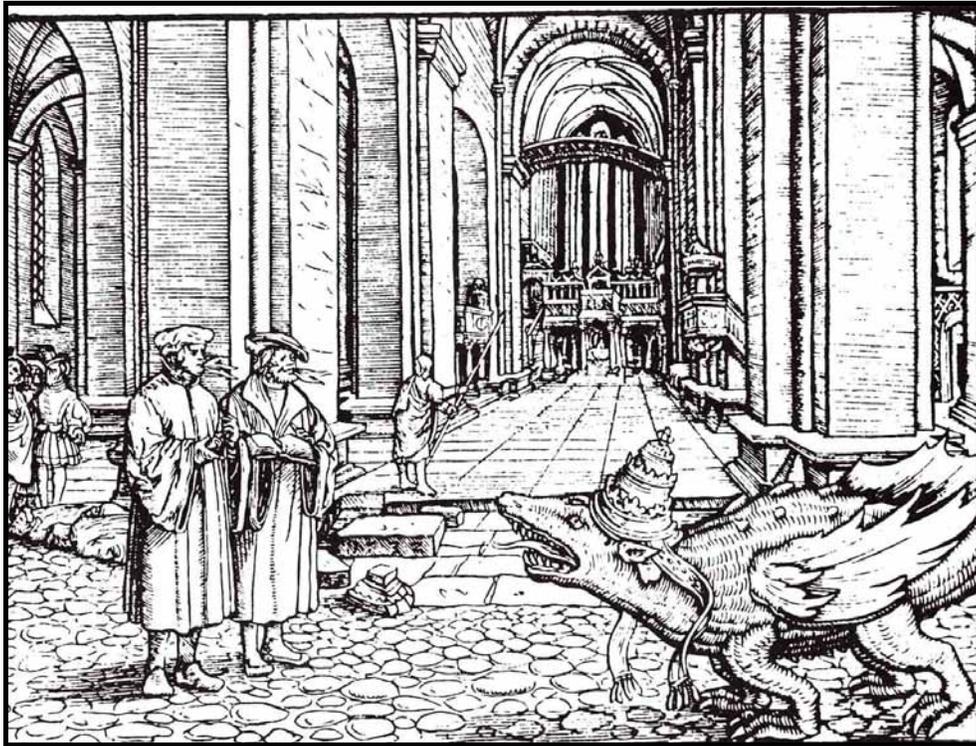
seven lamps upon the lampstand represent the omniscient *“eyes of the Lord which range throughout the earth.”* (Zechariah 4:10). The two olive trees represent the high priest and the king as the two leaders who the Lord has anointed to guard and protect His people and accomplish the reconstruction of the temple (Zechariah 4:14). The point of Zechariah’s vision was the assurance that despite powerful opposition the temple would be rebuilt - *“Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord Almighty.”* (Zechariah 4:6) John employs the same basic imagery but with significant alteration. Now the two prophet/witnesses which represent the people of God are signified by two lampstands along with the two olive trees adapted from Zechariah’s vision. The image of the church as the bearer of light in the world’s darkness has already appeared in Revelation (Revelation 1:20) and is a most appropriate image of her prophetic responsibility. John repeats the divine title used in Zechariah 4:14 - *“the Lord of the earth”* - to acknowledge his dependance upon the ancient prophet. In the original scene, the two olive trees provided the oil for the lampstand signifying God’s providential care of His people. John makes a similar point with the juxtaposition of the lampstands and the olive trees - the church is anointed and equipped by God to serve as His prophetic witness. Apart from that divine empowerment, the church’s witness will falter and fail



“The Celebration of the Rededication of Zerubbabel’s Temple”

“If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.” - Those who set

themselves against the witnesses of God do so at great peril. The Lord labels them as ***“My witnesses.”*** They stand under the protection of God and the word that they speak on His behalf contains the power of His judgement. Those who seek to harm them will be consumed by the ***“fire that comes from their mouths.”*** The phrase



“The Two Witnesses and the Beast from the Abyss”
Luther Bible Woodcut

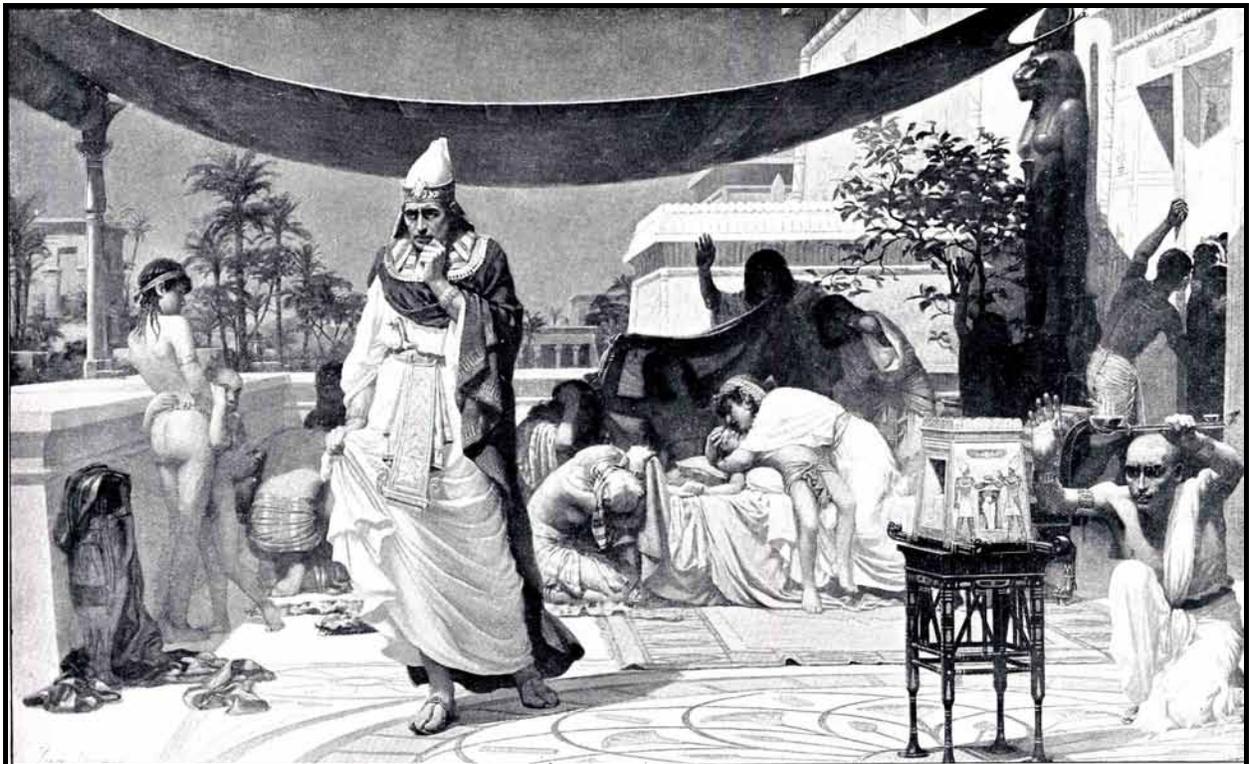
refers not to physical flame but to the consuming fire of the Word of God which judges and condemns those who defy the Lord and consigns them to the undying fires of hell. God assured His prophet Jeremiah: ***“Because these people have spoken these words, I will make My words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes.”*** (Jeremiah 5:14). A similar image of judgement fire proceeding from the mouth of the Divine Judge is found in 4 Ezra, a Jewish apocalyptic work written about the same time as Revelation. The author saw the Son of the Most High rising up from the heart of the sea with wind and fire and a storm coming out of His mouth. The symbolism is explained in this way:

“My Son will reprove the assembled nations for their ungodliness (this was symbolized by the storm), and will reproach them to their face with their evil thoughts and with the torments with which they are to be tortured (which were

symbolized by the flames); and He will destroy them without effort by the Law (which was symbolized by the fire).” (4 Ezra 13:37-38)

“These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain while they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.” - The awesome powers which God bestows upon His prophets are illustrated from the great events of the Old Testament like the prophet Elijah who brought drought upon the land of Israel as God’s judgement upon Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) or Moses whom God empowered to send 10 plagues upon the land of Egypt (Exodus 7-11). The judgement plagues of God are never capricious or vindictive. It is always His design to lead stubborn sinners to repentance.

“I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, yet you have not returned to Me, declares the Lord. I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to Me, declares the Lord.” (Amos 4:10-11)



“The Tenth Plague of Egypt - The Death of Pharaoh’s Firstborn” by Ernst Normand



*“The Two Witnesses and the Beast”
by Hans Burgmair*

“Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.” - The church of the faithful witnesses will always experience the persecution and opposition of the world. There can be no peaceful co-existence between the true church and the world. The devil cannot tolerate the proclamation of the truth. The full weight of his fury will fall upon those who refuse to compromise and conform to the way and wisdom of this world. The murder of the two witnesses depicts the persecution of the faithful church throughout the New Testament era and affirms that despite the devil’s rage, this witness will never be silenced. It is the Lord who determines the duration of the witnesses’

testimony - *“when they have finished their testimony.”* The Greek verb in this phrase is *“telesosin,”* the same word with which Christ announces the completion of His work of redemption from the cross - *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30). God in His providential power sees to it that the testimony of the Gospel goes on. When the faithful testimony of one witness is complete and that confessor is silenced or cut down, God will raise up another to take his place. Throughout the history of the church, that testimony has continued - the light has never gone out, although oftentimes it has seemed that the darkness threatened to overwhelm it. As Christ has promised, the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church.

The deadly enemy of the Gospel is *“the beast that comes up from the Abyss.”* The language of the text describes a ferocious wild animal of immense destructive power. In this instance, no further description is provided. This is in contrast to other beasts



“The Two Witnesses and the Beast” by Jean Duvet

that appear later in Revelation which are described in graphic detail. All that we are told of this monster is that he rises up from the bottomless pit of Hell. This is the “*Angel of the Abyss,*” (Revelation 9:11), “*Abaddon*” and “*Apollyon,*” the Destroyer. His lust for destruction and his ability to destroy is captured in the image of “*the beast that comes up from the Abyss.*” His warfare against the Gospel and its witnesses is brutal and relentless. He will never give up or grow weary in this age-old fight. All those who would stand for the truth of God must be prepared to face his rage. Again and again he will “*overpower and kill*” God’s witnesses. The majority will always be with him. The forces of falsehood and evil will maintain the appearance of overwhelming and irresistible power. They seem to move from victory to victory - “*truth forever on the scaffold - wrong forever on the throne.*”



“The Death of the Witnesses” by Matthias Merian

The defenders of truth and righteousness will be treated with cruel contempt - “*Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt where also their Lord was crucified.*” The denial of burial was an expression of singular contempt, indignity, and humiliation (1 Samuel 17:44,46; 2 Kings 9:10; Psalm 79:1-5; Isaiah 14:19-20; Jeremiah 8:1-2; 9:22; 16:4-6; 22:19). A modern example of this concept at work can be seen in the public display of the battered



The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah” by J.M.W. Turner

bodies of the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his mistress after their execution in 1945 amid the jubilation of the liberated populace. The macabre display takes place ***“in the street of the great city which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt where also their Lord was crucified.”*** The ***“great city”*** is not one particular metropolis but serves as the epitome of the ungodly and anti-christian world and its power. It is every city where Satan prevails and sinful mankind rebelliously relishes his defiant disobedience of God. It is every city where corruption and falsehood rule and the truth is ridiculed and repressed. The allusion to the crucifixion points to Jerusalem and yet every other use of the title ***“the great city”*** in Revelation refers to Rome in the guise of ***“Babylon the Great”*** as the personification of the ungodly and anti-Christian world (cf. Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18-21). This city is ***“figuratively (Greek - “pneumatikos” - “spiritually”) called Sodom and Egypt.”*** Apostate Jerusalem, now ground to dust beneath the conqueror’s heel, had become no different to the spiritually discerning than ancient seats of evil that had become synonymous with wickedness and sin. The sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were prime examples of places of immorality and corruption destroyed by God’s judgement (cf. Deuteronomy 29:22-26; 32:28-33; Isaiah 9:1-15; Jeremiah 23:14-15).

Egypt had come to be equated with oppression and injustice because of the four centuries of Israelite bondage in that land (Deuteronomy 5:6; Joshua 24:17; Isaiah 19:1; Ezekiel 20:7; Joel 3:19).

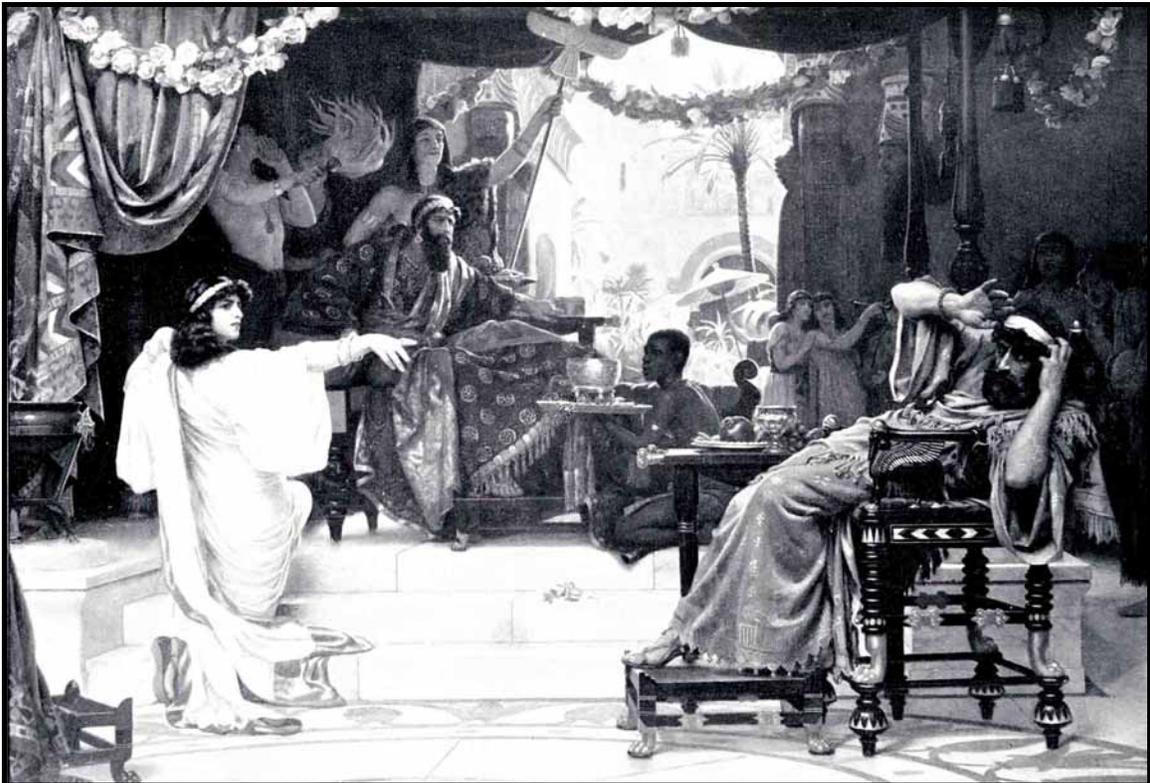


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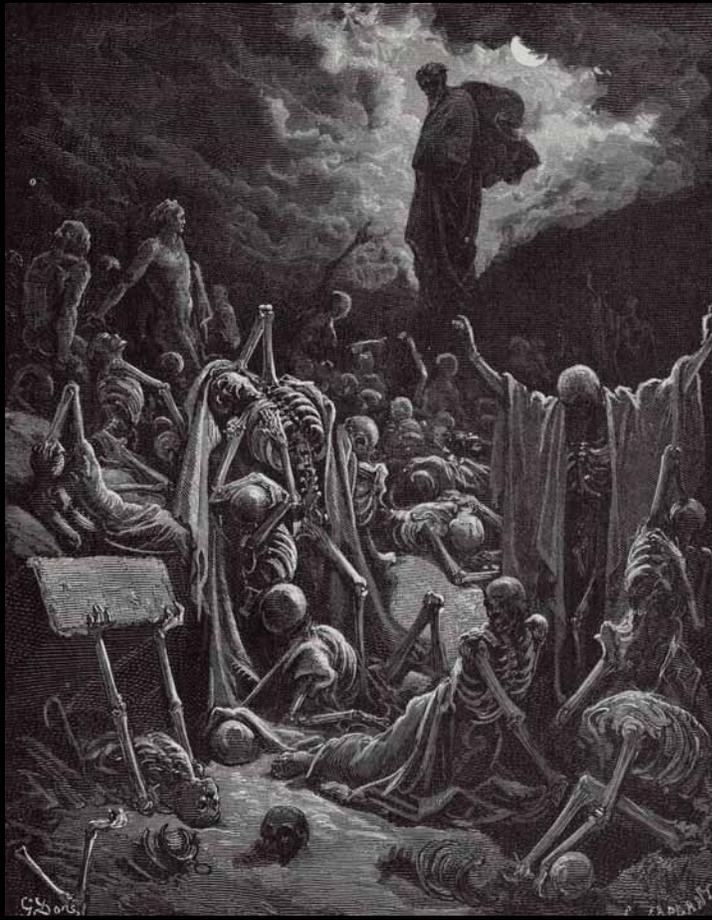
“For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language, and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.” - Sinful humanity will celebrate the downfall and death of the faithful witnesses with unrestrained jubilation. The phrase *“the inhabitants of the earth”* is used consistently in Revelation to describe the mass of unbelieving mankind. The worldwide application of these events is emphasized by the fourfold repetition - *“men from every people, tribe, language, and nation.”* The devil’s triumph is apparent - not real. It will only last for a brief time. The broken seven - three and a half - is here condensed to a mere three and a half days to symbolize the brevity of evil’s victory. The great Reformation chorale, *“O Little Flock Fear Not the Foe”* says it well:

*“O little flock fear not the foe who madly seeks your overthrow;
Dread not his rage and power.
What though your courage sometimes faints, his seeming triumph o’er God’s saints
Lasts but a little hour.*

In this context, the three and a half days, can also be seen as an allusion to the three day period of Christ’s death and burial. The burial of Christ, it should be noted, took place over the bitter objections of His enemies. It was Pilate’s way of expressing his anger over the manipulations and machinations of the High Priest (cf. John 19:38-42) The manner in which the world treats Christian’s is no different than the manner in which it treated Christ. The text strongly emphasizes mankind’s sadistic delight in the downfall of the witnesses - ***“they will gloat over them.”*** It is almost as though a world-wide holiday - an *“Antichrist-mas”* (Franzmann, p.81) has been declared with merry making and the exchange of gifts. One commentator describes their celebration as *“at once fiendish and childish.”* (Swete, p. 138) The gift exchange may, in fact, be a reference to the Hebrew Feast of Purim - ***“a day for gladness and feasting..a day on which they send choice portions to one another and gifts to the poor.”*** (Esther 9:19,22). The festival commemorated the deliverance of the Jews from destruction in the days of Esther and Mordecai. With the death of the witnesses



“Esther Denounces Haman to Save Her People” by Ernst Normand



*“Ezekiel’s Vision of the Bones”
by Gustave Dore*

sinful mankind feels as though it has been delivered - delivered from troubled consciences, the torment of guilt, and the accusations of the law. By speaking the truth, and holding up before mankind the ugly reality of its sin - ***“these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.”***

“But after three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them.” - The world’s merriment is found to be premature and comes to an abrupt end. At the end of the three and a half days, the time of the devil’s triumph, the breath of God which moved through the valley of the dry bones in the vision of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37), ***“entered them”*** (cf. Ezekiel

37:10) and the murdered witnesses live again. The language here closely reflects that of Ezekiel’s magnificent vision. Joyful celebration is suddenly replaced by desperate fear (Greek - *“phobos”*) - ***“and terror struck those who saw them.”*** The wording clearly indicates the final judgement context of these events. 4 Ezra uses virtually identical language to describe the fear of the last day:

“The trumpet will sound aloud, at which all people, when they hear it, will be struck with sudden fear. At the same time the earth will be stricken with fear...And those who have been taken up, those who have not tasted death from their birth, will appear... for evil will be blotted out.” (4 Ezra 6:23-27)

Mankind had rejoiced over the downfall of the witnesses because their death put an end to the troubling message of judgement which they proclaimed. Their ignominious demise seemed to discredit and deny their warning of impending

punishment for sin from the hand of a righteous God. But now the witnesses are alive again and their resurrection validates their message. Now the time of grace is over and the time of judgement is at hand. The resurrection of the witnesses and their vindication before the startled eyes of the world takes us to the end of the day and the great day of resurrection when the Lord shall return in glory and power to judge the living and the dead. The long awaited vindication will finally come for each and all of the witnesses when the dead in Christ shall rise to meet the Lord in the clouds.

“Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.” - The resurrected witnesses are summoned into the presence of God by ***“a loud voice from heaven.”*** The triumph of the witnesses is no secret rapture. The voice of God thunders from the heavens and the victorious ascent of the saints takes place deliberately and emphatically before the startled eyes of mankind - ***“while their enemies looked on.”*** The text echoes the grim prediction of Revelation 1: ***“Look He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be. Amen!”*** (Revelation 1:7) The ascension of the witnesses resembles that of Christ who rose up into the clouds before the eyes of His startled disciples (cf. Acts 1:9).

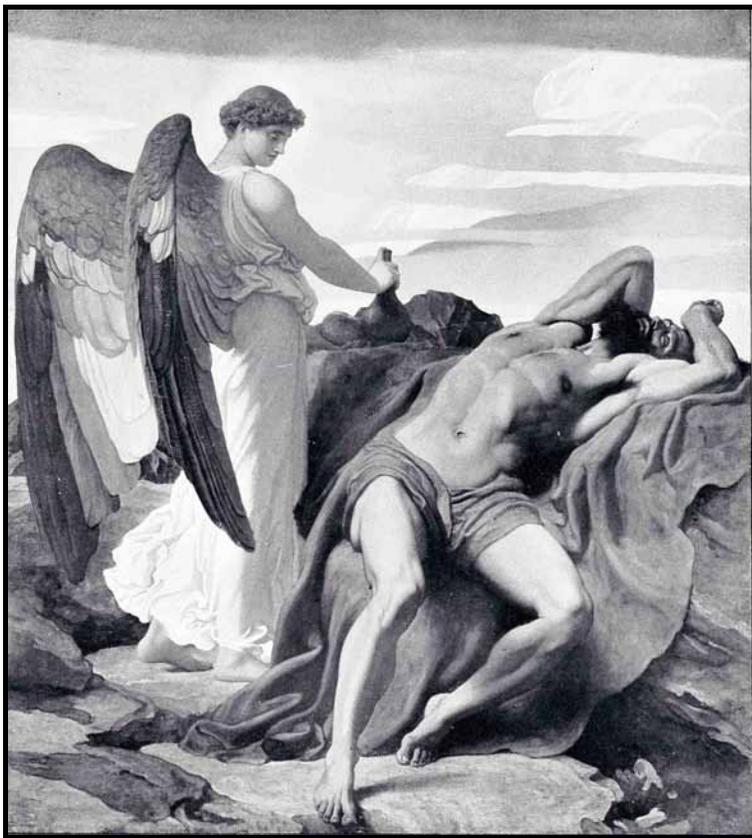


“The Last Judgement” by Michael Wohlgemuth

“At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.” - The Lord had prophesied: ***“And***

this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14) The resurrection and ascension of the witnessing church marks the end of time. Now must come the judgement. *“At that very hour”* emphasizes the immediacy of the divine retribution. There is no further delay for by now every one of the elect has been gathered in (cf. Mark 13:20-27; 2 Peter 3:8-10). Now the foundations of the earth will be shaken and the old order will pass away. The end of the world is signaled by *“a severe earthquake* (Greek - *“seismos megas”*). The same words are used in Ezekiel 38:19 to describe the final judgement of unbelieving mankind, Gog and the host Magog. The translation *“severe earthquake”* understates the magnitude of this cataclysm. This will be a seismic event of global proportion, literally off the Richter scale. It will involve not one nation but every nation. Human civilization will totter and fall as the death throes of the earth decimate mankind - *“a tenth of the city collapsed.”* The use of the ordinal number “10” in this context signifies the unraveling of the physical order of things. It is not that 10% of the city has been destroyed while the other 90% remains stable and secure. The collapse of the physical universe has

commenced and in its opening seconds the city is decimated. Lenski aptly compares the tenth that is destroyed to the first complete stone, the keystone, that falls from the arch, with the inevitable result that all the rest must now collapse. In John’s vision *“Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake.”* The symbolic number seven thousand may have been deliberately chosen to reflect the Elijah remnant of seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). The judgement is then a *“lex talionis”* - eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth - penalty (Exodus 21:24). The



“Elijah in the Wilderness” by Frederic Leighton



“Daniel in the Lion’s Den” by Briton Riviere

two witnesses who were killed represent the church. The number of unbelievers slain in the earthquake then matches the figurative number which represents the church. Just as the faithful remnant (7,000) were killed for their testimony so 7,000 unbelievers must die in retribution. Those who do not perish immediately will be overcome with dread and belatedly ***“gave glory to the God of heaven.”*** But it will be too late. There will be no unbelievers left on that great day. All will be compelled to acknowledge the reality and the majesty of God, not in faith, but in desperate fear. These are the same words with which the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar begrudgingly acknowledged the reality of Daniel’s God after the prophet’s deliverance from the lions’ den (Daniel 4:34). They did not indicate the presence of saving faith there and they do not here. As John reported at the end of the sixth trumpet vision - ***“The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent.”*** (Revelation 9:20). As in the days of Noah when the vast majority of mankind rejected the patriarch’s warning of impending judgement until the door to ark was closed and the deluge had begun so it will be on the last day. On that day the moment of final recognition will come for every man on earth and all will know the

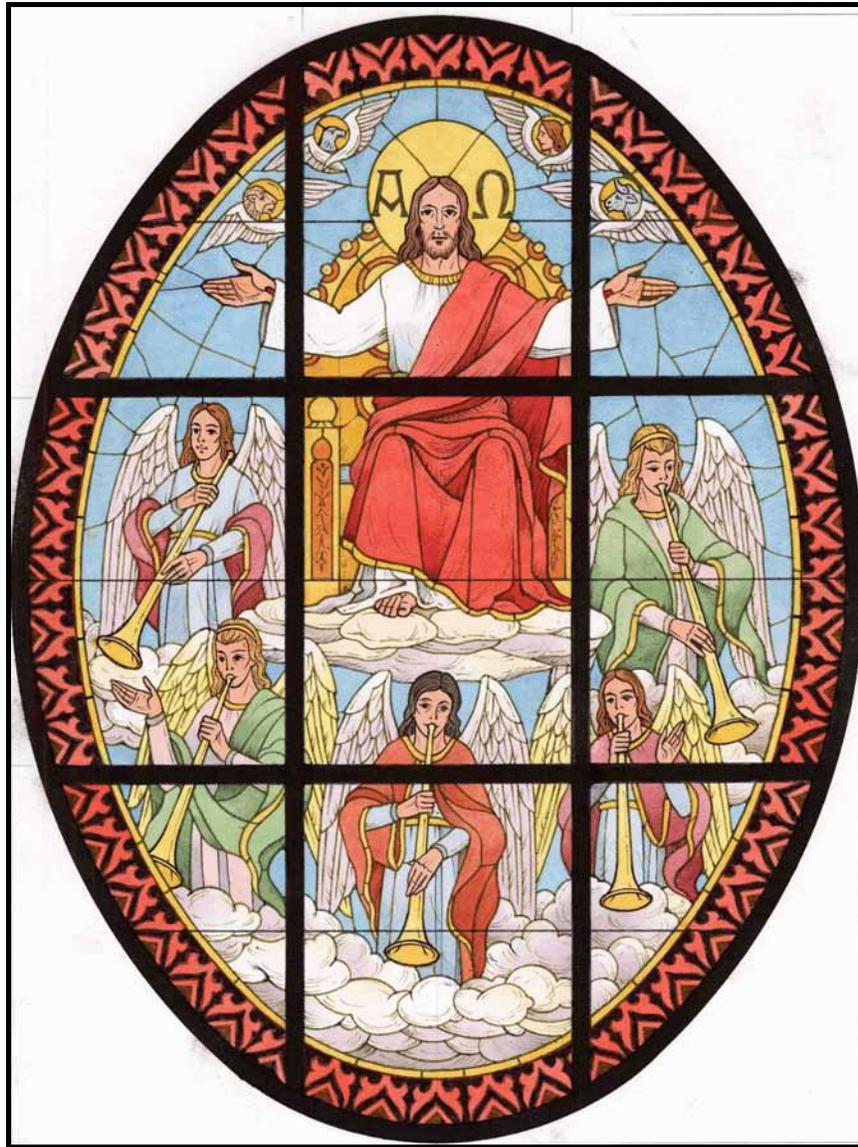


“The Death of Mankind in the Flood” by Karl Schorn

fatal error of their ways. But by then it will be too late. When judgement comes the time of repentance is over. Hear the bitter lament of God over the damned:

“If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you - when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and troubles overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me.” (Proverbs 1:23-28)

“The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.” - The announcement that the second woe has come and gone reverts to Revelation 9:21 and the completion of the sixth trumpet. The interlude of the mighty angel’s oath and the two witnesses was interspersed between the end of the second woe and the beginning of the third. The announcement here that the third woe is imminent serves to pick up the narrative where it had been interrupted after 9:21.

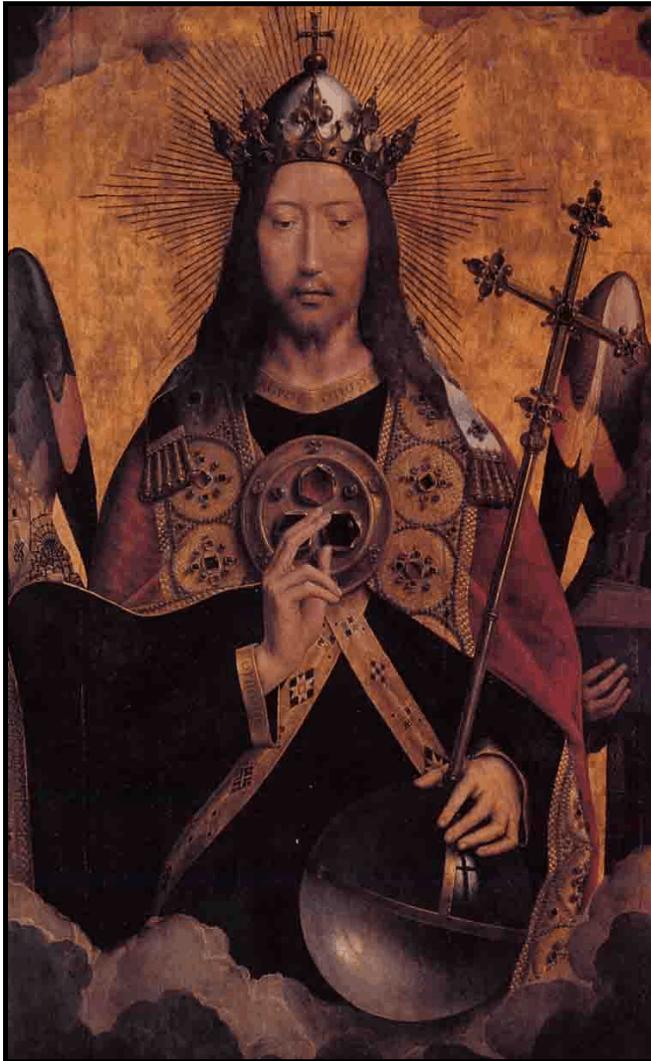


*“Christ the Omega”
Our Savior Lutheran Church*

The Sounding of the Seventh Trumpet
Revelation 11:15-19

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven which said, “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 were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give thanks to You, Lord God Almighty, Who is and Who was, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were

angry and Your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding Your servants, the prophets and Your saints, and those who reverence Your name, both small and great - and for destroying those who destroy the earth.” Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within His temple was seen the ark of His covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and earthquake and a great hailstorm.



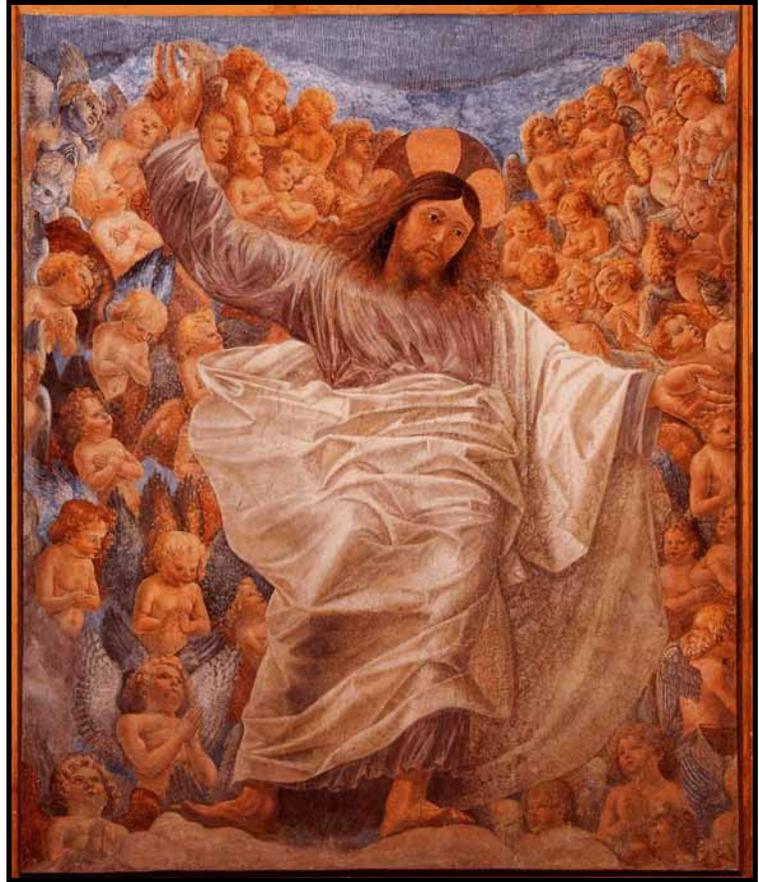
“Christ the King of Kings” by Hans Memling

god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven...” - The seventh trumpet sounds and the scene shifts from earth to heaven. The mighty acts of God’s judgement have been completed, the people of God have been vindicated, and the reign of evil is ended. Now a triumphant song of heavenly praise welcomes the coming of the kingdom of God. The kingdom for which God’s people have longed and prayed throughout history has finally arrived and the response is joyful celebration. The voices of the myriad hosts of angels and the resplendent host of glorified saints both of whom will accompany the Lord who comes in judgement now sound the triumph song. Throughout the long years of human history, from the fall of man until the second coming of Christ, the universe - *“the kingdom of the world”* (Greek - *“he basileia tou kosmou”*) has suffered beneath the tyrannical domination of sin and Satan. Hence Scripture describes the devil as *“the*

The sovereign control of God over all things has, of course, always been absolute; but

it has not always been evident. Through Christ's redemption, the power and dominion of sin has been destroyed. When Christ returns in glory and power to judge the living and the dead ***“the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ”*** will be publically and undeniably demonstrated before all. This is the cause of the heavenly celebration depicted in conjunction with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The first six trumpets have carried us across the New Testament era to the end of time and now the final trumpet proclaims the consummation of human history and the culmination of God's age-old plan for the salvation of His people. The heavenly anthem joyfully acknowledges the end of time and the beginning of eternity - ***“and He will reign forever and ever.”***



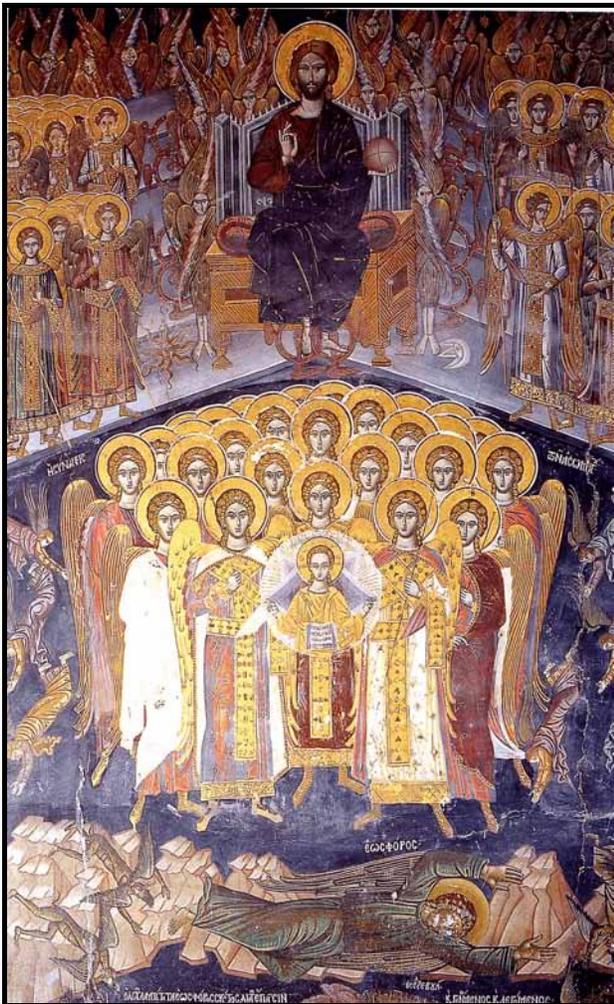
“Christ in Glory” by Melozzo da Forlì - 15th Century

“And the twenty-four elders who were seated on their thrones before God fell down on their faces and worshiped God saying...” - The victory anthem reverberates from the twenty-four elders around the throne of God who represent the people of God throughout the ages, the church of the Old and the New Testaments. The perspective of their praise is demonstrated by their posture as they ***“fell down on their faces”*** before God in adoration and awe. Their song is an acclamation of thanksgiving (Greek - *“eucharistoumen”* from which the English word *“Eucharist”* is derived) and praise that God has heard the prayers of His people and demonstrated the glory of His Name. God is addressed as ***“Lord God Almighty Who is and Who was.”*** The classic Hebrew title ***“Lord God Almighty”*** (*“Yahweh Sabaoth”* - literally - *“Lord of Armies”* - Greek - *“kyrie ho theos pantokrator”*) emphasizes the sovereign power of God. It is modified by ***“Who is and Who was.”*** This is two thirds of the traditional Hebrew designation for God as the Lord ***“Who was, Who is, and Who is coming.”***

(Cf. Revelation 1:4,8; 4:8) In this instance, the customary third component in that title has been omitted and replaced with the phrase - ***“because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.”*** This alteration reflects the perspective of the scene in which the coming of the Lord is no longer a future event but has become present reality. The language reflects the view that the power and reign have been God’s all along. At this point He has acted to reclaim (***“You have taken”***) that which has always been rightfully His.

“The nations were angry and Your wrath has come.” - The establishment of the kingdom of God arouses the fury of the nations. The NIV’s translation ***“the nations were angry”*** fails to express the intensity of the original. The Greek verb is

“orgisthesan” which means ***“to be enraged.”*** The response of the people and powers of this world to the return of Christ is impotent fury. His coming means that their day is over and the time of their judgement has come. Every weapon in the devil’s arsenal has been used to frustrate this purpose and prevent this event, but all have failed. The wicked anger of sinful mankind is contrasted in the text to the righteous ***“wrath”*** (Greek - ***“orge”***) of God’s judgement. As always, the punishment fits the crime. The ***“wrath”*** of God is the Lord’s response to the rage of defiant humanity. The language of the phrase clearly recalls that of Psalm 2.



***“Christ’s Glorious Reign” - Greek Fresco
1603***

***“Why do the nations rage and the
peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth take the stand
and the rulers gather together
Against the Lord and against His
Anointed One.
“Let us break their chains,” they say,
“and throw off their fetters.”
The One enthroned in heaven laughs;***

the Lord scoffs at them.
Then He rebukes them in His anger and terrifies them in His wrath, saying,
“I have installed My King on Zion, My holy hill.”
I will proclaim the decree of the Lord:
He said to Me; “You are My Son, today I have become Your Father.
Ask of Me and I will make the nations Your inheritance,
The ends of the earth, Your possession.
You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like
pottery.”
Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned you rulers of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you be destroyed in your way,
For His wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.

Some have been perplexed by the fact that the great majority of the third “*Woe*” is a heavenly song of celebration. But these verses remind us that that which causes celebration in heaven among the people of God causes consternation on earth for the people of this world. The day of His coming will mark a glorious victory for the saints but it will be a time of wrath and dire judgement for those consigned to damnation. Thus, it is properly designated as the third “*Woe*.”

“The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and Your saints and those who reverence Your name, both great and small.” - There is an awesome finality in these words. The Greek word for time in this phrase is the powerful “*kairos*.” This is a moment of divine destiny; in many ways the ultimate moment of divine destiny - the last day, the final judgment. On that great day of judgement, all the dead shall rise to stand before the judgement seat of God - every human being who has ever lived from the creation of Father Adam to the call of the last trumpet. For the faithful this will be a time for “*rewarding*” (Greek - “*ton misthon*”). The word generally refers to a reward or recompense that is based on what a person has earned or deserved. The word is often used in the context of the pronouncement of eternal destiny which will occur on the last day in the New Testament (i.e. Revelation 22:12). The purpose of that great and terrible day of the Lord is not to decide who is going to heaven or to hell, but to publically and irrefutably demonstrate the perfect justice of God before all of humanity. Thus the empirical evidence of works is presented as the basis for the judgement rendered (cf.



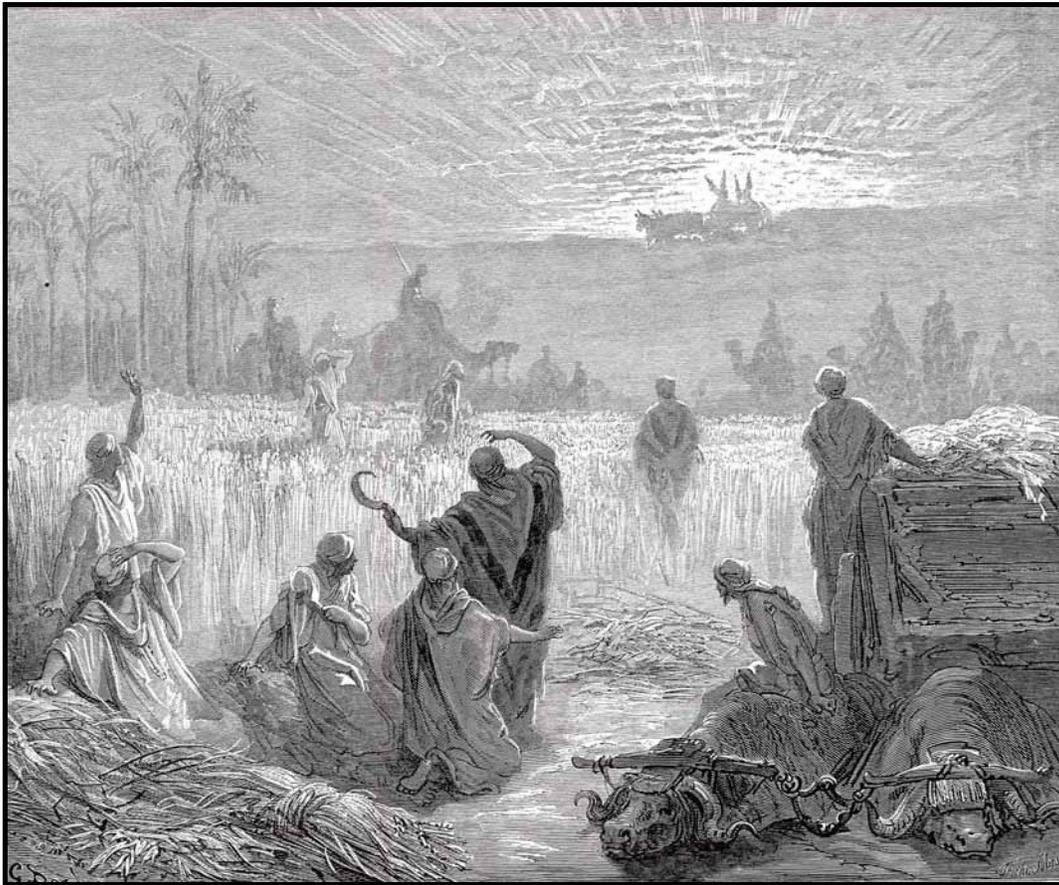
“The Ark Passing Through the Jordan” by J. James Tissot

Matthew 25:31-46). In that specific context the term “*reward*” describes the salvific benefits which God bestows upon His people by grace (Romans 3:27 - 4:5). While all who enter heaven do so absolutely by God’s undeserved love in Christ, degrees of glory in heaven will vary in proportion to the role which every individual was called upon to play in God’s work on earth (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:8; Daniel 12:3).

The people of God are described in three all inclusive phrases each of which refer to all of God’s people. This is characteristic of Revelation (cf. Revelation 16:6; 18:20,24). The inclusive intent of the text is emphasized by the addition of “*both great and small.*”

“*And for destroying those who destroy the earth.*” - In marked contrast to the reward prepared for witnesses and saints who revere the holy Name of God there is only destruction in store for the destroyers. Jeremiah had prophesied the doom of great Babylon in similarly balanced terms - **“*I am against you, O destroying mountain, you who destroy the whole earth, declares the Lord. I will stretch out My hand against you, roll you off the cliffs and make you a burned out mountain.*”** (Jeremiah 51:25). Once again the punishment matches the crime (“*lex talionis*” -

Exodus 21:24). Sinful humanity is guilty of destroying the earth not only literally, but primarily morally, in their opposition to the reign of God and their defiling themselves and the lands in which they live by their depravity and sin (Amos 4:7-9). God warns Israel not to participate in the wickedness and corruption of the Canaanites which were so disgusting that the land was going to vomit them out (cf. Leviticus 18:24-28).



“The Return of the Ark from Philistia” by Gustave Dore

“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within His temple was seen the ark of His covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.” - The result and effect of God’s judgement is symbolized by the opening of the temple and the disclosure of the ark within the Holy of Holies. Both tabernacle and temple had been divinely designed to architecturally convey the truth that sinful men cannot stand in the presence of the holy God. The further one proceeded into the temple courts and buildings the more

restricted access became. Finally, at the heart of the sanctuary was the Holy of Holies which contained the sacred ark of the covenant. The sanctity of the Holy of Holies was protected by a massive temple curtain and elaborate precautions were taken to guarantee that profane eyes would never gaze upon the ark, or later, the place where it had been. After complex purification rituals and preparation, the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies once a year, on *Yom Kippur*,” the great Day of Atonement. The ark of the covenant was a golden chest designed by God to serve as the physical symbol of His presence in the midst of His people (Exodus 25:10-11). The “*shekinah*,” the glory cloud of the divine presence rested between the outstretched wings of the guardian cherubim over the ark (1 Kings 8:1-11; Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). The apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees reports the tradition that God instructed Jeremiah and his disciples to remove the ark from the sanctuary

before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the temple was destroyed. The prophet was directed to conceal the ark in a cave on Mount Nebo where it will remain hidden - “*until God gathers His people again and shows His glory.*” (2 Maccabees 2:4-8) The ark remained a potent symbol of God promise to deliver and restore His people. The opening of the temple, and the disclosure of the ark for all to see in John’s vision indicates the fulfillment of that hope. God has acted to saved His people. The barrier of sin which divided the Creator from his creatures has been broken down in the blood of Christ (Luke 23:45). The Lord has kept His covenant. The promise



*The Cherubim Guarding the Ark”
13th Century Hebrew Manuscript Illumination*

of heavenly glory is that we shall see our God face to face. The characteristic storm theophany, the majestic physical manifestations of the presence of God - “***And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and earthquake and a great hailstorm.***” - accompanies the opening of the temple and the unveiling of the ark.



“The Beast and the Woman Clothed With the Sun” by Lucas Cranach

The Fourth Vision - Revelation 12:1-15:8

The Seven Scenes

Introduction

With the beginning of chapter 12 we enter the second half of the Book of Revelation and the fourth of its seven visions. Unlike the previous three visions, each of which was explicitly structured in seven segments (letters - seals - trumpets), the fourth

vision lacks a specific seven part structure. Nonetheless seven different scenes can be observed in this vision. After the opening scene in Revelation 12:1, each new segment is introduced with the Greek phrase “*kai eidon*” - “*And I saw.*” (13:1; 13:11; 14:1; 14:6; 14:14; 15:1). Unfortunately, most English translations (both KJV and NIV) do not translate the phrase consistently and thereby obscure the structure of the vision. As in the prior visions of the seals and trumpets, the final, seventh scene in this fourth vision serves as the introduction and bridge to the vision of the seven bowls which follows.



“*The Devil*” by Albrecht Dürer

The fourth vision presents the vast panorama of the ancient conflict between God and Satan, the underlying reality behind the sinful world reeling beneath God’s judgements presented in the earlier visions. In a sense, we have now come to the heart of the matter, as the grim truth is revealed. The previous visions showed us what was happening. This vision explains why it is happening. The physical world is the battleground upon which an age-old spiritual conflict is being waged. All of the death and destruction, all of the violence, hatred, persecution that have been described up to this point are the results of a cosmic conflict between the King of Heaven and the Prince of Hell. The demon armies that have spewed forth from the abyss in previous visions are the legions of an ancient and implacable foe. Now his identity, his nature, and his strategy will be fully revealed. Now we will see “*the dark satanic*

depths which underly the surface operations of opposition and persecution with which the church must deal.” (Franzmann, p. 84) The devil, to use Luther’s apt phrase is “*the ape of our Lord God,*” (Klug, II, p. 265) ever seeking to imitate, that is to counterfeit and negate, God and His mighty acts. An anti-Trinity - the red dragon, the beast from the land, and the beast from the sea - a counter church, and a resurrection from the dead (13:3) will mock and mimic that which God has done for man’s salvation in the infernal cause of man’s damnation. The visions which follow will demonstrate his downfall and destruction. But first we must see our enemy as he truly is and understand the magnitude of the conflict in which we are engaged.



“The Woman and the Red Dragon” - Luther Bible Woodcut

Scene I - The Vision of the Great Red Dragon

Revelation 12:1 - 13:1

A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to His throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against

the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice you heavens, and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury because he knows his time is short." When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times, and a half a time, out of the serpent's reach. Then from his mouth, the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. Then the dragon was enraged against the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring - those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea.

"A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." - The announcement of a "great and wondrous sign" in the heavens signals a subject of unique significance. A "sign" in Scripture is a visible presentation which points to or explains something of the divine. Thus, the miracles of our Lord are often described as signs which reveal the true nature of Christ as the presence of God among men. The virgin birth would be the unrequested sign for reluctant King Ahaz (Isaiah 7:14). The shepherds were told to look for the sign of a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger (Luke 2:12). This sign appears "in heaven," that is to say, from God. The sign which John observes is a beautiful woman "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." This woman personifies the people of God. She is the church.

The image of God's people as a woman - a mother, or a bride - is common throughout Scripture. The prophet Hosea rebukes apostate Israel as an unfaithful



"The Woman and the Red Dragon" by Albrecht Dürer

wife who has betrayed her loving husband in flagrant adultery (Hosea 1-3). For Isaiah, Israel is the **“daughter of Zion”** (Isaiah 1: 8), a distressed and disgraced wife whom a compassionate God will restore again (Isaiah 54:4-8) as His beloved **Hepzibah**. (Hebrew - **“My Delight Is In Her”**) and **“Beulah”** (Hebrew - **“One Who**



“I Am My Beloved’s” by F.M. Strudwick

Is Married”) (Isaiah 62:4-5). John the Baptist hails Christ as the long-awaited bridegroom who has come to claim His bride, the church (John 3:29). Christ Himself draws the same analogy in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). He warns that the time is coming when the bridegroom shall be taken away (Matthew 9:15). St. Paul reminds the congregation in Corinth that they are a bride promised to one husband (2 Corinthians 11:2). He counsels Christian husbands to love and care for their wives as Christ does the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). It is, however, in the visions of Revelation that the image of church as the bride of Christ comes to its fullest development. The people of God are the bride of the Lamb, arrayed in the fine linen of His righteousness (Revelation 19:7-8). The new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God is dressed in the finery of a bride prepared to meet her husband (Revelation 21:2,9). In the closing verses of the book, the church’s longing for the return of her Lord is expressed in the cry of a bride for her husband: **“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!”** (Revelation 22:17).

The woman of the vision is arrayed in heavenly splendor as a radiant bride. The image depicts the church as she is seen by God, not from the perspective of men.



“The Woman and the Red Dragon” by Jean Duvet



“The Beloved” by Alexandre Cabanel

“The woman appears in her true heavenly and glorious character despite her seemingly fragile and uncertain earthly history...The woman’s brightness connotes the heavenly identity and brightness of the people of God, as well as their purity.” (Beale, p. 627)

The language recalls the lover’s description of his beloved in the Song of Songs: **“Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?”** (Song of Songs 6:10) It is most significant to note the contrast between the adornment of this lady and that of the woman on the beast who will personify the devil’s counter-church in chapter 17:

“The glory which belongs to the sun-clad, moon bestriding, star-decked mother is all from above, from the

world of God, and stands in sharp contrast to the rich and gaudy decking-out of the harlot Babylon, whose ornaments all come from below, from the earth and the sea.” (Franzmann, p. 86)

The sun, moon, and stars imagery of the scene also recalls Joseph’s dream in which the sun and the moon (Jacob and Rachel) and the eleven stars (his brothers) bow down before him (Genesis 37: 9-11). It is evident that the brilliance of the woman’s array is a gift bestowed upon her. Unlike Christ who Himself gleams with the brilliance of the sun (Matthew 17:2; Revelation 1:16), the church is **“clothed with the sun.”** *“But God has put around her the brilliant, sunlit glory of His Christ, signifying that in Christ and because of Him she stands in God’s holy presence. “Clothed about with the sun” also suggests how much God in Christ honors the woman.”* (Brighton, p. 326) The positioning of the moon beneath her feet *“speaks of dominion”* (Mounce, p.236) and expresses the authority which God has graciously

bestowed upon His church. The moon is the symbol of the night, the time of darkness. Darkness signifies sin, death, and the devil. The fact that the moon is placed beneath her feet indicates the victory which God's people have won in Christ over sin, death, and the devil. That victory is further emphasized by the victor's crown (Greek - "*stephanos*") upon her head. The crown is adorned with twelve stars. As previously noted, twelve in the numerology of Revelation is the number of the people of God, from the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of Christ. Hence, the twelve stars in her victory crown confirm the identification of the woman as the personification of the church.

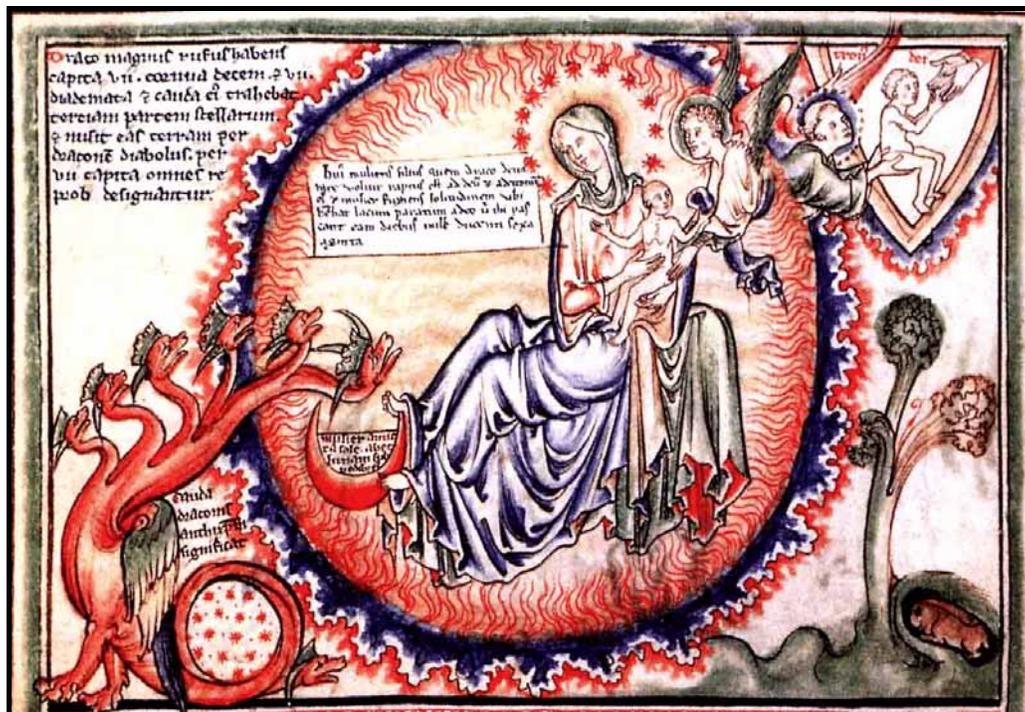


"The Woman and the Red Dragon" by William Blake

"She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth." - The anguish of the woman about to give birth to her child represents the anxiety, torment and persecution endured by the people of God in the days preceding the birth of the

Messiah. The Greek text literally reads - “*and she was with child, and cried being in travail, even being tormented to give birth.*” The verb “*being tormented*” is never used elsewhere in the New Testament in reference to childbirth. It is the characteristic word in the New Testament for punishment, trial, and persecution endured by God’s people (cf. Matthew 8:6,29; 14:24; Mark 5:7; 6:48; Luke 8:28; 2 Peter 2:8; Revelation 9:5; 11:10; 14:10; 20:10). The image of Israel as a woman suffering the anguish of labor is common among the prophets (cf. Isaiah 13:8; 21:3; 26:17-18; 61:7-8; 66:7ff.; Jeremiah 4:31; 13:21; 22:23; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:10; 5:2-3). The image of the Messiah being born of the people of God is not unknown in Scripture. From the beginning, the prophecies had foretold that He would be born of a woman (Genesis 3:15). Paul cites the tracing of “*the human ancestry of Christ*” from them as the greatest distinction of Israel (Romans 9:5). In Galatians 4:26, Paul hails the church, the true Jerusalem above, as “*our mother.*” A passage from one of the “*Thanksgiving Hymns*” of Qumram discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, closely parallels this text as it figuratively describes the community of believers as a mother in travail giving birth to the Messiah:

*“And like a woman in travail with her firstborn child,
upon whose belly pangs have come and grievous pains,*



*“The Woman Clothed with the Sun Gives Birth”
13th Century English Apocalypse*

*filling with anguish her child-bearing
 crucible.
 For the children have come to the throes of
 death
 And she labors in her pains who bears a
 man,
 For amid the throes of death she shall bring
 forth a man-child,
 And amid the pains of hell there shall spring
 forth from her child-bearing crucible
 A Marvelous, Mighty Counselor.
 And a man shall be delivered from out of the
 throes,
 When He is conceived, all wombs shall
 quicken,
 And the time of their delivery shall be in
 grievous pains;
 They shall be appalled who are with child,
 And when He is brought forth every pang
 shall come upon the child-bearing
 crucible.” (Aune, p. 682)*



*“The Dragon and the Bride”
 Luther Bible Woodcut*

Roman Catholic commentators have historically gone to great lengths to demonstrate a connection between the glorious mother of John’s vision and the blessed Virgin Mary. It is, however, unmistakably clear from the text that the emphasis here is not on an individual but on the entire community of faith, within which down through hundreds of generations the Messiah was finally born. *Mary in the New Testament*, a recent study edited by some of the world’s leading Roman Catholic Bible scholars reluctantly concedes the absence of significant historical support for the view that the mother of John’s vision represents Mary “raises the question of whether it represents an exegesis of the text itself or simply an imaginative theological application as part of a search for biblical support for Marian doctrine.” (Brown, p. 236).

“Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.” - The second sign appears in the form of a monstrous red dragon. The contours of this monster are drawn in a colorful mosaic of Old Testament imagery.



*“The Creation of Leviathan and Behemoth”
by William Blake*

The term “**dragon**” (Greek - “*drakon*”) is used thirteen times in the New Testament, all in the second half of the book of Revelation. It is used four times in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, as a translation for the Hebrew name “*Leviathan*” (“*the Coiled One*” - Job 40:25; Psalm 74:14; 104:26; Isaiah 27:1). In the imagery of the Old Testament “*Leviathan*” became a designation for the Satanic serpent whom the Lord shall destroy in the deliverance of His people - “***In that day, the Lord will punish with His sword, His fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan, that gliding serpent, Leviathan, the coiling serpent; He will slay the monster of the sea.***” (Isaiah 27:1). In Psalm 74:14, “*Leviathan*” is a monster with many heads. He is closely associated with “*Rahab*” the female monster of chaos

(Isaiah 51:9-10) who dwells at the bottom of the sea (cf. Psalm 89:11; Job 9:13; 26:12-13). The association of these monsters with the devil and demonic powers can be seen in the fact that the titles “*Leviathan*” and “*Rahab*” are often linked to the great empires which opposed and oppressed the people of God in the Old Testament era. In Psalm 74:14 “*Leviathan*” is Egypt. In Isaiah 27:1 he is Assyria and Babylon. Rahab is Egypt in Isaiah 30:7 and Psalm 87:4. The Septuagint also uses “*drakon*” fifteen times as a translation for the Hebrew word “*tannin*.” “*Tannin*” literally means the stretched out or elongated ones. The word is variously translated as “*sea serpent*,” “*monster*,” or “*dragon*.” Many scholars believe that this is the word the Bible uses to describe the massive reptiles which later came to be known as “*dinosaurs*” (Latin - “*terrible lizards*”). Based on the association of Satan and the serpent in the temptation of Eve (Genesis 3) “*drakon*,” the dragon, had become a prominent designation for the devil in early Judaism (cf. Revelation 12:9).

The dragon is John’s vision is “*enormous*” (Greek - “*megas*”). This marks him as a being of unique magnitude and power. The dragon’s color is a blazing “*red*” (Greek - “*pyrros*”) the color of fire, blood, and death. The color of this fearsome beast signals the mission upon which he has come. He comes from the fires of hell to serve the damning cause of the devil. Red is also the color of bloodshed. Later, in Revelation 17:3-6, the red color of the whore of Babylon is linked to the fact that she is “*the woman drunk with the blood of the saints*.” The vast reach of his cunning and



*“The Woman and the Red Dragon”
by Gerard Groeningen - 1561*

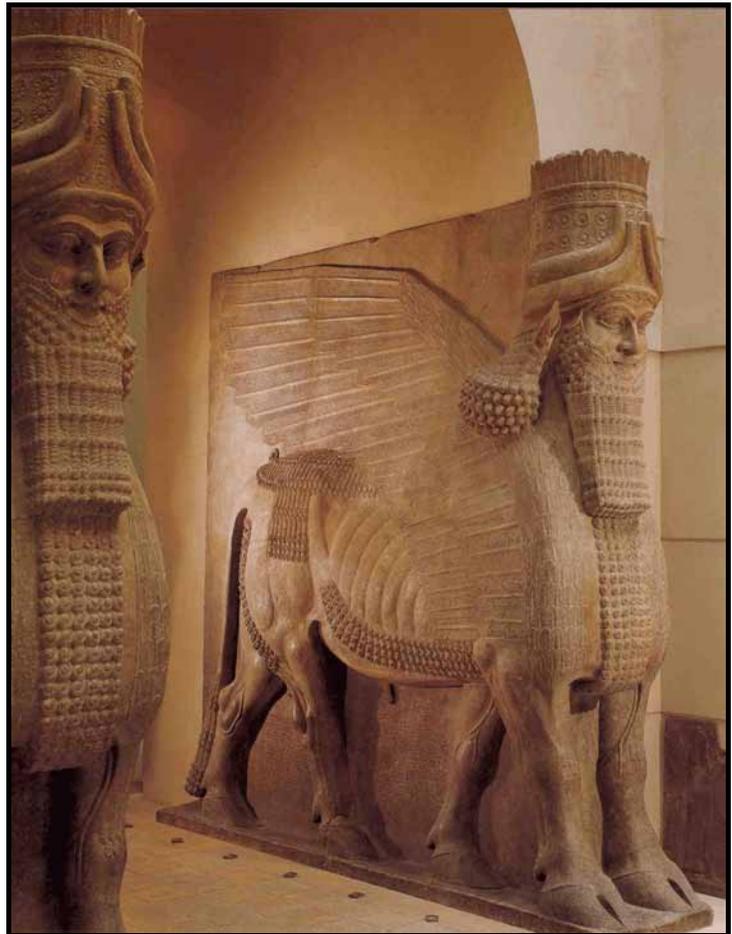
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“The Woman and the Red Dragon” - Our Savior Lutheran Church

power are represented by **“seven heads and ten horns.”** The dragon’s appearance mocks and mimics that of the Lamb (Cf. Revelation 5:6 and the seven horns and eyes of the Lamb). The ten horns of the dragon reflect the ten horns of the fourth beast in Daniel’s vision (Daniel 7:7). They signify his power and strength (cf. Psalm 89:17; 1 Samuel 2:10). The crowns upon the dragon’s heads are **“diademata,”** the royal crowns of a king. They once again reveal the devil’s character as **“God’s ape,”** as he imitates the Christ who is the true **“King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”** who will wear many crowns upon His head (Revelation 19:12). Hendrickson aptly describes the devil’s crowns as **“crowns of arrogated authority.”** (Hendrickson, p. 165) The crowns upon the dragon’s heads also indicate his ability to enlist the support of earthly kings and rulers in support of his cause (cf. Revelation 19:19). The powers of this world will consistently stand by his side in his bitter opposition to God and His people, for the devil is the god and prince of this world.

“His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.” - The image of stars swept down from the sky and hurled to the earth is drawn from Daniel 8:10 where the action is carried out by the little horn of the beast. John modifies the image and now it is the tail of the mighty dragon that sweeps **“a third of the stars out of the sky.”** The stars of the heavens are a popular symbol for angels in Scripture (cf. Judges 5:20; Job 38:7; Revelation 1:20). The fall of the star from the sky the downfall of the devil and the angels that followed him in his doomed rebellion against God (cf. Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18; Revelation 9:11). The image of evil angels as fallen stars is also prevalent in the popular first century Hebrew apocalypse 1 Enoch (cf. 18:13-16; 21:6; 86:1-6; 88:1; 90:24). John



Assyrian Guardian Cherubs from the Palace of Sargon II

once again uses the symbolic third to convey the fact that a significant minority of the angels joined Satan in his revolt (cf. 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The mighty power of the dragon is illustrated by his most awful deed. This highest and most glorious of the angels, “*anointed as a guardian cherub*” (Ezekiel 28:11-19) seduced massive number of the heavenly host to rise up against the Creator. The image of the dragon’s tail may be an allusion to Satan’s awesome powers of treachery and deceit (Isaiah 9:14 - “*The elders and prominent men are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail.*” Cf. also John 8:44).



*“The Deliverance of the Child”
13th Century German Apocalypse*

“The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.” - The child about to be born is the object of the devil’s malevolent attention. The church, pregnant with the promise of the Messiah, is presented as a woman about to give birth. The huge red dragon stands poised before the woman ready to devour the babe at the instant of its birth. Since the beginning, he has lived in dread of the fulfillment of the ancient promise that God would send a descendant of the woman to crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). The verb “*stood*” is in the imperfect tense, indicating continuous, ongoing action. The dragon does not know when the promise will be fulfilled. He stands in constant readiness. This child must be destroyed. His grim intent is to “*devour her child the moment*

it was born.” The image of the great dragon swallowing up the child is a picture of utter destruction. Jeremiah used the same language to describe the complete



“The Triumph of the Innocents” by W. Holeman Hunt

devastation of the kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians: ***“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured us...like a serpent he has swallowed us and filled his stomach with our delicacies, and then has spewed us out.”*** (Jeremiah 51:34). Behind the power of the image lurks the ugly history of Herod’s soldiers rampaging through the streets of Bethlehem, their swords stained crimson with the blood of babies (Matthew 2:16-18). Satan’s increasingly desperate efforts to destroy Jesus culminate in apparent success on Calvary. On the eve of His death, our Lord calmly declared: ***“The ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over Me.”*** (John 14:30) But in that success his cause is destroyed and the ancient prophecy that the serpent’s head will be crushed by the heel of the woman’s child is fulfilled.

“She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to His throne.” - The promised child, the Messiah is born. The repetitive language - ***“a son, a male child”*** alludes to Isaiah 66:7 where similar terminology is used. The wording of the descriptive phrase which follows is drawn from the messianic prophecy of Psalm 2: ***“You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”*** (Psalm 2:9) The iron rod rule over the nations which the Psalmist predicts looks beyond the

humiliation and meekness of Christ's earthly life to the time of His glorious return in power. When all that was necessary *“for us and for our salvation”* was accomplished God recalled His Son to the right hand of His glory in heaven. John's phrase - *“her child was snatched up to God and to His throne”* encompasses the exaltation and enthronement of the incarnate Son of God as they were visibly demonstrated in His ascension. The promise of Christ's triumphant return to judge the living and the dead is explicit in the ascension event: *“This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1:11).



“The Flight of the Woman” - 14th Century English Apocalypse

“The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.” - As Israel wandered in the desert wilderness for forty years prior to her entry into the Promised Land, so also the new Israel, the church of God in Christ, must also endure her time in the wilderness. The fury of the dragon, frustrated in his attempt to destroy the child, now focuses upon the child's mother. As God once assured Israel, *“It was I who knew you in the wilderness.”* (Hosea 13:5) so now God has *“a place prepared”* for the new Israel *“where she might*

be taken care of.” The duration of this wilderness wandering is “**1,260 days,**” (42 months - 3 ½ years) the characteristic designation for the New Testament era in Revelation. The details of the church’s sojourn in the wilderness of this world, and of God’s care for her, will be provided in subsequent verses but first the scene now shifts from earth to heaven.

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.” - The events described in Verses 7-12 are the heavenly counterpart of the earthly events recorded in Verses 1-6. The vision of the woman and the dragon revealed one dimension of the struggle, the angelic war in heaven reveals the other. As G.K. Beale notes: *“This is typical apocalyptic style and has precedents already in Daniel 10:13,21 and 12:1 and in later apocalyptic literature.”* (Beale, p. 650) In Daniel’s prophecy the archangel Michael (Hebrew - *“He Who Is Like God”*) is the champion of the host of heaven, the guardian of God’s people - **“the great prince who protects your people”** (Daniel 12:1) - assisting the divine Son of Man in battle against the evil angel of Persia. Here in Revelation Michael is again the champion of the host of heaven, leading the good angels in battle against the devil and his demons.



“St Michael and the Dragon” by Martin Schongauer

This climactic confrontation is not an historical account of the original fall of the devil and his angels. It is, instead, a symbolic description of the effect of the incarnation and exaltation of Christ already described in the previous scene. This battle rages **“in heaven.”** This is not the heavenly dwelling place of God where



“The War in Heaven” by Albrecht Dürer

perfect peace and joy prevail throughout eternity. That heaven will never be troubled by conflict or war. The Greek noun “ouranos” (“heaven”), like its English counterpart, has a variety of meanings. In this instance, the term is used in a more general sense to describe the spiritual realm, in contrast to the physical world of time and space, as also in Ephesians 6:12 - ***“Our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and authorities and cosmic powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*** The point at issue in this war is not the control of heaven, which could never have been in doubt, nor the ability of the devil and his angels to appear before God in heaven subsequent to their fall into sin. Job 1:6-12 clearly indicates that when it suits God’s purpose this can indeed occur. When Revelation reports ***“But he was not strong enough and they lost their place in heaven.”*** the point at issue is the devil’s ability to stand before God as the accuser of mankind, demanding their just condemnation (cf. Zechariah 3:1-10). By His righteous life and innocent death Christ has removed the basis for the accusation against us. His resurrection, ascension, and enthronement at the right hand of God demonstrate that the Father has accepted the substitutionary atonement of His Son and that now we stand before God justified. The victorious Christ is now our Advocate, our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) before the bar of divine justice. This is the context of the heavenly hymn of praise which follows: ***“For the Accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb..”*** (Vs. 10)



“St Michael and the Dragon” by Giovanni Pietro Birago



“The Justification of Adam and Eve” by Jacob Lucius - 1556

This classic Reformation era woodcut illustrates the Biblical concept of justification. In the center foreground, Father Adam and Mother Eve stand before the bar of divine justice as the representatives of the human race. Their heads are bowed. Their faces blush with shame, and their hands shield their downcast eyes from the glory of the holy God. Their bodies are concealed behind the pathetic fig leaves which represent mankind’s futile attempts to deal with the aftermath of sin. They are literally the picture of guilt. Behind them stands the grotesque figure of Satan, a humanoid bird of prey with a fiery sword at his waist, perhaps recalling the cherubim who barred the way to the Garden of Eden after the Fall. Hellish flames spurt out from beneath his costume. He holds Adam and Eve captive in the coils of the serpent, the instrument of the Fall. From his beak comes the accusation: *“My Lord Judge, I raise the cry against Adam and Eve!”* At the center of the image is the judge’s table surrounded by the bar of justice. At each of the table’s four corners is a putti/cherub reminding

the viewer that this is the heavenly court of justice. The two tablets of the law, with the ten commandments inscribed upon them are before the judge. The commandments rest upon a skull, symbolizing the fact that the Law brings only death and damnation to the sinner. At the center of the table is the Messianic rose, Old Testament emblem of the promised Savior, and the olive branch of peace. At the rear center, behind the judge's table are the three persons of the Trinity within the "shekinah," the "Glory Cloud" which indicated the presence of God in Tabernacle and Temple. To the right is God the Father in the ornate brocaded robe of the King with a gleaming golden crown upon His head. In His hands are the symbols of royal power, the orb and the scepter, signifying that He is the sovereign of all the world. The words coming from God the Father are a quotation from Ezekiel 33:11 - ***"As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live."*** To the left is Jesus Christ, God the Son. He also holds a scepter identifying with the divine reign of the Father. Christ presents the words of 1 Peter 3:18 - ***"For Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."*** A dove with human features, representing God the Holy Spirit hovers over the Father and the Son. Behind the Trinity are the sword and the lily, representing the holiness and justice of God. The right side of the woodcut represents the Law and its stern demands. Therefore the female personifications of Justice (Latin- "***JUSTICIA***"), holding the scales, and Truth (Latin - "***VERITAS***"), holding the square, stand to the right of the bar. Justice holds Ezekiel 18:4 - ***"The soul who sins is the one who will die."*** Truth holds the warning of Genesis 2:17 - ***"But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*** The cloud aureole on the Law side is populated by weeping putti. Behind them, in the upper right hand corner is the Fall into Sin as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden partake of the forbidden fruit. The gaping jaws of hell swallow up sinful mankind in the lower right hand corner. The left side of the image represents the Gospel. Here the female personifications of Mercy (Latin - "***MISERACORDIA***"), her hands folded in prayer, and Peace (Latin - "***PAX***"), with the olive branch on her shoulder, kneel in humble supplication before the bar. Both figures are holding prayers requesting the Lord to remember His mercy and compassion. The putti in the cloud aureole on the Gospel side of the illustration are rejoicing. Behind them in the upper left hand corner is the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. In the lower left hand corner is the risen Christ leading the saints in triumphant procession thru the open gates of heaven. Note the prominent presence of Luther and Duke Frederick the Wise among the saints.

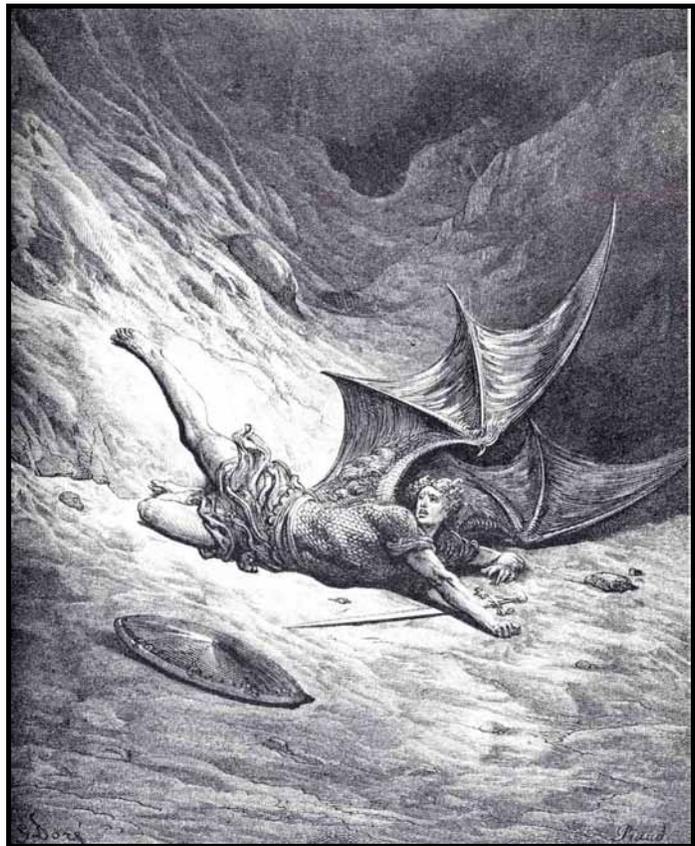


“Satan and His Angels Cast Out of Heaven” by Gustave Doré

The panoramic picture of heavenly war between Michael and the dragon is designed to present the successful accomplishment of mankind’s redemption - the victory of Christ and the defeat of Satan. The salvation or damnation of humanity hung on the outcome of this conflict. A series of three powerful phrases indicate the utter and complete defeat of the devil and his minions. First the direction of the battle becomes clear - **“he was not strong enough.”** The tide of the battle turns into a decisive rout - **“they lost their place in heaven.”** And finally, the moping up action in which the final pockets of rebel resistance are wiped out - **“He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him.”**

“The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.” - The leader of the fallen angels is completely identified and unmasked. He who is the master of the disguise, the masquerade, and the counterfeit (2 Corinthians 11:14) is clearly revealed in his true nature. He is ***“that ancient serpent... who leads the whole world astray.”*** The allusion is to the Fall of mankind in the beginning and the serpent through which the devil beguiled the woman and brought about the condemnation of our race (Genesis 3). Each of the two titles disclose his activities and his role. ***“Devil”*** is from the Greek *“diabolos”* means *“slanderer”* or *“false accuser.”* ***“Satan”*** (Greek - *“Satanas”*) is ultimately derived from the Hebrew. It means *“adversary,” “enemy,”* or *“accuser.”* The one who poses as our friend is actually our deadliest foe. His delight is to demand our damnation so that we may share an eternity in Hell with him.

“He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” - The devil and his legions were decisively defeated, but they were not destroyed. Their power was broken, but it has not yet been eliminated. The language of the text - ***“the great dragon was hurled down,” “he was hurled down to the earth”*** indicates great violence and bitter struggle. Jesus expressed a similar concept when He said: ***“Now is the judgement of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.”*** (John 12:31) After the seventy-two disciples preached the gospel throughout Palestine, Jesus responded: ***“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*** (Luke 10:18) Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection have resulted in drastically curtailing the devil’s role of deception and nullifying his role of slanderer. That is the meaning of the image of the devil and his angels being cast out of heaven and hurled down to the earth. This is not a matter of physical location, as



“Satan Smitten by Michael” by Gustave Doré



“St. Michael Fighting the Rebel Angels” by Lucas Vorsterman - 1595

if such things could be pertinent to angels, but of power and possibility. The Gospel of salvation will now go forth to the whole world. The devil and his demons cannot stop or silence that witness. The devil will continue his deceptive work. He will oppose and he will oppress, but the **“gates of hell”** shall not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18).

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ...” - The triumphant cry of victory now resounds throughout heaven. The song not only celebrates, but interprets and explains the significance of the heavenly war between Michael and the dragon. The source of the **“loud voice”** is unidentified, however, given the content of the hymn which follows, it is most probably the twenty-four elders who surround the throne of God representing the church of all ages. This is the song of the saints in glory, rejoicing in that which God has done for them. The verb **“have come”** is in the aorist tense in the Greek text indicating action that is fully complete. That which the song celebrates is present reality. This is a **“done deal”** to use the contemporary idiom. In



“St. Michael Triumphs Over the Devil”
by Hieronymus Wierix - 1553

the ascension and exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God is undeniably evident to all. What is it that has been completely accomplished? - **“salvation,” “power,” “kingdom,”** and **“authority.”** **“Salvation”** (Greek - **“soteria”**) is God’s action in rescuing his people from death and damnation and the safety and security which

results from that action. **“Power”** (Greek - *“dynamis”*) is the divine power of God which has accomplished this salvation through the incarnation and exaltation of the Son which broke and defeated the power of the dragon. **“The kingdom of our God”** (Greek - *“basilea tou theou”*) refers to His rule of grace and salvation reaching out to save men everywhere despite all the efforts of Satan. **“The authority of His Christ”** (Greek - *“he exousia tou christou autou”*) is the power delegated to our Lord by the Father to implement and carry out the plan of salvation (cf. Matthew 28:18). Now that the plan of salvation has been fully accomplished, the authority of Christ has been displayed and demonstrated before all. *“But now this authority of Christ is seen in all of its consummating power, before which no enemy can stand and by which Christ completely exonerates his followers and the faith they have in Him (cf. Phil. 2:7-11).”* (Brighton, p. 337)



*“The Woman and the Red Dragon”
by William Blake*

“For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.” This is the core of the vision’s meaning. The basis for Satan’s accusations against the saints has been taken away. He is no longer able to successfully lodge a charge against any one of God’s elect (cf. Romans 8:33-34). Our sins are covered over in the blood of Christ. The pure white robe of His perfect righteousness conceals the filthy rags of our unrighteousness. Now we stand before the divine judge justified. G.B. Caird offers the intriguing observation that although the vision depicts this battle in military terms, it is essentially a legal

battle between opposing counsel in which the loser is disbarred. The devil's role in all this is particularly malevolent in that he is the instigator of the very sins for which he demands punishment.

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” - Christ is the Lamb of God whose innocent blood has taken away the sin of the world. It is that atoning sacrifice which has destroyed the basis for the Adversary's accusations. The blood of the Lamb is the expiatory reason for our acquittal. Thus, ***“they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”*** The hymn adds a second reason for the victory of God's people over the dragon - ***“and by the word of their testimony.”*** Lenski describes this as *“the mediatory cause,”* (Lenski, p. 379), that is to say that the defeat of the devil was accomplished by means of the faithful testimony of God's people, as they proclaimed the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Christ. For many, down through the ages the price of that faithful testimony has been a martyr's death. Nonetheless the witness has gone forth in every place and time - ***“they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”***

“Therefore rejoice you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short.” - The hosts of heaven, men and angels, are summoned to join in the exultant celebration. But while the church triumphant in heaven rejoices, the church militant on earth remains locked in deadly struggle. The 1,260 days are not yet complete. The relentless assault continues. Satan's defeat has only served to intensify his fury. He is determined to do all within his now limited power to drag the souls of men down into the fires of hell. He know full well that his time is running out as the world hurtles on toward judgement. It is truly ironic that *“the troubles of the persecuted righteous arise not because Satan is too strong, but because he is beaten.”* (Mounce, p. 244) The impotent rage of an already defeated but still powerful foe is a dangerous reality indeed.

“When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.” - The scene shifts back to the earth again and to the woman in the wilderness. The dragon, frustrated in his attempt to destroy the child, now vents his anger upon the woman. The dragon furiously pursues the woman into the wilderness. Behind the dramatic imagery of the vision lies this truth -the devil was unable to destroy the Christ and prevent the accomplishment of the plan of salvation. His kingdom was shattered and his power curtailed. He turns now

to persecute and punish the people of God. By deception and false doctrine within and persecution and oppression without, he desperately seeks to limit the proclamation of the pure Gospel. Accordingly, the church on earth must live *“simultaneously in the high confidence of faith and in the open eyed sobriety of fear.”* (Franzmann, p. 90)



“To Me She’s Dear the Worthy Maid” by Rudolf Schäfer

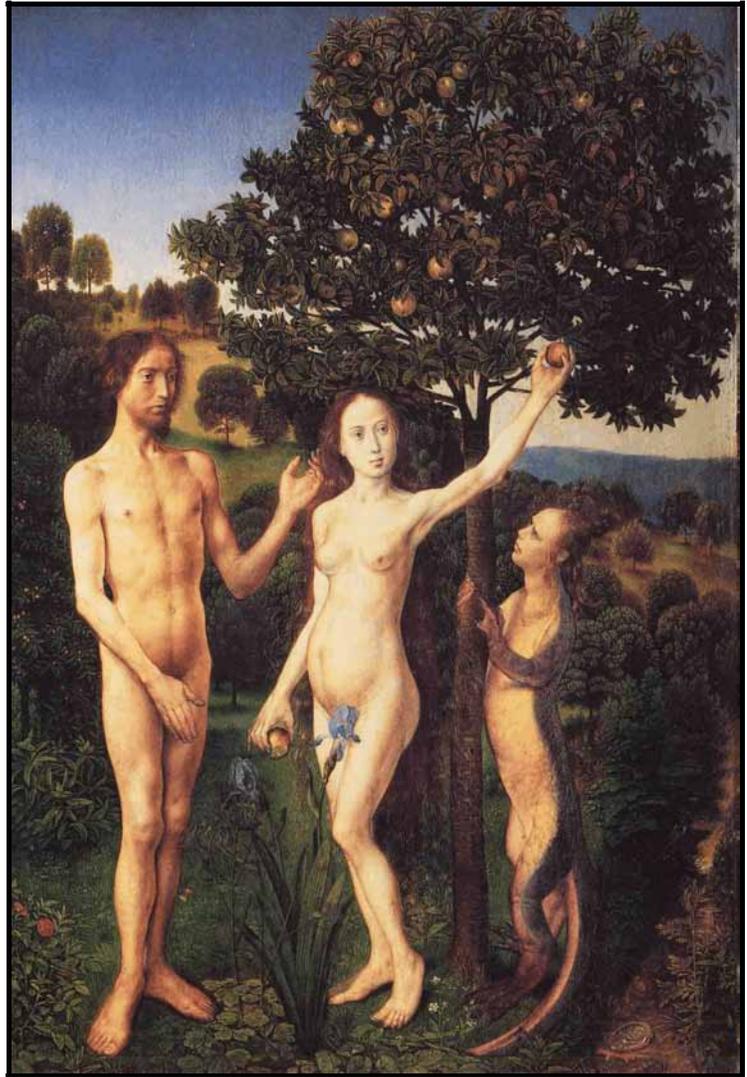
In 1535, amid religious upheaval and civil disturbance, Martin Luther wrote a magnificent hymn based upon the vision of the woman and the dragon. He used the structure and manner of the courtly love songs of his era. The hymn is entitled *“To Me She’s Dear, the Worthy Maid.”* It was composed as a hymn of comfort to the church under the cross. It captures the sense of the text and effectively expresses the intended meaning of the vision. Unfortunately the hymn’s complicated meter and melody have consigned it to undeserved obscurity:

*1. To me she’s dear the worthy maid, And I cannot forget her;
Praise, honor, virtue of her are said; Then all I love her better.
I seek her good, and if I should Right evil fare, I do not care,
She’ll make up for it to me. With love and truth that will not tire,
Which she will ever show me; And do all my desire.*

*2. She wears of purest gold a crown Twelve stars their rays are twining;
Her raiment, glorious as the sun, And bright from far is shining.
Her feet the moon are set upon. She is the bride with the Lord to bide,
Sore travail is upon her; She bringeth forth a noble Son
Whom all the world must honor, Their King, the only one.*

3. *That makes the dragon rage and roar, He will the child upswallow;
His raging comes to nothing more; No jot a gain will follow.
The infant high, up to the sky Away is heft and he is left
On earth all mad with murder. The mother now alone is she,
But God will watchful guard her, And the right Father be. Amen.*

“The woman was given two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times, and a half a time, out of the serpent’s reach.” - God led the Children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt and protected them through the perils of wandering in the wilderness for forty long years. In describing that loving care God used the image of an eagle protecting its young: ***“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you to Myself.”*** (Exodus 19:4). In his final words to the Israelite nation Moses reminded them that God had cared for their fathers: ***“Like and eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.”*** (Deuteronomy 32:10-11; cf. also Psalm 91:4).



The Fall Into Sin” by Hugo van der Goes - 1470

When Isaiah seeks to describe the unfailing care of God for His own he says: ***“They will soar on wings like eagles...”*** (Isaiah 40:31). The Revelator calls upon this effective Old Testament image to describe God’s providential care of His Church throughout her time of persecution - ***“the woman was given two wings of a great eagle...”*** The woman is brought to a place of refuge where she will be safe from the



“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” by Rudolf Schäfer

fury of the dragon - *“out of the serpent’s reach.”* The fact that the dragon is once again referred to as *“the serpent”* - recalling the original temptation in Eden to doubt the Word of God and usurp His place - suggests that the nature of the devil’s attack upon the Church will be primarily spiritual, that is, an assault upon the truth of the Word and substance of the faith. This is reflected in the traditional rabbinic understanding of the eagle metaphors in Exodus 19 and Deuteronomy 32. The rabbis taught that the sanctuary to which God delivered Israel was the truth of the Torah and that their safe refuge was *“none other than the protective place in the wilderness where God’s sustaining Word and tabernacling presence provide.”*

(Beale, p. 670). Hence the place of refuge which the vision depicts is not a physical location but the spiritual refuge of God’s Word and the unfailing comfort and courage which it will provide in time of trouble. This is not a promise of deliverance from deception and persecution but a promise of endurance through deception and persecution. It is as Luther declares in his great battle hymn of the Reformation:

*“Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us.
 We tremble not, we fear no ill, they shall not overpower us.
 This world’s prince may still, scowl fierce as he will;
 He can harm us none. He’s judged the deed is done.
 One little Word can fell him.*

The duration of the woman's sojourn in the wilderness is defined as ***“a time, times, and half a time.”*** This is the characteristic three and one half (1,260 days - 42 months), the broken seven, the limited period of persecution that comprises the New Testament era.

“Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.”

- Though crippled and cast out, the dragon is not helpless. In his rage and fury he



“The Hosts of Egypt Drowning In the Red Sea” by J. James Tissot

lashes out at the woman. The cascade of ***“water like a river”*** which gushes forth from his gaping jaws is intended for nothing less than extermination -***“to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.”*** The metaphor of an overflowing flood occurs quite frequently in the Old Testament to describe judgement and persecution (i.e. Psalm 18:4,16; 32:6; 46:3; 88:7; Isaiah 43:2; Daniel 11:10,22). In the library at Qumram and the rabbinical commentaries of the first century the metaphor of the overwhelming flood is most often understood as a reference to the deception and false teaching which threatens to overwhelm the people of God. Given the serpent allusions to the Fall in this text, that would appear to be the intended sense here. The flood proceeding from the serpent's mouth portrays the devil's efforts to destroy the church by deception and false teaching. Just as the serpent deceived the first woman with lies and half-truths so he now attempts to deceive the latter day woman with his lying words. It is evident from the letters to the seven churches in the first vision that false teachers were already infiltrating the young congregations

and causing significant disruption and defection. This river of lies and deception is the devil's cruel counterpart to the **"river of the water of life"** which flows bright as crystal from God's heavenly throne (Revelation 21:1). But this river does not bring life. It brings only death. In the context of the church's sojourn in the wilderness, the waters of the devil's flood also recall the waters of the Red Sea which threatened to destroy the Children of Israel when they were pursued by the army of Pharaoh. God led his people through the sea on dry land but when the host of Egypt attempted to follow them - **"You stretched out Your right hand and the earth swallowed them."** (Exodus 15:12) When Korah led a rebellion against Moses as the chosen spokesman of God **"the earth opened her mouth and consumed"** the rebels and their families (Numbers 16:12-14). So now in John's vision the earth **"opening its mouth and swallowing the river"** signifies God's care and His deliverance of His people.

"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring - those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" - The dragon's continued failure to destroy the woman serves only to enrage him further. He was unable to kill the woman's child. His attempt to engulf the woman herself in the torrent of the river also ended in abject failure. But still he will not desist. The campaign of extermination continues. His anger is redirected toward **"the rest of her offspring."** The faithful remnant, the true Christian Church, **"those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus"** - now become the target of his frantic wrath. **"If he can neither unseat the throned Christ nor destroy the Church, yet individual Christians may enjoy no such immunity."** (Swete, p. 160) While the gates of hell will not prevail against the church, individual believers remain subject to the attacks of the dragon and may be destroyed. Those who are steadfast in their obedience to the Word and commandments of God; those who will not compromise or yield to the world's relentless pressure to conform; those who faithfully and consistently testify to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ - these are they who become the dragon's prime target. Their destruction and their downfall must be the devil's basic objective. **"And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea."** - This change in the dragon's position signals the transition to the next scene in which the two monstrous agents through which the dragon will carry out his war against the faithful offspring of the woman will be presented.



“Mankind Worships the Beasts” by Lucas Cranach

The Second Scene - The Beast from the Sea

Revelation 13: 1-10

And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with crowns on his horns and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also

worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God and to slander His Name and His dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast - all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world. He who has an ear let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

Introduction - The Beasts of Revelation 13

The beasts of Revelation 13 present different dimensions of the same reality. By splitting the single image into two different symbolic figures John is able to highlight and emphasize particular characteristics of this reality. At the same time, the expansion of the one into two enables him to complete the image of the Satanic Anti-Trinity - the red dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the land - which reveal the devil as the great counterfeit. The view that the two beasts represent different dimensions of the same reality is strongly reinforced by the interchange of their roles throughout their various appearances in Revelation. In this vision, the beast from the land is portrayed as the agent and servant of the beast from the sea (Revelation 13:12-15). When they next appear, the two are presented as equals gathering the hosts of evil for the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-14). Later, in Chapter 17, the beast from the land, now in the guise of Harlot Babylon, is depicted as the mistress of the beast from the sea, riding upon his back (Revelation 17:3-8). The beasts are two sides of the same coin, each side presenting a different face of the same figure.

The subject of this chapter is the “*Antichrist*” and the host of anti-Christian powers that serve the cause of Satan in this world. The composite presentation of Antichrist and anti-Christ together is characteristic of St. John. In 1 John 2:18, the apostle had warned the Church of the imminent arrival of “*the Antichrist*” and of the host of “*many anti-Christ*s” that had proceeded his coming: “*Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many anti-Christ*s have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.” Now again, in the beasts from the sea and the land, we are confronted by the Antichrist and his entourage. (Cf. “*Excursus - The Biblical Doctrine of the Antichrist*”, p.383ff.)



"The Beasts from the Sea and the Land" by Albrecht Dürer

“And I saw a beast coming out of the sea.” - “The characteristic phrase **“And I saw”** (Greek - *“kai eidon”*) signals the beginning of the next scene in the vision. The dragon had moved to **“the shore of the sea”** in preparation for this scene, as if waiting for the monster that will rise to do his bidding. Now John sees a grotesque **“beast coming out of the sea.”** To the Hebrew mind, the sea represented chaos, confusion, and evil. The upheaval of its waves, crashing endlessly against one another, signified the tumult of the nations, constantly in conflict with one another

(cf. Isaiah 17:12; 57:20-21; Jeremiah 49:23; Daniel 7:2; Ezekiel 26:3; Revelation 17:15). For John on the island of Patmos, to gaze out over the sea was to look to the West and to Rome, seat of the empire that had conquered the world. That which rises up from the murky waters of the deep is a **“beast”** (Greek - *“therion”*). The word indicates an animal of great strength that is characterized by wild, uncontrolled ferocity. This horrendous being is the second member of the Satanic anti-Trinity. He is deliberately presented as the opposite in every way of Christ, the Lamb of God. This is clearly indicated by the stark contrast of their symbolic representations: on the one hand the lamb, the image of meekness and vulnerability; on the other the beast, the image of ostentatious power, arrogance, and



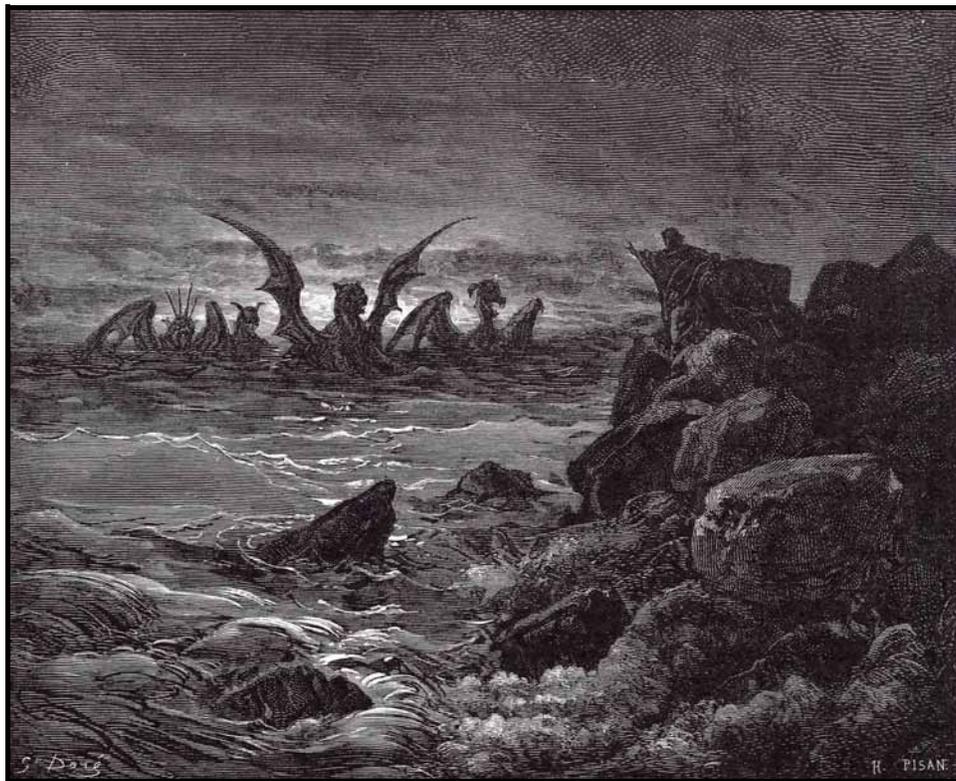
“The Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea”
by William Blake

invincibility. The beast stands for might against right, chaos against order, evil against good, death against life, and Satan against God. While he seeks to emulate and imitate the Christ, he is the very opposite and enemy of the Christ. The beast symbolizes the anti-Christian perversion of civil government and the power structures of this world, particularly their personification in and manipulation by the great Antichrist (cf. 1 John 1:18).



“The Beast from the Sea” by Jean Duvet

“He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on each of his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.” - The beast mirrors the appearance of the dragon who is his master (Revelation 12:3) and is thus identified as an agent and servant of the devil. Like his Satanic master, he boasts the golden crowns of royalty (Greek - *“didemata”*). But in this instance, the crowns are not upon his heads but upon his horns. The shift may signal the fact that this beast is nothing more than a tool in the hand of his devilish Master. While he may believe himself to be an independent agent, pursuing his own goals and purposes, perhaps even doing that which he believe to be good and right, in reality he is nothing more than a puppet whose strings are being pulled from the depths of the Abyss. The heads represent cleverness and intelligence. They are seven in number to signify the craftiness of our foe. The dragon’s crowns, unlike those of the beast rest directly upon his head to show that he is the mastermind. It is in his diabolical cleverness that the schemes carried out by the beast are devised. Ten is the ordinal number, the number of government and law. The horn, as we have seen, represents power. Many commentators also view the combination of seven and ten in this scene as an allusion to Rome, the city built upon seven hills, and to the ten original imperial provinces of the Roman Empire. In Daniel’s vision (Daniel 7:7-8), the horns of the beasts represented individual



“Daniel’s Vision of the Four Beasts” by Gustave Dore



“Men Worshipped the Beast” - Luther Bible Illustration -1534

monarchs ruled by the devil to use their power for evil. John broadens the symbol and places the royal crowns upon the horns themselves to symbolize all the powers and authorities of this world. While the primary focus here is on civil government, all the power structures of human culture are included in this dreadful image - political/governmental, military, economic, social, scientific, philosophic and educational.

A *“blasphemous name”* was inscribed on each of the beast’s seven heads. Blasphemy is the essence of this monster - his basic concern and his fundamental activity, as will be seen in the descriptions which follow. Blasphemy is all thought, speech, or action which denies, questions, or challenges the majesty or the power of God. The sin of blasphemy focuses specifically on the misuse or mockery of God’s Name or His Word. *“Blasphemy is the defaming and abusive speech by which God and all that belongs to Him are ridiculed and mocked.”* (Brighton, p. 350) The blasphemous names written upon the heads of the beast from the sea represent the claims of any human authority to absolute sovereignty over the hearts and minds of men throughout history. When human authority in any form presumes to take the



*“The Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea”
Luther Bible Woodcut by Hans Burgmair*

aware that they were gazing into the bloodshot eyes of the brutal beast from St. John’s vision:

*“The connection between worldly government and the church consists in this alone, that the church points out to worldly government through its proper proclamation the limits of their own order so that they do not thereby become a tool of the devil, who in the end seeks only chaos so that he may destroy all life. Worldly government ought to expect this service, and this service alone, of the church. With this service the church preserves those under authority from the deceit of the devil who desires unlimited power to have himself worshiped as life-giver and savior.”
(Bonhoeffer/Sasse, p. 113)*

“The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth

place of God it becomes a blasphemy. That judgement applies to the divine claims of ancient emperors and the totalitarian demands of modern dictators. In 1933, the Nazi government of Germany was systematically moving to control every dimension of the nation’s life. Lutheran theologians Herman Sasse and Dietrich Bonhoeffer were commissioned to draft the church’s response to Hitler’s efforts to manipulate the convictions and the confession of God’s people. The result of their effort has come to be known as *“The Bethel Confession.”* The confession emphasizes the inherent limitation of human governmental authority and the profound danger of the Satanic abuse of that authority to replace God. In reading the language of this prophetic document it is clear that the authors were well

like that of a lion.” - The prophet Daniel beheld a vision of four beasts, representing the succession of world empires that would conquer and oppress the people of God from the time of the prophet until the coming of the Messiah - Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. These four great world empires were represented by a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a monster with iron teeth. John combines all four into one great monstrosity. He presents us with an almost unimaginable image of destructiveness, ferocity and power. This is clearly not one particular ruler or power but a composite of all human authority as it is manipulated and abused by the red dragon in pursuit of his anti-Christian goals. An individual ruler or government may epitomize the beast from the sea at a specific time in a particular place, but none can exhaust the image for it encompasses them all. Even the “*Great Antichrist*” himself, who is the master at manipulating human authority for his own ends and whose malevolent presence will continue throughout the New Testament era, does not exhaust the image of the beast.

“Satanic evil expressed itself through the kingdoms of Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Sodom, and Rome. This system of evil will continue to manifest itself in yet future kingdoms of the world, and has the ability to manifest itself as well in economic, social, and religious structures on earth.” (Beale, p. 686)



“All Men Will Worship the Beast” by Matthias Merian

The authority of civil government is ordained and established by God Himself (Romans 13:1-7). However, when human government oversteps its bounds and usurps the power and place of God it then becomes demonic, a tool of the devil - ***“The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.”*** The beast personifies not authority itself, but human authority gone wrong - the anti-Christian abuse of human government that takes the place of God.



“The Beasts from the Land and the Sea” Luther Bible Woodcut

“One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.” - The death wound from which the beast’s head had recovered is a mocking parody of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Lamb of God upon the throne bears the wounds of one who was slain. Heaven had rejoiced:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased men for God... Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength, honor and glory and praise.!” (Revelation 5:9,12)

The visible wounds of Christ, the Lamb of God, are of profound theological

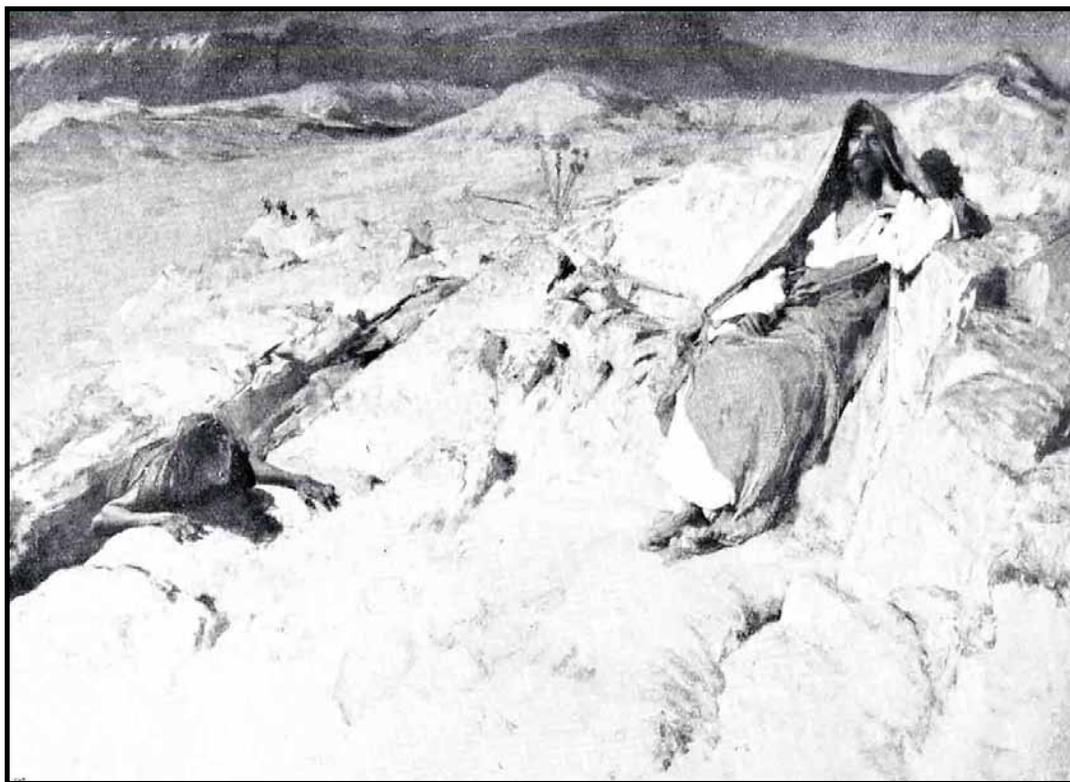
significance in the symbolism of Revelation. They link Christ's exaltation to His humiliation and assert the substitutionary death of Jesus as the sole basis for the salvation of humanity. The resurrection of Jesus proves that Christ is truly the Son of God and that He is worthy to rule and reign at the right hand of the Father. The Lamb who was slain has now begun His reign. As previously noted, the devil is "God's ape." He delights in mimicking and counterfeiting God and His great acts of salvation. The fatal wound of the beast is designed to serve the same purpose as the wounds of the Lamb - that is, to validate the beast's message of human power and pride. Many commentators see this detail of the vision as an allusion to alleged resurrections by divine emperors (i.e. Caligula or Nero), to the rise and fall of individual world governments, or the reformation. Given the scope of the vision, however, all such views seem too limited.

The first Messianic prophecy in the Garden of Eden had promised that the Descendant of the Woman would crush the head of the satanic serpent (Genesis 3:15). The fatal wound on the head of the beast reflects and rejects the language of that original Gospel promise. Later in the Chapter, John will specify that this fatal wound was caused by a sword (vs. 14). This recalls the prophecy of Isaiah: *"In that day the Lord will punish with His sword, his fierce, great, and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan, the coiling serpent. He will slay the monster of the sea."* (Isaiah 27:1) God fulfilled His ancient promise that He would crush the serpent's head in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But to all appearances the devil continues to reign. The final judgment did not immediately follow Christ's death and resurrection. From the world's false perspective the realm of Satan has not merely continued, it has flourished and grown. No matter how many times the



*"The Worship of the Beast"
Luther Bible Woodcut*

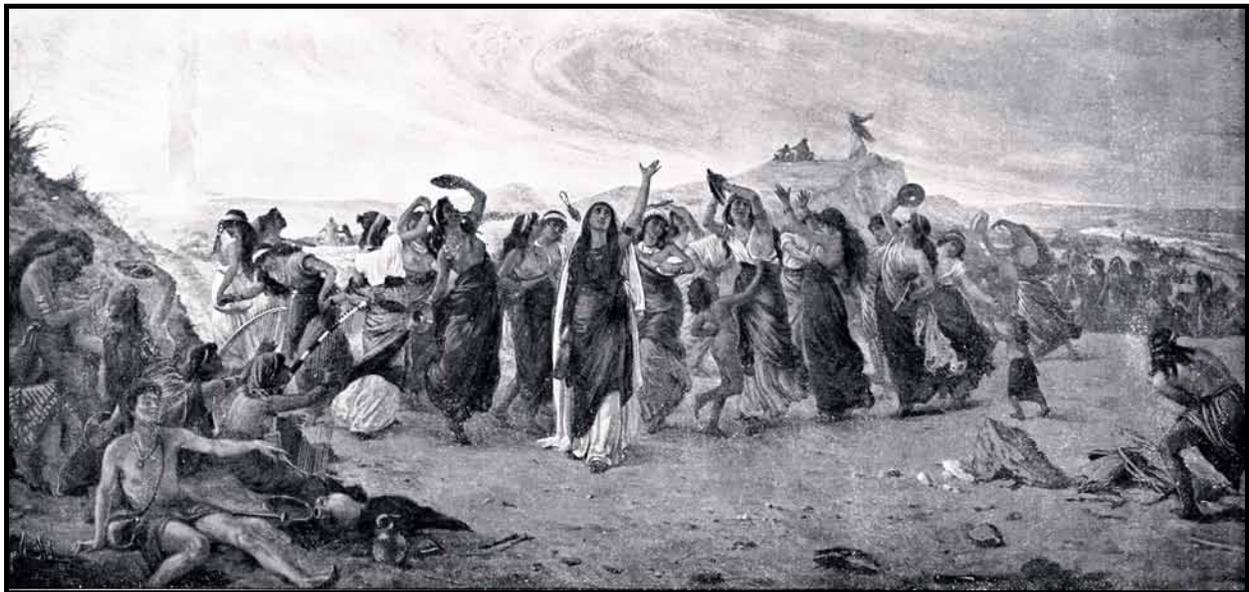
bestial power of godless government is defeated, it always seems to rise again. New tyrants come forth, hungry for new blood, wrecking havoc and destruction. To the vast majority of men, who live by sight and not by faith, who cannot spiritually discern the actual state of affairs, it does indeed seem that the devil has recovered from his mortal wound. In this way, the devil's imitation has the desired effect - ***“The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.”***



“The Temptation in the Wilderness” by Domenico Morelli

“Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?’” - The allure of the beast is such that most of mankind is captivated by him and his apparently invincible power. The devil once invited Christ to fall down and worship him in return for all the riches and power of this world (Matthew 4:9). Jesus refused, but the masses of humanity have always found that invitation irresistible. Those who are beguiled by the things of this world - power, popularity, pleasure, success or wealth - are, in fact, worshipping the dragon and the beast which serves him. Those who will not live in the love of God are ***“the children of the devil.”*** (1 John 3:10) There is no comfortable uncommitted middle ground. Jesus denounced the leaders of the Jewish religious establishment who had vehemently

rejected His claim to be the Savior: ***“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire.”*** (John 8:44) The Jews were horrified at His words. They were religious men who sincerely believed that they were carrying out the will of God. But their misguided zeal had become a tool in the clawed hands of the beast and his satanic master. While the great majority of men would recoil in horror from the vile practices of Satanism, they are only too eager to bow down before one of the legion of alternative idols which he makes available to them. All of men’s self-serving bargains with the power realities and moral ambiguities of this world are, in truth, worship of the dragon and the beast which serves him. Their adoring hymn of praise - ***“Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?”*** is a blasphemous parody of the Song of Moses on the shores of the Red Sea: ***“Who among the gods is like You, O Lord?”*** (Exodus 15:11; cf. Also Malachi 3:2) At the



“The Celebration of Israel at the Red Sea” by William Gale

same time, the masses praise of the beast is also a bitter mockery of Michael the Archangel who led the hosts of heaven against the dragon and his angels. The name ***“Michael”*** means ***“Who Is Like God,”*** emphasizing the uniqueness of the only true God and encouraging people to worship Him alone. ***“Who is like the beast?”*** on the other hand, twists that mighty name and directs the people’s worship away from God and toward the beast and the dragon whom he serves. The world loves a winner and that is exactly what the dragon and his mighty beast appear to be. R.C.H. Lenski sadly acknowledges that this aura of invincibility has had a significant impact, even



“Michael and the Dragon” by Rudolf Schäfer

among Christians and Christian churches. Here too, popularity and institutional success can easily become decisive, effectively replaced faithfulness to Christ and to His Word as the decisive characteristic of the church.

“Indeed at times even Christians imagine that the anti-Christian power in the world all about them is invincible. Certainly the voices heard in the whole earth triumphantly shout these two questions or their equivalents. Some Christians surrender; whole churches succumb. They keep the Christian name but yield to ‘the spirit of the age,’ to the new wisdom of science, etc.” (Lenski, pp. 395-396)

“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God and to slander His name and His dwelling place and those who live in heaven.” - Twice before active forms of the verb *“to give”* have been used (cf. Vss. 2,4) to describe that which the dragon has given the beast. Beginning here in Verse 5, the same verb occurs in the passive voice - ***“was given”*** - to indicate God’s permission for the activities of the beast. Neither the devil nor his minions operate outside of or beyond the control of almighty God. The Lord is sovereign in all things.

To use Luther's phrase, the devil must always remain "*Gottes Teufel*" ("*God's Devil*"). All that the devil does ultimately serves God's purpose and plan. He can do nothing without God's consent (i.e. Job 1:6-12). Our limited minds boggle at the concept of God's absolute sovereignty. Nonetheless, Scripture clearly and repeatedly asserts that nothing in this world takes place apart from the determinative control of God. While it may not be possible for us to understand the ways and whys of God's sovereign control, the reality of that control can serve as a source of profound comfort and assurance for every humble believer. The beast and his infernal master exist only by God's consent and may operate only under the restrictions and limitations which God places upon them.

"The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies..." - Like the anti-Christian "*little horn*" of Daniel's vision (Daniel 7:8-12), the mouth of the beast indulges in an ongoing flowing of blasphemy and boasting. The Greek verb is a durative present infinitive, signifying continuously ongoing action. He challenges, denies, and defies God. He claims for himself power and prerogative which rightfully belong to God alone. This is the essential characteristic of the Antichrist (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:4). Each of the beast's seven heads was emblazoned with a blasphemous name (vs. 1). That which fills the head pours forth from the mouth in an uninterrupted stream of blasphemy:

"God lets the beast pour out great floods of blasphemy upon men, and the world of men drinks in all of these blasphemies. The saints feast upon the holy Word of



"The Beast from the Sea and the Red Dragon"
15th Century Bible Illumination

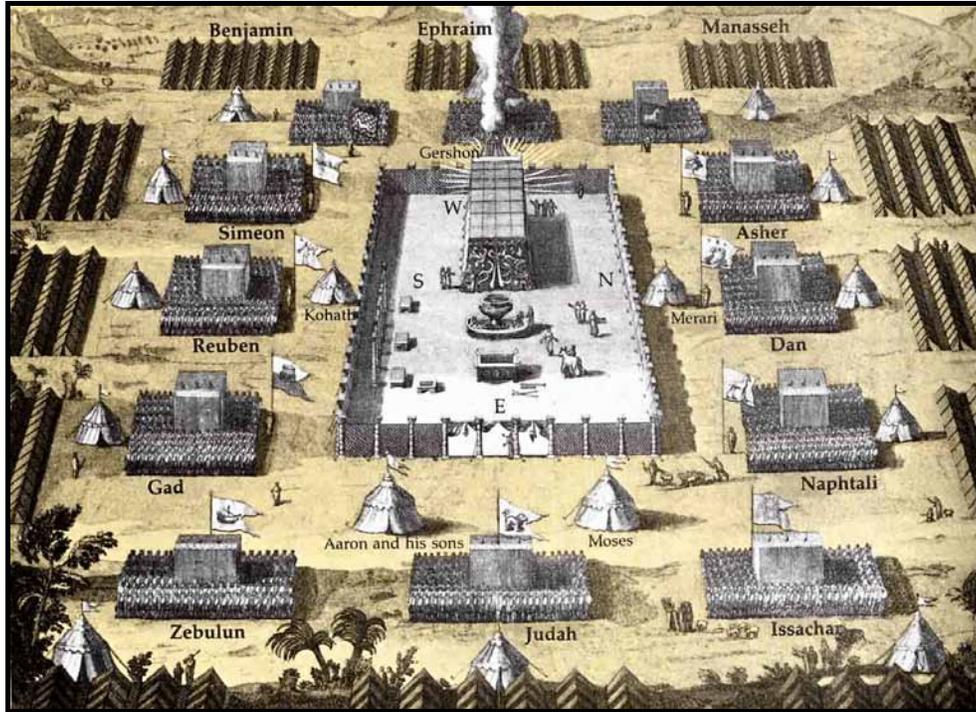
God; the antichristian power fills mens souls with uncounted blasphemies, contradictions of God and His Word.” (Lenski, p. 397)

God will permit the blasphemy of the beast to continue throughout the New Testament era - **“to exercise his authority for forty-two months.”** (cf. Daniel 7:25; 12:7)

“He opened his mouth to blaspheme and to slander His name and His dwelling place and those who live in heaven.” - This verse amplifies and explains the blasphemy of the beast. The language of the text vividly present the blasphemous speech of the beast as if it were a face to face challenge between God and the monstrous mouthpiece of Satan (Greek - *“blasphemias pros ton theou”*). He constantly and continuously hurls his defiance and denial against the God of heaven. It is significant to note that the blasphemy is defined by its substance , not its motive. Whether the intent is innocent or malevolent, every denial of God or His Word constitutes blasphemy. Lenski explains the broad scope of the concept:

“Who can count all of these blasphemies against God alone? It makes no difference whether the language is vicious or mild. So also there is no difference whether it is spoken in parliaments or in the courts, in newspapers, in magazines, in books, over the radio, and in the public forum, in universities, in colleges, and in homes or on the street or in the shop.” (Lenski, p. 398)

The objects of the beast’s blasphemy are specified - **“to slander His name, His dwelling place, and those who live in heaven.”** The verb *“blaspheme”* is used four times in Revelation, twice in reference to God (Revelation 16: 11,21) and twice in reference to the Name of God (Revelation 13:3; 16:9; cf. Romans 2:24; 1 Timothy 6:1; James 2:7). **“His name”** is that by which God reveals Himself or makes Himself known. It includes not only all of the names and titles of God revealed in sacred Scripture but all that which God has deigned to disclose about Himself, His attributes, and His actions. In the Biblical view, a name expresses the essence of the person who bears that name. The next two phrases - **“His dwelling place and those who live in heaven.”** are linked together in the Greek text by the repetition of forms of the verb *“to dwell.”* (**“His dwelling place”** - Greek - *“ten skenen autou”*; **“those who live in heaven”** - Greek - *“tous en to ourano skenountas”*) The etymology of this intriguing word goes back to the pitching of a tent or tabernacle, an allusion to the Tent of Meeting where God’s Glory dwelt within the encampment of Israel. The original text does not include the conjunction **“and”** which has been inserted between the two



*“The Tabernacle With the Glory Cloud in the Midst of the Camp”
18th Century Engraving*

phrases by the NIV translators. It seems likely that the second phrase stand in apposition to the first, that is, the second phrase explains and defines the meaning of the first. A literal translation would read: *“His dwelling place, that is, those who dwell in heaven.”* The people of God are His dwelling place, the place where He pitches His tent (cf. Ephesians 2:19-21). Revelation 21:3 uses the same combination of words in a similar sense to declare: *“Now the dwelling place of God is with men and He will live with them. They will be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God.”* The sense of the text is then that the beast not only blasphemes against God but also attacks His people, those who dwell under His protection - *“They are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits upon the throne will spread His tent over them.”* (Revelation 7:15)

“He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.” - Once again John carefully emphasizes that everything which the beast does is done with God’s permission and consent - *“He was given...”* The beast’s role remain subordinate to the sovereign power of God. The target of his hellish crusade is the infant from the

previous scene, the “*offspring*” of the woman, all those “*who hold to the testimony of Jesus*” (Revelation 12:17). The Antichrist’s use of secular power and authority is always ultimately directed against God and His people. The means may be political, military, economic or cultural but the final goal is always spiritual. The devil’s purpose is not merely domination but damnation. The terminology used to describe the beast’s onslaught against the Church is drawn from Daniel 7:21 - “*As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them.*” In an unholy world the presence of “*the saints*” (Greek - “*hagioi*” - “*the holy ones*”) is an intolerable offense. Their witness must be silenced and their presence eliminated. The beast is not only given the power to make war but also “*to conquer them.*” Throughout history he has rampaged among the faithful, wreaking death and



“*The Beast Waging War Upon the Faithful*” - *The Brussels Tapestry*

destruction on every side. In the exquisite “*Brussels Tapestry*,” woven in the mid-16th century, this scene is depicted with graphic power. The monstrous beast surges forward toward the faithful with irresistible might, each of his seven lion heads snarling ferociously. He is the epitome of destructive power. The battle line of the Church falters as those not already dead turn to flee in consternation and confusion.

The banner of the cross has fallen to the ground, its pole snapped in two by the brutal attack. But the victory of the beast is not final. He may persecute, kill and destroy - but those faithful saints whom he has slaughtered are the true victors (Revelation 15:2). The vision reports that the beast prevails throughout the whole world for ***“He was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.”*** The fourfold division in this phrase, utilizing the symbolic earth number, represents all of unbelieving mankind. The same phrase was used earlier (Revelation 5:9) in reference to those whom the Lamb had died to redeem.

“All the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast - all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.” - Despite the overwhelming success of the devil and his beasts, the people of God will survive. The Church will remain an isolated and tormented minority, a tiny remnant, but the Church will remain. Mankind will fall before the deceptive power of anti-Christ and the Antichrist - ***“All the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast”*** but those whom God has chosen will be preserved nonetheless.

“The book of life belonging to the Lamb” is a metaphor in Revelation for God’s predestination of His elect from eternity (Revelation 3:5; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27). It is the Lamb’s book of life because the blood of the Lamb paid the ransom price which won eternal life for fallen mankind. The blood of the Lamb is the indelible ink in which the names of the saints are inscribed in the Book of Life. The genitive ***“of life”*** indicates the nature and purpose of this book. Those whose names are recorded



“The Lamb’s Book of Life”
12th Century German Apocalypse



“The Lamb’s Book of Life - 15th Century French Apocalypse

therein receive the gift of eternal life with God in heaven. Those who worship the beast are those whose names were not recorded in that book before time began.

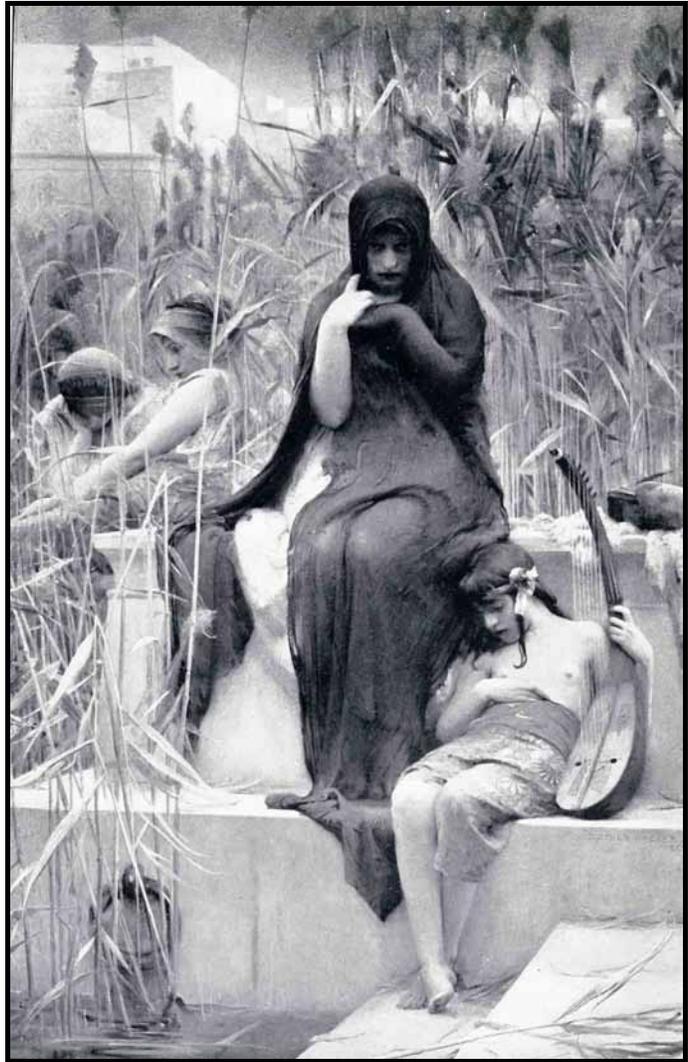
“He who has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.” - Seven times before this cry for spiritual discernment had gone out from the Christ who addressed the seven letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). It recalls the oft repeated admonition of Christ in the Gospels (cf. Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:9). The summons alerts the reader to the particular importance of what follows. These are not warnings which pertain to a safely distant future, as in the delusions of those who believe that God’s people will be “*raptured*” away before the “*Tribulation Period*” begins. The urgency of the text emphasizes that their relevance is immediate. Careful attention must be paid to what is being said.

The suffering church is reminded again that God remains in control. The calamities that overtake the church do not occur by chance. The God who has chosen them from

eternity to be His own remains sovereign. John's words recall God's prediction of the Babylonian captivity from Jeremiah 15:2 - ***"This is what the Lord says: 'Those destined for death to death; those for the sword to the sword; those for starvation to starvation; those for captivity to captivity.'"*** The same assertion of divine sovereignty resounds in His promise of the downfall of Egypt before the might of Babylon in Jeremiah 43:11 - ***"He will come and attack Egypt, bringing death to those destined for death, captivity to those destined for captivity, and the sword for those destined for the sword."***

Humble submission to the will of God is the appropriate response of the faithful. The NIV's translation - ***"This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints."*** - is an interpretive expansion of the original text which simply says - *"here is the patience and faith of the saints."* The Church dare never respond in kind to the cruelty and violence of the world.

"While in God's estimate the time is short, for the Christian undergoing persecution and suffering, the time can seem endless. Especially then will Christians be tempted to take things into their own hands. But the Spirit of God warns Christians not to do so. Rather, accept what God allows, even if it is cruel and unjust, and do not resist it. No human being can stand against the beast or control it, for 'on earth is not his equal.'the Christian is to suffer patiently and in faith for the sake of the Lord Jesus." (Brighton, p. 357)



"By the Rivers of Babylon We Wept as We Remembered Zion" by Arthur Hacker