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3-A: *"Vile Person"* Arrives on the Scene (11:21-23)
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3-F: The Great Tribulation (11:31-35)

11:31 "And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.
11:32 "Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.
11:33 "And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering.
11:34 "Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue.
11:35 "And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time."

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***Abomination of desolation* (11:31)**

After being attacked and apparently suffering a setback by the *"ships of Cyprus"*, the Antichrist *"king of the North"* will be filled with *"rage*

against the holy covenant*”. (11:30) And here in this verse 31 we see the result: the invasion of the Jewish temple sanctuary with the *“abomination of desolation”.

If we flashback to the ancient time, there was a similarity of events worth noting: After his humiliation before the Roman envoy, Antiochus Epiphanes vented his anger by storming into Israel and desecrating the temple. He sacrificed a pig on the altar and set up an idol of the Greek god Zeus in the temple. This was certainly an appropriate abomination for an ancient time.

However, if verse 31 is set in modern times, then the *“abomination”* spoken of here will be something quite different to what happened back then. What the two events, ancient and modern, have in common, though, is the fact that they both are desecrations of the *“sanctuary fortress”* or *“holy place”*. (Daniel 11:31, Matthew 24:15)

The meaning of this phrase *“abomination of desolation”*, or *“abomination that makes desolate”* (as translated in the ESV, KJV, NIV, ASV, and other versions) is a whole subject in itself. In brief, the wording suggests that it is not an idol at all but is something that destroys violently, something very different to what existed in ancient times. A modern vehicle of war that storms its way into the Jewish sanctuary and partially destroys it would be an accurate fulfillment of this peculiar phrase.

A mechanical monstrosity like this would serve, both as an abomination desecrating a religious sanctuary, and also as something that has the ability to cause violent destruction. (This, basically, covers what is meant in the ancient Hebrew by the phrase *“abomination that makes desolate”.* It is a subject, though, that may require considerably more explanation, beyond the scope of this study. However, the reader can refer to a series of posts devoted entirely to that topic, called *Unraveling the Mystery of the Abomination*.)

Anyway, as mentioned before, the primary fulfillment of these passages, since verse 21, was set to come to pass in modern times. And the phrase *“abomination that makes desolate”*, when properly understood, presents an important clue to reveal the modern character of

what these words of Gabriel were referring to.

The phrase could apply to what happened in ancient times, but indirectly. We see in Daniel 11:35 the words *"until the time of the end"* – a way of saying that this invasion of the Jewish holy place is a recurring phenomenon in history and has had intermediate fulfilments: during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes and later the Roman invasion and temple destruction. History repeats itself, and variations of this event have happened before. Or it may be more accurate to go by the saying, "History may not repeat itself, but it does rhyme." Whatever the case, the direct, primary application of these passages about the abomination are reserved for modern times.

This becomes evident when we note how nicely the details of phrasing and context match with what we could envision will happen in the near future and in our present day society with its advanced military technology. And, of course, Jesus Himself pinpointed this *"abomination of desolation standing in the "holy place"* as an event that would happen in the future (not the past), a time just prior to His Second Coming.

> **<u>Comparison of Daniel's message about the invasion of Israel with Ezekiel's</u>:**
>
> **Because Daniel's message was given to him directly by an angel, the prophecy's terminology is fairly precise, as much as was possible within the limitations of the ancient Hebrew language and scientific progress of that time. We took note already of Gabriel's astute use of the word *"devices"*, for example, and how it was appropriate for describing modern inventions, especially those that are computerized. And now we have *"abomination that makes desolate"*, another precise wording used to describe a modern weapon/vehicle of war that enters the sanctuary.**
>
> **Ezekiel's prophecy (chapters 38-39), however, was not dictated to him by an angel. Rather Ezekiel acted as the channel, and the Spirit of God (or perhaps the spirit of an angel) spoke through him. But in such a case, the message, coming via a less direct means of communication, could not be as clear-cut, for the channel's own mind can get in the way; it can "color" or influence the message that is being received.**
>
> **Thus, we find that Ezekiel's description of the war is couched**

sometimes in terms that are antiquated – horses, swords, javelins, etc. Whereas, because Gabriel was speaking directly to Daniel, he was able to use terms that fit the modern reality more closely: *"for the overspreading* [military invasion] *of abominations he shall make desolate* [violently]*… forecast his devices against the strongholds."* (Daniel 9:27, 11:24 – KJV)

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The sanctuary fortress (11:31)

Now that Israel has been re-gathered as a nation, the expectation is high amongst the Jewish people to get on with the job of re-building their temple and of renewing the worship system that had to be discontinued many centuries ago during the Roman invasion and dismantling of their nation. The plans for this temple and worship service are well known in Israel, and probably it is only a matter of time, of waiting for the right window of opportunity to come along. (And this may have a lot to do with the *"holy covenant"*.)

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Ancient Past or Near Future?

One of the main goals in the study of Daniel, chapters 9 and 11, was to show that the angel who delivered those messages was speaking primarily about events to come in the distant future – events which should not be relegated to the ancient past. Over the centuries, well-meaning scholars and teachers have tried – a little too hard perhaps – to view these Scriptures in the light of past events, rather than seeing them as prophetic insights into future events.

Today, with the benefit of more historical hindsight than was available in the past, it is easier to pinpoint more accurately the full meaning of Gabriel's prophetic messages. But because of the heavy weight of scholarly opinion from the past, the task of adjusting our understanding of these intriguing passages has developed into a major overhaul.

The accumulation of translations, commentaries, and various

interpretations over the years have stifled the mystery and magic implicit in the words of God's archangel, Gabriel – a being whose mind possessed tremendous foresight and multi-levelled comprehension. There is a need then to re-capture the beauty and wonder of these words from the past… for we stand on the threshold of the End of the Age, and the matter of resolving these particular doctrinal issues is becoming more needful.

If God's Word lies buried under the rubble of mistranslation, misinterpretation, or cultural understanding of yesteryear, why should it remain so? And why should God's message through His angel Gabriel remain sidelined at a time when it is needful to grasp the full intent of what he was trying to say so long ago?

So, because of the need to supply an antidote or remedy against the well-meaning preconceptions of scholars from earlier times, there is a review in the summary post of this series, outlining the reasons why the primary fulfillment of Gabriel's prophetic messages (especially verses 9:27 and 11:21-35 in the Book of Daniel) was meant for the distant future… and for us, as we anticipate and prepare for that brief tumultuous era prior to Christ's Return, known as the Great Tribulation:

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***Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery* (11:32)**

These who try to subvert the covenant, the Antichrist will *"corrupt with flattery"* – harden their hearts even further. Smooth words and deceits – needed perhaps to soothe some guilty consciences by affirming that their betrayal of the covenant (and God) was the right thing to do. These are the people who do not *"know their God".*

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***But the people who know their God shall be strong* (11:32)**

Then by way of contrast, we learn about those who do *"know their God"* and about their spirited reaction to the Antichrist's open declaration of war on them (triggered by his invasion of the *"holy place"* with his

***"abomination of desolation"*). In the ancient time Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution against the Jewish people resulted in heroic opposition from the Maccabee family who eventually drove the Syrian forces out of Israel. This struggle of the Maccabees again acts as a sort of backdrop to this passage about *"the people who know their God"* who *"shall be strong, and carry out great exploits"* – another example of history repeating itself in backward time.**

But of course, the final fulfillment for this passage is yet to come. Verse 35 makes that clear: *"even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed".* This seems to be saying that, yes, persecutions against God's people will continue all through history, including the one under Antiochus Epiphanes. But the message is focusing here on the final modern day persecution under the Antichrist.

It could be added that, like the persecution in ancient times, which ended in victory, so the modern persecution will also end in victory – with the coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon. Even before that great event, true Christians shall rise up in defiance of the Antichrist and, like the Maccabees of old, win great victories in the midst of dire spiritual and physical turmoil.

***"The people who know their God"* are those who have a close, intimate relationship with the Almighty and are sometimes referred to in the New Testament in such endearing terms as being married to Christ, being His wife or bride. Jesus promised that whoever comes to Him He *"would by no means cast out."* (John 6:37) All who come to Christ are given entrance into God's Kingdom and will be thankful to be there. But it is wise to remember that there are degrees of reward.**

> **But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. (2Timothy 2:20-21)**

So who are these elite, dedicated defenders of the faith in the End Time? That would be difficult to pinpoint at this stage. But certainly, God knows who they are. The main thing we have to understand is that they

will be able to stand *"strong"* then because of their close link to the Almighty and the forces of Heaven.

*

***And carry out great exploits* (11:32)**

Actually, there is nothing so mysterious about this; anyone who seeks for it can get to *"know their God"* and *"carry out great exploits".* It may help to understand here that in the original Hebrew the phrase *"great exploits"* is not there. Similar to the passages in verses 28 and 30 about the Antichrist *"king of the North"* doing his *"exploits"* and *"damage"*, it was left open-ended.

Thus, the translation could just as easily have said, "The people who know their God shall be strong and do accordingly (which would no doubt include *'great exploits'*)." The phrase *"great exploits"*, although not untrue, doesn't necessarily give us the full picture. To defend the faith with *"great exploits"* portrays one side, but to be *"strong"* in the Lord can manifest in other ways: behind the scenes, day to day faithfulness, and in ways that only God knows about.

Perhaps translators, thinking in terms of the ancient Maccabean revolt, felt that this was the appropriate phrase to use. But several translations do word it differently: *"the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action"* (ESV); *"the people who know their God will be strong and will resist him"* (NLT).

So again, who are these people *"who know their God"* and *"shall be strong"*? Well, it may surprise us to see that some of these will not be known officially as Christians; they would be similar to the non-Jewish "Gentiles" about whom the apostle Paul noted, *"show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness."* (Romans 2:15) He was saying there that many of the Gentiles had just as much right to be considered God's people as did the Jews, many of whom were hypocritical and over-confident in those days that they had some kind of superior standing with God.

Well, it is not wise perhaps to speculate too much on these matters, but

it may help to keep an open mind and to understand that God's way of looking at people or situations is often different to ours. (See "Capsule 11" on this subject.) Paul also stated that in the End Time, when *"the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition"*, he will *"oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped."* That prophetic message implies that other religions besides Christianity will also suffer persecution.

In this modern, secular world the battle line is not so much between Christianity and other religions; it is between those who have faith in a benevolent Higher Power and those who don't.

So it is conceivable that genuine seekers from other religions, or with no religion, will stand up for their faith in God at this precarious time in history. They may not *"know their God"* as well as many Christians do, who have had the opportunity to enter into a very personal communion with God through Christ, but chances are many of them may have just as much conviction to stand up for their faith and for righteousness as do many Christians. (See Appendix 1: Who Are God's People?)

***And those of the people who understand shall instruct many* (11:33)**

*

"What is going on?" That will be a question uppermost in people's minds during this time of confusion, war, and persecution. For those who have already been instructed with God's Words, this will be their hour to bring God's light and understanding to a populace unprepared for such trying times. During this time of totalitarian rule under the two *"beasts"* (Antichrist and False Prophet), much persecution will be raised against those who refuse to join the new system and to worship the Antichrist.

The Antichrist and False Prophet Beasts' regime will be just another version, albeit the worst and final one, of all the totalitarian regimes that have come and gone through history. Since the beginning of time, such regimes have influenced their peoples to turn away from God: first of all, by their rulers acting as counterfeit saviors that their people can worship, and secondly, by providing a counterfeit utopia in place of the Kingdom of God – a phenomenon we've seen in modern times under Communist

regimes (their utopia) and Hitler's Third Reich (his Germania empire).

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***Yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering* (11:33)**

Any persons or organizations who dare to challenge the new status quo will be met with official disapproval and eventual persecution. During these times many *"shall fall"*, having been caught in the web of the Beasts' persecution campaign.

This is nothing new, of course. Christians and godly people all over the world are suffering persecution right now, and this has been going on for centuries. But at the very End, such persecution will reach its most extensive and severe form.

One of the reasons for this, as Revelation 12 indicates, is that Satan and his angels will have been cast out of whatever place they occupy in the Celestial Dimension. This appears to be an event that coincides in our Earth-time with the beginning of the last 3½ years of this present Age.

> ***And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,***
> ***but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.***
> ***So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. . .***
> ***Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time* [3½ years].**
> ***Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman* [symbolic of God's people throughout human history] *who gave birth to the male Child* [Jesus Christ].**
> ***But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time* [means 3½ years]*, from the presence of the serpent. . .***

> **And *the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring* [God's people in the very End Time of human history]*, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.***
> **(Revelation 12:7-9,12-14,17)**

Those will be difficult years of rabid, organized persecution engineered by the forces of Darkness. But to counter the influx of demonic activity of those years, God will greatly augment the power of His servants to withstand the forces of evil. We shall see marvelous manifestations of God's presence: miracles of protection and supply, great harvests of souls won to the cause of God, and proclamations of the Gospel and warning message to the anti-God, anti-Christ forces of the world.

Revelation 11, for example, depicts the electrifying activities of the *"two witnesses"* in Jerusalem, the new center of the Beast's empire. And very likely, similar manifestations of God's power will surface in many other parts of the world at this time. So although it portends to be a trying time of persecution against God's people, they can also look forward to it as an exciting, fulfilling time of seeing God's power manifested in many startling ways, not too unlike what the children of Israel witnessed as they made their Exodus from Egypt so long ago.

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***Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help* (11:34)**

According to the above passage in Revelation 12, many of God's people will *"fly into the wilderness"*, that is, escape the Antichrist and False Prophet's web of persecution. (12:6,14) But even if they *"fall"* and are captured, they can count on God's presence to see them through: *"they shall be aided with a little help."* The Lord will never desert His own. *"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand."* (Psalm 37:24)

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***But many shall join with them by intrigue* (11:34)**

And such supernatural help will be needed, for *"many shall join with them by intrigue"* (or, *"cleave to them with flatteries"*, as the KJV puts it). Just as the Antichrist forces used *"flatteries"* (deceitful persuasions) to influence those who betrayed the covenant, they will also use the same to try and rattle the faith of those *"who understand"*. But *"blessed is the man who endures temptation for… he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."* (James 1:12)

Although such experiences tend to arouse in us feelings of dread and fear, nevertheless, they can be anticipated from a victorious standpoint – almost as a privilege… to be given the opportunity to stand up for the faith, for which Jesus said, *"Great is your reward in heaven"*. (Matthew 5:12) It was said of the early apostles, after a court trial and beating, that they were *"rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."* (Acts 5:41) It is not easy necessarily to see persecution from this kind of perspective, but it does help to keep it in mind as much as possible.

It also helps to remember that at such times God's presence can become so powerful that it will override whatever terrible things may be going on. A good example is the martyrdom of Stephen who, while the stones were being hurled at him and *"being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God… said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!'"* (Acts 7:55-56)

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***And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white* (11:35)**

Why does God allow persecution? The obvious answer: His people who *"understand"* (all too well how foolish and corrupt are the new system and its leaders) are going to have enemies who will want to get rid of them. But also, it's *"to refine, purify, and make white."* Persecution has a way of purging away the foolishness that we, as frail human beings, are all prone to pursue at different times in our lives. There are plenty of examples in the Bible of its greatest heroes who, by enduring persecution, gained important victories in their spiritual lives.

For example, Samson, who couldn't tear himself away from Delilah, landed in the Philistine dungeon, blinded and utterly defeated. His weakness with his Delilah got him into a lot of trouble, but then after this humbling experience, he returned in greater power than ever to destroy his enemies. King David, after causing the death of Uriah, endured flight from his throne and harassment by his own son Absalom. But later he returned to the throne, a humbler and wiser king than before. The great apostle Paul also got to a point in his life where he had become over-confident. He brushed aside the nudges of the Holy Spirit and the warnings of his friends not to go to Jerusalem. As a result he too landed in the soup and had to languish in jail for a couple years. But then, in the midst of this deflating experience God continued to use him mightily. Because of his incarceration and court trials, he had opportunity to testify to the rulers of Israel and even of the Roman empire, and to bring the Gospel message right into the heart of the empire from where it could spread all over the world.

So persecution should never be viewed as a defeat, but rather, as the gateway to even greater testimony and achievement in God. *"We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."* (Romans 8:37) The forces of Darkness may find plenty of holes in the armor of them that are known as God's people. But God is a flexible and capable Supervisor and is more than able to bring glorious victory out of what may look like the most dire and hopeless of defeats. We may well see that glorious victory in this life, but even if we don't, we can rest assured that whatever we have suffered or endured will not have been in vain.

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***Until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time* (11:35)**

This phrase again clarifies that these words do not concern events in ancient times, but rather events of a distant future that are *"appointed"* and set for the *"time of the end"*. In addition, the passage suggests that persecution of God's people is an ongoing event in history, as implied in the word *"still".* This is the translation of the ancient Hebrew word *owd* that was encountered in verse 27 – about peace treaties that bring peace for a time but later on have to be repeated. (See "History Repeats Itself" Appendix.)

Likewise, persecution has happened to God's people in the past. And this may be why interpreters have thought that this passage was already fulfilled. But the passage makes it clear that, although persecution is a recurring phenomenon (history repeats itself), yet no past persecution fulfills the prophetic message completely. The particular persecution that the passage is pointing to will not come *"until the time of the end."*

Here we have another example of the angel's long-term perception. He can see that certain things – like persecution of God's true followers and the endless parade of wars and peace treaties – will happen again and again before the End of the Age. And his words accurately get that point across.

This passage also acts as a sort of "reality check"; it confirms the fact that those who follow Christ will have to endure that last period of the Great Tribulation. These verses 32-35 clearly picture Christians in the midst of persecution. Who else could be those of *"understanding"*? Who else could they be who *"know their God"* and thus are *"strong"* and able to do *"exploits"* and *"instruct many"*? Much as we might like to think that God will spare His people from the affliction of those days, that is not the scenario that this and other passages in the Sacred Book have outlined.

Unfortunately, modern Christianity harbors a misleading conception about those days – what is known as a pre-Tribulation gathering (Rapture) of God's people. That is a big subject to get into here, but for more information about its origins and misconceptions and what Scripture teaches, the reader can check out this helpful article: "Will the Rapture Be Before or After the Tribulation?"

We may wonder, why does God want His people around at this time? 1) He will need them to provide help and leadership for the many who will be searching and struggling in those days – to *"instruct many"* and to *"do exploits"*. 2) Persecution and trying times will serve to *"refine"* and *"purify"* His people, making them ready for Heaven and worthy citizens of the coming Kingdom of God on Earth.

So no premature rescue, or Rapture – at least not *"until… the appointed time"*, the time frame that is plainly set forth in the Scriptures: *"immediately after the tribulation of those days"* when the world *"will see*

the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;" **when** ***"He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*** **(Matthew 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, Luke 21:27-28) (See Appendix 2: What Is the "Rapture"?)**

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Continue to Part 3G: Nature of the anti-Christ *"King of the North"*

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Appendix 1: Who Are God's People?

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." **(1 Corinthians 15:50) In the Old Testament days, "God's people" were the descendants of Abraham and followers of the laws of Moses, by which the Jewish people were more or less forced to be good and righteous; they served, in the midst of a pagan world, as the example of a nation that worshiped the God of Heaven.**

But Christ's coming into the world changed all that. He said, *"The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."* (John 4:23)

God wants His people to love Him voluntarily, to have a personal relationship based on trust, rather than just a going-through-the-motions type of ritual; this loving relationship has the additional benefit of causing His people to become stronger in faith and better connected to Him in spirit. Thus, where these verses in Daniel 11 refer to the *"people"* who *"understand"* and *"know their God"*, this is not referring to Jewish people, but to the followers of Christ (which will include some Jewish people, of course).

Now who exactly are the "followers of Christ"? A delicate theological question to be sure. In John chapter 1 the boundary seems a lot more extensive than many people might think. According to John 1:9, *"the Word* (Christ)*… was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."* Every person has a conscience, and many, without realizing it, are following that *"true Light"*. And as he or she continues to follow, that person will eventually be led to receive the *"Word"* (Christ), and this gives

them *"the right to become children of God"* (John 1:12)

It is needful then to be inclusive and recognize the fact that some individuals may be following the *"true Light"* without tying it directly to faith in Christ, then they too should be included as belonging to the Family of God. (Again, see "Capsule 11" on this issue.)

No doubt, the strongest of leaders in those days will be those who have fully come to Christ and know Him intimately. But that doesn't mean there won't be other voices or deeds from people who may not consider themselves officially to be Christians but who, whether they realize it or not, are following *"the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."*

Now, as far as the Jewish people are concerned, Paul spells it out in Romans 2:28-29. *"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."* Much of Paul's writings were devoted to what was a controversial issue in those days: does one have to be Jewish or observe the Jewish laws in order to be considered one of God's people?

The answer Paul gives in Romans 7:4 sums it up well: *"You also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."* The implication here is that the old system of the laws of Moses could not bring forth enough *"fruit to God"*. The new broader-based, more flexible approach that Jesus introduced would succeed in bearing more *"fruit"* – the benefits and blessings that God desires to bestow on His Creation.

Now, with hindsight, it is easy to see. It is almost a matter of common sense: why, in His fairness and justice, would God want to continue favoring one race of people over all others? Why should not His salvation be given to all?

But it would seem nowadays in the ranks of Christendom, there is a similar problem. As the Jews of old had to recognize that they were not exclusively the one and only people of God, so do Christians in this modern day probably need to stretch their boundaries of whom they consider should belong in the category of "God's people". Basically, it should be anyone who loves Christ… but could also include many who are following the *"true Light"* but just haven't connected the dots yet to see

that Christ who is the *"Word made flesh and dwelt among us"* is the *"true Light"* which they have been following. (John 1:9,14)

To conclude: It is not up to us to decide who belongs in the Family of God and who doesn't. God knows who His people are, and about the best we can do, from our limited earthly perspective, is to judge by the fruits of what a person does or says: *"By their fruits you will know them".* (Matthew 7:20)

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Appendix 2: What Is the "Rapture"?

In the Old Testament there were two people mentioned – Enoch and Elijah – who were translated straight from the earthly into the Heavenly Realm; they did not have to experience the death of their physical bodies, which apparently, by the power of God, were instantly transformed into spiritual bodies that could function in the Celestial Dimension. (Genesis 5:24, 2Kings 2:1,11-12)

In Old Testament times, believing Jews commonly understood that they would be resurrected at the Last Day. For example, when Martha was bemoaning the death of her brother Lazarus, she told Jesus, *"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."* To which Jesus said, *"I am the resurrection and the life."* At this moment He felt so sorry for their anguish that He *"wept."* (John 11:25,35) And then came the astonishing miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, a deed which certainly validated Martha's belief in the Resurrection of the dead at the Last Day.

According to our modern scientific way of thinking, however, the whole idea of Resurrection or Rapture seems preposterous. Although Christians accept this unusual doctrine by faith, it does help to understand that that faith is based on recorded testimonies from the past, including Jesus' own deeds and words on the subject, including His own Resurrection. We can rest assured then that this is a future event that will come to pass. The big question in Christian circles is "when?"

But first, it would help to know, what exactly is meant by the term "Rapture"? The "Rapture" refers to the Resurrection of both the dead and those who are still alive at the time of Christ's Second Coming; and it happens "en masse". It is the sudden transfer into an honored place in

the celestial realm of God's people of all ages in the final moments of human history. This "end" of the age seems to happen in stages but begins with the dramatic appearance of Christ in the heavens, at which moment the angels will *"gather together His elect… from one end of heaven to the other"*. (Matthew 24:31) The timing for this event comes in verse 29 in the phrase *"immediately after the tribulation of those days"*.

To go into all the doctrinal why's and wherefore's on this controversial subject of pre- or post-Tribulation Rapture is a whole other study in itself. (Here is a helpful podcast on this subject by Nelson Walters.)

From the little that we have seen, however, the arrows are already pointing to the realization that there is no reason to think that Christians will be spared from this time of Tribulation. And truly, such thinking is counter-productive; it creates an attitude of complacency and false security with a consequent lack of preparedness for the trying days to come.

Nevertheless, although Christians should not pin their hopes in what appears to be little more than wishful thinking in a pre-Tribulation Rapture, they can take comfort in the fact that when the Rapture actually does happen, it will spare them from the troubles that are to come in what is known as the "Wrath of God", or the "Indignation" as it is often called (outlined in Revelation 16); this is another period of trouble, coming afterwards, that will prepare human society for a new start in the Age of Peace to come. Our present civilizations and cities must be swept away in order to lay the foundation for building the World of Tomorrow.

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Continue to Part 3G: Nature of the anti-Christ *"King of the North"*