

End Times Unmasked

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In Loving Memory

I give much credit and gratitude to my dear friend and colleague Trevor Chandler for his help in my understanding of this topic. He has now gone to his well-earned place in the presence of the Lord.

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Chapter One - Introduction

The goal of this book is to provide a brief reference or explanation as to why the prevalent dispensational theory of eschatology or end times is totally unbiblical and has no place in the Kingdom of God. At all times my challenge has been to provide a useful tool that will give the readers a working knowledge of the serious errors in this belief in order to debunk the passionate argument that so many apply to support such an unbiblical viewpoint.

My methodology has been to go to the Scriptures that the dispensationalists claim support their view and totally debunk this theory by looking closely at what these Scriptures really teach. Over many years of debate that I have had with these adherents, I have been amazed to find that very few of them have ever gone to the Scriptures themselves. Instead they have been prepared to accept the errant interpretations that others have provided.

I cannot encourage the readers of this book more to be good Bereans and search the Scriptures for yourself to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11).

Some of the chapters are longer than others. The chapter on The Secret Rapture is the most extensive as this erroneous theory has been presented in such depth that it requires a very thorough evaluation of it to prove how each and every aspect of it comes apart with careful evaluation. Notwithstanding this, my goal has been to keep the text as brief as possible while still ensuring that a very clear argument is made. A much more detailed study of all these topics is available on our website. I have restricted this work to the topics that seem to have the most interest to those that are passionate about this subject.

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Chapter Two - The Secret Rapture

Revelation 4:1-2

V1 - After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."

V2 - Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

What does the secret rapture mean? - that sometime before the visible return of the Lord to this earth, He will secretly come for all the true believers and they will suddenly and secretly vanish of the earth. Life on earth will continue.

This rapture is said to take place either seven years before the visible return of the Lord or 3 1/2 years before in the midst of the tribulation. Either way, it is to happen just before an unprecedented time of tribulation that will come upon the earth when there will be a rule of Antichrist and God will pour out His wrath and judgment upon the earth but the true Christians will not be here. They will have been taken to heaven.

If this theory is true then we need to consider it very carefully. If it is false we must ask ourselves how we ever came to believe such a thing. Why has it been so strongly presented and, if it is false so what - does it have a negative effect upon us as Christians today?

First Rapture or Secret Coming of Christ

According to the Dispensationalists, the secret rapture is described as the first stage when Christ comes for the church and that the second stage is when Christ returns in judgment. The viewpoint that is present is that John at the point we read ([Chapter 4](#)) is actually taken into heaven (typifying what will happen to the church). Everything that follows from then on in the book of Revelation all happens after the Church has been taken out of the world.

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Meanwhile there is a preparation of the bride in heaven and Jesus will return with His bride (us), after a period of seven years.

Most commentators and theologians do believe in a "calling up into the air" of the church. The word rapture is not found in scripture but Paul does refer to a taking up (1 Thess 4:17) at the coming of Christ believers will rise to meet Him in the air. It is acknowledged that scripture teaches this clearly. The issue is "when will this take place?"

Question- Does this happen when Christ visibly returns to earth - which obviously He is going to do - or does it happen secretly either seven or 3 1/2 years before the visible appearing of the Lord? There is not a single verse in the Bible that upholds the secret rapture theory. There is no scripture for a pre-tribulation rapture! (Actually there is no Scripture for a time of "great" tribulation either - see Chapter Three).

The scriptures that the proponents of the secret rapture theory use most are called the "thief" scriptures. The scriptures which refer to the true believers been taken out like a thief in the night etc. Here are examples.

Matthew 24:42-44

V42 - Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

V43 - "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

V44 - "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

V2 - For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

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V3 - While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

Both these scriptures refer to the coming of the Lord and use the illustration of a thief in the night. Jesus will secretly steal away His Church. But nowhere in the Bible does it say that Jesus will act as a thief! In fact, to the contrary, the Lord says it is the devil who is a thief and a robber. When the scriptures state "as a thief" this is meaning secretly concerning time.

So, coming as thief has to do with the unknown nature of when it will take place. In fact, **Matthew 24** is clearly talking about time. It does not say that He will act as a thief. He does not do anything that is underhand - this is totally foreign to His nature.

What these passages tell us is that the arrival of Christ is certainly going to be unexpected but the effect of His arrival, the impact of it will be very dramatic and evident and powerful. The timing will be secret but certainly when it happens it will be no secret. It will be loud, dramatic and powerful.

This can be seen in **1 Thess 5:2-3** - it is sudden destruction and they shall not escape - where is the secret in this?

2 Peter 3:10 - But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Here we have another thief scripture. Look at the results of this time. Where is the seven-year period here? There is going to be a dramatic happening here! Let's see this further in **2 Peter 3:3-4**

V3 - Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts,

V4 - and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."

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Here are some people who are going around making fun and mockery of others - and laughing about the second coming - Peter gives an explanation for this in **verse 9**.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Question - Who are the scoffers scoffing at (**2 Peter 3:3**) if the Christians aren't there? If they have just been raptured? The scripture says that while they are scoffing (the Christians) sudden destruction comes upon the earth - where's the rapture here?

Revelation 3:3 – ‘So remember what you have received and heard; and keep *it*, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

Note the word thief here. These thief passages do not really speak of a rapture at all.

Revelation 16:15 - “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”

Here it is even stronger - note again “He comes as a thief” - He does not act as one.

What is of utmost importance here is that the verses that immediately follow on describe the judgment of God. Jesus is coming as a thief in the final climax of the ages - not seven years before.

Revelation 16:16-21

V16 - And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

V17 - Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.”

V18 - And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was *it*, and so mighty.

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V19 - The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

Further Evidence

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

V13 - But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

V14 - For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

V15 - For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

V16 - For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

V17 - Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

V18 - Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Those who believe the tribulation to come upon the world will be so great that Christians will not be able to survive, let alone remain on earth. But Paul is talking to the believers who will be alive and living upon the earth when these things happen. Paul is addressing himself to the Christians of that day discussing the possibility that this may happen in their time.

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Does verse 16 sound like a secret calling up? To the contrary it describes an incredible amount of noise. There are trumpets blasting, people shouting, graves breaking open - what an event!!

Paul is talking about a one final act of God where Christians on earth, serving God and standing for God, suddenly, unexpectedly, will suddenly rise to meet the Lord in the air!! This isn't any secret event that no-one is going to know about. There is nothing secret or silent about it. It is going to be a noisy show.

V20 - And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

V21 - And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

This all comes immediately after Jesus saying He was coming as a thief.

Key Point - the emphasis placed upon the thief passages to prove there is a seven year earlier taking away of the church, do not stand up to close examination. These passages do not refer to a secret stealing away of the Christians but rather to the secret timing of Christ's return - when He returns the saints will rise to meet Him in the air and immediately there will be poured out the final judgment of God upon the earth. Thus this being caught up in the air is something that occurs at the time of the visible appearing of Christ. No indication is given that the Church will be removed at a seven or 3 1/2 year period before hand.

Jesus' Teaching on Secret Rapture

John 16:33 - "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

The Lord promised us tribulation in this world, not escape from it. This is contrary to the heart of the secret rapture theory which promises escape from tribulation.

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However, He promises us that in the midst of that tribulation we will be kept. Church history verifies this. The Church has faced incredible tribulation from time to time just as Jesus said - so much so that it is almost hard to imagine. To say that the Church gets spared from tribulation denies the extent of what has happened down through the ages.

Countless numbers of Christians down through the ages have been put to death in the most horrific ways imaginable - burnt at the stake; tortured whilst being kept alive as long as possible; nailed to the cross, to name a few. How can there be any worse ways than what many thousands, of these dear saints have gone through? Where was their rapture? Where was their sudden lifting out of all the pain and agony? Death was the only relief they got.

Still today, many Christians are suffering for their faith in other parts of the world. The Lord never said that the Church would be removed before the end of time.

John 17:15 (KJV) - "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*."

Verse 20 - "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;"

On the contrary, Jesus actually warned against the idea of some secret coming!!

Jesus covers the whole period of Church history here. He prays that WE WILL NOT BE TAKEN OUT OF THE WORLD!! Why would Jesus would pray a prayer that was contrary to what He and the Father intended to do!

Matthew 24:23-27

V23 - Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There *He is*,' do not believe *him*."

V24 - "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."

V25 - "Behold, I have told you in advance."

V26 - "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe *them*."

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V27 - "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Here the Lord is warning people against the idea of some hidden, secret appearing. He then goes on to tell them how they can be sure (**verse 27**).

Question - What is His coming going to be like? It is going to be like lightning that shines out of the east and goes all the way to the west. There is nothing very secret about this. The Lord says if people are talking about some secret or exclusive coming DO NOT BELIEVE IT!!

Matthew 28:19-20

V19 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

V20 - teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Here is another passage of scripture which I believe has been given a far too narrow meaning. Jesus says "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Question - Does this promise run out seven years before His return? No - it is right to the end of the age or world. The Church is going to remain until the end of the age - not seven years short of it.

Typology of Teaching of Jesus

Luke 17:26-27

V26 - "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

V27 - they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

When did the flood destroy them all? It was on the day that Noah entered the ark. Note how life was going on perfectly normal up until this time. Society was operating as it always had, then suddenly the moment comes. Noah enters the ark and the heavens open and the floods of judgment fall upon the earth and destroyed all its inhabitants.

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This parable has often been used to support the rapture theory on the basis that Noah was lifted out just before the time of tribulation. This scripture illustrates clearly that Noah was lifted out as the final judgment came upon the earth. There is no secret rapture here. Rather it supports God coming for His Church and then judgement following immediately after.

Luke goes on to talk about two people in the field - one will go and one will be left behind; two in bed - one will go, one will be left behind and so on. There is no contradiction here. This is exactly what will happen, but it will be in the final act of time when Christ comes and the judgment of God comes. One (believer) will immediately meet the Lord in the air and judgement of God will come down on the others (unsaved) who remain. Nothing here indicates that it is a separation that will take place seven years after some other event.

These verses do not support any idea of a "secret" rapture but merely speak of the separation of the just and the unjust at the end of time.

Luke 17:28-29

V28 - "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

V29 - but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

This is about the days of Lot. Here we have a similar story to the one of Noah we have just looked at. The point we need to see is when did the destruction of Sodom happen? It happened the same day that Lot went out of Sodom. Now NOTE WHAT VERSE 30 SAYS!! "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed." First Lot is delivered then immediately afterwards judgement comes down upon the city.

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By way of typology Lot is often claimed to represent righteousness. Note that he was not taken out of Sodom seven years before - he was taken out and immediately, in fact on that day (**verse 29**), destruction fell upon the city. Let's follow this point on a little further:

2 Peter 3:11-12

V11 - Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

V12 - looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

It is clear here that Peter is talking to Christians on this earth and shows quite some concern about what type of people they are and how they are responding to the word of God because there is coming a time of accountability. This day is when the heavens are going to be on fire and be dissolved - not some prior occasion succeeded by a later dissolving of the heavens and the earth. He is talking about, and to, people who were looking for a particular day.

Question - why would Peter talk to people about such a day if they weren't going to be there? It would be a waste of time. No-one is going to be looking for a day if they had gone away seven years before. I want to suggest they were looking for a day because that day was going to come. Let's go back to the Apostle Paul:-

2 Thessalonians 1:4-10

V4 - therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.

V5 - *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

V6 - For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

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V7 - and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

V8 - dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

V9 - These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

V10 - when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

Note these people were enduring persecutions and afflictions - not only was this going to continue but they were told why. Where was their rapture?

We cannot deny that this Church was facing terrible persecution. Then Paul comes Paul and tells them that they will receive rest from their troubles (*verse 7-8*).

Question - When are they going to rest from their troubles? - The answer is rest will not come until the day of judgement arrives upon the earth - not seven years before! Nothing here indicates there is a secret removal of believers finding rest in the presence of God so many years before the final judgement of God.

Summary

- 1) There will be one final climax of the ages.
- 2) The Church will endure tribulation and testing but will stand firm in the midst of it.
- 3) Christ will suddenly appear as a thief in the night but with a shout and a trumpet and much noise.
- 4) At this point the righteous arise to meet Christ in the air.

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5) At this point judgement will fall upon the unrighteous.

The Scriptures teach these points clearly and consistently. There is NO SECRET RAPTURE either seven years or three and a half years before Christ returns to bring judgement.

The Church is going to remain on earth right till the end of time and the climax of the ages, under whatever protection Christ, the head of the Church, gives to His bride. In the world we will have tribulation but fear not for Jesus has overcome the world.

There is definitely going to be a call of believers in the clouds as the Lord returns (1Th. 4:17) but it happens when Christ comes as a thief in the night that is it!! There will be no further seven year period to make up our minds what to do and to get our life right with Christ - it will then be too late!!

The belief of this deeply erroneous theory has caused countless Christians over the last one hundred and fifty years, to refuse to get a job with a future; buy a home; teach their children in the ways of God; get involved in the world with a transformational message, to name but a few tragic points.

All of this because they believed that the Lord was about to return and take us all out of here and leave the world to the unsaved." Sadly, the Bible teaches exactly the opposite – we are to endure until the end.

We should always be ready for the return of Christ, and indeed only He knows when it shall be, yet our security does not lie in an early return of the Lord, nor a secret rapture. Our only security lies in a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To this end we need to check our own lives on a daily basis.

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Chapter Three - The Antichrist

There are only four Scriptures referring to the antichrist in the Bible and they are all found in the books of **1 and 2 John**

1 John 2:18

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

1 John 2:22

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son

.

1 John 4:3

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

2 John 7

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Predominant False Teaching

The most common erroneous viewpoint regarding the antichrist states that sometime in the near future there is coming a time when a man will emerge on the world scene and will dominate both the political and the religious activities of that day. He will demand allegiance to him and to his cause and those who do not give that allegiance will face all sorts of persecution and sometimes death and will go into a time of great economic hardship.

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Most proponents of this theory believe that the true church will have been taken from this earth via the secret rapture, discussed in an earlier chapter, before this antichrist will appear. The theory further goes onto to say that at the time of the antichrist's appearance, the nation Israel will have become a nation of great predominance as a world power. During that time there will be a group of 144,000 Jewish converts who will become dynamic evangelists and will preach the gospel at this time.

The spirit of antichrist is anyone or anything that preaches against Christ Jesus, or even just leaves him out of the picture or preaches a different version of Christ. The problem that most Jews had was not accepting Jesus' humanity, but his deity. The problem that most Greeks had was not accepting his deity, but his humanity. So, John is saying that these are antichrists. We shouldn't merely look for some figure in the future, he says many antichrists are already in the world. — Michael Horton

But by the end of it most of them will have been martyred. It is claimed that this will be a time of unprecedented turmoil and confusion and also a time in which amazing judgements of God will be poured out upon the earth. At the end of this time Christ will return and defeat the antichrist. It is important to note that this theory is unable to be found anywhere in the Word of God.

The Biblical Truth

In the original Greek the word for antichrist is *antichristos*. This word is not found in the book of Revelation. Now there are a number of symbolic figures in the book of Revelation who are obviously opposed to God and Christ and the saints of God (us), but the word *antichristos* is not included. As shown above, the word is used only five times in the whole of the New Testament and only in John's epistle.

On considering the Scriptures above we must ask who or what we are actually dealing with when we talk about the antichrist. Is he an individual who is yet to be revealed in world history? Or are we dealing with a principle that has been continuing throughout church history as John seems to be teaching?

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A further word study will help us here. The word "anti" is not quite what it sounds or what it is taken to mean today. Most concordances and Greek commentaries state that the word is actually stated to mean "instead of." Another meaning is "in the room of" or "in the place of." Strong's Concordance adds the comment that this word is often used to denote contrast or requital (to make equivalent). So we are looking here at meaning someone who is substituted for another.

In our modern day thinking we take the word "anti" as meaning "against." But this is not the major Bible meaning of the word. In the Bible the word is primarily referring to someone in the place of another. This is an important point to consider, because if we take the meaning as being "against" rather than "in place of", we can get an entirely different perspective on this whole subject.

Let's now examine the four references to the word "antichrist" in John's epistles and see if we can come up with any conclusions here. The underlining is all mine.

1 John 2:18 - Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

The last part of the verse says "even now many antichrists have appeared." Writing this 2,000 years ago John states that even back then, life was called the last days because "even now many antichrists have arisen." He is speaking about a situation taking place at that time not something that is going to happen 2,000 years later. He is referring to the present Biblical age he was writing in.

So, we can eliminate this verse as evidence about a coming world figure. In fact the next verse endorses this.

1 John 2:19 - They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

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Here John says “they went out from us.” He is referring here to the believers meetings at the time, stating that these antichrists went out from them, but they were not from them. John is not speaking about atheistic opposition. He is not speaking about a great communist horde seeking to descend upon a godly people. He is talking about those who were once part of the body of believers and were former close associates, who had left the faith and were now opponents of it.

1 John 2:22 - Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

John says here that the antichrist is a liar – one who denies that Jesus is the Christ and who denies the Father and the Son. So here we have a definite statement as to who the antichrist is. John is saying that a person is an antichrist if they deny Christ by false teaching. Many have done this down through the ages.

1 John 4:3 - and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

Of note here is that John describes the antichrist as spirit – not a man. This is referring to a type of behaviour or manifestation that comes from or reflects a spirit of antichrist. The end of the verse says that this spirit is even now (John’s time) in the world. This does not refer to something or someone to come in future days but states very clearly that it is amongst us now and was back then. This can clearly be seen through many examples and behaviours over the church age. We don’t have to look for a particular person to rise up and express this. Many have and do.

2 John 7 - For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

In his consistency John again makes the same emphasis in his teaching here. Any comment made that claims Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh is inspired by the spirit of antichrist. It comes from a person but is endorsed, supported and contrived by an anti-christ spirit.

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John is here teaching that any departure from the true word of God; any denial that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; is inspired by the spirit of antichrist. It is so important that we understand this because this is happening so much today, even in Christian circles where such things as questioning the virgin birth; Christ's resurrection; the coming; the Trinity and other such tenets of the Christian faith have become common place. This is the evidence that the spirit of the antichrist is here amongst us right now and always has been during the church age.

Summary

A close study of all the references to antichrist in the Scriptures reveals the following,

1. John is referring to a spirit or a way of behaviour by many different individuals, not by one big monster.
2. The spirit was prevalent in his day - it was not something that was yet to come.
3. It often had to do with those who had departed from the true faith and who were now teaching false doctrines.

There is nothing in John's writings to suggest what has become the common belief or idea that the antichrist is a major, atheistic world figure to be revealed at the end of time. The antichrist spirit and the antichrist activities by men have been in the world since the time of the Lord Jesus Christ and will continue to be in the world until the second coming of the Lord.

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Chapter Four - The Great Tribulation

The expression "great tribulation" is only found three times in the New Testament: -

Matt 24:21 - For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Rev 2:22 - Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

The most common passage of Scripture used to give evidence for a time of great tribulation to come is,

Rev. 7:14 - And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

It definitely speaks of tribulation, and no one studying Christian history would deny that from the time of Christ on, great tribulation has been faced by believers. Incredibly, more Christians were martyred in the 20th century than all the other centuries combined. Tribulation is always with us, but what we are concerned about here is a period of time, still to come, referred to as the Great Tribulation. Let us look further at this chapter.

Rev 7:9-17 (KJV).

Rev. 7:9 - After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Rev. 7:10 - And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Rev. 7:11 - And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

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Rev. 7:12 - Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Rev. 7:13 - And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

Rev. 7:14 - And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Rev. 7:15 - Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Rev. 7:16 - They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

Rev. 7:17 - For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Predominant False Teaching

The most common teaching of a Great Tribulation still to come goes something like this.

Shortly after the rapture, a seven-year period known in the Bible as the Great Tribulation will take place. It will begin with the signing of a peace agreement between Israel and her enemies and it will end with the physical return of Jesus Christ to set up His kingdom on earth. In between, will be seven years of terror for those on earth. Violence will increase in all parts of the world, both nation against nation (ethnic wars) and domestically. Men will indiscriminately slay one another as peace will be removed from the earth.

Certainly not something to look forward to. But don't worry. It completely comes apart with a close study of the Scriptures.

End Times Unmasked

The Biblical Truth

The dictionary defines tribulation as "great affliction or oppression." The confining of this to just one particular period of time has caused many Christians to look to the future with much fear.

The original Greek word in the New Testament text, which is translated by the English word "tribulation" is *thlipsis*. It has a literal meaning of "pressure" or "to crowd in" or "to trouble." It is used 45 times in the New Testament. However, it is important that we note this same word (*thlipsis*) is translated by several other words. e.g. affliction, anguish, persecution, trouble and burden.

There is also a similar Greek word - *thlivo* - this is also translated as "tribulation" or "narrow" or "trouble." A good translation of the word "tribulation" is "being crowded in and put under a troublesome pressure."

This chapter will argue that this is the correct Biblical translation of the word "tribulation." In the KJV translation above, we see that verse 14 misses out the word "the" and translates simply as "they came out of great tribulation" not "the great tribulation." This makes a significant difference to the way this verse is read.

Nowhere does this passage refer to a seven-year period that is coming before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:9 - I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

If John is referring to "the great tribulation" here we cannot put the reference commonly used in **Rev 7:14**, into some distance time to come because John could not possibly call himself a fellow partaker of it. John was writing the book of Revelation to churches that were actually in existence at that particular time. The letter was intended for them, for their encouragement and to them the whole book, not just part of it, had purpose and meaning. It had meaning to them just as it has meaning to us.

End Times Unmasked

In order to explore the Greek word *thlipsis* further we will look at **Matt. 24:21** and **29**.

V21 - For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

V29 - Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Jesus tells us in this passage that there is going to be great tribulation. In verse 29 He merely speaks about "the tribulation of those days." The word "great" is missing, yet it is clear He is referring to the same event.

A Biblical study on all the Greek words that are used for the English word "great" reveals that there are two different words used. The first one is *megas* and the second one is *polus*. In English we translate both these words as "great."

The Greek word *megas* has three distinctive meanings concerning greatness: -

1. External form, size or measure. e.g. a great fish or stone. Not because it is great but because it is big.
2. Degree and intensity. E.g. "great fear" meaning the intensity of the fear. Or "a great wind" describing the force of the wind as opposed to the size of it. i.e. how powerful it was. It has this meaning when it is used with "great tribulation."
3. Rank or position. e.g. "the great God" speaking about the position God has. "The great priest" which has to do with the rank of the priest.

The Greek *polus* is used primarily for numbers or quantity. E.g. it is used to describe "the great harvest." This is referring to number. "The great mercy of God" which speaks of the depth or quantity of God's mercy. God is merciful over and over again. It is a continuing quantity.

End Times Unmasked

Now, the word in the Bible when describing the great tribulation is without exception the word *megas*. This means it can refer to two things. Either greatness in size, meaning it is going to be big; or greatness in intensity.

If it means "greatness in size" we can take it to be referring to the fact that it is going to be BIG. Or that it is going to be great in intensity. This could refer to the continuing nature of it. That it will be on going. It will always be coming, there will be no escape from it.

So far, we have explored two of the three verses that contain the expression "great tribulation" (**Matt 24:21** and **Rev 7:14**), and will now look at the final one.

Rev 2:22 - Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

The first thing to note with this verse is that it is all symbolic e.g. Jezebel is being used as a type. He is speaking to people who are disobedient at the present time and warning them that their behaviour will bring great tribulation upon them. This passage uses the same Greek word (*megas*) yet it is in reference to a literal church.

As we have seen in the other two verses, there is nothing futuristic here.

Looking at all the evidence available, we simply cannot take the expression "great tribulation" and assign it to a period at the end of time.

Summary

An incorrect emphasis has been placed on the meaning of (the) "Great Tribulation" as being an single event that will take place at the end of the age. Scripture does not support that theory at all. In fact, the New Testament instructs us that tribulation is going to be a normal part of our life not just something we will face at the end of the age.

End Times Unmasked

We have been living in a time of tribulation since the day of Pentecost. We do not have to worry about a time to come. We live in it now!! Many people even today, are experiencing persecution in other parts of the world and may even be facing torture and even death for their faith as we read this. Whether we like it or not, the world has always opposed the true church in the past and will continue to do so until the end of the age.

We are told not to fear the future or things to come - only to fear God. It is for this reason that the book of Revelation was written. Allow God's Word and His Holy Spirit to encourage you and empower you to walk in victory, remembering that greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world.

Chapter Five - Revelation Ch 13 - The Beast, the Mark and 666

Introduction

In this chapter we have 3 main characters:-

- The Dragon - verse 4
- The Beast from the Sea - verses 1 - 10
- The Beast from the Earth - verses 11 - 18.

Scripture identifies who the Dragon is so we needn't spend any further time trying to discover this symbol.

The Dragon

Rev 12:9 - And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

The dragon is none other than Satan. In **Rev 12:3** we are given a description of this dragon. Now obviously this is not what Satan literally looks like. It is symbolic, which makes this point - if we accept this description as being symbolic is there really a need to demand a literal meaning for all the rest of the characters?

We will now explore the beast from the sea.

1. The Beast from the Sea

Rev 13: 1-10.

V1 - And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

V2 - And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

V3 - And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

V4 - And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

V5 - And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

V6 - And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

V7 - And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

V8 - And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

V9 - If any man have an ear, let him hear.

V10 - He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Up until the early 21st century it was claimed that this beast was the soon to be appointed leader of the E.E.C. Of course, the E.E.C. no longer exists, so this prevalent dispensational viewpoint is now totally debunked, adding further to the endless lists of failed dispensational prophecies.

It is now claimed that the beast is probably symbolic of the rising technology in Europe, or a future leader of the EU and many other such things or people, all about to appear on the world stage. Don't despair, there is a far more credible view available to us by searching the Scriptures instead of our newspapers.

Biblical Description

Scripture portrays this beast as a symbolic representation of the persecuting power of Satan operating in and through the nations of the world and their governments.

Rather than something that will emerge at some time in the future, this beast has been in the world since the time of creation - continually seeking to frustrate the purposes of God and to persecute God's people.

Let's examine the Biblical evidence for this.

We read in verse 1 (above) that he has seven heads. These represent the seven nations that have downtrodden and persecuted Israel in Old Testament times. They are:-

- Egypt or ancient Babylonia
- Assyria
- New Babylonia (Babylon)
- Medo-Persia
- Greece (Greco-Macedonia)
- Rome
- One still to come ([Rev 17:10](#))

The fact that he has seven heads simply means that he can assume different forms at different times as he obviously has done throughout the ages. These heads are symbolic and are not meant to be taken literally.

In verse 2 we are told that he looks like a leopard with bears feet and a lion's mouth. This lines up perfectly with the vision given to Daniel in the book of Daniel chapter 7. This one beast represents the four beasts mentioned in Daniel. They are ([Dan 7:17](#)),

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- The lion - Babylon
- The bear - Medo-Persians
- Leopard - Greece
- Rome - (10 horns)

We see also in verse 1 that this beast comes up out of the sea. In Biblical terms, the sea is symbolic for people and/or nations particularly those under the dominion of sin

. See Rev 17:15; Isaiah 17:12; 57:20; Dan 7.

In **verse 3** we read that one of his heads was slain but the fatal wound was healed. There has been many interpretations and meanings given to this over the years and I do have my own views on what this could mean at the end of the age but for now let me simplify it for you by given you a very clear interpretation.

Whatever happens to any particular form this beast takes on, he is always able to resurface again in some other way. Some people thought the Hitler regime was the beast. I would be very sympathetic with that viewpoint. The point is that when the Hitler regime was finally defeated that didn't mean the end of the beast. He simply assumes another or other forms and continues with his work. Remember we are saying that this beast is not literal but rather symbolic of Satan's persecuting power.

Also, in verse one we are told that this beast has ten horns. In Scripture horns speak of strength. So, we learn through this that this beast is very powerful.

Rev 17:12-14 describes the final battle at the end of the age when Satan and all his demonic powers, manifesting themselves in various human authorities will come up against God's people and be annihilated by the Lamb of God who is of course the Lord Jesus Christ. So please keep in mind at all times that victory is ultimately ours.

What is this Beast Up To?

Verse 4 tells us that he receives worship. Revelation Chapter 13 is all about worship. We worship the beast simply by making the world, its systems and its lusts, our God, placing it first in our life instead of God. This is what Satan tried to do with Jesus in the wilderness. Satan doesn't care if we don't acknowledge his presence or even believe in him. As long as we make the world our idol we are giving our worship to the beast and this is what he is after.

Verse 5- the beast utters great blasphemies. The forty-two months, refer to the period of time the church operates in at the moment.

Verse 6 (KJV) - (other verses alter meaning). This beast blasphemes God, God's temple (which we know is us because God no longer dwells in literal temples but in people) and even the saints that are already in heaven. This beast has a real hate to all of God's people, from the beginning of time until the end, including those saints who have already gone to be with the Lord.

Verse 7-8- The book of Revelation is a message of encouragement to Christians undergoing attack, persecution and difficult times, but an important point must be made here.

To be put to death physically for our faith is not a defeat - it is an amazing victory. Death cannot defeat or overcome those who are in Christ (**Rev 1:18**). It is Jesus, not Satan who holds the keys both to life and death. If we are put to death for the sake of the gospel the word of God says that our very blood cries out for vengeance and God will act on it.

Death has no sting for us. It cannot separate us from the love of God. Dying to ourselves, or being put to death is a foundational truth or concept of our Christian faith (**2 Cor 4:11**). For some it may only ever be spiritual i.e. dealing with attitudes etc., to others it may become literal, but either way it is not to be considered as something extraordinary or unusual.

However, whatever the outcome, everyone whose name is written in the book of life will not be overcome by this beast even though they may be put to death physically.

Summary

There is an ugly looking beast who comes out of the sea. The sea represents the nations and their governments. This beast represents the persecuting power of Satan which works against and through these nations and governments. This has been happening since the beginning of time. It is a world dominion that has been and will continue to be directed against God's people since the beginning of creation till the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This beast has seven heads which means he can and does assume different forms of government e.g. Babylon, Assyria, Rome etc. in order to persecute God's people. Although the forms differ the actions or purposes are always the same. He has great strength and authority given to him by Satan and he is going to make war against the saints and to blaspheme God for the entire church age. History clearly shows his past actions doing this. However, God has always raised up a standard against him and will continue to do so. The church has prevailed so far and will continue to do so.

We are called to overcome this beast and we do this by living our lives for the glory of God - even unto death. If we are persecuted because we refuse to deny our faith we have overcome the beast. It is not some great end of the age show-down that we have to worry about and wonder if we will make it. It is happening right now and has throughout the church age.

We are all confronted by him in one way or another and can overcome him in the name of Jesus even if it costs us our life.

The issue is worship. The beast wants worship and we worship him by putting the things of the world before the things of God. Although causing great harm this beast meets an horrific end and is thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented day and night forever (Rev 20:10).

2. The Beast from the Earth

Introduction

Having discovered who the first beast of Revelation 13 is we will now turn our attention to the second beast.

Revelation 13:11-17

V11 - And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

V12 - And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

V13 - And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

V14 - And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

V15 - And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

V16 - And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

V17 - And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Verse 11 describes a second beast who comes up out of the earth, who looks like a lamb yet speaks like a dragon. This beast does not have an horrific appearance like the first beast. He actually looks gentle, yet his speech suggests he is far from that. It can be strongly argued that this beast is none other than the spirit of antichrist (see a previous chapter on this). The fact that he looks like a lamb is a reference to the fact that he has the appearance of the Messiah. He is seeking to deceive the followers of Christ or Christ's followers by setting himself up in place of or instead of Christ. He is masquerading in place of Christ.

Verse 12 states that He exercises the same authority as the first beast and coerces those on the earth to worship the first beast. He is the servant of the first beast, reinforcing again that the main focus of Revelation Chapter 13 is worship.

The word "earth" is used four times in **verses 11 - 13**. Obviously, it speaks of the world but the fact that this beast comes from the world also helps us to identify this beast.

Verse 13-14a tells us that this beast has the ability to perform great signs and wonders. Of course, this is nothing new for any representative of the kingdom of darkness. We can go right back to Exodus 7 where we see that Pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians imitated several of the miracles that Moses performed.

We are all very aware of the power of the occult and various other anti-christ powers today that are operating in the world. These powers seem good and in fact, often bring healing and relief but we know there is a dragon behind them.

They are totally consistent with the anti-christ spirit. Further to this Jesus Himself tells us in **Matt 24:24** that false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive not only the world but even the elect if they can.

The Image of the Beast (**Verse 14b - 15**).

This beast requires those who dwell on the earth make an image to the first beast who was wounded and has come back to life. Those who do not worship this image will be put to death.

Here again, we have a description of persecution, such that has been happening throughout Biblical and Church history. There are numerous accounts of such happenings. The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in **Daniel 3** is just one of many. This is the second beast in action. Remember the issue here is worship.

The Caesars and/or Emperors of Rome clearly represented the image of the beast. The power of these men finally evolved to the point where the statement used to be made saying "Caesar is Lord." Also, various priests of pagan temples ordered the inhabitants of their various districts to make statues in honour of the emperor.

We have no need to look to the future for a fulfilment of these verses because it has been happening down through the ages to a greater or lesser degree and will continue to happen right up until the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Summary

The second beast, from the earth, has the primary role of generating worship for the first beast from the sea. In real terms this means he deceives those in the world to embrace the world's system at the expense of the Kingdom of God. Anyone who does not embrace the world's system, is in danger of being attacked or even put to death.

3. The Mark of the Beast and Number 666

The Mark of the Beast

Such attacks seem to have intensified in the Western recently against those who refuse to acknowledge the fallen world's credibility in such things as marriage, education, abortion and human rights, just to name a few.

Rev. 13:16 - And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead,

Rev. 13:17 - and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

We now come to what has been one of the most famous verses in the Bible. We will attempt here to try and cut through the multitude of theories on what these verses mean and give a general overview of the false teaching on it.

False Teaching so Far

A beast from the earth is going to rise up at a point in time and will become a powerful false prophet. He is going to put all to death who refuse to worship the first beast from the sea, who it is claimed, is the antichrist.

At a point in time is going to demand that a mark is to be placed on a person's right hand or forehead and only those who accept the mark will be allowed to buy or sell anything. Those who refuse, obviously, will starve.

The cashless society, which is very well entrenched in the Western world today, is believed to be the work of the devil and very soon (although this has been promised since the 1980s), all humanity are going to be required to have a mark or number on our right hand instead of carrying credit cards and money around in our pockets.

What Then Does It Mean?

To answer this question and avoid all the crazy hype and speculation we must go back to the word of God.

The whole idea of a mark is very common to Scripture and has very significant meanings. Meanings that were clearly understood by God's people at the time the Book of Revelation was written.

When we look at this word whenever it is used in the context of identifying people as belonging to or serving somebody or something it is almost NEVER used in a literal sense!! Even on occasions when it could be literal e.g. Gen 4:15 we are still not told clearly that it was. Let's look at this a little further.

The Mark in the Old Covenant

Exodus 13:6-9

V6 - “For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD.

V7 - “Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders.

V8 - “You shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’

V9 - “And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.

Orthodox Jews are still seen today wearing amulets which are strips of clothing with verses on them and little boxes (phylacteries) on their foreheads that contained Scriptures in fulfilment on this passage. Any Bible dictionary, encyclopedia or reference book will tell you that this is a custom that developed over the centuries and certainly was not done in early Jewish times.

It was never meant to be taken literally and Jesus did not wear them. God was speaking here about true religion. The forehead represented the human mind which is the thought life or philosophy of a person and is meant to be controlled and directed by the word of God. The right hand signified a person's actions which were to be the same. So - right back here we have God putting marks on us - not literal but spiritual. Again, it gets back to worship.

Now if we look down the chapter a little further we see this more clearly.

Exodus 13:14-16.

Ex. 13:14 - “And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ then you shall say to him, ‘With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.

Ex. 13:15 - 'It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.'

Ex. 13:16 - "So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

This cannot possibly literally? God is saying here that this dedication is to be a sign on your right hand and forehead. You will have some fun trying to stick all of this on your hand and forehead. Again, the issue is worship, including devotion of the first born.

The Mark (Seal) in the New Covenant

John 6:27 - "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

God has placed a seal, or mark upon His Son (obviously not literal) and we are told that if we make Him our Lord we are sealed with Him in God(**Eph 1:13**). Interestingly here it is talking about food here which is obviously an issue in Rev 13 in regard to buying and selling. There are several other verses in the New Testament that plainly state that if you are a born-again believer you have been sealed in Christ (**2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:13; Eph 4:30; Rev 7:3**).

Revelation Chapter 7 talks of a seal being placed on the foreheads of those who are God's servants. A seal that denotes ownership and genuine character. Those that sincerely belong to God.

So, a study of the Scriptures show us that we are sealed or marked in response to our faith or worship. In our case it denotes our allegiance to the Living God. Obviously, no one, on becoming born again, receives a literal mark on them - but the Scriptures assure that each person is sealed in Christ via the Holy Spirit.

The question must be asked then - why, when it is totally inconsistent with Scripture, do we have to suddenly find a literal interpretation for **Revelation Chapter 13**? It simply gets back to the issue of worship. If we worship the beast and the image of the beast i.e. the things of this world, we are marked for Satan. If we worship the Lord Jesus Christ we are marked for Christ. If God's mark is not literal why should Satan's be?

We should note that in **Revelation Chapter 13** that worship (V15), comes before the mark (V16). This is clearly the Biblical pattern. There is first worship, then the mark. We are marked according to whom we worship. To develop a whole theory of finance, credit cards, marks on the American dollar etc. has no Biblical support at all.

No Buying or Selling

Verse 17 says that those without the mark will not be able to buy or sell. This is not new for Christians and is easily understood as applying to the whole church age including the present.

Christians down through the ages have always been restricted in trade and opportunities. Unlike the world we do not have the right just to go about our business in whatever way we like. As someone who was in business for many years I can testify to many good business opportunities I could not partake of because they contravened the word of God. Turning down the Lotto agency for my Service Station was one of them.

In many countries, especially Moslem or Communist ones, if a person is a devout Christian they are denied educational opportunities, loans, employment opportunities etc. There are severe restrictions on opportunities to buy and sell and in some cases no opportunities are offered at all. In some countries a believer can become excommunicated from his or her family and denied any inheritance or business opportunities. It is something that is part of our Christian heritage and will continue till the Lord's return.

The Number 666

Rev. 13:18

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

There has been so much mystique and speculation about this number, from something that will be tattooed on various parts of our body to what it means and why.

Sadly, this all could have been avoided if a careful study of the Scriptures took place. In fact, it almost could not be more simple. It says right here in the verse that 666 is the number of a man.

It may surprise many readers to learn that the number "666" is not foreign to the Scriptures.

It actually appears four times. Once in the New Testament (the infamous passage from [Revelation 13](#)), and three times in the Old Testament. Of the three references in the Old Testament, two are identical but all three of them are the same sort of thing...measures of human wealth and success.

1 Kings 10:14 and 2 Chronicles 9:13 both record 666 as the weight of King Solomon's annual income: "The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents"(Incidentally, a 'talent' is an ancient measure of mass. By today's standards, a talent was approximately 30 kgs. So Solomon received something like 20,000 kilograms of gold a year!)

The third reference is in [Ezra 2:13](#) and is probably the least significant – it occurs in the middle of a range of census-style records and lists the number of Adonikam's descendants as being 666 people. So, returning to the passage in Revelation, if the number 666 in itself were to have any symbolic meaning its strongest link would be to a consideration of human power and human wealth and success. Is it really that surprising then that, reviewing the passage in Revelation 13 again, we see it ends by saying: "If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number."This is about us.

As we have already discovered, [Revelation Chapter 13](#) is all about worship, so all this verse is saying is that we are never to worship a man, only God. However, we probably should explore this a little deeper for those who may want a few more details.

The theme of the Biblical book of Numbers is all about belonging. In it the people of God were numbered off in their respective tribes or clans, according to their birth. This allowed God to clearly point them to their inheritance in Him and how, through their descendancy, they belonged to His people.

By giving the beast a number, this verse is making a statement not asking a question. The statement is that he is part of, or represents, sinful man or humanity. He certainly is not numbered with the people or tribes of God.

Man was created on the sixth day. Six is a Biblical number of imperfection. Humanity always falls short of God's glory. Putting the numbers 666 together we see that human effort, no matter how good it looks or what it is dressed up as, will always fall short of God's glory. There is no relationship with God outside of the Lord Jesus Christ.

666 is the chosen number for this situation and needs no further explanation. The beast glories in man and his number is in man therefore he must fail. We know this to be true because [Rev 20:10](#) tells us that he finishes up in the lake of fire.

Brief Summary of the Two Beasts, the Mark and 666

We have a beast of the sea and a beast of the earth. Along with Satan (the dragon), it can be argued that these three represent a false or counterfeit Trinity.

The beast of the earth looks like a lamb but is really the anti-christ spirit deceiving many and attempting to make all mankind worship the first beast of the sea. He brings about false worship (Caesars, Emperors etc.) and causes those who refuse to obey this command to be put to death.

This beast of the earth can work great signs and wonders and is also a false prophet and the spirit behind all false prophecy for the whole dispensation of the ages.

Those who do as he says and worship the beast receive a mark which is not literal but simply means they belong to the kingdom of darkness. He opposes Christians in all sorts of business and trade and is continually attempting to bring about worship for the beast of the Sea whose is numbered as belonging to fallen man.

Seal or Mark?

Those who serve the Lord Jesus Christ are sealed in Him. It may be of interest for you to note that in the New Testament references we have explored above for mark or seal show a significance between the seal of the Lord and the mark of the beast.

The Greek word used for seal as applied to believers is *sphragizo*. However, when we come to **Revelation 13** and therein after the Greek word used (for mark) is *charagma*. Now we are looking at the difference between a seal and a mark which is very significant.

Those who worship the beast receive a mere mark - those who worship the Lord are sealed with the Holy Spirit (**Eph 1:13**). However, the mark (*charagma*) is not a permanent seal. It can be removed. The seal (*sphragizo*) is permanent.

This makes a very clear statement. Those wearing the mark of the beast (which is all non-believers) can have the “mark” removed by accepting the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not condemned to a lost eternity. They can lose the “mark” by becoming a true worshipper of the Lord Jesus Christ at any time during their lifetime on earth.

All those truly in Christ are sealed by the Holy Spirit and nothing is able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:39**).

Satan's most successful strategy has been to deceive the Church regarding the victory Christ has already won through the Cross. Many are looking to Christ's return to accomplish what was done in the first coming. They are looking for Jesus to defeat the Devil, when he has already met his defeat.

Hebrews 2:14 says "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Note the fact that the devil was "rendered powerless" (Greek word- katargeo) through the Cross.

Chapter Six - Conclusion

In **Genesis 3:15** God proclaims, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel." (Gen. 3:15)

The definitive fulfilment of **Genesis 3:15** is at the Cross and validated through the Resurrection. The entire story of the Old Testament is leading the reader to the culmination of Christ's redemptive work, and subsequent defeat of Satan, fulfilling God's promise made to Adam. The "climax" of history is past, not future. The "climax" is the First Coming, not the Second Coming, as strange as that may seem to most believers today. The "Defeated Church Syndrome" is a result of an improper understanding of Scripture, which produces an incorrect eschatology. The Second Coming is not Christ triumphing over His enemies, He has already done that at the Cross.

In **Colossians 2:14-15** the Apostle Paul, speaking of Christ's Calvary experience, states "having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (**Matt. 28:18**). What authority will Jesus have when He returns, that He does not already have?

This provides our foundation to participate in active work and serving the Lord Jesus Christ until His return. We need to have a fire from the Spirit of God burning within us. Many saints have gone through so much for us in order for us to have what we do in God today, not to mention the sacrifice of the Lord Himself. If we are going to be able to build on this we have to face the future with confidence in God not with a spirit of timidity.

End Times Unmasked

One of Satan's greatest ploys, has been to deceive the Church into believing that he is "alive and well." He has convinced the Church that she is defeated and can do nothing but wait to be rescued from this planet in defeat.

As quoted in my book "Eternity Begins Now" using D-Day terms, D-Day was not the end of the war, but it was such a decisive turning point that for all intents and purposes the war was over. What was left was a "mop-up" exercise (the Battle of the Bulge excepted). In like manner the decisive, definitive work of the Kingdom has been accomplished. We are living in the interim awaiting the consummation that will occur at Christ's appearing.

Although we remain in a battle, our confidence in ultimate victory over evil rests on the finished work of Christ at the Cross. We can experience victory (although not the ultimate victory) in this present age, because Christ has triumphed over Satan definitively.

Let's face the future with faith and hope, taking hold of God's promises of victory and get on with the job we have been given to be an expression of the Kingdom of God in all aspects of our life.

To conclude, on the last page you will find a most useful end-times mantra that we, at SRT, embrace. Is taken from Kris Volotton's website - <https://krisvallotton.com>. I have added Scriptures to each point.

End Times Unmasked

End Times Mantra

- I will not embrace an end-time worldview that re-empowers a disempowered devil - [Heb 2:14](#).
- I will not accept an eschatology that takes away my children's future, and creates mindsets that undermine the mentality of leaving a legacy - [Gen 18:19](#).
- I will not tolerate any theology that sabotages the clear command of Jesus to make disciples of all nations and the Lord's Prayer that earth would be like heaven - [Matt 28:18-20](#).
- I will not allow any interpretation of the scriptures that destroys hope for the nations and undermines our command to restore ruined cities - [Isa 58:12](#).
- I will not embrace an eschatology that changes the nature of a good God - [Ex 34:6](#).
- I refuse to embrace any mindset that celebrates bad news as a sign of the times and a necessary requirement for the return of Jesus - [Matt 24:36](#).
- I am opposed to any doctrinal position that pushes the promises of God into a time zone that can't be obtained in my generation and therefore takes away any responsibility I have to believe God for them in my lifetime - [Eph 1:18-19](#).
- I don't believe that the last days are a time of judgment, nor do I believe God gave the church the right to call for wrath for sinful cities. There is a day of judgment in which GOD will judge humanity, not us - [Jn 3:17](#).

