

## Chapter 18

### No More Mr. Nice Guy

A lot has happened in the three and a half years since the world hailed the new European leader's historic Middle East peace plan, touted at the time as "earth's last, best hope for an enduring peace," or some such rubbish. By now the frightened and hungry—and a billion and a half less numerous—inhabitants of the earth know just how wrong they were to buy into it all. Whatever it was, it was not the road to peace.

The question, remarkably, remains: whose fault was this war? If the truth were told (it won't be, by the way) everyone would realize that the Antichrist's peace plan was fatally flawed from its conception. Comprehending neither the nature nor the motivation of Islam, the Antichrist had hamstrung Israel and dangled its helpless form like a tasty morsel before the covetous eyes of the ravenous Muslim wolf. No one who understood the real Muslim agenda would have been surprised when Gog snapped at the bait. But therein lay the problem: *no one understood*. Everyone assumed Islam was a religion, not a political doctrine with political objectives. So everyone outside of *dar al-Islam* was caught unawares.

Then came the reaction: nuclear holocaust. Amazingly, the European leader's story is holding—so far. He's placing the blame squarely where it's expected: on the Jews. But slippery to the end, he "defends" them before the world (what's left of it). *Yes, the Israelis nuked the invading Muslims, but it was totally justified—a case of self defense. Outnumbered a thousand to one, their very national existence was in danger. Although I'm horrified at the outcome, I'm sure you can all see that they were given no choice in the matter.* The Jews, of course, have no idea that he's lying. Like the rest of the world, they actually believe their own military was responsible for pushing the button. Many of them are even proud of it. But the truth has been buried—literally. Every Israeli technician who was involved in preparing the warheads for the Antichrist—with a gun to his back—has disappeared. Casualties of the war, it is claimed.

Ironically, the Antichrist owes his life to the fact that he was in Israel, not Europe, when the bombs started falling. His own capital city, along with a hundred other major European population centers, was decimated by the blasts. Every major EU and NATO military installation was hit. Russia had subsequently received a similar pounding at the hands of the Americans, but the land is so vast, only the largest cities and bases were targeted. More to the point, little or no damage was done to Russia's secondary nuclear strike capability because of the mobility of their launch platforms—Typhoon-class submarines and mobile truck-based missile launchers. Russia's first order of business had been to move as

much of their nuclear arsenal as they could to new and undisclosed locations, and about half of their nuclear stockpiles had been successfully secreted out of harm's way.

Before launching their nukes, the Russian leadership had hotly debated whether their own intelligence concerning the West would prove correct—that America had grown so soft, liberal, and politically correct, they would never rise to the challenge and launch a nuclear counteroffensive against an enemy that had not actually attacked them. Some of Russia's brightest minds had predicted that America would not come to Europe's aid, but would instead play possum until the danger blew over, going no farther than lodging diplomatic protests at the U.N. Others insisted that historic ties and treaty arrangements like NATO would compel America to launch a counterstrike whether they were attacked or not. The argument that tipped the scale was that the Magog War was in fact a *dar al-Islam versus United Nations* affair: by attacking the European leader, Russia would *de facto* be attacking the United Nations—to which America had clearly sold its soul. The U.S. was its biggest financial backer and supplied its largest military contingent. And U.N. world headquarters sat upon U.S. soil, in its most populous city. The European Leader had, in point of fact, figured out how to use the American military machine as his own personal bludgeon by pulling strings at the United Nations. So it was settled: America's ability to project power globally would have to be eliminated in the first strike. New York and Washington would top the hit list.

Then, one by one, sometimes weeks apart, America's other prime military targets and premier cities had been hit—or missed, as the case may be. Russia's intercontinental missile technology, having been designed in an era when political gamesmanship was the holy grail, looked great in parades but proved somewhat less than reliable in practice. Several—no one would ever know how many—went nuclear on their launch pads, incinerating huge tracts of Siberian forest. Several more fell short—a thousand miles short—of their intended targets in the U.S., setting Canada's vast woodlands ablaze. The fact that Russian targeting technology wasn't nearly as accurate as the Americans' only added to the terror. A missile intended for the Norfolk Naval Base landed instead on Colonial Williamsburg—which hadn't been a particularly good military target for well over 300 years. Another, aimed at Florida's Homestead Air Force base, landed a hundred miles north, near Orlando—killing Mickey Mouse instantly.

The Russians had been as surprised as anyone when the Vatican went up in smoke. Their plan had been to spare Rome—whether it was out of superstition or prudence wasn't clear. There were no military installations within the city proper, though several bases in Italy had been targeted. The Russians weren't claiming “credit” for the strike, but they weren't denying it, either. They didn't want to

appear weak or uncommitted, and besides, they weren't absolutely sure it hadn't actually been a mistake—or a deliberate disobedience of orders—on the part of one of their commanders. The truth didn't occur to anyone: the Antichrist had instructed one of his own agents to drive to Rome with a NATO hydrogen bomb in the back of a pest-control van (his idea of a joke). Parked on a side street near St. Peter's while the agent made his getaway, the truck didn't look out of place—until the Vatican City evaporated in an inferno the likes of which Dante could never have imagined. And since no one was familiar with Revelation 17:16, **“The ten horns...will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire,”** no one was shocked when the European governments comprising the Antichrist's European federation invoked emergency powers to tap the Vatican's vast hidden wealth in order to “provide relief to the people of the Roman Catholic world.” Humanitarian relief, of course, was the last thing on their minds.

Just when it seemed it couldn't get any worse, two back-to-back natural disasters had struck the earth. Scientists had been breathlessly watching both situations for decades, but had proved powerless to do anything about them. First, a huge volcano in the Canary Islands had blown its top, sending half the mountain crashing into the Atlantic and setting off the largest tsunami in recorded history, decimating the coastlines on both sides of the Atlantic. It would never be known whether the seismic shocks caused by the detonation of hundreds of nuclear weapons had had anything to do with the eruption and collapse of the volcano, or if it was merely a coincidence. Geologists agreed that the event was as long overdue as it was tragic. The British Isles and Western Europe were inundated, as was the American East Coast, as the mega-tsunami swept away everything the nukes had spared within forty or fifty miles of the shoreline. Boston and New York: gone. London and Amsterdam: gone. Philadelphia and Paris: crippled. Miami, Havana, Caracas, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Aires, all having escaped the nuclear carnage, were each wiped out by an unstoppable wall of water. Africa fared a little better, but only because it has fewer densely populated cities along its western shoreline.

A few days after the Canary Islands disaster, the first of hundreds of new volcanic islands began appearing in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, belching ash and greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. Like a string of Mount Pinatubos, their smoke darkened the sky all over the world, adding to the billions of tons of radioactive dust the recent nuclear war had pumped into the air. The sun's light was measurably obstructed, and the moon, when it could be seen at all, took on a ghastly red hue. The only reason anyone knew about the new island chain, however, was the imagery being sent down from orbiting satellites—not a single ship in the entire Atlantic Ocean, north or south, remained afloat. Worse, when scientific research vessels were finally able to reach the area, they could find no

signs of life in the ocean—none at all. Everything from whales to plankton had died.

Then, as if to add an exclamation point to the death sentence the earth had already received, an asteroid that NASA scientists had been tracking since 2004 broke up in the earth's atmosphere, sending Buick-sized chunks of white-hot debris raining down on earth from Budapest to Detroit in a spectacular and deadly lightshow. The earth's shaken populace thought at first that they had dodged the bullet—as the astronomers had predicted. There was no direct impact, no immense crater, no extinction event like the one that had killed off the dinosaurs sixty-five million years previously. It took months for them to realize where the real danger was: the high sulfur content of the asteroid was poisoning the earth's water supply with acid rain over much of the northern hemisphere.

The fact that all of this, either overtly or between the lines, had been predicted in the Bible didn't raise as many eyebrows as it should have. Relatively few people knew about the prophecies of the Last Days, since the Christians had been raptured years before and the Bible had been suppressed ever since then. But between the 144,000 Jewish messengers and the angelic warnings that had been proclaimed all over the world for the last several years, the remaining population wasn't completely in the dark. In the dim light of the unseasonable winter that seemed to be descending upon the earth, small pockets of survivors heatedly discussed two things: "Where are we going to find something to eat?" and "Is all of this the result of man's folly, or is it God's judgment?"

That second question tended to divide the room into warring camps. The weight of public opinion in recent years, from the media, organized religion, and even the politicians, had agreed—even insisted—that God was whatever you conceived Him to be, a sort of "great spirit" who resided in all living things. Most people weren't *totally* stupid, of course. They'd figured out what this really meant: that God was neither personally interested in their welfare or behavior, nor could he do anything to help—or harm—them. In other words, even if He existed (and the pseudo-intellectual rhetoric screamed that He did not) they were perfectly free to live their lives without His interference—and certainly without His standards of conduct. This in turn meant that the only real rule in life was "don't get caught."

But the horrific events of recent months—if you'd been lucky enough to live through them—looked for all the world like the "wrath of God," whatever *that* meant. It had never been this bad before. A quarter of the earth's population was dead. The whole planet was an ecological disaster area. And then there was the nagging memory of the "event" that had started everything rolling downhill—when all the born-again Bible-thumping whackos had disappeared *en masse*. Try

as they might, no one had ever satisfactorily explained that one. Could it be that there *was* a God, and that He was trying to tell them something?

*Don't be so #@%&\*! gullible, was the inevitable response. You haven't actually seen God do anything, have you? No. Everything that's happened is either attributable to nature—things we've been worried about for years—or the direct result of our leaders making bad decisions, one after the other. And you can trace it all back to one thing: if the Jews hadn't nuked the Arabs, we would have been just fine. Then, as now, no philosophy that couldn't be reduced to a sound-bite was given much credence. It didn't have to make sense or fit the facts; it only had to be plausible, succinct, and politically correct. Everything was somebody else's fault—and if you could pin the blame on the Jews, so much the better. And God? If there is a God, He's going to have to show us some signs and wonders to prove He's there. All we've seen so far is human blunders and bad luck. I'll start believing in God when he starts showing his face.*

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The foregoing scenario is admittedly speculative on my part, but it does fit the prophetic record. Interestingly, the confusion on earth about whether to “blame” God or man is only confirmed in scripture. For although John in his apocalyptic vision sees ominous angelic activity, no causal link is established at this stage between heaven's proclamations and earth's woes.

**“When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”** (Revelation 8:1-6) If you'll recall, I have described the Book of Revelation as an onion—with layers of detail becoming more specific as you peel them back. This passage introduces the second layer, known as the Trumpet judgments. We see the prayers of the saints as the catalyst of judgment. And what are the saints praying for? My guess is, it's: **“[May] Your kingdom come; [may] Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven.... For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”** (Matthew 6:10, 13)

The first Trumpet judgment describes nuclear warfare in first-century language. This is the same World War III that I have attempted to flesh out with

my hypothetical scenario: **“The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.”** (Revelation 8:7) Strong’s informs us that the Greek word for “burned” is *katakaio*—from which we get our English word “cataclysm”—meaning “to burn down (to the ground), i.e., to consume wholly—burn up, utterly.” In other words, we’re not talking about getting merely singed or scorched, but total destruction.

A more generalized description of this nuclear holocaust and its aftermath were given under the third and fourth “seal” judgments. **“When He [the Lamb of God] opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come and see.’ So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.’”** (Revelation 6:5-6) The black horse—the third of the so-called “four horsemen of the Apocalypse”—represents famine. A “denarius” was equivalent to a full day’s pay for a common laborer in John’s day. So forget making the rent or car payment. It will be all one can do to feed himself and his family. That last phrase, **“do not harm the oil and the wine,”** gives us a bit more insight. Luxury items will still be available—for a price. This implies a widening gap between rich and poor. Rampant inflation won’t cramp the style of the super-rich. The vast majority, however, will fall into the latter category—poor and getting poorer by the minute.

**“When He [the Lamb—Yahshua] opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.”** (Revelation 6:7-8) Hades (from the Greek root meaning “unseen”) is the state or place of departed souls, the equivalent of the Hebrew *Sheol*. Because Hades follows death here, it is clear that the death of the mortal body, not the soul, is meant. After the separation of men’s souls from their bodies—which is all “death” means in this context—these souls must wait in sheol/hades for the coming day of judgment. We’ll discuss these issues later.

A “fourth of the earth” adds up to over 1.5 billion lives lost in this war—*thirty times* the appalling death toll of World War II. The “sword” is indicative of any kind of weapon, of course, including nuclear warheads. But as with any large-scale modern war, the fighting is only the beginning. Famine and disease often kill far more people than soldiers with weapons do. The word for “beast” isn’t the usual *zoon*, or animal. It’s *therion*, a venomous, wild beast—a diminutive form of the word translated “trap.” My guess is that the Spirit directed John to use this word to accurately describe something the world would not discover for another nineteen hundred years: bacteria and viruses—the sources of disease.

Following the nuclear war (since each *series* of end-times plagues—seals, trumpets, or bowls—is apparently chronological within itself), we see this: **“Then the second angel sounded [his trumpet]: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”** (Revelation 8:8-9) What does that sound like? A missile? A meteor? A landslide? A volcano? It used to be hard to be dogmatic about precisely what it was that John saw. But now—based on recent scientific findings—it seems that what he foresaw actually *was* “a great mountain burning with fire being thrown into the sea.” I’m referring to the impending collapse of the Cumbre Vieja volcano on La Palma Island, at the western end of the Canary Island chain. This is more than a mere volcano. In October 2000, researchers Simon Day and Stephen Ward warned of the potential for a landmass twice the size of the Isle of Man—weighing in at about a trillion tons—breaking off during Cumbre Vieja’s next big eruption and plunging violently into the Atlantic. Since this crumbling and unstable hulk is one of the steepest mountains in the world, it has the potential to set off the largest tsunami in history. Day and Ward’s computer models predict a series of waves up to 50 meters (165 feet) high moving at up to 500 miles per hour slamming into the American East coast, destroying everything within miles of the shore—all the way from Nova Scotia to Brazil. Cumbre Vieja normally erupts at intervals of a few decades to a century or so. The last big blast was in 1949, so it’s due.

We also have firm scientific data concerning the likely trigger for the *next* trumpet judgment. **“Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.”** (Revelation 8:10-11) The Greek word for “star” is *aster*, from which we get our word asteroid. And NASA astronomers have identified the very asteroid that has the potential to fulfill the prophecy. It was initially designated 2004 MN<sub>4</sub> and is now called 99942 Apophis. NASA is, at the time of this writing, giving it a 1 in 38 chance of impacting our planet—extremely good odds (in a bad sort of way) as these things go, and odds that could easily be altered by minor angelic intervention. Apophis is estimated to be 320 meters long and  $4.6 \times 10^{10}$  kg in mass, about the size of the asteroid that caused the Tunguska event of June 30, 1908, flattening thousands of acres of Siberian forest.

Note that this plague is specifically said to have come from the sky: the only explanation that makes sense is that it’s an asteroid. The name Wormwood is from the Greek *apsinthos*, a word that implies bitterness and calamity. NASA’s University of Arizona Space Imagery Center reports, “The amount of this sulfur [generated by a meteor strike] can be substantial, because meteoritic materials contain up to 6.25 weight percent sulfur. Consequently, even if the asteroid or

comet does not hit a Sulfur-rich target, it can still cause dramatic increases in the total amount of atmospheric sulfur. Once vaporized, this sulfur can react with water to form sulfate (or sulfuric acid) particles. These particles can greatly reduce the amount of sunlight that penetrates to the surface of the earth for a period of up to several years. Over time, the sulfate will settle out of the stratosphere (upper atmosphere) into the troposphere (lower atmosphere) where they can form acid rain which can have additional environmental and biological effects.” That sounds like a recipe for “bitter waters” to me.

The *Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains* defines *apsinthos* as: “the taste of wormwood, a bitter-tasting herb used as a cure for intestinal worms.... The meaning of ἀψινθος [*apsinthos*] in Revelation 8:11 is not that the waters turned into a particular plant but that the waters came to be as bitter as the plant in question.” The word for “made bitter” is an entirely different word, *pikraino*, carrying the added connotation of resentment, anger, or hate. Perhaps this bitterness explains why “death” was listed among the causes of death in the fourth seal judgment we just looked at: John had no earthly way to adequately describe the catastrophe he saw unfolding before him—he had neither the vocabulary nor the scientific knowledge, and yet, in the power of the Spirit of Yahweh, he did a marvelous job of informing us of the dire physical consequences of rejecting Yahshua.

The timing? Friday, April 13, 2029—about two and a half years into the Tribulation by my reckoning. This is when NASA scientists calculate that the huge meteorite they’re tracking will have its next close encounter with the earth. This would put it after the Battle of Magog and the commencement of the nuclear war that follows, but before the Antichrist assumes total control of the nations of the earth—something we’ll discuss shortly. Indeed, I think that it (along with the volcano/tsunami of the second trumpet judgment) could have a positive impact (pardon my word choice) on the Antichrist’s ability to seize control of the monetary reins of the entire planet—something he’ll need to do before he institutes the universal oath of loyalty known in scripture as the “mark of the beast.” We’ll discuss the prophetic particulars a few chapters down the road.

In short, Apophis and Cumbre Vieja are a prophecy researcher’s dream come true, even though they’re a nightmare for everyone who’ll see them. That being said, it doesn’t really matter whether my hypothesis is right or wrong. What’s certain is that God’s Word cannot fail. The “how” of it is something only time will tell. However it transpires, though, this is incredibly bad. Nothing like it has ever happened before—not during man’s tenure upon the earth. From this point on, the very survival of the planet balances on a razor’s edge.

Our military “geniuses” call it nuclear winter. Even *they* have figured out that the detonations and radioactive fallout are only part of the problem with nuclear

warfare. Even without the volcano and meteorite chasers, the billions of tons of smoke and debris blasted into the atmosphere during the nuclear war won't simply fall back to earth in a day or two. Wind currents will disperse them—first darkening the sky in the target areas, then spreading the pollutants over the entire face of the globe. John saw this too: **“Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”** (Revelation 8:12) The effect is being described from the earth's point of view. Nothing has happened to the sun (yet) or the moon. Rather, the sun's light, upon which we utterly depend, is partially blocked. This, of course, is a prime cause of the famine that will follow the shooting war: with sunlight levels lowered, even in areas that weren't directly attacked, crops will grow much more slowly, if at all. Nations used to agricultural surpluses will find it hard to feed themselves, and regions that traditionally import food will starve.

We're not even halfway through the Tribulation, and it looks doubtful if the world can recover from the environmental damage that man and nature have inflicted upon it. As we shall see, it will get worse—much worse—before it gets better. But let's pause for a reality check: let us remind ourselves Who built the earth in the first place, Who put us, with a billion other life forms, on it—and why. We are here for Yahweh's pleasure. He made us so that we might commune with Him—and he made the world to support the life he created within us. That in itself makes our willful destruction of the earth and its inhabitants a heinous act of disloyalty to our Creator—which explains why Satan works so hard toward that goal. Yahweh, however, is not limited by the failings of man or the machinations of the devil. **“He made the Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning and makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth; Yahweh is His name.”** (Amos 5:8)

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We need to reanalyze the political and economic lay of the land, for it has changed a great deal from the world's situation of only a few years before. Again, what I'm about to describe is something of an extrapolation, but consistent with what is revealed in scripture.

For the first time since the days of Nimrod, there is a worldwide power vacuum. The war has killed many of the world's leaders and disrupted governments from Oslo to Canberra, from Tokyo to Cape Town. The Americans have a Constitutional crisis on their hands, for the entire emergency succession roster from the President on down, along with the majority of Congress, has been

wiped out. The Russian President, plus his heir apparent *and* his top six rivals, are all dead. The Asian governments that escaped the war's nuclear ramifications are nevertheless facing famine from crop failures, economic meltdown from the loss of their trading partners, and widespread anarchy at home. Europe's largest cities are in ruins, and many of its national leaders have fallen. But the Antichrist—the charismatic overlord of the continental federation—escaped without a scratch. He had been personally directing U.N. operations in Israel, upon which no nuclear weapons fell, at the time of the attacks. *Mr. Lucky.*

As we have seen, the Islamic nations in the Middle East and Africa have been decimated—not just their leadership, but the vast majority of their populations. That in itself sends economic shockwaves around the world. Only now are people coming to grips with how much they depended on Middle Eastern oil. The world is learning the true meaning of the term “energy crisis.” Between atomic blasts in the Middle East oil fields and the tsunami devastation in the North Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean, the world's oil production is off by over eighty percent. In a ripple effect, coal mining slows to a virtual standstill for lack of fuel, and farming on anything approaching a large scale becomes impossible. Most of the world's nuclear power generation facilities have been knocked offline—some with Chernobyl-like repercussions. Even solar energy generation is impossible, since the sun has become “**black as sackcloth of hair.**” (Revelation 6:12) There are great new opportunities for geothermal power generation in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, but nobody knows how to harness the awesome energy being unleashed there. People peer at the sooty sky and brace for a long, severe winter. Crop failures are predicted for the coming year. Food prices skyrocket. The cost of electricity soars. Anarchy threatens to engulf the globe. Even the nations who were left relatively unscathed have been sent back to the stone age. Their leaders are about to face new and unprecedented challenges—like how to avoid being assassinated by their own starving, angry populations. This passage bears repeating: “**Wail, shepherds, and cry! Roll about in the ashes, you leaders of the flock! For the days of your slaughter and your dispersions are fulfilled. You shall fall like a precious vessel [shattering into tiny, worthless fragments]. And the shepherds will have no way to flee, nor the leaders of the flock to escape.**” (Jeremiah 25:34-35)

As society unravels, the remnants of government around the world come together in agreement: what's desperately needed is strong central leadership on a worldwide scale. *If we can't impose order from the top down, the whole human race is doomed. We will fight and kill each other in a paranoid scramble for self-preservation until there is no one left.* It has escaped no one's notice, of course, that the United Nations is in shambles. Its world headquarters in New York was destroyed in one of the first nuclear blasts to hit the U.S. But its heart still beats: a fierce determination to gather the peoples of the world together under one banner, united in purpose and determined in will—to pull the world up by its own

bootstraps, proud and independent, empowered to shake humanity's collective fist in the face of Yahweh and scream: *We don't need You!*

To my mind, one of the twentieth century's strangest trends was polling. Surveys were taken on every conceivable subject. Sure, it made some sense in the commercial realm, where focus groups were employed to determine what people would be apt to spend their money on, and why. If people were attracted to the bad red thing instead of the good blue one, then that's what they'd put on the market. But in matters of truth, faith, and the eternal destinies of men, polling makes no sense at all. Truth is not a matter of popular opinion; it just *is*. If ninety-seven percent of the human race agree that there is no God, does that make Yahweh non-existent? Of course not. The point, though, is just as valid the other way around: our unanimous assertion that God is here among us—in the flesh—would not in itself make it true. Our opinions have absolutely nothing to do with the truth or falseness of the matter. People (at least in the West) have gotten so used to voicing their opinions on issues that are not really matters of opinion, they will assume during these dark days that all they have to do to make everything work out is to achieve consensus. It's the ultimate myth of democracy: *We can—and will—elect our own Messiah.*

And so, like ancient Israel demanding a king Saul to govern them, the world goes looking for the ideal candidate. It quickly boils down to a short list of three (I'm obviously beyond speculation here—this mental exercise is merely to give you a feel for the moment): an American Senator—the apparent front runner in the heated contest to replace their dead President; the Premier of China—the head of world's most populous nation (and one of the few national leaders to escape the nuclear holocaust); and the European leader—who has already proven himself to be what the others may or may not be: a diplomat of the first rank and a shrewd and capable leader of men.

After some jockeying for position, it becomes clear that there's only one man for the job. Even the Chinese and American candidates reluctantly agree: the European leader is the perfect man to guide the shattered world back from the brink of destruction. He's the only one who commands universal respect among nations (excuse *dar al-Islam*, but they no longer count). He has proven his diplomatic abilities in the crafting and implementation of the world's most comprehensive peace treaty. And when that treaty was breached—unilaterally sabotaged by the deceitful Magog federation—it was he who defended the injured party—personally—driving the Egyptians out of Israel and destroying the overwhelming Islamic invasion force. In the process he proved his military abilities beyond a shadow of doubt. (The fact that he actually had nothing to do with Gog's defeat within Israel is conveniently overlooked. *Somebody* has to take the credit, after all.) Even when disaster struck—when the Jews he was so

valiantly trying to protect panicked and used their nuclear weapons against the Muslim foe (the fact that he himself had touched off the nuclear fuse was a secret he was determined to take to the grave), he mounted a Herculean and well-coordinated relief effort saving, so it was claimed, hundreds of thousands of lives. He's so much like Nero, it's scary, but nobody sees the parallels.

All of this makes the European leader the man of the hour. He's tall, handsome, and speaks in a resonant baritone voice, spouting wonderful platitudes in six different languages. Besides, he looks great on TV, and even with electricity prices going through the roof, the television is the last appliance to go—people are turning off their lights, refrigerators, and washing machines, but not their TVs.

The news media have gotten themselves back up and running (the war didn't knock out the satellites), and to hear them tell it, everyone on earth is getting behind the European leader. It's true that every government still in operation has voiced its support of a one-world system—sort of a United States of Earth—with the Euro Leader at the helm. But there are multitudes who, as individuals, have their reservations. None of this dissent is being reported, however, for the media moguls have decreed that unity is of the utmost importance at this crucial juncture in history. It's as ironic as it is hypocritical. For the last hundred years the Western press had been giving front-page coverage to every dissenting voice, ignoring the vast majority who just wanted to live quiet, peaceable lives. After all, controversy sells. So “causes” such as women's lib, homosexual rights, the “need” for a Palestinian homeland on Israeli soil, “reproductive rights” (i.e., the ability to legally kill your unborn children), abolishing the death penalty—for people who impose their own death penalty upon others—and religious freedom (in other words, your God-given right to hate God) had been artificially kept on full boil for decades.

Now the world press was issuing its latest self-fulfilling prophecy: the European leader would soon become the *world's* leader. His program—some of it—has been leaked to the media: he will implement revolutionary technologies to improve life for all people. The power of the computer will be harnessed to ensure the freedom of every individual on earth, to fight—even prevent—crime, make wars obsolete, head off medical emergencies, locate missing persons—even make buying groceries and paying your electricity bill easier. It will be a bold, imaginative step, one with utopian benefits for everyone on the planet. Film at eleven.

A televised event is planned to formally introduce the world to their new leader, and as the hour approaches, the despair and anarchy that had gripped the globe begin to dissipate. In the wake of a worldwide nuclear war, amid the worst ecological disaster since the demise of the dinosaurs, many people actually start to

feel like there's hope. They sense that somehow they've always had an inner longing for somebody like this, someone who could take the burden of world government upon his shoulders, a wonderful counselor who would be a father figure to them, one who would finally put an end to war—a prince of peace. Few knew that millennia before this, the prophet Isaiah had predicted the appearance of just such a man—unfortunately, not the man the celebrants were honoring, but the One he was impersonating.

In a move fraught with portent, the Antichrist arranges for his inauguration to be held near the scene of his greatest diplomatic triumph—the new Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Ironically, the temple mount, which was supposed to be a symbol of earth's unity, now has a large open area right in the middle of it that will serve perfectly for this huge gathering. The gap was created when exuberant Israelis had bulldozed the Dome of the Rock shortly after Magog's humiliating defeat. They didn't want to give the few remaining Muslims a reason to come back—*ever*. They would not repeat Moshe Dayan's disastrous blunder of 1967.

The big day arrives. It has been almost three and a half years since his first worldwide diplomatic triumph. It's a short time, as history goes, but long enough for people to have forgotten that his Middle East peace plan—his “last, best, hope for world peace”—was the singular event that had primed the world for war, that had, after decades of divisive squabbling, focused the irrational hatred of a billion Muslims upon the tiny, insignificant nation of Israel. The world has conveniently failed to comprehend that the Russians had seen *him*—not Israel—as the threat when *Dar al-Islam* had been nuked into oblivion. There are but a relative handful who see the evil in the European leader. What will they do now? When Germans during the 1930s had perceived the truth about Hitler, many of those who were able had fled the Fatherland. But where can one flee this time? This man is about to assume leadership of the entire world.

The European leader and his entourage climb the stairs to the temple mount in triumph as film crews from news organizations around the world record the scene. The dais has been placed directly over the lower summit of Mount Moriah—the rock around which the Muslims had built their shrine (on the foundations of the second-century Roman temple to Jupiter). In the background stands the new temple, shimmering despite the darkened sun—a symbol to all the world of the fresh spirit of religious tolerance that had built it. The irony—like the polluted air—is so thick you can cut it with a knife.

As he mounts the dais, the Antichrist greets world leaders and religious potentates; all of the most influential men of the earth have come to pay homage to their new leader. A few chapters back, I hypothesized about a liberal Jewish theologian who would be instrumental in making a “success” out of the Antichrist's vaunted worldwide ecumenical council. We'll meet this fellow in

scripture in a little while—he plays a major role in what’s coming. For now, imagine him as the master of ceremonies on this most auspicious of occasions, this combination press conference and coronation on the temple mount. The theologian gives a glowing forty-minute appraisal of the Antichrist’s accomplishments, characterizing him as a “Prince of Peace.” He prudently neglects to mention his most noteworthy achievement so far—starting a global thermonuclear war.

Introductions done, the Euro leader approaches the podium. A billion television viewers—those in cities that weren’t destroyed in the war—watch the scene with fascination and awe. As he begins his speech, however, the scene becomes confused. A shadowy robed figure is seen approaching from behind. A knife is raised high into the air, then thrust with fury deep into the man’s right shoulder, narrowly missing the bullet-proof Kevlar vest he’s wearing. The Euro leader spins around to face his assailant and is shocked to see a man he knows—one of the priests who serve at the new temple. The deranged priest raises the knife again, and before the stunned onlookers can react, plunges it deep into his victim’s right eye, screaming in Hebrew, “I am the Lord your God... You shall have no other Gods before me!”

The priest is immediately cut down in a hail of gunfire, but the damage is done. The European leader is mortally wounded. Half a dozen doctors confirm the obvious: his cerebral cortex has sustained massive trauma; he never had a chance—he was dead before his body hit the floor.

I can remember as if it were yesterday a bright fall day during my college freshman year. I had just finished my last class of the day and was strolling across campus toward the parking lot when I noticed all kinds of odd things going on around me—guys running for no apparent reason, girls crumpled on the grass sobbing uncontrollably. Through an open door I saw a classroom full of people watching television; many were weeping. I can’t have walked thirty yards before it became apparent what had happened: President Kennedy had been shot. Analyzing my experience later, I was amazed at how quickly the information had traveled, and how quickly the nation’s perception of the victim shifted—Kennedy’s assassination instantly elevated him from popular politician to revered martyr. People, including me, who hadn’t paid much attention to his life or policies before, suddenly became keenly attuned to everything he had done—and everything he might have accomplished, had he lived.

Now, imagine watching the Antichrist’s assassination—on *live television*. Even for those disinterested in politics (and *everybody* will be politically aware after living through a nuclear war) the man’s stature will suddenly be raised to new heights: from the most powerful and influential man on earth to a beloved martyr, a *bona fide* saint, all with one stab of the knife. *But it doesn’t matter*, you

say. *The man's dead.* Yes. But therein lies the problem: the Antichrist, now a fallen hero who has instantly attained mythic proportions in the hearts of men and women all over the world, refuses to *stay* dead. Minutes after the coroner confirms his death, as the cameras roll on, the Antichrist regains consciousness and groans. He sits up, asks those nearest him what happened, and complains of a sharp pain in his right eye—he can't see very well, he says. He seems puzzled by the odd reaction of the bystanders—they look as if they've seen a ghost.

*But you were dead, they protest. We watched you die. It was horrible!*

He gets to his feet, rubbing his shoulder with his left hand. As a billion incredulous TV viewers watch, he absent-mindedly brushes at the bloodstains on his jacket, and responds, “Yes, that would explain all the fuss. Lucky I wore a dark suit. Loan me your sunglasses—let's get on with this, shall we....”

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I'm not making this stuff up (well, not all of it anyway). The Bible tells us what will happen; but it doesn't give us much detail as to how, so I've taken the liberty of fleshing out the plot a little. At this point, we need to get back into the actual scripture. If you'll recall, John was shown this scene: **“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.”**

(Revelation 13:1-2) This established the identity of the man we've come to know as the Antichrist. He is a gentile (from the “sea”) who has taken over a federation of ten kingdoms that was represented by seven “heads,” or leaders. The comparison to wild predators shows him to be quick and ruthless, with both great power and unrivaled authority. But his real strength comes from “the dragon,” Satan himself.

John goes on to say, **“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.”**

(Revelation 13:3) That's it, I'm afraid. A few verses later, John confirms that the wound was literal and apparently mortal, referring to **“the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived,”** but this is all the Bible gives us plainly concerning the beast's fatal head wound. Now you know as much about it as I do. Obviously, it could happen in any of a thousand ways—I've sketched in one of them. But we know that it *will* happen, and we know that the bottom line is that **“all the world...followed the beast.”**

So where did I get all the specifics about his injuries? From an obscure Old Testament passage that, frankly, I'm not one hundred percent sure applies to the Antichrist. But if not him, then who? You be the judge: **"For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye. His arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded."** (Zechariah 11:16-17) And the bit about the Jewish priest/assassin? I made it up: put a big SF9 on that one. But you've got to admit, it's awfully poetic. No one would be in a better position to see through the charade, as you'll soon see (though there will be many with ample motive). And if the assassin is Jewish, it will make it all the easier for the Antichrist to plausibly make an abrupt about-face in his policy toward Israel's defense, if (or should I say *when*) it comes to that.

I'm sure you didn't miss the parallel between Yahshua and the Antichrist here. Both were slain and then rose from the dead. There isn't an original bone in Lucifer's body (okay, he's a spirit—he doesn't have bones—but you know what I mean). From the very beginning, Satan has been trying to counterfeit Yahweh's plan for our salvation. This is his last bogus bill. They say that the best way to spot a counterfeit is to be intimately familiar with the real thing. Those who will be fooled by Satan's plot here have no idea what the real Messiah looks like. But this kind of sign will impress them like Christ's resurrection never did, because it will happen on live worldwide satellite TV. Satan is the ultimate game-show host, and the name of the game is "You Bet Your Life."

This is the turning point of the Tribulation. This is where the mask comes off, where the real agenda of the Antichrist becomes clear—sort of. Until now, he has been seen as a political leader in a world desperately trying to convince itself that there is no God. But the whole world has just seen what looks like a *bona fide* miracle. A man has come back to life from the dead. Does this mean that there *is* a god? I believe that the Antichrist will at this point give credit where credit is due: not to Yahweh, you understand. To Lucifer.

It is here that the insight we gleaned from the Illuminati and the Freemasons helps us understand what is going on. "Satan" is not a name; it is a description, an epithet. It means "adversary." The being to whom this slur is ascribed—so often we sometimes forget that it's not his name—is popularly known as Lucifer, who was at one time a prince among Yahweh's angels—the mightiest of them all. Lucifer *hates* being called the adversary. He wants to be known as an angel of light, or better yet, worshipped as God Himself. Satan no doubt prefers being called "Lucifer," because he'd really like us to believe that he's the source of enlightenment. That's why Adam Weishaupt named his "Illuminati" organization

after him. To those of us who are personally and intimately familiar with the wealth of Yahweh's goodness, Satan's ploys are absurdly easy to spot. (His "Allah" persona is a particularly bad joke.) But the world in their spiritual blindness during these times can't see that he's as phony as a pink three-dollar bill: the vast majority will think this counterfeit Christ actually has value.

His whole agenda, as we read in Isaiah, is to usurp the rightful place of Yahweh in our hearts: **"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"** Note that this pegs him as the recipient of all of the false sun-god worship that's been going on since the days of Nimrod; and linguistically, his name is tied to the crescent moon deity of the Muslims as well. **"How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God [i.e., the angelic host]; I will also sit in the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'" (Isaiah 14:12-14)** This is one of the few places in the English Bible where Satan's name is even hinted at—and even this is more a description than it is a name. "Lucifer," Latin for "light bearer" is *Helel* in Hebrew, meaning "shining one, morning star, or day-star. The word upon which it's based (*Halal*) is a verb that on one end of the spectrum means to shine, flash forth light, or praise, but it also means to boast, to make into a fool, or to act like a madman. But forget the name. It's far more important that we know Satan's character: he's our *adversary*, our *accuser* (Greek: *satanas*). Considering the fact that the Creator's name is repeated seven thousand times in scripture, it's a sad commentary indeed that so many people recognize the name "Lucifer," while so few know the self-revealed name of the true and living God: Yahweh.

Anyway, with diplomacy and tact, the Antichrist will eloquently explain who "saved" him from the assassin. He will describe this god of light who has performed such a remarkable sign. He won't refer to him as Satan though, for to him he's not the adversary but the ally. He'll call him by a name he prefers: Lucifer, or perhaps Allah. And then he'll call upon the world to join him in worshiping his god—the one who restored his life. Again we see a blatant Satanic counterfeit: as Christians worship Yahweh through his resurrected Messiah, Yahshua, the Antichrist will be demanding that the world worship Lucifer through himself. I personally have a hard time comprehending how anybody could fall for this, but then again, Satan has an impressive track record of persuading people with disastrously illogical but brilliantly packaged arguments. I mean, look at Islam. Give Muslims booty or promise them a paradise filled with virgins and low-hanging fruit and they'll follow you anywhere—even to hell.

Whether or not Satan is actually responsible for bringing the Antichrist back to life is a matter of conjecture. I don't know if Yahweh has given him the ability to do that—and that's what it would take: God-given ability. The prophetic record

is rather ambiguous on this point. It could just as easily be slight of hand (he wasn't really dead) or demonic possession and reanimation of his corpse. We aren't given enough information to be dogmatic. But we do know one thing for sure: the whole world buys it: **"So they worshiped the dragon [named "Lucifer"] who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months."** (Revelation 13:4-5)

The cat, as it were, is out of the bag: the inhabitants of earth now know who they're dealing with. As the Rolling Stones put it (without having a clue how terrifyingly close to reality they'd stumbled) their devil says: "Please allow me to introduce myself; I'm a man of wealth and taste...." The one John calls the "dragon" is now, perhaps for the first time ever, presented to the world openly. And the Antichrist? The people won't call him the "beast," of course. He will be spoken of in the most glowing and flattering of terms. There is to be no more ambiguity. Satan will no longer hide behind religion and petty distractions. It's time for a showdown: the world must choose between Yahweh and "Lucifer."

I don't really understand why, but Yahweh has allotted a full three and a half years—basically the entire second half of the Tribulation period—for Satan to rule the earth in person through the Antichrist. Perhaps it's His sense of fair play. He doesn't want anyone coming to Him later and whining, "I was tricked—I didn't understand what was going on. It all happened so fast." *Everyone* will understand that they're making a conscious choice: you're either for Yahweh or against Him. For once in their lives, they'll get the candidate they voted for. This period—three-and-a-half years, or forty-two months, or 1,260 days, (remember, we're still using the prophetic-year reckoning of 360 days)—is referred to many times in scripture (though the last half of the Tribulation is not always perfectly coterminous with every "1,260-day" period). We'll see it described again by Daniel later in this chapter. If you thought the first half was bad—thermonuclear war, environmental disaster, the death of a third of the earth's oceans and a quarter of its population—then you're in for a shock. It's all downhill from here.

**"Then he [the Antichrist] opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven [i.e., the rapture participants]. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."** (Revelation 13:6-10) John concludes the passage by giving us a bird's eye view of the final forty-two months of the history

of mankind. We see several things that distinguish this period of time. First, the Antichrist is in complete control of the whole earth now, not just the Balkans, Europe, or the lands he was able to overrun in the opening days of World War III.

Second, he is now openly blaspheming Yahweh and everything and everyone associated with His kingdom. He can't touch the raptured saints, of course, but he goes out of his way to attack all that they stood for. Two groups find themselves in his crosshairs: the Jews (whose incredible national epiphany we'll explore in a future chapter) and the new Christians, the neoEkklesia, those gentiles who have belatedly chosen to follow Yahshua after the rapture—the Fellowship of Repentant Laodicea, if you will.

Third, now that Satan has come out of the closet, the world is divided into two—and only two—camps: those who are Yahweh's children, and those who worship Satan. The ramifications are stunning. This means that all of the world's religions (excluding the reverence for Yahweh, which as we have observed is not really a religion at all but rather a relationship between God and His people)—*all of them* come to terms at some level with the fact that their god is actually Lucifer! This has always been the reality, though concealed beneath a cloak of secrecy and false identities from Ba'al, Merodach, and Chemosh, to Diana, Zeus, and Apollo, to Shiva, Vishnu, and Allah—to the pitiful, dead caricature of Yahshua so many settle for in today's apostate world. But note that Yahweh has known all along who were His, for their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, even these late comers. Yes, they're going to experience a few very tough years, but God's eye is on His children. The Antichrist may kill their bodies, for this is Satan's moment in the sun. But he can't touch their souls, because their spirits are forever linked with that of the eternal living God.

That, however, brings up an interesting question. We've seen two of Satan's most influential tools—Islam and Catholicism—get pummeled during the first half of the Tribulation. Doesn't that mean the devil is fighting against himself? Doesn't he have an interest in perpetuating the lie? No, not any more.

The answer gets to the heart of his real agenda. Throughout the history of man, Satan has apparently been content to seduce people away from Yahweh. But he wants more: he wants to be worshiped as himself, as "Lucifer," the light bearer—something that has always been a rare phenomenon in this world. Satan has always had to use surrogates, substitutes, gods with other names who were nothing but figments of the imagination, gods who had been given substance by priests and sculptors (or, more recently, by advertising agencies). He has never really wanted man to believe that there is no God. What he has desired, rather, was for man to believe that there was no *Yahweh*. Satan's greatest yearning, from day one, has been for mankind to worship him openly for who he thinks he is: Lucifer—not Allah, not Mary and a gaggle of saints, not even a phony caricature

of a Jesus who bears no resemblance to the Yahshua of history and heaven. Only Lucifer—alone and glorified: *Halal*, the boaster.

You've got three and a half years, big guy. Knock yourself out. You said, **“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.”** Just remember what the *real* God said through his prophet when he described you: **Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.”** (Isaiah 14:14-15)

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A few chapters back, if you'll recall, I concluded from the convoluted evidence in Revelation 17 that the Antichrist would be possessed by the same demon that inhabited the twisted Roman Emperor Nero. But the disasters of the Tribulation's first half were precipitated by the actions of one who, as far as I can tell, wasn't necessarily demon possessed. Yes, the Antichrist was following Satan's plan to the letter, and yes, his intrigues resulted in unmitigated horrors unleashed upon the earth. But what he did and why he did it speak of a garden-variety megalomaniac on the order of a Mussolini or Saddam, albeit a really clever one who's getting lots of Satanic assistance. Now, as we approach the three-and-a-half year mark, we perceive a quantum leap in evil. I believe that it is here, in the Antichrist's apparent return from the dead, that we see the demon of Nero take over his persona (not that he's an unwilling participant—he has consciously sold his soul in exchange for unlimited temporal power).

When John states matter-of-factly that **“It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them”** (Revelation 13:7), he's announcing that things are about to get worse—much worse. The overt persecution is about to begin, and those who aren't specifically sealed (that is, every follower of Yahshua now on earth except for the 144,000 Jewish messengers) will suddenly be faced with two choices; run and hide, or stay and die. There will be no more pretense of religious or political tolerance, no more gently coaxing cautious Jews into his camp through favors and concessions, no more lenience for dissenting opinion. From now on, the name of the game is submission. Of course, the whole thing will be couched in politically correct terms: *for the greater good of society at large, the anarchy must be reined in; the benefits of the new worldwide system of law and order will far outweigh the inconveniences. We must all pull together in this great endeavor; we can and will forge a bright new tomorrow from the ashes of yesterday's failures.* Good grief.

It is not without significance that John's whole discussion of the Antichrist's new openly Satanic agenda comes upon the heels of a symbolism-rich recap of the history and prophecy of these days. We, too, should pause and get our

bearings. **“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars....”** The woman is Israel. Her garland is her twelve tribes, and the sun in which she is enrobed represents the glory of Yahweh. Could the moon under her feet be Islam’s crescent and the greater counterfeit it represents? The symbol certainly fits. Here again we are reminded that Isaiah 14’s *halal ben shachar*, rendered “Lucifer, son of the dawn,” aspires to be mistaken for Yahweh, the true light, but throughout history he has had to masquerade as something else—a mere reflection, as the moon’s light is of the sun. **“Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.... She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.”** (Revelation 12:1-2, 5) The only child destined to rule like this is Yahshua. His human roots and destiny are outlined here—the in-between stuff is left out. Of special interest is the word translated “caught up,” *harpazo* in Greek—the same word Paul used to describe the eventual rapture of those who would follow Him—those who would be described as “the body of Christ.”

**“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.”** (Revelation 12:3-4)

What I want to know is how John knew what a dragon looked like. Does my mental picture of dragons (based on medieval art and Saturday matinees) match—even remotely—what he saw? I don’t suppose it matters. At any rate, this is definitely Satan. If there were any doubts, they are dispelled in both Revelation 12:9 and 20:2, where the dragon, the serpent of Garden-of-Eden fame, the devil (meaning “slanderer”), and Satan are all identified as the same creature. It also proves that Herod was acting under the devil’s explicit instructions when he ordered the children in Bethlehem slaughtered in an attempt to destroy the coming King.

It’s no coincidence that the dragon is described as having **“seven [crowned] heads and ten horns.”** This is precisely how the political empire of the Antichrist, a.k.a. the beast, is described. Does this mean they’re the same thing? No, but it does establish that the Antichrist is operating in the spirit and power of Satan. We have already seen (actually, it’s a few chapters *later* in Revelation) how the seven heads are associated with Roman Emperors—a metaphor for godless earthly authority. Of course with Biblical prophecy these symbols often take on several layers of meaning. One thing is certain: the Antichrist and the dragon are joined at the spiritual hip.

John continues the overview: **“Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”** (Revelation 12:6) In a twisted sort of way, it’s gratifying to learn

that Israel has finally learned to take instructions. Their Messiah, during His Olivet discourse, had told them (i.e., those living near Jerusalem, in Judea) that a time would come, marked by a specific sign, when they would have to run for their lives. In Revelation, we are assured that Israel (the “woman”), as a nation, does precisely that. Those who flee will be sheltered for three and a half years. The “they” that “feed her” in the wilderness I take to be those “stars of heaven,” who were *not* swept away by the dragon’s tail—in other words, angels who remained loyal to Yahweh. Supplying the needs of the “woman,” Israel, is in perfect accord with Yahweh’s consistent and long-standing promises to her.

Here’s how Mark recorded Yahshua’s admonition: **“So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ [we’ll cover this shortly] spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.”** (Mark 13:14-19) The parallel passage in Matthew calls this period of time the “great tribulation,” and Jeremiah calls it the “time of Jacob’s trouble.” We’ll talk about this episode in detail in a coming chapter. For now, just note that the shift in the political wind that causes the Jews to flee is extremely sudden. There’s no time to plan; there’s not even enough time to pack.

But not all of the action’s here on earth. Although we can’t be dogmatic about the timing, it appears to me that the following scene culminates near the midpoint of the Tribulation, for it signals a drastic change in Satan’s *modus operandi*. **“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”** (Revelation 12:7-9) Angels and demons, though spirits, are finite creatures—they can’t be in more than one place at a time. The reason Lucifer is called the devil, i.e. the slanderer, is that he spends time in heaven accusing us of being sinful, unworthy people. He’s right, of course, but if we’re willing to accept God’s gift of salvation, our penalty has already been paid, so his case gets thrown out of court. At some point, however, Satan and his angels are evicted—they will no longer have access to the throne of Yahweh—contempt of court, I suppose. This is good news and bad news: he won’t be accusing Christians any more (as if God couldn’t see our shortcomings on His own if He had chosen to look), but from that point forward, Satan and his minions will be spending all their time on earth, walking about like roaring lions looking for tasty spiritual morsels to devour.

John's narrative continues. **"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.'"** (Revelation 12:10-12) After almost six thousand years of satanic trickery and deceit focused on separating us from the God who made us, it's come down to this: a final three and a half years of open warfare against mankind upon the earth—not against God, you understand. Satan's already lost that battle. His wrath is against the sole object of his jealous hatred: man.

Here's the way Satan sees the game: if he can get you to your grave without knowing Yahweh, he's won. Of course, he'd prefer it if you'd actually side with him—to accept his spirit and be "born from below" as Yahweh's people are "born from above." Those who are indwelt with Satan's spirit are his most effective tool in obfuscating the message of Yahweh's redeeming love. But as much as Satan craves our worship and submission, he's willing to settle for our souls. Until this point he's been content to leave people alone who were disinterested in, or antagonistic toward, the Word of God—those people would likely die in their sins anyway, so why expend the effort? But now it's a whole new ball game. He can no longer afford to sit around and wait for the lost to die of natural causes. Satan is now like the forlorn cartoon vulture sitting on a tree limb who turns to his buddy and says, "Heck with patience. I'm going to go out and kill something." A major paradigm shift is indicated here. Satan is no longer seen merely fostering ungodly behavior in the earth—now he's harvesting all the lost souls he can, while he's still got the chance. He knows his days are growing short.

Nor is he prohibited from killing God's children any more—something he now begins to do with reckless abandon, as much out of spite as to prevent the "cancer" of eternal life from spreading. I get the feeling that among the saved at this point in history, hanging on to one's mortal life is no longer a top priority. Every soul who dies trusting in Yahshua is further evidence that Satan has been "overcome by the blood of the Lamb."

When the heavenly voice said, **"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea,"** I think we can safely assume that he was speaking of Jews and Gentiles. **"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [i.e., three and a half years], from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be**

carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 12:13-17) The first group on Satan’s hit list is Israel. Although this is nothing new for Satan, it’s a 180-degree turnaround for the one he has empowered as his emissary: the Antichrist—at least as far as his public persona is concerned. As we shall see in a future chapter, the trigger for his newfound rage is Israel’s national rejection of his Messianic claims, and worse (for him), their belated acceptance of their true Messiah, Yahshua.

Time after time in the Book of Judges we read of Yahweh’s willingness to rescue Israel when they cried out for help. Here, for the first time in a long time, Israel is crying out to Yahweh again: “Save us!” The phrase “two wings of a great eagle” seems to modern ears to be a reference to the use of aircraft as the Jews make their escape. It may mean nothing more than this, but I have my doubts. I’m having trouble picturing six or eight million Israelis lined up at David Ben Gurion Airport trying to catch El Al flights to the middle of nowhere. The whole point of fleeing to the “wilderness” is that it’s hard to get to. No, I think something else is happening here.

Could it be that the “great eagle” represents America? I know, *I know*—all of the governments of the earth, America included, will have fallen under the suzerainty of the Antichrist by this time. But factor in that we’ve had three and a half years of angelic preaching and witnessing by the 144,000, and I think there could well be enough latent mutiny in the U.S. military to engineer a massive, spontaneous, and unauthorized rescue effort on behalf of the Jews. There’s no reason to suppose that the huge American contingent of the U.N. peacekeeping force stationed in Israel will have been sent home at this time. They will be on the scene, equipped for battle, and will still remember their original directive: protect Israel. One thing’s for sure: such an operation would definitely separate the sheep from the goats.

A few chapters back, I reiterated the popular theory that Isaiah 18 refers to America. Listen again to the payoff verse: “**In that time a present will be brought to Yahweh of Hosts: a people** [whose description leads us to the conclusion that they are Americans]—**to the place of the name of Yahweh of Hosts, to Mount Zion.**” (Isaiah 18:7) If Americans are to be responsible for bringing the Jews back to Jerusalem from wherever they’ve fled, it isn’t inconceivable that Americans will also be responsible for hiding and protecting them in the first place. I don’t know for sure, of course. The evidence is cryptic, to say the least. Maybe it’s just wishful thinking on my part. I’d love to see my countrymen form the backbone of the Fellowship of Repentant Laodicea. At any rate, this scenario sure beats our

present course, leading the lynch mob demanding that Israel commit geographical suicide by surrendering her buffer territories to her mortal enemies.

And what about the “flood” sent by the serpent to destroy the Jews? Is that literal—is it water? I doubt it. The last three and a half years of the Tribulation, as we shall see, will be a time of worldwide drought. Since Satan has in times past been given the ability to manipulate storms (cf. Job 1:19, Mark 4:37), this drought is, like the ten plagues of Egypt, a sign from God that Satan’s teeth have been pulled. So though we don’t know precisely when this “flood” will occur, it seems highly unlikely that Satan will be able to conjure up a deluge of water—especially one extensive enough to threaten millions of people. But a “flood” of gentile troops? Troops that get swallowed by the desert? Yeah, that makes sense (in a divine wrath sort of way). It would also explain why, after **“the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood,”** the Antichrist didn’t merely pursue the Jews using conventional military means: he’s *already* sent everything he had after them—with disastrous results. (Is there a Pharaoh in the house?)

*It’s those @\$%&! Christians, the world leader will seethe. This is all their fault.* Even if nobody else gets it, the Antichrist will understand the bond—like a mother and her child—between the Jews and Christians. I’ve heard commentators claim that all of the Tribulation martyrs will be dead by the Tribulation’s midpoint, freeing God to “do his worst” to the remaining world. Sorry, it’s just not true. Yahshua is, even now, “standing at the door, knocking,” appealing to a lost world to invite him in.

And the Antichrist? At this point he and his pet dragon will go out **“to make war with the rest of [Israel’s] offspring.”** A billion and a half people are already dead, but he’s just getting warmed up. No more Mr. Nice Guy.