

The Work of the Watchman!

Many would-be evangelists have claimed to be doing the work of the WATCHMAN, but have we really correctly understood the nature and latter-day time setting of this commission first given to the prophet Ezekiel? This article seeks to shed new light on this crucial subject and, at the same time, may open up a potential door of understanding to the enigmatic SEVEN THUNDERS of Revelation 10.

by Jim Rector

One of the most enigmatic passages in all the Bible is found squarely in the middle of perhaps the most enigmatic part of the Bible, namely the book of Revelation. The section to which I refer is found in the 10th chapter and concerns the incident of the *little book* that John was forced to eat and the utterance of the *seven thunders* that the apostle was specifically told not to record. First of all, let's read the account:

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot

upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, ‘Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not...’ And I went unto the angel and said unto him, ‘Give me the little book.’ And he said unto me, ‘Take it and eat it up; and it shall make your belly bitter, but it shall be in your mouth as honey...’ And he said unto me, ‘You must prophesy again before many peoples and nations and tongues and kings’ (Rev. 10).

Certain self-styled organizational church leaders have attempted to interpret this passage of Scripture, almost always to their own personal aggrandizement, but their notions have not been very well grounded in the truth. For instance, Gerald Flurry of the Philadelphia Church of God claims that a treatise he has written is, in fact, the actual *little book* of Revelation 10. The book in question, entitled *Malachi's Message*, is nothing more than a scathing attack against the Worldwide Church of God, and has no more connection with real meaning of the *little book* and the *seven thunders* than does my pet cat!!

Remember the axiom--The Bible interprets the Bible? This is or certainly should be one of the basic principles of Scriptural study and understanding, and, in the case of Revelation 10, there can be no exception. Another modern-day would-be prophet tries to explain the meaning of incident as being seven specific instances when thunder itself is mentioned in the book of Revelation. While this conclusion is somewhat interesting, it would seem to be in violation of the angel's direct command to John **NOT TO WRITE** down the utterances, but rather to seal them up. If John was, as he so testified, about to write them down and was then abruptly told not to do so, it would seem highly improbable that they could still be in the book of Revelation. On the other hand, it is possible that there could be completely overlooked explanation that just might fit the bill? You be the judge.

THE EZEKIEL CONNECTION

Rather than focus on Revelation for the answer to the *little book/seven thunder* question, perhaps it might be more profitable to take a look at a portion of the book of Ezekiel, where we will uncover an amazing series of descriptions, events, visions, prophecies and warnings that could very well provide us with the key to the riddle.

Ezekiel was a priest taken captive during the second Babylonian invasion of Judah around 597 BC. He received his divine calling in the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, and ultimately became one of the great major prophets of Scripture. He was a man of remarkable energy and determination and willingly endured much hardship to serve God and His people.

In the first chapter of his book, this prophet received a vision of astounding and quite unique proportions. In this special vision, Ezekiel saw the very throne of Yahweh Himself coming down out of heaven. In graphic language, he wrote:

“And I looked and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures...And every one had four faces and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass...Their wings were joined one to another...As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle...As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire...and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning...And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creatures was as the color of terrible crystal stretched forth over their heads above” (Ezek. 1:4-22).

Ezekiel was, to say the least, overwhelmed with the vision he witnessed, because not only was he privileged to observe this incredible mobile throne, but God Himself was present and dealt directly with the prophet. Now we must compare some of the pertinent facts of Revelation 10 with what is

revealed in the next portion of Ezekiel's calling. Notice the following parallels, and I believe that you will begin to clearly see how these two areas of Scripture are closely related:

Rev. 10:1 - "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a CLOUD and a RAINBOW was upon his head."

Ezekiel 1:28 - "As the appearance of the BOW that is in the CLOUD, so was the appearance of the brightness round about."

Rev. 10:1 - "His face was, as it were, the SUN, and his feet as PILLARS OF FIRE."

Ezekiel 1:27 - "And I saw as the color of AMBER, as the appearance of FIRE round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw, as it were, the appearance of FIRE, and it had brightness round about."

Rev. 10:3 - "And [he] cried with a LOUD VOICE as when a lion roars."

Ezek. 1:24 - "And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the VOICE of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the NOISE OF A HOST."

As you can see, these initial descriptions in each account are virtually identical. They are clearly speaking of the same being or type of being. The similarities, however, do not stop there. Notice the next comparison:

Rev. 10:2 - "And he had in his hand a LITTLE BOOK open."

Ezekiel 2:9 - "And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and lo, a ROLL OF A BOOK was therein."

Now in the case of the apostle John, he was told to do a rather unusual thing. He had to actually eat the little book which was in the hand of the mighty angel. This is recorded for us in Revelation 10:9:

"And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, 'Take it and EAT IT UP; and it shall make your belly BITTER, but it shall be in your mouth SWEET AS HONEY.'"

Remarkably, the stories continue to precisely parallel each other in that Ezekiel was commanded to do the very same thing as was John and with exactly the same results. Notice the proof:

"Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, eat that you find; EAT THIS ROLL, and go speak unto the house of Israel... Then I did eat it, and it was in my mouth as HONEY for sweetness... So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and in BITTERNESS in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (Ezek. 3:1, 3, 14).

Description for description, command for command, event for event, these two accounts, both the result of Godly visions, are uncommonly alike--so much so that all logic demands they are directly connected. In fact, the mystery of Revelation 10 and the words of the seven thunders which John was expressly forbidden to record may actually be revealed and explained in the calling and initial commission given to the prophet Ezekiel. It is quite possible that the reason John was told not to write what the seven thunders said was simply because God had already caused Ezekiel to anciently record it in cryptic form, and perhaps only in a close comparison of the two accounts can we unravel the enigma.

If you will recall, the very last verse of Revelation 10 states that the apostle John had further work to do, indeed another part of his own commission. The

angel told him, *“You must prophesy again before many people and nations and tongues and kings” (Rev. 10:17)*. Well, the very same thing proved to be true in Ezekiel’s case as well. Carefully notice the following statement:

“And he said unto me, Go, get you unto the house of Israel, and speak my words unto them For you are not sent to a people of strange speech or of an hard language, but to the house of Israel...Surely if I had sent you unto them, they would have hearkened unto you. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto you; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads...fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house” (Ezek. 3:4-9).

Do you recognize just what special calling Ezekiel is receiving from God? It is known by a very special term. A number of would-be evangelists and other religious leaders have claimed to be fulfilling this unique commission today. One well-known evangelist in the corporate churches of God, for instance, has insisted for years that he is doing the work Ezekiel was commanded to perform. A leader of yet another spin-off church organization now claims that the too is fulfilling Ezekiel’s famous commission. This endeavor has come to be known as the work of the **WATCHMAN!!!** Here is how God characterized that work to the prophet himself:

*“Son of man, I have made you a **WATCHMAN** unto the house of Israel; therefore here the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.” (Ezek. 3:17)*.

I believe that based upon what is revealed in the ensuing chapters of Ezekiel, when compared with the time sequence in the book of Revelation, will clearly demonstrate that we may well have misunderstood and misapplied the work of the watchman. The typical teaching on this subject has

been that the *watchman* was that servant or that work directly responsible for issuing the great warning message to end-time Israel **BEFORE** they go into the Great Tribulation. I am suggesting that this conclusion may indeed be suspect and possibly outright erroneous. Why? Simply because Ezekiel’s *watchman* commission was specifically designated to go not to a people still free from tribulation, but to those who were **ALREADY IN CAPTIVITY!!** You want proof? Then turn to Ezekiel 3:19-11 and read:

*“Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto you perceive with your heart and hear with your ears. And go, get you to them of the **CAPTIVITY**, unto the children of your people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus says the Lord God; whether they will, or whether they will forbear.”*

That is correct! Ezekiel, the **WATCHMAN** unto the house of Israel, was sent to a people already in **CAPTIVITY!** As a matter of fact, the prophet himself was also a captive, something that the pretender *watchmen* of today had better seriously consider!

If, therefore, the work of the watchman goes to the end-time house of Israel as well, and if it is to follow the types and patterns already established in Scripture, then logic dictates that it will be accomplished at a time when tribulation has already come upon those peoples. If that is so, then what is the time frame involved? Where does it fit into the chronology of the latter-day prophetic scenario? This is crucial, so please note carefully. When John was confronted with the *little book* in Revelation 10, something very interesting and intriguing occurred. Do you remember what it was? Let’s review the account:

And he (the mighty angel) had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars: and when he had

cried, SEVEN THUNDERS UTTERED THEIR VOICES. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write, and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, SEAL UP those things which the seven thunders uttered, and WRITE THEM NOT” (Rev. 10:2-4).

John saw the vision. He heard the words of the seven thunders and, as was his practice, he simply started to write what he was told--but he was immediately cut short by God Himself and was ordered to seal up the words. To make doubly certain that the utmost secrecy was maintained, John was plainly told **NOT TO WRITE DOWN THE WORDS!!** There is really no way to get around this obvious fact. The apostle was not allowed to write the words of the seven thunders. It is, therefore, utterly impossible for them to be included in the book of Revelation. That is **NOT** the place to which we must look for our answers.

SECRET OF THE SEVEN THUNDERS!

It is the enigmatic seven thunders that hold the key as to when the famous watchman commission is to be accomplished. Thunder is a natural phenomenon. A degree in astrophysics isn't required to figure out that thunder, whether used in meteorological terms or even in figurative language, means basically the same thing. Thunder is a **WARNING**--a warning of an impending storm, whether literal or symbolic. The messages of the seven thunders are, therefore, seven special warnings. If so, then why was John prohibited from recording them for our instruction? Maybe, just maybe, God had a very good reason. Maybe they had already been written down hundreds of years before--and perhaps it is only now that we can properly identify them and understand precisely the content and time element involved.!

For anyone desiring to look into this matter, one obvious question arises--If John was not permitted to record the warning messages of the seven

thunders, where might those messages be? Is it possible that they had already previously been given in prophecy, and, if so, what better place to start such a search than right in the first few chapters of Ezekiel, where the very same set of descriptions and circumstances exist?

The introduction to the entire series of messages is found in chapter 1. There Ezekiel receives the vision of the four cherubim and confronts Yahweh Himself. In chapter 2, the little book of lamentation is given to him to him, along with his general prophetic commission. The 3rd chapter contains instructions for the prophet to eat the roll. Just as in John's case, it tasted sweet in his mouth, but later became bitter. This same chapter also has the well-known passage concerning Ezekiel being the **WATCHMAN**.

These first three chapters therefore serve as the preface to the actual warning messages themselves. As we go through chapters 4-10 (precisely seven in number, by the way), you will begin to notice that they are full of visions, prophecies and dire warnings. The 10th chapter will bring us back to where we started with the final vision of the four cherubim and the subsequent departure of this rather strange conveyance that is described in both chapters 1 and 10. As noted above, Ezekiel 4-10 are seven chapters that contain exactly seven visions and/or warning messages. As I was reflecting upon this fact during my own study some years ago, it suddenly dawned on me that these very well could be the utterances of the seven thunders to which the apostle John was only allowed to refer. Remember that he was specifically ordered not to write what they had said.

With this possible premise in mind, let us therefore go through each of these seven chapters and see if we can determine the what, when and where of Ezekiel's watchman commission, and very possibly what the seven thunders uttered in John's presence as well. We begin with chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 - This initial message is the famous 390 days prophecy against Israel. Some years ago, I began to see how this particular passage might fit into the overall end-time Biblical scenario. I included an explanation in the article entitled, *1997/98 - A Year of Destiny?* If you don't have a copy and would like one, please let us know. I think you will find it interesting and intriguing. Briefly, the prophecy is intended to be understood primarily from the perspective of a day for a year in actual fulfillment, thus it comprises a 390 year period of time. It was my tentative conclusion that this latter day time span might well fit between the years 1607 AD, when this country was permanently settled at Jamestown, VA, and 1997/98, an admittedly crucial year in Biblical prophetic reckoning.

In light of the end-time fulfillment of Ezekiel's watchman message, however, I believe that this particular prophecy may also have a very literal 390 day application as well. In other words, this initial passage in our study may be telling us precisely **WHEN** the watchman is to begin preaching this final and very forceful warning to a modern-day Israel that will have **ALREADY GONE INTO CAPTIVITY OR TRIBULATION!!** And just when would that starting point be? Why, 390 days from the end of the age, from the time when Christ will return to this earth! We know that the final year itself comprises the so-called *Day of the Lord*. The famous watchman's message there would commence some 30 days prior to the onset of this last year--the time of God's unspeakable wrath upon a sin-sick world.

Modern-day Israel is at this very moment being weakened and corrupted from the inside. She is being set up and is, slowly but surely, being pushed toward the brink. Soon it will take only a key event or two of great magnitude to send this nation and its closest allies over that precipitous cliff! The chances are great that our downfall, while brought upon us by our own wretched sins and refusal to wake up and repent, will indeed be engendered by **ECONOMIC WOES!** Notice the prophecy of

Hosea 5 in this regard. Speaking of end-time Israel, we read:

“They have dealt treacherously against the Lord: for they have begotten strange children: and now shall a MONTH devour them with their portions. Blow you the cornet in Gibeah and the trumpet (signs and sounds of dire warning); cry aloud at Bethhaven, after you, O Benjamin. Ephraim (probable U.S. led western coalition) shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be...Ephraim is oppressed (especially financially) and broken in judgment (political, judicial, diplomatic, social, economic, religious, etc.), because he willingly walked after (trampled) the commandment. Therefore I will unto Ephraim as a MOTH, and to the house of Judah as ROTTENNESS. When Ephraim saw his sickness (economic woes), and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the ASSYRIAN (possibly a German/Japanese led UN coalition), and sent to king Jareb (the Beast?); yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away: I will take away, and none shall rescue him” (Hosea 5:7-14).

Believe it or not, there is a way to actually connect the terms of verse 12 where God says that He will be Ephraim as a *moth* and to Judah as *rottenness* with the problem of economic demise! Notice carefully how the passage in Matthew 6:19-20 fits so perfectly in this discussion:

“Lay not up for yourselves TREASURES upon earth, where MOTH and rust doth CORRUPT, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

Here we can clearly see the direct connection made by Christ between the symbols of the moth and

corruption or rottenness and physical treasure or economic woes. When the Bible explains itself on issues like this one, we really do need to pay attention. It strongly appears as though this is precisely what Hosea is talking about concerning the sickness of Ephraim. It is because of his financial problems that he goes to foreign nations to seek help. Indeed, in the modern world, what other major issue would even prompt such a move on the part of one nation to another? It would almost certainly be money-related.

America and Britain, especially among the western nations, are probably going to fall first and foremost economically. Even now we see the ominous handwriting on the wall. The interest along on the current national debt now exceeds all the revenues taken in by the government in taxes! We are, in effect, officially bankrupt! Our demise is even now within sight! In a few more years, with our nation bogging down in a financial quagmire, the very social fabric of our people will begin to rapidly unravel. Unrest and outright violence, that has only occasionally broken out in the past, will become prevalent. Even the Great Depression will begin to pale into insignificance in the face of the horrible problems that will be encountered at that time.

In the meantime, our war-making powers will continue to be greatly diminished. In all probability, they will gradually be surrendered to the United Nations. In fact, UN troops will very likely be permanently in place on American soil within the next few years (some believe that they are already here!), and when that happens, this country can kiss its freedom goodbye! These multi-national forces will come in ostensibly to re-establish law and order or to help in the clean-up operations in the wake of violent outbreaks, but since our own system will have by then broken down, they will probably remain in place. Ultimately, it may be that American citizens will be forced to either comply with UN ordered sanctions and controls and especially to accept the new financial and social system being imposed upon the whole world at that

time or suffer the consequences!! Under such circumstances, we will be in captivity right here in our own country!

After about 2 years of such punishment, the time will come for the final warning message to be given to an enslaved latter-day Israel. Just as Ezekiel was commissioned to go to those of the captivity of his day, so will the end-time watchman's message go to an Israel that is imperiled and under siege. It appears from the prophecy of Ezekiel 4, that this warning will start being broadcast approximately 390 days from the time of Christ's second advent or 30 days before the onset of the Day of the Lord--the final year before the end of this age! God will desperately desire that as many of these captive Israelites as possible hear this strong message and repent. He wants to spare these people from the terrible wrath to come. Latter-day Israel will be in a weakened and beleaguered state. God will by then have allowed them to have endured much trial, in order that many will be in such a state of mind that they can and will respond positively to the watchman's message.

To find our time frame in the book of Revelation, turn over to the 6th chapter and notice verses 15-17:

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; For the GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH is come, and who shall be able to stand?”

Chapter 6 ends just before the beginning of the dreaded *Day of the Lord*--that final year prior to the Second Coming of the Messiah. That tumultuous period of time commences with the blowing of the first trumpet as recorded in Revelation 8:7. We will soon come to see that the prophecies of Ezekiel 4-10, precisely 7 in number, all fit into the space

between the end of the 6th seal (Rev. 6:15-17) and the sounding of the first trumpet. It appears that this time segment is about 30 days (390-360=30). Remember the use of the word *month* in Hosea 5:7 quoted previously?

CHAPTER 5 - This passage begins the actual prophecies against a captive end-time Israel, and this one concerns the type of the prophet's hair. It has to do with exactly how God intends to further punish the fleshly Israelites. Ezekiel is told shave his head and beard and divide the hair and weigh it. He is to separate it into three divisions, each of which is representative of a type of dire punishment.

The warning message is strong. Certainly no punches are pulled here. It is clearly because of the gross transgression of God's laws that these consequences are coming upon the people. The watchman is commanded to say:

"Because you multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in My statutes, neither have kept My judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; therefore thus says the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, am against you, and will execute judgments in the midst of you in the sight of the nations. And I will do in you that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all your abominations. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of you, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgment in you, and the whole remnant of you will I scatter into all the winds...Surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things, and with all your abominations, therefore will I also diminish you; neither shall my eye spare, neither will I have pity" (Ezek. 5:7-11).

The actual punishments are three in number. If latter-day Israel, already beaten and humiliated by at least 2 years of economic disaster and political and military domination, does not heed the watchman's

warning and turn to God in faith and deep repentance, then a third of the remaining population will die due to disease epidemics and famine. Another third will die in battle or through violence, and the final third will be scattered and on the run for their lives. God concludes this warning by saying:

"Moreover, I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that are round about you, in the sight of all who pass by. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, and instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about you when I shall execute judgments in you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the Lord have spoken it" (Ezek. 5:14-15).

CHAPTER 6 - This chapter deals directly with the overall main cause of modern-day Israel's spiritual problems. It is summed up in one word which is certainly the main theme of this passage of Scripture, and that word is **IDOLATRY!!!** The watchman is to warn the people by declaring:

"You mountains of Israel (the leaders, both Church and State)...Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken; and I will cast down your slain men before your idols...In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places desolate...I am broken with their whorish heart, which has departed from me, and with their eyes, which are whoring after their idols; and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations...Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence" (Ezek. 6:3-4, 6, 9, 11).

Idolatry is modern-day America and Britain's greatest sin. It permeates life at every level of society. The lust of the eyes, the longings of the flesh, the pride of life--just exactly what the apostle John warns all Christians against. In his first epistle

he pleads:

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires are passing away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

Money, power, prestige, recognition, sex, religion, possessions, education, knowledge, pride, boasting, etc., are all a part of the world of idol worship. Whatever it is that is most highly prized in your life, whatever it is that comes first in your affections and attention, whatever stands between you and the true God of heaven, is **AN IDOL!!!** Most people are idol worshipers and probably don't even know it, their level of spiritual awareness is so low. By the time latter-day Israel has been brought down and has suffered, perhaps many will be primed to respond to the watchman's dire message.

CHAPTER 7 - The further we go into the watchman's message, the stronger and more intense are the warnings. Chapter 7 basically covers the absolute final desolation of end-time Israel. God proclaims:

“Now is the end come upon you, and I will send My anger upon you, and will judge you according to your ways, and will recompense upon you all your abominations” (Ezek. 7:3).

Continuing on, but this time in the New International Versions, we read the following ominous words:

*This is what the Sovereign Lord says: **DISASTER! An unheard of disaster is coming. THE END HAS COME! It has roused itself against you. It has come! DOOM has come upon you--you who dwell in the land. The time has come, THE DAY IS NEAR; there is panic, not joy, upon the***

mountains. I am about to pour out My wrath upon you and spend My anger against you...Then you will know that it is I the Lord who strikes the blow. The day is here! It has come! Doom has burst forth, the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed! Violence has grown into a rod to punish wickedness, none of the people will be left, none of that crowd--no wealth, nothing of value. The time has come, the day has arrived...Outside is the sword, inside are plague and famine; those in the country will die by the sword, and those in the city will be devoured by famine and plague. All who survive and escape will be in the mountains, moaning like doves of the valley, each because of his sins. Every hand will go limp, every knee will become weak as water. They will put on sackcloth and be clothed with terror. Their faces will be covered with shame and their heads will be shaved. They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be an unclean thing. Their silver and gold will not be able to save them in the Day of the Lord's wrath. They will not satisfy their hunger with it or fill their stomach with it, for it has made them stumble into sin” (Ezekiel 7:5-19).

The Day of the Lord's wrath is the time setting of this prophecy. This punishment will transpire during the last year before Christ's return to the earth. Unless the remaining people of end-time Israel heed this most dire of warnings, God will utterly destroy them, leaving only a remnant who will survive by the skin of their teeth! We have always thought that the watchman's message was before the tribulation, but it is not, at least not in its final and most forceful form. It is directed to the people of the captivity, and is focused upon Israel just prior to the onset of the fearsome Day of the Lord. This message will truly be **THUNDERED** at that crucial time.

CHAPTER 8 - In the vision of corrupt worship, the prophet is shown some startling scenes of his own people's abominable practices. Notice how well

they fit into the end-time scenario with which we are

all so familiar.

First of all, Ezekiel is taken in vision to Jerusalem and the area of the temple. What we will read in this chapter has both a physical and a spiritual application, so keep the end-time church in mind as well as we go through these Scriptures:

*“Then He said unto me, Son of man, lift up your eyes now the way toward north. So I lifted up my eyes the way toward north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this **IMAGE OF JEALOUSY** in the entry” (Ezek. 8:5).*

Notice what is being said here and remember the time setting. We are well into the final 3 ½ years. This *image of jealousy* anciently was an Ashtoreth or Astarte, also known as Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. One has to wonder if this description is not synonymous with the infamous **ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION**, spoken of by the prophet Daniel! Astarte or Ishtar was the chief female deity of the Babylonians and other Middle Eastern pagan religions. She is clearly symbolic of the Babylonish system of false worship which was foisted off on the ostensible Christian church during the 2nd - 4th centuries.

In this regard, it is very interesting that the word *abominations* is used more times in this particular chapter than in any of the previous 6 in this series. It or a variation thereof is mentioned exactly seven times in chapter 8, thus showing that the wretched religious practices will be filled to the fullness of evil at the very end of this age.

Ezekiel is taken step by step through the horrible practices for which the latter-day house of Israel is and will be guilty. He is told to dig through a hole in the wall of the temple, and he testifies:

“So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them

seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shahpan, with every man his censor in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, have you seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, The Lord sees us not; the Lord has forsaken the earth” (Ezek. 8:10-12).

The number 70 is directly associated with the Sanhedrin of Judah in Jerusalem, the ruling body of the Jews. This chapter may be telling us that the Jewish leadership will indeed be supportive of the Beast power’s political and religious system, perhaps for reasons of greed, perhaps for reasons of survival. Other scriptures, especially in Daniel 11 indicate that many of the Jews will indeed allow themselves to come under the sway of the invading Beast power, but then repent and return to God very near the end of the age (thus possibly accounting for the much shorter siege against Judah in the prophecy of Ezekiel 4:1-6). Whether chapter 8 indicates this precisely or not is perhaps debatable, but suffice it to say that the vision Ezekiel saw clearly shows that the ancients of latter-day Israel, the political and religious leaders, all are a part of the coming Beast system and are greatly to blame for the horrible condition of the people at that time.

Next the prophet is show even more abominations, for we read in verse 14 about the women weeping for Tammuz. Tammuz was the husband of Ishtar in ancient Babylonian mythology. He was a false Messiah who died each year and was subsequently resurrected in the spring. The period of weeping and fasting for this pagan deity during the time just prior to his annual restoration is probably the precursor of what is know today as Lent.

Finally Ezekiel is taken to the area between the porch and the alter of the temple, and here he sees perhaps the most blatant of all false worship. Notice the account:

“And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east, and they worshiped the sun toward the east” (Ezek. 8:16).

This should tell us plainly that not only is the general practice of religious worship in latter-day Israel evil and wretched, but that even in the very temple of God in Jerusalem, the rites of Easter itself are going to be enforced. Furthermore, one has to wonder if the reference to the temple here does not also apply spiritually to God’s own people or at least a portion that will have succumbed to the enticing power of the Beast system. It is surely something to seriously contemplate as the sleepy church inches its way ever closer to the world around it, compromising and even completely exchanging the truth for pagan error.

CHAPTER 9 - This is the 6th and next-to-last message of the seven visions or prophecies that Ezekiel received at the time of his special calling. This passage of Scripture coincides perfectly with Revelation 7 and provides us with yet another compelling piece of evidence of the timing of the watchman’s message. Chapter 9 deals with the famous episode of the **WRITER’S INKHORN!**

The corresponding event in Revelation 7 is the famous sealing of the 144,000. Before we go into Ezekiel 9, let’s take a quick look at this well known episode. One of the crucial points in our discussion has to do with the timing of this occurrence. In order to determine the time frame involved, we really need to review the preceding chapter.

Chapter 6, you will recall, contains the record of the various seals, the first four of which have come to be known as the *four horsemen of the apocalypse*. The 5th seal concerns the martyrdom of the saints and the onset of the Great Tribulation, and the 6th seal deals with the different heavenly signs and other celestial

phenomena that will transpire during the latter portion of the final 3 ½ years. But the 6th seal does not mark the end. There is still more time left. In fact, the heavenly signs appear to begin just prior to the Day of the Lord, which is actually mentioned in Revelation 6:17. This time known as the *Day of the Lord* comprises approximately the last year of this present age, the year that leads up to and culminates in the return of Yahshua the Messiah back to this earth and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. This also works well with the prophecy found in Joel 2. Notice the time sequence involved:

“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, BEFORE the great and terrible Day of the Lord come” (Joel 2:30-31).

The space of time between Revelation 6:17, which marks the onset of the heavenly signs, and Revelation 8:7, which marks the onset of the trumpet plagues, may well be the 30 day period during which Ezekiel’s famous *watchman’s* message is given, because this is just prior to the literal beginning of that terrible time of God’s wrath upon the earth which commences with the first trumpet being sounded.

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the Living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have SEALED servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel” (Rev. 7:1-4).

Note well that the sealing of the 144,000 takes place

AFTER the 6th seal or heavenly signs and wonders, but **BEFORE** the fearsome Day of the Lord. This is very important, because it shows God's clear intention of protecting His people during this time of final worldwide destruction. Many people have greatly misunderstood what the sealing of the 144,000 really means. If, however, we could make the connection between the Revelation 7 account and that of Ezekiel 9, the answer would be clear.

The vision of the *writer's inkhorn* conclusively explains the seemingly enigmatic events of Revelation 7. Let's read the story:

“He cried also in my ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side; and they went in, and stood by the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon He was...And He called to the man with the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and SET A MARK upon the FOREHEADS of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in my hearing, Go you after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have you pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the MARK and BEGIN AT MY SANCTUARY” (Ezek. 9:1-6).

This passage of Scripture is very revealing. It clearly demonstrates that the sealing of the 144,000 is not the sealing of the Holy Spirit, as many have assumed, but rather a mark of special protection that is placed on all the faithful servants of God at that very critical time in history--just before the unleashing of God's terrible fury upon the world.

That is precisely why we read in Revelation 7 that the angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and sea are expressly told to hold back the onset of their destruction until this sealing or marking of the saints takes place. Though they many have suffered a certain amount of hardship up to that point in time, God does not intend for His people to endure the horrors of the infamous Day of the Lord--that final year of unprecedented punishment upon the evildoers of this world. They will be specially protected, and they are marked at this specific and most appropriate time. In that respect, Revelation 7 and Ezekiel 9 go hand-in-hand and explain each other. This fact also confirms ever more strongly the rightness of our conclusion that the seven visions and prophecies contained in Ezekiel 4-10 not only comprise the work of the end-time *watchman*, but also pinpoint the timing of that special warning as occurring during the 30 day period preceding the blowing of the first trumpet, signaling the commencement of the Day of the Lord. Furthermore, with additional study, we may find that the work of the watchman is also closely related to the utterances of the seven thunders that the apostle John was strictly forbidden to record.

CHAPTER 10 - This is the seventh and final vision and/or prophetic message that Ezekiel received at the time of his special calling as the *watchman*. This chapter brings us right back to the point where we started in chapter 1 and completes the picture puzzle of this special section of Scripture.

Although Ezekiel 10 deals primarily with a further description of the four creatures, there is still a final stage in the seven-fold division of the watchman's work--and that is the vision of the coals of fire. The account of it is only about 3 verses, but I believe that you will be convinced just how carefully God has orchestrated this particular event to perfectly coincide with the identical occurrence recorded in Revelation 8, and within precisely the same time frame. First, let's read Ezekiel 10:1-3:

“Then I looked and, behold, in the firmament that

*was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared over them, as it were, a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. And he spoke unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill your hand with **COALS OF FIRE** from between the cherubim, and **SCATTER THEM** over the city. And he went in my sight.”*

The rest of the chapter discusses the four cherubim and the throne, along with the eventual departure of God and His entourage. These first three verses would make little sense were it not for the related passage in Revelation 8. Notice how perfect the fit is between these two episodes:

*“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about the space of half and hour (there may be a possible connection between the 30 minutes of this verse and the 30 days of the watchman’s message). And I saw seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given him 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, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with **FIRE** of the altar, and **CAST IT INTO THE EARTH**; and there were voices and thunder and lightnings and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound” (Rev. 8:1-6).*

It is almost as if this very event, the casting of the coals of fire from the altar to the earth, is the signal for the Day of the Lord to commence--for the first angel to sound his trumpet. It may even be that the casting of this fire actually is the beginning of the first plague itself, for we read in the very next verse:

*“The first angel sounded, and there followed **HAIL AND FIRE** mingled with blood, and they*

*were **CAST UPON THE EARTH**; and the third part of trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up” (Rev. 8:7).*

So either or both suggestions are indeed quite possible. Not matter which one is correct, the fact that Ezekiel’s vision of the coals of fire correlates perfectly with John’s vision of the censer of fire, both of which are taken from the very altar of God and then cast upon the earth, is absolutely corroborated! In Ezekiel’s case, the vision was the very last one he received while in the presence of God and the four living creatures and completes the seven-fold nature of the *watchman*’s commission. In John’s case, this vision marked the very last event prior to the beginning of the trumpet plagues and the onset of the dreaded Day of the Lord, so the time setting is clearly established as well.

CONCLUSION

My purpose in writing this article has been simply to publish the information as a basis for further study into the subject. I do not mean to state or imply that what is contained therein is some special private revelation made only to me. I do, however, feel that it is very interesting and indeed that it does indicate certain facts and suggestions in a fashion that I personally had never considered before.

There can really be no question that the episode recorded in Revelation 10 concerning John’s eating of the little book and the utterances of the seven thunders which the apostle was forbidden to write down, and the account of Ezekiel 1-10, where the very same sort of events are discussed in detail, are related in some way. This is directly indicative of how the Bible explains, defines and verifies itself, which is one of the great principles of Scriptural study and understanding.

The descriptions of both Revelation 10 and Ezekiel 1-3 are virtually identical, except that the Ezekiel

account gives us more information, whereas the passages in Revelation merely make mention of the basic facts. In both cases, the same type of great Being confronts the two human characters--Ezekiel and John. In both cases, a little book or scroll is involved. In both cases, the two men are commanded to go through the most unusual act of eating the book. In both cases, the book tasted like honey in their mouths, but later turned to bitterness. In both cases, it is clear that John and Ezekiel still had much preaching left to do. And in both cases, seven warning messages are either intimated or stated outright. In John's case, they take the form of the enigmatic seven thunders which were not permitted to be recorded by the apostle. In Ezekiel's case, the complete revelation of seven specific visions and prophetic warnings are included. Among them we see the precise time frame involved, the people to whom the warnings are to go, the problems to be faced, the protection of God's chosen people, and the onset of the Day of the Lord or the final year of unspeakable destruction yet to come upon this sinful world that will culminate in the Second Coming of the Messiah.

We also have discovered perhaps the most significant part of the whole story in that it should have become more clear just what the famous work of the *watchman* really is, to whom the message really goes, and, particularly, the time setting of the warnings. They go to an end-time Israel already having suffered at least two years of tribulation. This does not mean nor is it implied that there would not and should not be other types of warnings given to modern-day Israel prior to the onset of tribulation, but I do not believe that they should be confused with the very special messages of Ezekiel 1-10. The work of the watchman is different and very specific. He will be the one who truly does turn the hearts of many Israelites to God before the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

Will the watchman's work be successful? God told Ezekiel not to worry about that, but to preach these warnings to Israel no matter what he had to face or

how many times he was rejected. The same will hold true for the latter-day fulfillment of this crucial prophecy. We may, however, have been given a clue as to whether or not anyone will listen and respond at that time. That clue is found in the book of Hosea. Remember the passage quoted earlier from Hosea 5:7-14? Those verses concern the sins of end-time Israel that cause our people to go into great tribulation. But after they have been in this dire situation for at least two years, then Ezekiel's watchman's message is delivered in power and effectiveness. Notice now what is revealed in the very next few verses of Hosea:

"For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction, they will SEEK ME EARLY. Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn and He will heal us; He has smitten and He will bind us up. AFTER TWO DAYS HE WILL REVIVE US; IN THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RAISE US UP, and we shall live in His sight" (Hosea 5:14-6:3).

Indeed, after two years of suffering in the Great Tribulation, of having been economically and politically broken among the nations of the world, at least some of end-time Israel will be ready to respond to God's stern warnings. The watchman's message will surely be successful. After two years (a year for a day), He will begin delivering those who will hear the voice of the watchman. This is the heart of Ezekiel 1-10.

I hope that this discussion has been of interest to you. In the short space allotted here, I really have not been able to do full justice to this subject. Perhaps some of you will be prompted to take a closer look into this very intriguing topic. I trust that this article will prove to be of interest and help to everyone.