

## Chapter XVII

### WHERE DO THEY FIT?

We have seen that the Old Testament saints believed the promises of God concerning both advents of our Lord. As in any age, we know that some of them had more information and understood more than others, because some of them received direct revelations from God and were thus used of God to write the Old Testament Scriptures. Even though some of them were used in this way, it is impossible for us to say with any degree of accuracy how much any one of them actually understood about how the two advents of our Lord would be fulfilled, because there is a distinction between believing a promise and knowing how the promise will be kept.

It is spiritually reasonable then to apply to their understanding of the two advents of our Lord the same sort of understanding that we have concerning our Lord's second advent. For example, we have seen that certain prophetic truths could not be understood until certain other prophetic truths were first fulfilled. This is a part of the mystery of God, and it reveals the grace of God and the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit of God in every age without a specific

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understanding of prophetic events that have not yet been fulfilled.

The average Jew, prior to the Babylonian captivity, received his knowledge of the Word of God by hearing it read by the priests on the Sabbath day (Exodus 24:7). They also heard the Word of God from the prophets who were in their midst, both before and after their exile into Babylon. During their exile the Jews met together in private homes for prayer, the reading of the Word of God, and the observance of certain Jewish traditions. This was the beginning of the synagogue, which from that time on provided a place in the world where the Word of God could be heard (Luke 4:16-21). As a part of the restoration to the land, after their captivity in Babylon, the Jews who returned to Jerusalem were strengthened by the reading of the Word of God as they prepared to repair the walls of the city and to rebuild the temple (Nehemiah 8:8).

Given the general level of understanding of the Old Testament saints, as far as we are able to ascertain, we have seen that the prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel would most likely have been viewed by those who were aware of it as an uninterrupted sequence, since there was nothing about it that would have made them think otherwise. This was probably the accepted view of those who were aware of the prophecy until at least seven years after the crucifixion of our Lord, when it would have become obvious that the Kingdom had not been established upon the earth according to an uninterrupted sequential interpretation of the prophecy.

Further the significance of the seven feasts of the Jews (which in this age gives us an overview of the first and second advents of Christ, separated by the church age) would have been obscured to most, if not all of them. This can be seen by the fact that even after the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord (at the end of the sixty-ninth week of Daniel's prophecy), the

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overview provided by the seven feasts of the Jews could not be seen to be a prophetic overview until after Israel became a nation again in 1948. Once Israel was back in the land, but without salvation, it was then possible to see that the first three feasts of the Jews represented the first advent of our Lord and the last three feasts represented the second advent. It was also possible, as we have seen, to recognize that Pentecost, the middle feast of the Jews, represented the church age.

Despite the difficulties involved in the understanding of the prophetic Scriptures, we have already seen that for the age in which he lived, David had a great understanding of the new covenant relationship that was promised in Christ, and Enoch understood that the Lord would come *with ten thousands of his saints* (Jude 1:14). Even so it seems that the greater number of the Old Testament saints simply believed the promises that had been revealed to them, concerning both advents of our Lord, but like so many believers in this age, they did not know how the Lord would fulfill the details of the various prophecies.

We have been privileged to see all of the prophecies of our Lord's first advent (contained in the Old Testament Scriptures) fulfilled with perfect detail through the New Testament record that God has given us. Even so, with respect to certain aspects of our Lord's second advent, we find ourselves in a similar position to that of the majority of the Old Testament saints regarding some prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled. Indeed we, like they, believe these prophecies, but with our present level of understanding, we cannot tell (with absolute certainty) where some of these prophecies fit in the sequence of events that shall lead to the coming of our Lord and the establishment of His Kingdom upon this earth.

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Throughout the church age believers have been able to see the mountain peaks of second advent prophecies in the distance. Sometimes these peaks have appeared to be nearer than at other times. However with the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in her own land in 1948, we have become aware that we are definitely in the latter part of the latter days. Despite this awareness, we still do not know the day or the hour when our Lord will come (this is known only to the Father [Matthew 24:36]). Even so those of us who have diligently applied ourselves to the study of the second coming of our Lord now have at our disposal many more details of our Lord's coming than our brethren understood in previous generations, but despite this our prophetic vision is still not perfect. Some prophecies still elude our understanding, so that we do not know when or how they will be fulfilled, but we know that when they are fulfilled, they will be fulfilled perfectly.

One such prophecy is the battle described in the thirty-eight and thirty-ninth chapters of the book of Ezekiel. Most of the respected theologians that I have read on these passages of Scripture have ascribed them to the battle of Armageddon. They may be correct in their ascription, but this ascription has never completely satisfied me because the conditions for the battle of Armageddon and some of the conditions for this battle do not seem to fit together.

The solution to this problem may be that some of the things that are written together in these two chapters may not be fulfilled together, so that some of the events may occur at the beginning of the tribulation (where they seem to fit), and other events in these chapters may be fulfilled at the end of the tribulation (where they seem to fit). At this juncture, given the difficulties in accurately placing these prophecies, our responsibility as always is to continue to

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*study to shew [ourselves] approved unto God, [workmen] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15).*

If this allows us to agree with what we have read, so be it; but if it does not allow for an agreement with what we have read, then the Word of God must stand for what it reveals when it is rightly divided with the information that God supplies with the progression of time. With more light, more can be seen, so this should not be taken as a criticism. If these writers diligently applied themselves to the study of the Word of God and wrote with a present-tense conviction that what they wrote was correct as they understood it with the light that was available to them, then their inability to see certain prophetic truths cannot be faulted. As we have previously stated, prophecy is a difficult subject. It takes certain keys to unlock the prophetic Scriptures and make them more understandable. Without these keys, prophecy remains veiled in the mystery of God, so that our understanding of the when and the how of the prophecies cannot be seen until by God's grace and by our study He enables us to discover the keys.

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee.

Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. *After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.*

Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the

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land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: and thou shalt say, *I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.* (Ezekiel 38:1-12, emphasis mine)

As we approach the interpretation of this prophecy, it is important for us to know that Gomer, Magog, Tubal and Meshech were some of the sons of Japheth (Genesis 10:2), the eldest son of Noah (Genesis 10:21). The Jewish historian Josephus tells us that Gomer founded the Galatians (Gauls ) and that Magog founded the Scythians (Tartars) (Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter VI, Section 1). Thus the general consensus based upon the evidence is that Gog the chief prince of Magog will be the ruler of Russia at the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy. Meshech and Tubal, names for two of the sons of Japheth, have been identified in modern times as the cities of Moscow and Tobolsk. (Scofield Reference Bible, 1909, 1917, pg. 888, Note 1.)

Thus this prophecy is about a northern confederation of armies that will be allied against Israel in the *latter years*. These armies will consist of Magog (Russia), Persia (Iran), Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer (Gauls), and Togarmah (Turkey). They shall arise and come like a storm (which seems to describe an aerial invasion) to the mountains of Israel to take a spoil of the Jews, the people that have been gathered out of the nations of the world in the latter years.

This alliance of nations has not yet been formed, but at the present time it seems to be in the process of forming. For example, Turkey is presently an ally of the United States which is an ally of Israel. Yet Turkey has recently made an alliance with Iran (an enemy of Israel) against the Kurds. Likewise Russia, after her supposed cold-war demise, has recently been saber-rattling

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and is very much a supporter of Iran, supplying her with weapons and military technology. Gomer has been identified as ancient Galatia, a people that migrated from Asia Minor to the West and have been known as the Gauls and as the Celts. History tells us that they populated Germany, Italy, France, Scotland, Ireland and England, so it is difficult to say just who will make up the nation called Gomer in this alliance of nations. Will it be one of them, all of them, or some of them? We simply do not know, but given the present political climate in Europe, it might be France and Germany. Likewise the present political situations in both Libya and Ethiopia lend themselves to this alliance with very little persuasion.

The primary condition that shall exist prior to this invasion is that Israel will dwell safely without the need of fortifying walls after she has been restored to the land in the latter years. The term *latter years* makes this a reference to present-day Israel and not to Israel's restoration to the land after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. These walls speak of the best military technology that was available at the time of the writing of this prophecy and should not be taken literally. This also applies to the attacking armies, which means that an army of horses and horsemen, with armor, swords, shields and bucklers is a description of the best military technology that was available in the days of the prophet and is not a literal description of the military might that will be brought against Israel when this prophecy is fulfilled.

Throughout our studies we have repeatedly emphasized that Israel was resurrected out of the nations of the world to become a nation again in her own land in May of 1948. We know that this is one of the two conditions that must exist prior to the fulfillment of this prophecy. Yet any student of modern Jewish history knows that from the time of the United Nations' vote to partition

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Palestine, in November of 1947 until the present-time, the Jews have never dwelt safely in their own land. They have fought numerous wars from the time of their war of independence in 1948, and they have become one of the most powerful nations in the Middle East, militarily. Even so almost daily they are confronted with acts of terrorism, and the majority of the Arab nations that populate the Middle East are devoted to Israel's destruction. It is apparent then that the dwelling safely condition of this prophecy awaits fulfillment, because Israel's present existence (from a human point of view) is dependent upon her military might, and this does not equate with the *unwalled cities* of the prophecy. So it appears that for this aspect of this prophecy to be fulfilled there must be a change in Israel's military status.

We can only speculate as to the time when this will occur. Will it happen before the tribulation, at the beginning of the tribulation, during the tribulation, or at the end of the tribulation? We do not know, but we know that at the beginning of the great tribulation the antichrist will counterfeit the second coming of Jesus Christ and he will bring peace upon the earth. After that, he will take peace from the earth (Revelation 6:4). So this time of peace offers the most logical time, given our present perspective, for the fulfillment of this prophecy.

We must remember that the nation of Israel as well as the nations of this world will be convinced by the signs and lying wonders of the antichrist that he is the Christ (II Thessalonians 2:4). Israel's delusion that the antichrist is Christ may be the very thing that will enable her to confidently lay aside her weapons, for during the reign of Christ the Scripture says: *And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against*

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*nation, neither shall they learn war any more* (Micah 4:3).

Since the antichrist will claim to be the Christ, and since the antichrist will have no authority with the nation of Israel other than the authority of Christ, it seems spiritually reasonable that he will be attached to certain prophecies about the Christ that will seem to give him authority. This attachment to prophecies about Christ is implied in Scripture, but it is not directly stated. For example, in the thirteenth chapter of Zechariah in context with instructions about false prophets in the last days, seemingly out of context, the prophet interjected a prophecy about the Christ: *smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered* (Zechariah 13:7). The logical explanation for this sudden shift in context is the counterfeit nature of false prophets, and particularly the counterfeit nature of the ultimate false prophet, the antichrist.

We have previously stated that we believe that the antichrist will give the nation of Israel the authority to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem when he makes a covenant with them for the final week of Daniel's seventy-weeks. If he does this, this will indirectly attach him to the prophecy in the sixth chapter of the book of Zechariah about the BRANCH building the temple of the Lord (6:13), and this will further convince the Jews that he is the Christ. It is very important that we understand that any attachment by the antichrist to any prophecy is not the fulfillment of the prophecy. It is merely an expression of the devil's deceptive nature.

In regard to the prophecy in Zechariah about the BRANCH building His temple, we have seen that the Lord has been building His temple with *living stones* (I Peter 2:1-6) upon the foundation of Himself (I Corinthians 3:11) from the time of His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection until the end of the age. However since the antichrist will be the devil incarnate; and

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since the devil indwelling the serpent deceived Eve into believing that she could be like God (*knowing good and evil*) if she would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and since Adam as the federal head of the human family plunged it into sin when he ate of that tree; and since the fruit of that tree has produced *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*; and since the ways which seem right have produced all of the religious and ethical systems of the world: it should not pose a problem for the devil to unify the religions of the world around the antichrist. This will allow the antichrist to order the construction of the temple in Jerusalem on a site revered by the Muslims.

In view of these remarks, it is important to understand that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with doing *the right things*. Right conduct in a society is certainly better than bad conduct. However the wrong comes when man thinks that by his conduct he can satisfy the Holiness, Righteousness and Justice of God; but this is impossible because the Scriptures have clearly established the truth: *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in [God's] sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin* (Romans 3:20). Thus a right relationship with God can only be obtained through the vicarious life and the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the good news of the gospel: *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs*

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*according to the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3:3-7).

The prophecy against Gog does not tell us how long Israel will dwell safely, but her vulnerability (lack of walls) seems to be the irresistible lure that will place the metaphorical hooks into the jaws of Gog and draw him to Israel to be judged of God. Only one-sixth of his army will survive this judgment (Ezekiel 39:2). Consequently the supernatural nature of this judgment (Ezekiel 38:18-22) will sanctify the Lord before the Gentile nations of the world (Ezekiel 38:23). Nevertheless, in view of his attachments to prophecies about the Christ, suppose the antichrist were to claim that he wrought this judgment upon the armies of Gog. Such a claim, along with his signs and lying wonders (II Thessalonians 2:4-12), could add further persuasion to Israel and to the nations of the world that his claim to be the Christ is true.

Once the army of Gog has been destroyed upon the mountains of Israel, God is also going to judge Gog's homeland: *And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the [nations]: and they shall know that I am the LORD* (Ezekiel 39:6). This sets up another interesting possibility. Suppose Russia were to initially perceive that this *fire on Magog* was not from God, but was a reprisal from the United States of America for Russia's attack on Israel. What would her response be? It is likely that she would launch her ICBMs from silos and submarines around the world. This could bring the destruction of another entity called Babylon into the equation.

The name Babylon is used throughout the Scriptures to designate several different entities. It is important for us to understand that though they are all called by the same name, they are not the same. The first, as we have already seen, was the kingdom of Nimrod where confusion was

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brought upon them by judgment. God confounded their languages so that they would spread abroad upon the face of the earth (Genesis 11:1-9). The kingdom of Nimrod was followed centuries later by the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, where confusion was wrought by the fact that God used an idolatrous people (Daniel 5:1-4) to judge Israel for idolatry (II Chronicles 36:11-19). Then, in the New Testament, the name Babylon was used by Peter to designate the city of Rome (I Peter 5:13). This use was carried over into the book of the Revelation (17), where it was used by John to describe the final stages of the fourth world empire, *BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS*, and he also used it to describe an economic entity (18), which does not seem to be the fourth world empire of the seventeenth chapter, even though it bears many of the characteristics of Rome as well as many of the characteristics of ancient Babylon.

We must not confuse the Babylons of the Old Testament with the Babylons of the New Testament. Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was eventually destroyed, and when it was, God placed a curse upon it that it should never be inhabited again (Isaiah 13:20). So, contrary to much that is being taught today about the revival of ancient Babylon, the Babylon of the New Testament cannot be a direct reference to the Babylon of the Old Testament. Nevertheless ancient Babylon is used in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation to introduce another entity that has many of the characteristics of ancient Babylon, but is neither ancient Babylon nor the HARLOT BABYLON of the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation:

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, [Fell, fell, Babylon the great], and [it was] the habitation of [demons], and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations [drank] of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth ... committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth [were] waxed rich through the

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abundance of her delicacies.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, [my people came out of her and shared not in the sins of her, and [received] not of her plagues. For her sins ... reached unto heaven, and God ... remembered her iniquities. [She was rewarded even as she rewarded them], and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she ... filled fill to her double. How much she...glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: *[for in her heart she says], I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

*The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*

*And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth. (Revelation 18:1-24, emphasis mine)*

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I have taken the liberty of changing the tense of certain verbs (as translated in our King James Bible) in the first two paragraphs of the above portion of Scripture to correspond with the aorist tense that was used in the Greek text of this chapter. It is true that the use of the aorist tense could be from the perspective of the prophet and thus reflect the things that he saw in his vision, but this would not explain his later use of the future tense. This change of tense makes me believe that the use of the past tense was a reference to the judgment of ancient Babylon.

Thus John saw the fall of ancient Babylon, and this vision was projected forward to a nation that will exist in the latter years that parallels ancient Babylon. This can be seen in the last sentence of the second paragraph of this Scripture, where an allusion to the past judgment upon ancient Babylon suddenly changes to reveal the attitude of this other entity, which says, *I sit a queen and am no widow*. While this was the attitude of ancient Babylon, it also reflects the attitude of this other entity. This can be seen by the fact that John then changed from the use of the past tense to the use of the future tense throughout much of the remaining portion of this chapter.

Many years ago, while studying the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation, I was impressed by the many similarities between this description of Babylon and conditions that existed in the United States of America at that time and have continued to the present-time. A number of things stood out and still do. First, when this entity will be destroyed, the merchants of the world will weep and mourn *for no man buyeth their merchandise any more*. I cannot remember what sort of imports America had at the time of my initial study, but in the year 2000, according to the website for Nations Encyclopedia, the estimated imports of the United States were \$1.233 trillion

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as opposed to exports of \$776 billion. This certainly could make the merchants of the world rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Second, the United States resembles the Babylon of Nimrod after God's judgment by the confusion of its tongues, because *The American population is one of the most diverse in the world and is constantly changing because of immigration and differences in birth rates.* (Nations Encyclopedia) This diversity is encouraged by the inscription on the Statue of Liberty which reads: *Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden shore.* America has been a land of immigrants. Consequently American law provides for legal immigration, but strictly forbids illegal immigration. This makes the present interest in amnesty for illegal immigrants confusing at best. Third, the description of the angel casting a millstone into the sea produces an image of a nuclear explosion. It must be remembered that it was the United States of America that produced the first nuclear bombs during World War II. Then if one remembers that the Scriptures tell us that *they that live by the sword, shall perish by the sword*, it is possible to see a connection to this type of judgment. Fourth, America was once a mighty force for the proclamation of the truth of the gospel into all of the world. Yet in recent years there has been a definite departure from this position. Supreme Court decisions and organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and liberal politicians have moved away from the letter of the Constitution, which provides freedom of speech and freedom of religious expression, to support anti-semitism and anti-Christian policies. Somehow they use the very portions of our Constitution that guarantee these liberties to take away these liberties. Thus America has become humanistic in its philosophy and has

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departed from the things that once made her great. We cannot say with absolute certainty that the United States of America is the Babylon of the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation; but at the present time, viewing the other nations of the world, we do not see another nation that fits the image of this Babylon quite like America does.

Quite a few years after the above-mentioned study (which had a beginning but no ending), I was browsing in a bookstore one day and came across a book written by Max I. Dimont, *Jews, God and History*. Chapter twenty-seven in Mr. Dimont's book is titled, *United States: New Babylon*. In this chapter Mr. Dimont draws a parallel between ancient Babylon's relationship with the Jews and the United States' relationship with the Jews, and he reveals many parallels between Babylon and the United States. For example, *Between 1880 and 1920...Jewish intellectual life suddenly took root in America....The center of Jewish intellectual life shifted from the Old World to the New, just as the center of Jewish intellectual life in Biblical days had shifted from Palestine to Babylonia after the fall of Judah in the sixth century B.C.* (*Jews, God and History*, Max I. Dimont, Copyright 1962, Signet, Signet Classics, Mentor, Plume and Meridian Books, pg.355) Thus there is some authority for the United States being the Babylon of the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation besides my impressions many years ago.

When we began our view of the prophecy in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel, we suggested that part of the prophecy might be fulfilled at the beginning of the tribulation period and another part of it at the end of the tribulation. To this point in our study we have been stressing the events that we believe will be fulfilled at the beginning of the tribulation. Even so, from about verse seventeen of the thirty-ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the prophecy seems

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to jump from the beginning of the tribulation to the end of the tribulation, and this is probably the reason that many respected theologians of the past ascribed the whole prophecy to the battle of Armageddon. There are similarities between the two battles, but in the battle described by Ezekiel, only six nations shall come against Israel (Magog, Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Togarmah and Gomer), while in the description of the battle of Armageddon described by Zechariah, it is all the people of the earth:

The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, *though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it* (Zechariah 12:1-3, emphasis mine).

This difference in the number of people coming against Israel suggests that we have a description of two different battles. Even so after both battles God brings the carrion birds to the battle site to feast upon the bodies of the slain. Then in the description of the battle in Ezekiel, as well as in the description of the battle of Armageddon in Zechariah, there is a description of the salvation of Israel. We know that the salvation of the nation as a whole does not take place until the end of the tribulation, at the coming of our Lord, so this is the reason the theologians of the past ascribed both battles to the battle of Armageddon:

In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.* (Zechariah 12:8-10, emphasis mine)

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In my mind there is no question that the battle of Armageddon and the battle in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel are two different battles, despite the fact that there are similarities and that after both battles we have a description of the salvation of Israel:

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; after that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; *then shall they know that I am the LORD their God*, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. *Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD* (Ezekiel 39:25-29, emphasis mine).

Here again is the emphatic proof that things written together are not necessarily fulfilled together, for in this portion of Scripture we have a description of Israel's restoration to the land (in 1948), a description of the tribulation period (yet to come), and a description of the salvation of Israel (at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ). No wonder there has been confusion about this prophecy in Ezekiel.

Another possibility for Israel to  *dwell safely*  lies in the book of Obadiah. This prophecy is a description of a judgment of Esau, Jacob's brother, but it is not directly concerned with Esau because it was written during the eighth century before Christ, before the northern tribes of Israel were carried into Assyrian captivity and long after the death of Esau. Even so it speaks of judgments against the posterity of Esau for their actions against Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt. It also projects forward in time and speaks of judgments against Edom for their actions against Judah in the sixth century before Christ, during Nebuchadnezzar's captivity of Jerusalem; and it projects still farther into the future and speaks of their actions against Israel

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during the Roman siege of Jerusalem, which culminated in 70 A.D.

When we think of the posterity of Esau, we must be aware that they intermarried with the posterity of Ishmael (Genesis 36:1-3), and these two posterities have produced the modern Arab nations of the world, most of whom have sworn themselves to Israel's destruction. Even so there are some Arabs who have gotten along very well with the Jews, to the point of feeling the wrath of those Arabs who are sworn to Israel's destruction. Nevertheless as long as there are Arabs who feel this way, Israel's ability to dwell safely is in jeopardy. This brings the prophecy of Obadiah into consideration, for depending upon when this prophecy will be fulfilled, it could provide the circumstances under which Israel could dwell safely:

The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?

How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up! All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.

Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter. *For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my*

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*people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.*

For the day of the LORD is near upon all the [nations]: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been. But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's. (Obadiah 1:1-21, emphasis mine)

Like the prophecy in Ezekiel, it is impossible with our present level of understanding to fix a date for the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is also impossible to know if this prophecy is directed against all of the lineage of Esau, or if this prophecy is only directed against those Arabs who have delighted in the evils that have come upon Israel when God judged them for their rejection of the Christ; but on the surface it appears to be against all of them.

Even though the religion of Muhammad did not come into existence until the beginning of the seventh century after Christ, the fundamentals of Islam reflect a statement God made to Hagar before the birth of Ishmael: *And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren* (Genesis 16:12).

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When we consider the number of Arab nations in the Middle East and the number of Arabs who have migrated to the Gentile nations of the world, in the light of the scope of this judgment, it does not seem that this prophecy will be fulfilled before the battle of Armageddon. In this regard, at the beginning of the last paragraph, we read: *For the day of the LORD is near upon all the [nations]; as thou has done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.* Then at the end of that paragraph, we read: *And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.* Thus this judgment seems to fall to the time when the Lord will come and fight against His enemies:

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs. (Revelation 14:14-20)

While the prophecy about the judgment of Edom could provide for Israel's safety, there is nothing about the prophecy that suggests that we should place it anywhere in the sequence of the last day events, other than where the prophet seemed to place it, at the battle of Armageddon.

So while the placement of each of the three prophecies which we have considered in this chapter still remain veiled in a cloud of mystery, the placements that we have made seem to fit the

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Scriptures, to the level of understanding that the Lord has given us at the present time. The theologians of the past placed all three in the realm of the battle of Armageddon, but as we have seen, this explanation does not seem to answer all that we know about these three prophecies. Are we correct in our placement of these three prophecies? Only the fulfillment of the prophecies will enable us to know for sure. Even so our present-tense conviction regarding these three prophecies is that we have placed them correctly in the sequence of last day events.