

What on Earth is Going On?

Session 1 - The Rise of the Antichrist

The topic of the Second Coming of Christ is a challenging topic, due to the many interpretations put forth by biblical scholars of differing viewpoints. In this study I will seek to interpret, as best I can, the scriptures pertaining to the coming of Christ in the Book of Revelation and other prophetic books. I will also seek to highlight and interpret the significance of current events as I believe they relate to the days we are living in, and the last days leading up to the coming of Christ. As a disclaimer, I would like to state that I do not claim to have exclusive truth, or that my interpretations are the only ways to view this topic, but my beliefs that I will express here are conclusions that I have arrived at through careful study of God's Word, and various scholar's interpretations of this subject. The purpose of doing this study is to focus on the coming of Christ, in order to better prepare ourselves for His coming. The early Christians in the first century would often talk of His coming and encourage one another by looking forward to the day when Christ would return. If that is so, how much more should we be anticipating His coming? Now more than ever, it is important that we remember often to lift up our heads and say; "Come Lord Jesus!"

I would like to say something about the hermeneutic (how one interprets what is read) that I use when I come to an understanding of what has been written, especially when it relates to prophecy. If the normal sense makes sense, seek no other sense. In other words, I use a "face value hermeneutic." I take what I read at face value seeking to understand what is written in its normal, natural, customary sense. I reason that if Jesus fulfilled so many scriptures in His first coming at face value, why would it be any different with His second coming? Of course, there are other times when I approach a passage, such as the Beast of the Book of Revelation (Revelation chapter 13), in which case it is obvious that we are not talking about a literal beast coming up out of the sea, I therefore seek to understand it in a symbolic sense.

Warm-up Question: What is your greatest fear concerning the last days leading up to Christ's return?

I once heard someone use the expression; "What on Earth is going on?" For some reason, it took hold in my mind and I thought it would be a great question to start with as we consider the events leading up to the coming of Christ. What on earth is going on? What is God doing now on planet Earth? How do the events that we see unfolding around us relate to what we are told in the Bible will happen before Christ's return? In this four session study, one thing we want to observe is what God is doing on planet Earth. It is what God does that is of interest to me. What is He unfolding, or allowing, in order that He may bring His Kingdom into full view? What does He tell us about the things that will happen in the future, so that when we see those things begin to occur, we can look for the signs of His return? He does not want us to be ignorant of His plans, otherwise John the Apostle would not have been given the vision and revelation that he received while on the island of Patmos. God speaks to us for a reason. He does not waste words, yet He has chosen to speak in veiled terms in the language of the Prophets. He could have chosen to give us definite dates when every event would happen. He did not have to use word pictures and give us brief glimpses of images revealed in dreams which read like a fantasy novel, leaving us to draw multiple conclusions and arrive at varying interpretations. Is there a reason that God chooses to speak to us in dreams and visions, instead of giving us clear factual details which can not be disputed?

Why do you think God gave John the Apostle this vision that we read in the book of Revelation, and why does He not give us the facts exactly as they will occur with specific dates?

Here is a hypothetical question for you to answer. Put yourself in this situation: If secret service men with dark glasses were to come into this room with sharpshooter rifles and loaded automatics, and seconds later the President of the United States walked in following them, would it be a bit of a surprise? What if the president was to say to you, "I know that all of you are interested in prophecy, therefore I would like you to

interpret my dream that I had last night. If you cannot interpret my dream, my secret service men will proceed to shoot every last one of you.” After recovering from the shock of such a proposal, I imagine that you may very nervously reply with something like this: “Please tell us your dream and we will do our best.” How would you then feel if he asked you to tell him not only the interpretation of the dream, but the exact details of his dream as well? Would it put your heart in your mouth? Daniel and three young men with him were placed in such a situation. The Bible tells us that when the king of Babylon asked the wise men of Babylon to tell him his dream, along with its meaning, they replied that what the king had asked of them was impossible. He then ordered them all to be put to death, which included Daniel and his three friends. They were given time to seek God for the interpretation and during the night Daniel received a vision with the answer:

²⁷ Daniel replied, “No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these: ²⁹ “As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. ³⁰ As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind. ³¹ “You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. ³⁴ While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. ³⁶ “This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. ³⁹ “After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of

bronze, will rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. ⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. ⁴⁴ “**In the time of those kings**, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy” (Daniel 2:27-45).

Why do you think God would give a dream about the present time and future time to a pagan king?

I find it interesting that God would give the dream to the King. Only when Daniel’s life and the lives of his friends were threatened did he seek God for the answer moving into a new realm of giftedness. I wonder how many of us have to be pushed by God through some life threatening incident before we begin to seek God in a life transforming way. Daniel is the one that God wanted to understand the future so that the people of God, having been dispersed from the land of Israel to Babylon could be encouraged. God is not asleep, but working out things on Earth to bring about a kingdom that will be set up from heaven. God wants His people to know what on Earth is going on! He used the king of Babylon as an instrument to bring His word forth.

Amos the prophet spoke about God’s desire for you and me to know what He is doing on planet Earth in this way:

⁷ Surely the Sovereign LORD **does nothing without revealing his plan** to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7. Emphasis mine).

If we are diligent to search the scriptures to know what God has revealed, He will open our minds to know what on Earth is going on. He does not want to hide from us, but He does want us to seek Him. The prophets of Amos’ day were the ones that were listen-

ing for God's voice in a dark period of Israel's history.

In this passage we are told of four world kingdoms that would come and occupy the land of Israel. I hold the popular opinion that this dream speaks of the major world powers that have arisen in history, since Daniel makes it clear that the first kingdom, the head of gold, represents King Nebuchadnezzar. He says to the king; "You are that head of gold, and after you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. So we see that the first, the head of gold, was King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire (Daniel 2:37). The second was the Medes and Persian empire under Darius the Mede (Daniel 8:20). That was the predominant world power to arise after Nebuchadnezzar's reign in Babylon. The third was the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great (Daniel 8:21), and the fourth is the Roman Empire. The first three kingdoms existed in Daniel's day (although the kings mentioned did not), but Rome did not then exist. We know from history that each kingdom succeeded the other. For the sake of brevity we will concern ourselves just with the fourth kingdom, which is where the rock cut out of a mountain, which is obviously the Kingdom of God, will fall.

¹⁵ The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 11:15).

Some would say that this has been literally fulfilled already because the King of Heaven came during the Roman occupation of Israel and set up His kingdom, the kingdom of God. They would quote Paul as saying, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). It sure doesn't seem to me, though, that the Rock has broken the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces yet (verse 45). We certainly have not seen the promised coming, so it must mean that it is still to happen. So what does it mean? Although the Roman Empire became a dominant power after Greece, it has not been around for several centuries now. When one thinks about the last two centuries, the world hasn't been dominated by the Africans, the Indian Subcontinent, or the Asian nations. The peoples of the Roman Empire still dominate the world scene in the sense that the Roman Empire covered most of the countries of Europe. The legs of the vision more than likely symbolize the fact that the Roman Empire was divided into two parts,

the eastern Byzantine leg situated in Constantinople, which is present day Istanbul, and the western leg situated in Rome. The European people have been strong as iron and weak as clay over the last 1700 years with several people seeking to bring about a unified Europe, men such as Napoleon and Hitler amongst others. I find it interesting that the Treaty of Rome was signed on March 25, 1957. Many see the Treaty of Rome as the seedling that has grown into the European Union. This treaty introduced the European Economic Community. It wasn't signed in London or Paris, Vienna or Amsterdam, but it was signed in Rome. Verse 42 of Daniel's prophecy speaks about the toes of this statue, and this is also interesting, as the European nations fit this description very well. France at times has been strong and then very weak. Germany has been strong but also very weak. We can say the same about England and Spain too. The clash with the Rock comes upon the feet of the statue (Verse 34). Verse 44 says that, "in the time of those kings," God will set up His kingdom which will never be destroyed. It is not clear from the passage what kings or leaders are being mentioned, but I believe the kings that are mentioned are ten kings symbolized by the ten toes of the image. These ten leaders of nations, I believe, will be in power with the Antichrist at the return of Christ. We will find more insight in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13, as both passages include the image of ten horns symbolizing 10 nations or kings allied with a leader that will arise called Antichrist.

In Daniel chapter seven, Daniel has his own dream and in it there are four beasts that arise out of the sea. Often the sea is symbolic of a sea of people. The four beasts, I believe, refer to the same empires we have just read about in Daniel chapter 2. Daniel indicates that they are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth: "The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth" (Daniel 7:17). We will focus our attention on the fourth kingdom:

⁷ "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns. ⁸ "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully. ⁹ "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took

his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.¹¹ “Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.¹² (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)¹³ “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.¹⁵ “I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me.¹⁶ I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. “So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things:¹⁷ ‘The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth.¹⁸ **But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.**’¹⁹ “Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which **was different from all the others** and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left.²⁰ I also wanted to know about **the ten horns** on its head and about **the other horn that came up**, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully.²¹ **As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them,**²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.²³ “He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms **and will devour the whole earth**, trampling it down and crushing it.²⁴ The ten horns are ten kings **who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise**, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings.²⁵ **He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.**²⁶ “But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole

heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him’ (Daniel 7:7-27).

We are told in verse 21 that this little horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, what do you perceive as happening here? What does defeat look like for the saints?

I personally do not believe that defeat refers to the persecution that will take place, but to the abandonment by many of their faith in Christ to take the mark of the beast and to worship antichrist (Revelation 13:16, 14:9). Persecution has never defeated Christianity; it has only stimulated the church to grow deeper in God and numerically too. We are told in 2Thessalonians 2:3 that there will be departure from the faith by many, an apostasy or rebellion, depending on the translation you use. This will be a discouraging time for many true believers. We will explore what could take place on the earth that will cause such a departure from the faith in the next study. Revelation 12 tells us that the true church will not be overcome by this war against the saints by antichrist:

¹¹ They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11).

What other things should we understand from this passage in Daniel 7 if we were to interpret it with a face value hermeneutic? What does it say, and what does it mean?

1) The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom (v.23) that will devour the whole earth. Rome did not conquer the whole earth.

2) There will be a time where there will be a unified purpose with ten leaders who will be from European descent (the area of the Roman Empire, v.24). Don’t rule out America from this confederation of ten world leaders, for America is made up of mostly of the people groups of the Old Roman Empire.

3) It seems that at some point after (v.24) the ten nations begin working together another king will arise. I believe that this is the Antichrist mentioned by John the Apostle. He will speak against the God of the Jews and Christians and begin to oppress the saints. We are also told that he will try to change the set times and the laws.

It is possible that this means he will seek to change the year, getting rid of the Gregorian calendar so that it is no longer called A.D. (Anno Domini means, In the Year Of Our Lord), it may also mean getting rid of religious holidays such as Easter and Christmas.

4) Verse 25 says that the saints will be handed over to Him for three and one half years (time, times and half a time). Verse 21 also says that he will go to war against the saints.

Who are the saints and what do you think is meant by the phrase, “the saints will be handed over to him?”

The word *saint* comes from the Hebrew word *Kaddish*, the Greek word is *Hagios*. It means something that is separated from ordinary common use. It is something holy that has been brought into relationship with God and designated by Him as having a sacred purpose or special significance to Him.¹ If a person is born again of the Spirit and walking with Christ, he is seen as set apart for holy use and this is what the Bible calls a saint. In this sense, I believe that the saints refer to the whole body of Christ.

Sometimes Bible teachers have to teach things that they do not like to teach. We that have been given the responsibility of teaching the scriptures all enjoy sharing the things that are uplifting and encouraging, but we must not shy away from teaching what the Bible says; otherwise we will be guilty of withholding truth that is important for your growth in God. I interpret this passage as teaching that there will be a period of three and one half years (verse 25), time, times and half a time is three and a half years, while the Antichrist is in power, where there will be a time of persecution and oppression of the saints, and God will allow it, but only for a time. There are scriptural indications that this time will be cut short: If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened (Matthew 24:22). But is this word, the saints, referring to Jews that become believers or to the Church? Some say the Church is taken up in the Rapture before the Antichrist comes to power, and are not around for this persecution. I would like to look at the whole topic of the Rapture in the next session, but for now let's look at specific passages in the book of Revelation, chapter 13, and see if we find similar images that we have already seen in the Book of

Daniel:

¹ And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. ² The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. ³ One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. ⁴ Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” ⁵ The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. ⁶ He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. ⁷ He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. ⁸ All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. ⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints (Revelation 13:1-10).

What can we learn about the end times from this passage?

1) In this passage again we see a 10 nation confederacy, symbolized by the ten horns as it was in Daniel 7:7.

2) The Antichrist is described as having the same characteristics as the three former beasts in Daniel 7. In that passage we are told that Babylon was like a lion (7:4). The Antichrist will have an ability to speak great things that will sway people just as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon did. The second beast, which we know to be the empire of the Medes and Persians, is likened to a bear (7:5), which perhaps symbolizes antichrist's ferocity and power. The third beast, a leopard (7:6) is indicative of the speed of Alexander the Great who conquered the known world in just over three years. In the same way Antichrist and his kingdom will have an ability to react with speed to world events, symbolized by the leopard.

3) He will be inspired and empowered by the dragon (Satan).

¹ Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, Page 1572, 41. Hagios.

4) One of the heads of the beast will have what many think to be a fatal blow. I don't know what this means, but perhaps it could be that one of the countries of his alliance has what will appear to be a fatal blow but is healed miraculously. Some say it could be an assassination attempt and he is miraculously healed afterwards. If this interpretation is correct, it will certainly increase his popularity and cause people to elevate him. This could enable him to present himself as one to be worshipped, as a god.

⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2Thessalonians 2:4).

5) The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. The Greek word used here, *thoumazō*, means to wonder, have in admiration and to marvel at.⁵ The emphasis in this verse certainly seems to be at a time when the whole world will admire what this man is able to accomplish through his ten nation confederacy. Passages such as this is why I believe this passage and associating passages are still yet future. Those that are Preterists (Preterist's believe that this passage was fulfilled in the first century A.D.) have difficulty interpreting this passage at face value, Rome in the first century had no way of making the whole world be astonished at any of the Caesars of Rome.

6) His ability to make war far outstrips other nations, "who can make war against him?" Technological advances in the 10 nation confederacy will leave other nations behind to the point where the beast will intimidate other nations into submission.

7) He will have charisma in the way he talks (Verse 5). He will utter blasphemies and proud words. There will be an ability to sway people with convincing words; Adolf Hitler has got nothing on this guy.

8) Here's the part that I don't like, he will be given power to make war on the saints. Remember that this is what we also read in Daniel 7:25. Remember the fact that it was only for 3½ years (time, times and half a time, Revelation 13:5 says the same amount of time, calling it forty two months (3½ years) that Antichrist will exercise his authority.

9) He will call for everyone on planet earth to worship him, all whose names are not written in the book of life (Verse 8). The scripture seems to emphasize that this per-

tains to all inhabitants of the earth; verse 7 tells us that his authority will be over every tribe, people, language and nation. In the first century A.D. this did not happen. This passage has to be future, as I see it. Those that have committed their lives to Christ will not go along with this edict, which is perhaps the very reason that they are persecuted, some going into captivity and others being put to death. (Verse 10).

Revelation 13 then goes on to talk about a second man who will arise that will be a religious figure; many call him the False Prophet. He will perform miraculous signs and will make people worship the first beast, the Antichrist. There are two things he does which will cause true Christians (saints) to rebel against the authority of these two men.

1) He will set up an image of the Antichrist that speaks and demands worship of him, threatening those who will not with death (Revelation 13:15). We are not told where this image is set up in this passage but perhaps this ties in with Jesus' warning to the saints that, "when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then.....there will be great distress" (Matthew 25:15. KJV uses the word tribulation, NIV uses the word distress). 2 Thessalonians also mentions this same time, I believe, when Paul says that the Antichrist will "exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God." (2Thessalonians 2:4).

2) He will force everyone to comply with his demands to take a mark signifying allegiance to their regime. "He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666" (Revelation 13:16-18).

How could it ever come about that nothing could be bought or sold without having a mark? I certainly do not see a situation at any time in history where everyone, small and great, could not buy or sell without using cash. With the use of credit cards and bank accounts with computers, we are in a time where buying and selling can be done completely without cash. It certainly could not have been fulfilled before the present

² Word search on e-sword.com on *thoumazō*, Revelation 13:3.

time. Take a look at everything you buy in the stores and see if you can see the RFID tag (Radio Frequency Identification) on it. Some of you might have seen the ones on music CD's, they are little white plastic boxes.

Did you know that there is a plan in place by major corporations mostly from America and Europe, but in fact going on all over the world, where everything that is bought and sold will have a microchip called an RFID tag on it? In 1999 Proctor and Gamble along with Gillette and MIT got together and looked into tagging all their products with these little computer chips that will record and track every bit of information from production to the home. Each tiny chip, some as small as the period at the end of a sentence on this page, is hooked up to a tiny antenna that picks up electromagnetic energy that is beamed to it from a reader device. The reader device allows the item to be remotely identified as each chip has its own unique number. The plan is now being put into the systems of many companies all over the world to track every item that is produced and where it ends up. With bar code technology, every can of Coke has the same UPC or bar code number (a can of Coke in Toronto has the same number as a can of Coke from Cincinnati). With RFID, each individual can of Coke would have a unique ID number which could be linked to the person buying it when they scan a credit card or a frequent shopper card (i.e., a "registration system"). The second way it's different from a bar code is that these chips can be read from a distance, right through your clothes, wallet, backpack or purse, without your knowledge or consent, by anybody with the right reader device. In a way, it gives strangers the ability to spy on you, to identify both you and the things you're wearing and carrying. Imagine walking through a doorway and having a hidden reader device identify the books in your briefcase and the brand of your underwear. Not only will everything have its own chip, but plans are being made for every person to have a chip that can be read at point of sale. This sounds wonderful to some because if there is a person suspected of being a terrorist, his every move and everything he buys can be tracked. If a person does not have a chip embedded in his skin in the future, he will not be allowed to buy or sell. IBM has even developed a device actually named the "person tracking unit" that can zero in on your RFID tagged products and use them to watch you like a hawk.³ Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre, two consumer rights activists, have written a book about this technology called *Spychips*. This is

not a Christian book, and it was not written with the intention to make a link between this technology and the mark that we read about in Revelation, but the possibilities and similarities of this mark are startling. There are many people who are not Christians who are already warning others of the loss of privacy and freedom that is at our doorsteps. Many people, however, will view this technology as a good thing because of safety precautions which these chips will make possible. For instance, there will be reader devices that will be placed on major roads that will track the tag in every car that is produced. Technology like this is already being used. When you go on some major highways in Chicago, there are reader devices that debit money out of your bank account when you go through a certain place on a toll road. For a certain amount of money I can pay for the ability to see on a map on the internet just where the tracker unit on my son's cell phone is. He won't be able to hide his location. It will even tell me the speed his car is travelling at. There are many good reasons and advantages that make this technology seem useful and helpful, and this may explain why people will welcome having a personal chip embedded in his or her skin. With terrorism being such a major concern, some will argue that having such a chip being mandatory for everyone would be in the best interest of the majority, arguing that it is for the safety, or common good of the people, making it worth the sacrifice of privacy and freedom. It is said that the two sons of Diana, Princess of Wales, both have chips embedded somewhere in their skin, so that if they are kidnapped and held for ransom, they can be easily found via satellite. Think of the advantages for the military. If one soldier was kidnapped in Iraq or a pilot was downed, they could be found on a map via a satellite tracking unit. Think of the advantages for the stores; security chips that are attached to products and items of clothing would not be able to be stolen; a hidden reader device would be set off near an exit. Everything on planet Earth will be tracked via RFID. Nothing will be bought or sold at some point in the future except it has the stamp of ownership on it to Antichrist's world kingdom. Taking the mark of the beast will be tantamount to selling your soul to Antichrist. There will be a commitment along with the mark of the beast to worship his image:

⁹ "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, ¹⁰ he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will

be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb (Revelation 14:9-10).

We are living in a world that is changing fast, and not always for the better. What on Earth is going on? Jesus is coming, that is what is going on. Jesus said that: "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28). This is a time for us to get to know God, to be intimately acquainted with Him. This is also a time to make sure of where you are going in life and in death. Do you know Him? He has told us clearly through the prophetic writings that He has overcome death and hell, and that He is coming back for His church. Have you committed your life to Him? Is He your Savior? He said, "And everyone who calls on the

name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). Give your heart totally to Him in absolute trust...you will not be disappointed!

Prayer: Father, as I consider the things that I have read today, I want to have assurance that I will be with you in your eternal kingdom. I commit my life and my future to you. I know that you hold the future. I choose this day to place my heart and my life in your hands. Please forgive me of my sins. I choose to receive the gift of eternal life which you have purchased for me through the death of your Son. Thank you for dying in my place so that I can spend eternity with you. Please come into my life and make me a brand new person (2 Corinthians 5:17).

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