

## What Will Heaven Be Like?

*“On this mountain the Lord will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine, the best of meats and the finest of wines . . . He will swallow up death forever and wipe the tears from all eyes. He will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.”*

*Isaiah 26:6-8 New International Version*

### *Overcoming Church in Heaven*

**W**hen the time comes for God to remove the *Overcoming Church* from the earth, it will happen suddenly—“*in the twinkling of an eye*”, as Paul says—caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This event will terminate the history of the *Church of the Messiah* on earth and will take place in the manner described by Paul:

*“According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede*

*those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever.”<sup>74</sup>*

The removal of the *Church of the Messiah Overcomers*—not institutional church members or denominational churchoid attendees—takes place in the *Apocalypse* between the end of Chapter 3 and the beginning of Chapter 4. From then on the Church is not seen on earth during the period of *Apocalyptic* judgments. In the first three chapters of the *Apocalypse* the word “church” occurs about twenty times, but it is never mentioned again until the end of the *Apocalypse* and beginning of eternity in chapter 22.

From chapter 4 on the *Overcoming Church of the Messiah* is with the Messiah in heaven as he takes over authority and judgment from his Father, and they share impending inheritance of rule in heaven and on earth won through their overcoming efforts. The dramatic Rapture of the Overcomers will start the divine clock for the count-down events of the last days of the world. From the Rapture onwards the Overcoming Church is not seen on earth during the period of *Apocalyptic* judgments which follows. From chapter 4 the Overcoming Church of the Messiah is with their Lord in heaven as he takes over authority and judgment of the last days of the world. This removal of the Overcoming Church, however, ushers in the new history of the believing *Remnant Jews*, as God begins to fulfil His promise to bring them back to the Promised Land. The startling disappearance of the Christian Overcomers from earth will cause a world-wide convulsion of interest, because the bodies of the Overcomers will not be left in beds, houses, or streets, as so often ludicrously portrayed. They will just disappear as mysteriously as the post-resurrection body of Enoch, Elijah and Jesus disappeared, leaving the grave-clothes of Jesus in the tomb; or like the cloak of the prophet Elijah, both their bodies just metamorphosing into another state or dimension, possibly similar to, or the same as, the body of Adam before he sinned. At that time Adam could walk and talk with God in the Garden of Eden, with God-given rule over earthly creation.

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<sup>74</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

The dramatic removal of the *“Overcoming Church”* to heaven, with their permeating spiritual influence in the world, opens the door to Satan’s final attempts to destroy the remaining remnants of *“the kingdom of God”* of non-overcoming or lukewarm believers, both Jews and Gentiles, in seven years of increasingly devastating *“Tribulations”*. These *“seven years”* are derived from the prophecy of Daniel regarding *“seventy weeks of years”* of God’s unfolding plan for the world. The *“seventy weeks of years”* were interpreted to mean 490 years by Hebrew calculations, from the time of Daniel/Nebuchadnezzar to the *“last days”* of the world and divided into three segments: (i) the first 483 years (69x7) ended with the entrance into Jerusalem of the acclaimed Messiah and the subsequent events there; (ii) the second interim period of *“the times of the Gentile nations”* and *“Church age”*; and (iii) the final week (7 years) divided into two segments of 3 and 1/2 years of *“the last days”* of Tribulations and Final Judgements. With the removal of the *Overcoming Church of the Messiah* to heaven, Daniel’s *“last week of years”* begins, and God turns once more to the destiny of *Remnant Israel* and the kingdom of God on earth.

The present-day Israel is not the prophetic realisation of the Scriptures: it is a non-Biblical, non-spiritual return to Israel of European political *“Zionists”*, with selective nationalist and socialist policies derived from a mixture of East European Marxism and Western capitalism, with only a gloss of Biblical association to justify their claims to Israel’s historic *“Promised Land”*. In their modern constitution there is no mention of observing God’s commandments other than claims to the *“Promised Land”* based on God’s promises to Abraham. Even ultra-Orthodox Jews currently living in Israel do not accept the legitimacy of the present Israeli government—or any national government—*“until Messiah returns”*. God’s promises concerning *“Remnant Israel’s return”* include the provision that they will be *“true believers”* in the commands of God through Moses and Jesus.

*“They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived . . . I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers,*

*and I will put my sanctuary among them forever .My dwelling-place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them.”<sup>75</sup>*

The secular Zionism of modern Israel bears little relation to the Israel of Moses; it is a bowdlerized combination of BC fifth century Judaism and European socialism, with no Biblical claims to the inherited “*Promised Land*” of Moses. That Israel agreed to a concordat to share the land of Canaan with the descendants of Esau, now modern-day Arabs and Palestinians, and both Jews and Arabs shared the benefits of the Islamic empire for a thousand years.

Modern Zionist Israel is not the *Remnant Israel* of the Scriptures, and has no part in any prophetic blessings. In the Scriptures they are classified “*unbelievers*”, because of their commitment to Babylonian Judaism, sharing the same classification and destiny as non-practising Christians. Jesus gave a blistering condemnation of these rabbis summed up in the opening words of his diatribe:

*“Woe to you teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are attempting to do so.”<sup>76</sup>*

A clear distinction is made between those who believe in God as Creator and those who do not believe. Those who believe in the God of Moses’ *Pentateuch*, the *Psalms*, the *Prophets* and Jesus as the Son of God—whether classified as Jews or Muslims or nominal Christians—in God’s sight are “*believers*” and therefore *subjects of the kingdom of God*. This is not to say they are they same as Christians *in the family of God*, who have been “*born again*” into this special relationship in the Church of God. The Apostle Paul stated clearly:

*“God will reward each person according to what he has done. To those who by their persistence seek glory, honour and immortality; to them God will give eternal life.”<sup>77</sup>*

The removal of the *Overcoming Church of the Messiah* from the world ends “*the Church age*” but not “*the kingdom of God*” in the world, which will comprise nominal Christians, Jewish Messianic converts, and Islamic practitioners—all genuine “*persistent seekers of glory, honour and immortality*”. The shock of the departure of the

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<sup>75</sup> Ezekiel 37:24-28

<sup>76</sup> Matthew 23:13

<sup>77</sup> Romans 2:7

Overcoming believers will serve as a stimulus to the previously lukewarm believers in all three segments of nominal Christians, secular Jews and militant Muslims, who will continue to represent the “*kingdom of God*” on earth despite the persecutions of the Tribulations.

### ***Thrones in Heaven***

In the beginning of the *Apocalypse* John records the commands of God to him as: “*Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which take place after this*”. Consequently, having commented on “*what you have seen*” among the Seven Churches on earth, and then the things “*which are*” currently being practiced by them, he now turns to reveal the things to happen “*after these things*”.

The Apostle John was immediately transported in an ecstatic state through an entry in the heavens to a different scene from the one previously experienced. Before him was a Throne and on the Throne was a Person, but the Person had no “*form*”; earlier Scriptures had made it clear that “*no man can look on God and live*”. Even Moses, the “*friend of God*”, had to cover his face when God was speaking to him. John was conscious only of the Presence on the Throne—the glory and majesty blazing like the jewels jasper and carnelian and, around the Throne, a rainbow with the green predominating and encircling it.

From the Throne there emanated flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. Under the Throne there was a transparent expanse, like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. Around the Throne there were twenty-four smaller thrones and on these were seated Twenty-Four Elders, all dressed in white robes, with crowns of gold on their heads. They were not angels, but human beings because they were able to sing about being “*taken from every tribe, and tongue and people*”. They were “*elders*” because of their experience under trial; and they were “*twenty-four*” because they comprised twelve Apostles, and twelve Overcomers, representatives of both Israel and the Church, officiating as “*kings and priests*” in glory, reigning as promised with their Lord

Before that Throne Seven Lamps were blazing which John assumed were symbols of the Seven Spirits of God. Moving between the twenty-four smaller thrones and the central Throne there were four Living Creatures, also described by the prophet Ezekiel in his vision of heaven: the first had the appearance of a lion; the second like an ox, the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each had six wings, and the wings were covered with eyes, above and beneath. These Four Living Creatures were the highest ranking seraphim and cherubim in the angelic hierarchy administering the purposes of God in the world. They were singing an anthem: *“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”*

The Twenty-Four Elders left their thrones to fall down in worship before the Presence on the Throne, laying down their crowns while they sang: *“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”*

In his *Paradise Lost* the poet John Milton described it:

*“Forth rushed with whirlwind sound  
The chariot of paternal Deity,  
Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,  
Itself instinct with Spirit, but conveyed  
By four cherubic shapes; four faces each  
Had wondrous; as with stars their bodies all,  
And wings were set with eyes, with eyes the wheels  
Over their heads the crystal firmament,  
Whereon a sapphire throne.”<sup>78</sup>*

The first thing that impressed John was the similarity between his vision of the *“Ancient of Days”* on the Throne and that of Daniel, although there were more details than Daniel’s. This would seem to indicate that the scene was permanent, and have direct associations with all that subsequently transpires in the *Apocalyptic* divine judgements on the world.

The Vision continued to unfold with one of the most sublime scenes in all Scripture. The Presence on the Throne is seen to be holding a book, or roll, in the right hand, written on the inside and

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<sup>78</sup> Book vi

cover, and fastened with seven seals. The book, it appears, contains material regarding *"The redemption of the purchased possession"* of Israel and the Church, not just the positive glorious rewards for the people of God, but also the negative calamitous judgements on all those who rejected God's provisions of mercy and salvation listed in both *Old* and *New Testaments*.

A mighty angel appears to announce with a loud voice and the call resounds throughout heaven, *"Who is worthy to open this book?"* No-one came forward, not even to look at it. John knew that if no-one came forward the world was faced with hopeless damnation. But, even as he wept in despair, one of the Elders said to him: *"Do not weep; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, is able to open the book and break its seven seals."*

Then there appeared in the midst of the thrones the similitude of a slain Lamb in striking contrast to the acclaimed Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the two aspects of the divine revelation of God throughout Biblical history—redemption by sacrifice of the innocent Lamb of God on behalf of the world's sinners, and the triumphant Messianic King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The similitude of the Lamb which John saw had *"seven horns, and seven eyes"*, which he is given to understand *"are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth"*—and which he knew from the prophet Isaiah were *"the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of might, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of the fear of the Lord, and the spirit of perception in the fear of the Lord"*. The *"seven horns and seven eyes"* he understood to be the metaphoric symbolising epitome of imperial, intellectual and spiritual power, available to all individuals who sought *"the fear of the Lord"*, represented in King David of Israel, but fully demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ as Son of Man and Son of God.

Without hesitation the Messianic Lamb/Lion came forward to the Throne of God and took the book from the right hand of the Presence of God. Metaphorically, this was the *"Second Adam"* standing sinless and unashamed in the presence of God to take the full inheritance lost by the disobedience of the *"first Adam"*. When he took the book the Four Living Creatures, with the Twenty-Four Elders fell down

before the Lamb and broke into a song of worship and praise.

Each one of the Elders is described as *“having in their hands a harp, and a golden bowl full of incense”*, which John is given to understand symbolized *“the prayers of saints”*, the summation of all the prayers of all the saints of all the ages: *“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*, treasured in golden bowls with the sweet savour of appreciative incense. To the songs of the Elders there is added the swelling thunders of a choir of millions of angels.

John understood that all that he was seeing were symbolic representations of ranks and powers of divinity and angels to serve as a background of all that was still to come *“after these things”*.

## Seven Seals of Judgement

*“Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and darkness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old, nor ever will be in ages to come . . .”*

*Joel 2:1-2 New International Version*

### *Last Days of the World*

**I**f the Rapture of the Overcoming Church was Act One, Scene One, of the saints in heaven, then what followed was Scene Two of the opening calamitous events of *“the last days of the earth”*. The *“Sealed Book”* taken from the hands of the Presence on the Throne is opened by the regal Lamb and this opening of the *First Seal* reveals the divine programme of the last days of the world. The *Seven Seals* of the fateful book launches a series of *Seven Judgements* preceded by *Seven Trumpets* over a period of *seven years* culminating in *“the end of the world as we know it”*. The events of that time were

prophesied by Daniel from the Angel Gabriel:

*“Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem to the Messiah, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks . . . And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and have nothing; The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be like a flood, and to the end of the war desolations are determined . . .”*

*“He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and on a wing of the temple he shall cause an abomination to be set up that causes desolation until the end that is decreed for him.”<sup>79</sup> (my emphasis)*

That specific figure of seven years to “*the end of the age*” had been prophetically announced as the final segment of Daniel’s “*seventy weeks*”, or periods of duration forecasting the fate of the world from his own time until the end of time. But the fate of the Gentile world is secondary in Daniel’s prophecy to that of the Jewish people. Daniel was a privileged prisoner in Babylon at the time of his prophecy, a favourite Counsellor to King Nebuchadnezzar, with a primary concern for his fellow-exiled people, the remaining two Israeli Dispersed tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The revelation from God, therefore, primarily concerned the immediate and future destiny of the Israeli people in the light of God’s promises to Abraham regarding the Promised Land and their place in the world. They had no country, no Temple, no future, as exiles in Babylon, God’s disastrous punishment on the two segments of Israel, Judah and Ephraim, for their continuous disobedience. It was at that point that God revealed to Daniel the destiny of the remaining Jews in periods of time. The full significance of Daniel’s prophecy is not the specific nature of the fate of empires involved, or the coming of the prophesied Messiah, but the future return of a repentant *Remnant Israel* to the Promised Land with their Messiah as God’s patience with the Gentile world ends.

The “*decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*” as the beginning of his prophecy was provided King Artaxerxes of the following Medo/Persian empire in the twentieth year of his reign in 455BC.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Daniel 9:23-27

<sup>80</sup> Nehemiah chapter 2

From that time the first of four segments of Jewish history began.

*The first seven weeks, or 49 years, were occupied in the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem in the "troublous times", recorded in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.*

*Three score and two weeks, or 434 years from the time of the rebuilt city to the entry of Jesus entering Jerusalem and acclaimed as the Messiah, was 49 plus 434, or 483 years.*

*One week, or seven years, still future, "the Anointed One, the Ruler, cut off . . ." —until the return of the Dispersed Remnant Israel returns to the Promised Land<sup>81</sup>*

The clock of divine judgement from that time was given, varying descriptively but not factually, as two periods of *"forty and two months"*, *"a time, times and half a time"*, *"a thousand two hundred and threescore days"*, or *"three-and-half years for each period"*.

Throughout this final prophetic period of seven years defining the *"last days of the world"*, the *Seven Judgments* would increase in severity, each one announced by the opening of a *Seal* of the *Book* and the sound of a *Trumpet*, until the final catastrophic Armageddon. The Apostle John, like every Jew and including the Apostle Paul, was aware of the sixty-nine years of divine history and the final prophetic week of seven years, but no-one until John's *Apocalyptic Visions* had known the details. So John waited with a combination of fascination and trepidation to see what would follow the breaking of the *First Seal*.

He was presented with the emergence of *Four Horsemen* and he was immediately reminded of the mysterious words of the prophet Zechariah:

*"During the night I had a vision, and there before me was a man riding a red horse. He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses.*

*"I asked, 'What are these, my lord?'"*

*"The angel who was talking with me answered, 'I will show you what they are.'"*

*"Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, 'They are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth.'"*

*"And they reported to the angel of the Lord who was standing among the*

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<sup>79</sup> Isaiah 18

*myrtle trees, 'We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace.'"*<sup>82</sup>

John waited with interest to see what these *Four Horsemen* of his vision represented more than four hundred years after the prophet's revelation.

### ***First Horseman***

Then one of the Four Cherubim from beside the Throne declared in a loud voice, "*Come!*", and immediately there appeared an armed rider on a *White Horse*, and he was given a crown and power to accomplish all that he had to do on earth.

Biblical literalists, in their acceptance of real horses with real riders having real crowns and real bows and swords, are derided for their childish beliefs in mythical figures. It is certainly a difficult position to defend, if not impossible, but my own interpretation is that these are all metaphorical substitutes provided as divine aids to our limited understanding of the supernatural world. For example, when I was in Tibet, on one occasion I was battling with supernatural opposition as I tried to come to grips with the mysterious world of the supernatural unfolding before my eyes, when I had a clear sense of an angel with a sword appearing on my behalf in answer to my desperate appeal to God for help.

Afterwards I wrote the following:

*"The air was still;  
Yet charged with power,  
As forces elemental  
Engaged in conflict for the will.  
Can it be that in so small a space  
There are sufficient powers to alter destiny?  
And who is this with but a flaming sword  
To challenge all the hordes of hell;  
Who forward steps with eager feet  
His dark antagonists to meet,  
In battle to excel?  
They clash! And space is filled  
With noise, as creatures spiritual*

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<sup>82</sup> Zechariah 1:8-11

*Grapple in eternal war:  
Noise as of many thunders,  
And shrieking winds, and tossing tempests,  
Of splitting earthquakes, and hissing lava;  
Roll upon roll of sound  
Of overwhelming horror.  
Suddenly -  
The air once more is still,  
With the quiet stillness of early dawn,  
Pulsing with life.  
The representatives of doom are gone,  
And nothing remains in all the firmament  
But clear blue sky without a cloud.  
The smiling messenger of God has sheathed  
His erstwhile flaming sword,  
Victor in the strife.  
With one last look all space he scanned,  
Then, with a gesture of his hand,  
He cleft the air.  
Ere I could know I was alone  
I found myself before a throne  
In silent prayer."*

The experience of swarming demons was real; the angel was real; the sword was real, the panic was real, the deliverance was real — as it is today when I recall it. I had nothing physical, or “literal”, to show for it, but I did have an expanded understanding of how the “evil” supernatural operated which led to a greater understanding of how the “good” supernatural is described in the Scriptures. It was to be the first of many similar experiences over the next few years while I was studying the world of the supernatural in my understanding of the unfolding revelation of the purposes of God in history.

To return to the “armed” White Horse rider with “crown” and “power” to accomplish a divine purpose: the rider is armed with a bow, an instrument of war, and his white horse is indicative of spiritual warfare, so it might be legitimate to infer that his task is to

provide divine support to all those nominal believers on earth who have been left behind in the rapture of the *Overcoming Church*, and who provide a witness and challenge in contrast to the mocking unbelief of others. Hitherto, individuals, religions and nations had been hiding their allegiance to Satan rather than God by a series of complex philosophies and secular theories devised to exclude God from their private lives and professional activities. The divine symbols of *White Horse*, bow and crown of the *First Horseman*, all symbols of royal power and purity, seem to indicate the divine provision of a “*second chance*” separation from the multiplying disbelief on earth following the departure of the *Overcoming Church*.

### ***Second Horseman***

At the opening of the *Second Seal*, as with the *First*, one of the Four Cherubim announced “*Come!*” and a *Second Horseman* appears, this one on a fiery *Red Horse* and with a large sword. The rider “*was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other*”. The colour of the horse, like blood, is indicative of vengeance and slaughter, now as then an acceleration of what is already being demonstrated in the rising use of weapons, increasing disorder and terror in national societies across the world, disregard of civil as well as moral laws, cynical political manoeuvring, endemic corruption and starvation. This is a world in which there is no internal harmony in nations, no amity among nations, and no trust between nations. This is what Jesus foretold while on earth as “*the beginning of sorrows*” which precedes the succeeding “*Tribulation*”, then the final “*Great Tribulation*” and culminating in the “*Day of God’s Wrath*”, Armageddon.<sup>83</sup>

### ***Third Horseman***

The breaking of the *Third Seal* brings another horse, a “*black horse and he that sat on him having a pair of balances in his hand*”. Then John heard a voice from among the Four Cherubim declaring sonorously: “*A measure of wheat for a day’s wage, and three measures of barley for a day’s wage*”. As a fisherman John knew the difficulties of living day

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<sup>83</sup> Matthew chapters 23 and 24

by day on what could be caught, so he knew that this fearsome black rider with the scales was going forth to disturb the economies of the world. When wheat is scarce people have to resort to barley—the food of animals. In normal times a Roman *denarius* would buy twenty-four measures of barley, and the voice of the cherubim had warned that it would purchase only three measures—the wage of a slave. The unseen Cherubim announced commandingly “*Do not damage the oil and wine*”. Olive trees and vines, once begun, will grow and produce yearly without much attention—but not wheat and barley, evidence that God will still provide opportunities for repentance amid signs of growing judgement.

#### ***Fourth Horseman***

When the *Fourth Seal* was broken another horse and horseman appears, more terrible than the others, a *pale, corpse-like horse*. The rider is called “*Death*” and his attendant, “*Hades*”, or Hell. The voice from the Four Cherubim declares that “*power was given them over a fourth part of the earth to kill with sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts of the earth*” The catastrophic consequences follow the previous pattern of all forms of affliction, proceeding from the lesser to the greater. A condition of bloody war and civil strife is followed by multiplying disease and famine, the dead becoming too numerous to bury, wild animals ravaging cities seeking food because their own habitats have been destroyed, and “*Death*” and “*Hell*” are no longer subjects of supercilious intellectualism as successive calamities become inconceivable catastrophes. Yet only a “*fourth part of the world*” is affected, just “*the beginning of sorrows*” foretold by Jesus.

#### ***Fifth Seal***

The breaking of the *Fifth Seal* was different from those preceding it: there is no voice from the Cherubim, and there are no horses or horsemen. Instead there is a dramatic digression to describe a company of martyrs who, despite the horrendous persecution for their belief in God following on the departure of the Overcoming Church from the world, and suffering the same as their unbelieving neighbours through the unfolding and increasing divine

judgements, have held on to their faith. When the Lamb/Lion Messiah opens the *Fifth Seal* it is recorded that John saw,

*“ . . . beneath the altar the souls of those that had been slain on behalf of the word of God for their unflinching testimony. Then they shouted loudly, ‘Almighty and True God, how long will it be until you judge the people on earth and punish them for killing us?’ Each of them was given a white robe and told to wait a little while longer until their fellow-servants and brothers who would also be slain were completed.”*

Although they were given a “white robe” like the Overcoming Church representatives, they were told to wait a little longer “beneath the altar” until other martyrs joined them to enjoy the heavenly rewards for their earthly witness. Here we enter a sphere that only those who are spiritual with a knowledge of *Old Testament* religious procedures can comprehend—and that with great difficulty!—how to make those who believe in the duality of *homo sapiens* being only “body and mind” understand those who believe we are the trinity of “body, mind and spirit”—who believe that God exists as a Judge and is “a rewarder of those who diligently seek him”.

To return to the “altar in heaven”: first, this was not the first mention of an “altar in heaven”. When God called Moses up into Mount Sinai alone to give him His Covenant with Israel, the religious and moral Law that would identify Israel “God’s People”, He showed Moses “the true tabernacle in heaven which God pitched, and not man,” every item of which was communicated to Moses by God.<sup>84</sup> This was also true of David who was given full instructions regarding the building of the Temple, communicated directly from God: “Then David gave to Solomon the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the Lord and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasures of the temple of God . . .”<sup>85</sup>

To the believers in the reality of the words from God, like Moses and David, the spirit is as real as the mind, with only a “curtain” between the two which can be crossed both God-ward and man-ward. It is the means by which we come to know and understand God as the prophet Jeremiah made clear when he said: “The is what the Lord says: ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength, or the rich man boast of his riches, but

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<sup>84</sup> Hebrews 9:1-5, 21-24

<sup>85</sup> 1 Chronicles 28:11-19

*let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord . . .*"<sup>86</sup> So the goal of "knowing and understanding God" is open to every one who believes and acts on it.

The significance of this is that in the after-death experience of believers, such as the martyrs described by John, an existence of an "altar in heaven" is as real as the temple in heaven or a heavenly city of Jerusalem. "Where are these buildings located?" may well be asked. I have to answer, "I don't know". In all that is known of the stellar universe, and the other universes beyond the ones already identified, there might be a physical "heavenly location", but I doubt it. A physical altar, temple, or city, in space is difficult to imagine let alone believe. They are metaphors of the real that are difficult for us to understand with our present limited knowledge of the spiritual world. Also, the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the heavenly city and temple is apparently 1200 miles square and high, which is demonstrably a physical impossibility, but a likely spiritual metaphor.

Once one accepts the spiritual metamorphosis of the after-death bodies of Moses, Elijah and Jesus the possibility of a spiritual metamorphosis of structures becomes possible, if not easy. It means that when God created Adam he had the capacity to walk and talk in the presence of God in a pristine Garden of Eden, with powers to name the animals and expand Eden into a microcosm for the rest of the world.

This capacity to "understand and know God" was the vision also given to Moses for the people of Israel "to enlighten the world" from a God-blessed Promised Land. It was the vision of David when he created Israel as a viable God-directed State. They all gave form to what was initially a spiritual experience. They did not just believe in God as a "religious entity", but as a realistic dynamic Being providing power to create a physical kingdom of God on earth, from a spiritual blueprint of "a city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What Moses and David did not do, Jesus Christ successfully accomplished when he not only opened a door to heaven for Gentiles but also the realisation of building a New Jerusalem on earth. The New Temple, New Jerusalem, and Kingdom

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<sup>86</sup> Jeremiah 9:23

of Heaven, already currently exist in spiritual forms, and this is what was being revealed to the Apostle John in his apocalyptic visions. What John was seeing and hearing is what has been prepared by God for the years following "*the end of the world as we know it*".

This is what the post-rapture martyrs under the altar found difficult to comprehend: "*Lord, why do you not judge and avenge our blood from those that dwell on the earth?*" They had died for their faith in God yet their murderers were unpunished and they had not experienced the full joys of heaven. Like John the Baptist in prison they did not know that judgement of the world had already started with the presence of Jesus on earth, and would soon be consummated by his death and resurrection far beyond their expectations.

### ***Sixth Seal***

As the divine judgements on the world escalated with the opening of the Seals the opening of the Sixth Seal produced cataclysmic events far beyond what had gone before. There is a great earthquake which rocks the world, the sun becomes black and the moon red, shooting or meteor stars bombard the earth, the sky dissolves, mountains flatten, and islands disappear under raging oceans.

These phenomena could be both literal and metaphorical; that is, in addition to real storms, eclipses, planet disturbances and earthquakes, they could also be interpreted symbolically as political convulsions, increasing Godlessness, social revolutions and world-wide desperation and panic. All of this had been foretold by Jesus while on earth: "*Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven . . .*" The prophet Isaiah said: "*Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from the wrath of the Lord . . . men will flee to the rocks and caves when he rises to shake the earth . . .*" And the prophet Joel declared, "*the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near . . . the sun and the moon will be darkened and the stars no longer shine . . . the earth and the sky will tremble . . .*"

Despite the world-wide belief that "*the day of the Lord*" had arrived this is still only the *Sixth Seal*, with other *Apocalyptic*

judgements to follow. Throughout the *Apocalypse* the Apostle John is said to be "*in the Spirit*" on four separate occasions and locations: (i) in chapter 1 he is said to be "*on the isle of Patmos*", to learn about the destiny of the *Overcoming Church of the Messiah* (v 9,10); (ii) in chapter 4 he is "*caught up to heaven*", to witness the Throne of God and Tribunal of Judgement (v 1,2); (iii) in chapter 17 he is "*carried away into the wilderness*", to witness the deliverance of the kingdom of God believers (v 3); and in (iv) chapter 21 he is "*carried away to a great and high mountain*" to witness the marriage ceremony of the *Church of the Messiah Bride* and the conquering *Ruler/Messiah* (v10).

The *Sixth Seal*, and its devastating consequences, are still only "*the beginning of sorrows*" foretold by Jesus, and only the first three-and-a-half years of Daniel's prophetic seven years of the last days. Now the final Tribulations begin which will end with "*the day of God's wrath*".

Chapter -12 -

will be available on this site on the 1st March 2009