

## The Mystery of Glad Tidings in the Darkest Days

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### Introduction

What is the mystery of God, which was promised as glad tidings to the prophets and which will be fulfilled at the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet?

*In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound the trumpet, the mystery of God also shall be completed, as he has made known the glad tidings to his own bondmen the prophets (Rev. 10:7, JND; all subsequent Scripture quotations from Authorized [King James] Version).*

### Future Events in the Gospel of Matthew

Our Lord gave an overview of the future events in Matt. 24. In verses 4-14 He described the events before the time of Jacob's trouble, which He defined in v. 21 as the most severe tribulation ever to take place on earth. In Revelation this time of tribulation follows after the sound of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (Rev. 11:15).

The beginning of the future events were summarised by Our Lord and described as the beginning of birth pangs (Matt. 24:8). In Revelation these events have their parallel in the sequence of the first four seals (Rev. 6:1-8). After these events Our Lord described the persecution of the faithful and the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:9-14), which will be terminated by the appearing of the abomination of desolation (v.15 and Rev. 13). However, just before the most terrible time starts, the mystery of God will be completed.

### The Completion of the Mystery: Something Missing?

J. Allen (1) stresses the shortness of time, indicated in this announcement:

*The waiting time is to continue only until the blowing of the seventh trumpet. As soon as the seventh trumpet begins to sound the long delay of the ages will be over.*

However, there is nothing in his explanation of the mystery of God which would have to be completed in the future – in the moment of the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet. He explains this mystery with the following words:

*The word "mystery" in the NT never means "mysterious" but defines that which cannot be known apart from God Himself making it known; it is that which must come by divine revelation. Throughout the long ages of waiting, the prophets, the servants of God, brought good tidings to men. ... These notes of gladness have been necessarily incomplete and partial but they will find their completion and finally reach the goal when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is sounded. This means that the "mystery of God" must be defined as being the full knowledge of Christ, which is the clear statement of Col. 2:2, "The mystery of God even Christ "(RV).*

In general I agree with this explanation of the mystery of God; however, I have the impression that a special event might be missing, which was promised as glad tidings

to the prophets and is to be fulfilled in the future. If this is correct this event must take place in the very moment when the angel is about to sound the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet.

### The Timing of the Seventh Trumpet

The sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is described in Revelation 11:15. When will this be? The duration of the three woes in Revelation in comparison to the last seven years of Israel before the coming of Messiah is shown in Table 1.

The end of the last 7 years of Israel's 70 x 7 years according to Dan. 9:24-27 is the coming of Messiah in power and glory (Zech. 14:3-5). This event is identical with the coming of Christ Jesus as king of kings in Rev. 19. Therefore, this comparison between Revelation and the OT prophecy concerning Israel is based on solid scriptural ground.

The three woes in Revelation are identical with the trumpets 5-7. These trumpets cannot overlap, as indicated by the following verses:

*One woe is past; [and], behold, there come two woes more hereafter. And the sixth angel sounded... (Rev. 9:12-13a).*

*The second woe is past; [and], behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded...(Rev. 11:14-15a).*

The period of time given within each of the three woes determines the duration of each woe. In this way a time pattern is developed on a clear scriptural basis (Table 1). The shortest possible duration of the three woes is 7 years and 5 months.

From Table 1 it is evident that the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet will be sounded right in the middle of the last 7 years of Israel before the coming of the Messiah in power and glory. To show this in detail, we will compare the relevant verses in Daniel and Revelation. Dan. 9:27 and Dan. 12:11 tell us that the daily sacrifice in Jerusalem will be performed during the first half of Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

**Table 1**

Duration of the three woes in Revelation in comparison to the last seven years of Israel before the coming of Messiah

<p><b>5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet = 1<sup>st</sup> Woe</b> Duration: 5 months Power of Abaddon/ Apollyon (Rev. 9:1-12)</p>		
	<p><b>6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet = 2<sup>nd</sup> Woe</b> Duration: 1260 days, Power of witnesses (Rev. 11:1-14)</p>	
		<p><b>7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet = 3<sup>rd</sup> Woe</b> Duration: 42 months or 1260 days Power of beast (Rev. 13:5); Refuge for woman (Rev. 12:6)</p>
<p><b>Last seven years of Israel before coming of Messiah (Dan. 9:27)</b></p>		
	<p><b>First 3 ½ years</b> with sacrifice (Dan. 9:27a; Rev. 11:1-3)</p>	<p><b>Last 3 ½ years</b> no sacrifice, with abomination (Dan. 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4)</p>

In the middle of these 7 years the coming prince will break his covenant with Israel by stopping the daily sacrifice and setting up the abomination of desolation.

During the second half of Israel's last 7 years before the coming of Messiah there will be no sacrifice for 1290 days:

Dan. 9:27 *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...*

Dan. 12:11 *And from the time [that] the daily [sacrifice] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, [there shall be] a thousand two hundred and ninety days.*

We will now compare this prophecy with Rev. 11:1-3:

*And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty [and] two months. And I will give [power] unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred [and] threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

According to the quotations from Daniel, the time when God is being worshipped in the Temple in Jerusalem is the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week. During the same time the court outside the Temple is given to the Gentiles and – also during the same time – Jerusalem is called “*The Holy City*”.

For 42 months the Gentiles will tread under foot The Holy City. After these 3 ½ years The Holy City ceases to exist in the view of God, since after the death of the two witnesses Jerusalem is called *spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified*. This dramatic change occurs after the 1260 days of the testimony of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:7-8):

*And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies [shall lie] in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

These considerations show that both the daily sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem and the testimony of the two witnesses will take place in the first half of Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

### ***J. N. Darby's Time Pattern***

This view is shared by J. Allen (1) and A. Fruchtenbaum (4), but not by the majority of commentators who, like me, believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. These commentators seem to follow J. N. Darby (2), who argued that within the book of Revelation only the second half of Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is mentioned. According to him Revelation consists of two parts, which overlap in time. Like Rev. 19:11, the end of part one describes the coming of Christ (Rev. 11:15):

*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

According to this view the 1260 days of the two witnesses overlap with the 42 months of total power of the beast.

However, this is in conflict with Rev. 11:14-15a:

*The second woe is past;[and], behold, the third woe cometh quickly.  
And the seventh angel sounded...*

Here it is stated that the third woe follows the second woe. Therefore, Darby's time pattern must be revised. However, this is quite difficult, since this time pattern has been taken for granted for more than 100 years.

### **An Alternative Suggestion: The Middle of the 7 Years**

One of the early exceptions among pre-tribulation commentators is E. W. Bullinger (3), who does not see the actual coming of Christ in Rev. 11:15. He explains this verse as follows:

*The whole subject is one of sovereignty... And this question is now about to be settled by these final judgements of the seven Vials. The result is celebrated in this vision "in heaven" by anticipation. It looks forward to the close of the whole book of Revelation. It is not till the events of chap. xx have taken place that this change of sovereignty is consummated.*

A. Fruchtenbaum (4) explains that the two witnesses are killed in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel and that after their death the 42 months of total power of the beast begin.

The forced end of the sacrifice and the desecration of the Temple by the abomination in the middle of the last 7 years of Israel are among the reasons that lead to the dramatic change to the name of Jerusalem. During the time of the daily sacrifice in the first 3 ½ years, Jerusalem is called "*The Holy City*", but after the death of the two witnesses she is called, "*Spiritually Sodom and Egypt*".

### **Which Events?**

Which of the events in the middle of Israel's last seven years could have been made known to the prophets as "glad tidings"?

At first glance none of them seem to be prophesied as glad tidings. Therefore we have to study this question more thoroughly.

### **The Man-Child in Revelation 12: Saints Who Overcame or Believers from Israel?**

F. Eichler (5), along with others who hold the partial rapture theory, suggests that the man-child is a picture of the saints who "overcame" during the church age. To support this suggestion, these commentators stress that the same word is used for the rapture in 1 Thess. 4:17 and in Rev. 12:5:

*Then we, which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up (harpazo) together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord...*

*...and her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne.*

However, the whole church will be caught up to meet the Lord *Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath* before the Day of Wrath (1Thess. 1:10):

1 Thess. 5:9 *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Therefore, we can rule out this idea. The Apostle Paul continues his teaching about resurrection and rapture with the words:

1 Thess 5:1-3 *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

The apostle uses two different pictures to indicate the beginning of the judgement day of the Lord:

1. A thief in the night – his coming is totally unexpected and results only in loss.
2. The time of birth – which is roughly known and its result is a child.

Therefore, we conclude that the first picture refers to unbelievers while the second one refers to believers from Israel who know the prophecy that the future most intense time of trouble will not destroy the elect people of Israel (Dan. 12:1). This terrible time is referred to as travail, which will start when they say: *“Peace and safety”*.

In Ezek. 38 an attack from a northern power is predicted when Israel dwells safely: Ezek. 38,14-15 *Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know [it]? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee...*

In the next chapter the defeat of this power is described and it is added that Israel will burn the weapons during the following 7 years. From this, I conclude that this war will start at the beginning of the last 7 years of Israel before the coming of Messiah.

Table 2 (see overleaf) contains a comparison of the prophetic events with the last 7 years of Israel before the coming of Messiah – Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (Dan.9: 24-27).

In the middle of the last 7 years we find the following events:

- Sacrifice in Jerusalem ceased (Dan. 9:27)
- Abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15)
- Death of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:7)
- Resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:11-12)
- Earthquake in Jerusalem (Rev. 11:13)
- Survivors in Jerusalem give glory to God (Rev. 11:13)
- 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet sounds (Rev. 11:15)
- Woman’s (Israel’s) man-child is caught up to God (Rev. 12:5)
- War in Heaven and Satan besieged (Rev. 12:7-8)
- Satan is cast out of heaven, down to earth (Rev. 12:9).

**Table 2: Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week in comparison to Revelation and other prophecies.**

**Seventy weeks** are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression ...and to anoint the most holy. ...from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem (Neh.2:1) unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be **seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks (69 weeks)**: ...and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary (Titus, 70 A.C.) ...unto the end shall be war.... And he shall make a firm covenant with many for **one week** (the 70<sup>th</sup> week)... (Dan.9:24-27)

70 <sup>th</sup> week of Daniel:	First 3 ½ years	Middle	Second 3 ½ years
Dan. 9:27	7 year covenant enables sacrifice in temple	Abomination causes sacrifice to cease	
Dan. 7:8, 25; 12:1 Matt. 24:15-21			Little horn has power for 3 ½ years, Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7)
Dan. 12:11			For 1290 days no daily sacrifice
Rev. 11:1	Daily sacrifice in 3 <sup>rd</sup> temple		
Rev. 11:2	<b>Jerusalem: Holy City</b> , 42 months trodden by nations		
Rev.11:3-6 (Zech. 4:11-14)	Two witnesses have power for 1260 days		
Rev. 11:7-8		Two witnesses killed in <b>Jerusalem: Sodom &amp; Egypt</b>	
Rev. 11:11-12		Resurrection & ascension of witnesses	
Rev. 11:13		Earthquake in Jerusalem, survivors give glory to God	
Rev. 11:10, 14	Two witnesses had tormented people, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Woe is past, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Woe comes quickly		
Rev. 11:15		7 <sup>th</sup> trumpet sounds	3 <sup>rd</sup> Woe
Rev. 12:5 Isa. 66:7-8; Mic. 5:3		Woman's (Israel's) man-child caught up to God	
Rev. 12:6			1260 days refuge for Israel in desert
Rev. 12:7-12		War in Heaven, Satan cast out of heaven and down to earth	
Rev. 12:13-17			Persecution of Woman (Israel), 3 ½ years refuge, persecution of her seed
Rev. 13			42 months power of beast, image of beast being worshipped
Rev. 15:1; Rev. 16			7 vials of the wrath of God

J. Allen (1) mentions the following idea: *Some see in this raptured man-child a select number from Israel raptured at the midpoint of the tribulation. All that can be said of this suggestion is that there is no scriptural support for it.*

**Believers from Israel: Basis in Scripture**

However, in Rev. 11:12 the bodily ascension of the two witnesses is described. There are also several further arguments from Scripture for the rapture of a select number from Israel, as we will now indicate.

In agreement with many commentators, J. Allen sees only Christ in the man-child. A broader view is described by W. Kelly (6):

*"She brought forth a male son, to rule all nations with a rod of iron." There is not the slightest difficulty in applying this to the man-child, viewed not personally and alone but mystically; and the less, because this very promise is made to the church in Thyatira, or rather to the faithful there. It will be remembered that at the end of Rev. 2 it was expressly said that the Lord would give to him that overcame power over the nations, and he should rule them with a rod of iron, just as He Himself received of His Father."*

This view, that the man-child is Christ together with the true church is consistent with the words of the Lord to Saul on the Damascus road: *"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest"* (Acts 9:5), although he was persecuting the church.

However, we have to ask whether this extended view is as broad as the Scriptures teach. Not included in this view are the saints from Israel, mentioned in Zech. 14:5: *And the LORD my God shall come, [and] all the saints with thee.*

#### ***The Barren and Desolate Woman***

One of the glad tidings may well be the promise to Israel, in the time when she was a barren and desolate woman, that she would have many children:

Gal. 4:27 *For it is written (Isa. 54:1), Rejoice, [thou] barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.*

Could this barren and desolate woman perhaps be a picture of Israel during the time of the church? I think that this is quite possible, since the Apostle Paul continues his explanations to the churches of Galatia:

Gal. 4:28 *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

Therefore, the fulfilment of the promise mentioned in Rev. 10:7 may have begun with Christ, being continued with the church and finally completed with a select group from Israel, in the moment when the 7<sup>th</sup> angel is about to sound the trumpet.

The woman in Rev. 12 is a picture of Israel, whose children – Christ and the NT believers – were brought forth before her birth pangs started:

Isa. 66:7 *Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child.*

In contrast to that, the woman in Rev. 12:1-5 is seen in birth pains:

Rev. 12:2 *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

The OT parallel to this seems to be the travailing woman in Micah:

Mic. 5:2-3 *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, [though] thou be little among the thousands of Judah, [yet] out of thee shall he come forth unto me [that is] to*

*be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth [have been] from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time [that] she, which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.*

Verse 2 defines Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah. The birth in verse 3, however, does not refer to Christ's birth, for this would leave no time during which Israel is set aside. The birth Micah is speaking of will take place after the time of the church, when God deals again with His people Israel.

### ***The 144,000 sealed of Israel***

At that time, about 144,000 servants of God from the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 7) are sealed and thus kept safe during the trumpet judgements (Rev. 9:4). J. D. Pentecost (7) writes about this group and their witness to the world:

*...God is again dealing with Israel on this national relationship, setting them apart to national identities, and sending them as special representatives to the nations in place of the witness of the church...*

After the rapture of the church the 144,000 servants of God from the 12 tribes of Israel will preach the gospel of the kingdom (Mt.24:14).

In Rev. 14 the same company is seen together with the Lamb on Mount Zion in heaven and it is said of them:

Rev. 14:4b *These were redeemed from among men, [being] the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.*

It is obvious that this is a select number from Israel.

This group of 144,000 first fruits from Israel, who are seen in Rev. 7 on earth and in Rev. 14 together with the Lamb on Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22), seem to be caught up to God and His throne and thus to complete the mystery of God when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet sounds.

Many commentators see in the 144,000 from Israel the preachers of the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14). If this is true, they must know their King and Messiah while they are preaching, and need therefore to be distinguished from the remnant which repents after the time of Jacob's trouble, the most severe tribulation ever to take place (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21).

This last group from Israel will repent only after seeing that their King-Messiah is the one who was pierced 2000 years ago (Zech. 12:10).

### ***Rapture in the Old Testament: Enoch and Elijah***

In the OT we find the rapture of Enoch and that of Elijah:

2 Kgs. 2:10-11 *...if thou see me [when I am] taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be [so]. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, [there appeared] a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

The word "take" (laqach), as used for Enoch's rapture, is used 4 times in the story of Elijah being taken to heaven. Could Elijah be a type pointing to a rapture of a select group from Israel?



In the Psalms there are two examples of this word with this meaning:

Ps. 49:15 *But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me.*

Ps. 73:24 *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me [to] glory.*

While searching through Jewish literature on this subject, I came across the Art Scroll Tanach (8) series on the Psalms, which quotes Ibn Ezra's commentary on Psalm 49.

The Art Scroll translation of verse 16 reads: *But God will redeem my soul from the grip of the Lower World (Sheol), for He shall take me.*

The Hebrew word for "take" is identical to the word in Gen. 5:24 describing the rapture of Enoch. In the following I quote from the Art Scroll commentary:

*"When my love for God is so all-consuming that the very letters of His name become indelibly etched in my heart... I shall never die; rather, my soul will be drawn upwards, until it disappears in the heavenly abode, as we read of the ancient tzaddik (Genesis 5:24) And Chanoch walked with God, then he was no more, for God had taken him" (Ibn Ezra).*

These quotations show that God had indeed indicated to His prophets the mystery of a rapture of some people from Israel. This of course is a glad tidings, especially because it will take place before the terrible time of Jacob's trouble.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion there seems to be sufficient scriptural evidence for the following suggestion: The man-child in Revelation 12 is a picture of Christ together with the church and a select number from Israel. This picture will be completed by the rapture of that select group at the midpoint of Israel's last 7 years before the return of Messiah. This select group are the 144,000 sealed from the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 7) who are kept safe by the seal of God during the trumpet judgements and who are caught up to heaven (Rev. 12:5 & 14:1-5) before the beginning of the 3 ½ years of Jacob's trouble.

The future part of the fulfilment of God's mystery, which was promised as glad tidings to the prophets, is the promised rapture of the 144,000 first fruits of Israel. They will be taken to heaven together with the two witnesses when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet begins to sound.

### **Literature**

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