



God is present in History



Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti
Ministério Seara Ágape

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(Intertestamental Period, Seleucids and Ptolemies, Prophecies of Daniel and John about Apocalypse, the Great Tribulation)



*Ministério Seara Ágape
Estudo Bíblico Evangélico*

*Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti
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I thank you, Lord, for making me see that in you there is justice, and that your eyes are always attentive to your saints on earth.

I dedicate this book to all brothers in Christ who have a heart willing to obey and a bold mouth to proclaim His truth among men.

“Then he looked up at his disciples and said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets’” (Lk. 6: 20-26).

Index

Introduction	6
Part 1 – The dominion of nations over Israel in the Intertestamental Period	8
Part 2 – Intertestamental period – Seleucids and Ptolemies	20
Part 3 – Revelation of Daniel chapter 11	43
Part 4 – Prophecies of Daniel and John – Apocalypse	57
Part 5 – The Great Tribulation	79

Notes:

- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [] or parenthesis (), in italics, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV – 1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (it will be used in brackets in some verses to make it easier for readers to understand).
- Source of research for texts and images: wikipedia.org
- Source of research for images: crystalinks.com

Introduction

This book is, so to speak, a journey through time, starting in the Intertestamental Period until the end of the Western and the Eastern Roman Empire, with a conclusion concerning the present days.

This work is the result of a series of biblical themes that I've put on my website and because the subject became so extensive, I decided to write it in a book so that people could read it in the correct sequence.

The texts began with a study of the Intertestamental Period, also called "God's period of silence", which was the period between Malachi and Christ, when He ceased to speak to mankind for nearly four hundred years through the prophets, because of the rebellion of His people and the idolatry of the heathen nations, which also contributed to the hardening of the hearts of the Israelites. With the beginning of the Roman Empire under the reign of Caesar Augustus, not only Israel but the entire world of that time suffered a great transformation. It was during the reign of Caesar Augustus (29 BC-14 AD) that Jesus was born, bringing the light that humanity needed to be free from the spiritual bondage to which it was arrested.

Soon after, the Lord called my attention to a very important prophecy of Daniel (Dan. 11: 1-45), when the prophet mentions the kings of the north and south, referring to the near future when other kingdoms would take the place of Babylon: Persia, Greece and finally Rome. But his prophecy also was related to a distant time in the future, the Apocalypse, which was later confirmed by the Apostle John in the book of Revelation because at this stage of History, the Roman dominion was already present and God could already give more revelations to us through His disciple.

Following the sequence of the Intertestamental Period, then we'll talk about the Hellenistic period, which began with Alexander the Great of Macedonia, and the division of the empire after his death among his four generals. However, the two main empires and peoples that interest for our study and, of course, to the prophecy of Daniel, are the kings of the North and South (Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties), i.e., Egyptians and Syrians, because the two empires had great dominion and influence over Israel. Knowing the story of the characters of that time, we are ready to understand the prophecy of Daniel 11: 1-45 and much more: what will happen to mankind in the end times, that is, in the coming of the Antichrist, in the period of the Great Tribulation and the Rapture of the church.

As for the prophetic visions of the Apostle John in the book of Revelation, we can say:

Even though many biblical symbols and many revelations from this biblical book about the future of humankind are still hidden from us, the purpose of this work is not to sadden people, let alone to frighten them with the strong and inevitable events that are about to happen. On the contrary, the purpose is to show how important our intimacy with God is, and give us the hope that one day prepared by God ('in the appointed time', as the bible says), all the evil that we see and live in the world will be destroyed, and unrighteousness will be avenged, for it is necessary that men repent of their sins and recognize that only in Jesus there is freedom, justice, judgment, and eternal life. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John writes not only about future events; he also writes to the believers of that time (in the seven churches in Asia Minor, going through persecution) and mentions in a symbolic way the political circumstances in which he was inserted, involving the Roman emperors, for example, and showing that God was

acting and doing justice in the present, the same way He will do in a much more comprehensively manner in the future.

About Rome and the Roman emperors, which the apostle John mentions in the book of Revelation, I will talk about this in the next two volumes.

I hope you enjoy the reading and the Holy Spirit may reveal to you some secrets of the spiritual world.

May the light of the Lord be upon you.

Tânia Cristina

Volumes 2 and 3 of this book:

<https://www.searaagape.com.br/godispresentinhistory2.pdf>

<https://www.searaagape.com.br/godispresentinhistory3.pdf>

Email: relacionamentosearaagape@gmail.com

Part 1 – The dominion of nations over Israel in the Intertestamental Period

Let's begin by the study about the dominion of pagan nations over Israel in Intertestamental Period and the Hasmonean period (Judas Maccabee and his descendants). 'Intertestamental Period' is the period between Malachi and Christ, which comprises nearly four hundred years, when Israel was dominated by pagans and when the Lord stopped speaking to His people through the prophets. So, this period was called "God's period of silence".

The kingdoms that dominated over Israel can be quoted by periods:

1) Persian Period (539-333 BC):

For about one hundred years after Nehemiah's time (The episode of Nehemiah took place around 445–432 BC) the Persians dominated Judah, but the Jews were allowed to continue with their religious observances without facing any opposition. During this period, the land of Judah was ruled by high priests. The Persian kings after the fall of Babylon, were:

- Cyrus the Persian emperor (Cyrus II or Cyrus the great) who ordered the return of the Jews in 538 BC (1st return of the exiles), by invading Babylon. He reigned as king of the Persians, Medes, Lydians and Babylonians (559–530 BC)
- Cambyses II (son of Cyrus): 530–522 BC.
- Darius I (brother-in-law of Cambyses II): 522–486 BC. In his reign the temple began to be rebuilt (520–516 BC). It had begun in 536 BC (2nd year of the reign of Cyrus in Babylon and stopped until 520 BC – 2nd year of Darius I). According to Strong's Concordance, 'Darius', Dārayavahuš (Strong #1867), comes from the Persian origin 'Dareyavesh', the title (rather than name) of a Persian king. According to Evandro de Souza Lopes – 'Os nomes bíblicos e seus significados, CPAD, 8^a ed. 2002' – 'Darius' comes from the Persian name 'Dozenda dara', which in Hebrew means: owner, lord; in Greek: the powerful, rich. Other sources give its meaning as: 'He who holds, the one who maintains.'
- Xerxes I (Ahasuerus – אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ): 465–486 BC (son of Darius I). Xerxes (great warrior, warlike, bellicose, lion) is a Greek transliteration of his Persian name after his ascension, Jshāyār Shah, meaning 'ruler of heroes.' In the bible his name is mentioned as Ahasuerus (Achashverosh אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ or Achshrush, in Hebrew – אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ = prince, head, chief, lion); Hebrew equivalent of Persian 'Khshayarshan' = king lion; written as Ahashuerus, in Chaldean; or Axashverosh, in Greek. According to Strong's Concordance (Strong #325), Ahasuerus or Achshrush) is the title (rather than name) of a Persian king.
- Artaxerxes I: 465–424 BC (son of Xerxes I, but not the firstborn). There was a 2nd return of the exiles to Jerusalem with Ezra in 458 BC to minister in the rebuilt temple. Rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, 445 BC (3rd return with Nehemiah).
- Xerxes II (son of Artaxerxes I) and reigned one month and a half. He was murdered by his brother Secydianus or Sogdianus (the form of the name is uncertain). In his turn, he was killed by Ochus, satrap of Hyrcania (region southeast of Caspian Sea, modern Iran), who rose to power and adopted the name of Darius II.
- Darius II (Neh. 12: 22) ruled Babylon and Persia (424–404 BC). He is called Darius the Persian. His birth name was Ochus; then he adopted the name of Darius II (Persian: Dārayavahuš; that's why the Greek sources call him Darius Nothos, 'Bastard').

Artaxerxes II Mnemon, meaning: ‘whose reign is through truth’ (404–358 BC). He was son of Darius II

- Artaxerxes III or Ochus (3rd son of Artaxerxes II): 358–338 BC.
- Artaxerxes IV or Arses (youngest son of Artaxerxes III): 338–336 BC
- Darius III (great-grandson of Darius II and cousin of Arses): 336–330 BC when Alexander the Great defeated him in Macedonia. Originally called Artashata; in Latin: Codomannus, and in ancient Greek: Kodomanos (Κοδομανός) was the last king of the Achaemenid Dynasty of Persia. Darius (Dārayavahuš, in Persian) was the name he adopted after ascending the throne.



Cyrus, Cyrus the Great, or Cyrus II

Cyrus, Cyrus the Great, or Cyrus II, king of Persia as he was known, was the king who led his dynasty to the apogee (the Achaemenid dynasty, founded by the king of Persia Achaemenes, his great-grandfather, in fact a Mede ruler who paid taxes to Persia in the seventh century BC), dominating the kingdoms of Media, Iran, Lydia, Syria, Babylon, Palestine, Armenia and Turkestan, thus founding the Persian Empire. By invading Babylon, King Cyrus ordered the return of Jews to Jerusalem (1st return of the exiles) to rebuild the temple of the Lord. It is interesting that the rulers of this dynasty characterized their administration for tolerance to different cultures and religions of the conquered peoples and this created a great loyalty among the subjects. They also built roads linking the main cities, and the postal system was quite efficient. The roads also facilitated the trade of Egypt and Europe with India and China, of which Persia was benefited greatly. It is quite possible that because of this tolerant policy with the beliefs of his subjects that God has found the heart of Cyrus favorable to free the Jewish captives. So he ordered everything that had been stolen by Nebuchadnezzar, including the vessels of the temple in Jerusalem was returned and placed in the custody of Sheshbazzar (Ezr. 1: 8; Ezr. 5:14), whom he appointed the prince of Judah. The Persians and all citizens of the kingdom helped Jews by giving them silver, gold, goods and livestock, precious things, beside the freewill offerings for the house of God. Thus, the Jews returned and rebuilt the temple of the Lord. What happened here was very similar to what happened in Egypt when the people gave many precious things to the people of Israel before their departure.

His mother was called Mandane, daughter of the last king of Media, Astyages (reign: 585–550 BC). In 600 BC she married Cambyses I, son of Cyrus I, king of Persia. When the son was about to be born, Astyages had two prophetic dreams which were interpreted by the magicians as a prediction that his grandson (Cyrus, Kūruš, in ancient Persian) one day would rebel and succeed him on the throne. So he sent for her in Persia with the intention of murdering the baby as soon as he was born. He ordered the butler Harpagus to kill him. However, the child was not killed, but delivered to the care of a shepherd. In his place, they presented to Astyages a stillborn child, and the father of this child adopted Cyrus as son. At the age of ten, Cyrus was introduced to his grandfather. By intervention of the magicians, Cyrus was not punished and was sent back to his parents. Years later, through a rebellion of Harpagus, Cyrus dominated Media (region of the present Iran), entering the capital, Ecbatana, and spared the life of his grandfather. He also conquered Lydia and other territories, increasing the extension of the Persian Empire. Maybe by the story of his childhood, God has called him shepherd (Isa. 44: 28), besides the fact of using him to bring His people back to Israel. Let's remember that Cyrus, in the bible, is a figure of the Messiah, the Good Shepherd.



Cyrus Cylinder

Cyrus Cylinder is a document in the form of a clay cylinder inscribed in Akkadian cuneiform in whose interior there are great gray stones, currently divided in several fragments, listing his genealogy as a king of a lineage of kings, and reporting his capture of Babylon in 539 BC. The cylinder measures 22.5 cm length and 10 cm in its maximum diameter. The text says that the victorious Cyrus was received by the people of Babylon as their new ruler and entered the city in peace. It extols Cyrus' efforts as a benefactor of the citizens of Babylon, responsible for improving their lives, repatriating displaced peoples and restoring temples and religious sanctuaries through Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the region. It concludes with a description of Cyrus' work of repairing the walls of Babylon. The text of the cylinder denounces the deposed Babylonian king Nabonidus as impious and portrays Cyrus as pleasing to the chief god Marduk. It probably dates from the sixth century BC (539 BC). There is much controversy among

scholars about something written in Cyrus Cylinder on the repatriation of the Jews (Ezr. 1: 1-4; 2 Chr. 36: 23). Although not mentioned specifically in the text, the repatriation of the Jews from their Babylonian captivity has been interpreted as part of this general policy.

In Isa. 46: 9-11 it's written: "remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My purpose shall stand, and I will fulfill my intention', calling a bird of prey from the east, the man for my purpose from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have planned, and I will do it."

The 'bird of prey' refers to Cyrus. Cyrus was called 'bird' for his swiftness, and 'voracious' for his ferocity and victory over his enemies; a bird of prey like an eagle. He was quick on his horse, being compared to this bird. As Plutarch relates (He was a Greek historian and philosopher – 46-120 AD), Cyrus had an aquiline nose. Therefore, men who have such a nose among the Persians are highly esteemed. According to Plutarch, Cyrus is the Persian word for 'sun.' Xenophon said that Cyrus' standard was a golden eagle on the top of a high spear, and was held by the kings of Persia. Xenophon was a Greek historian, writer and military leader, disciple of Socrates, and who lived around 430-354 BC. He was a contemporary of Artaxerxes II, one of Cyrus' successors as king of Persia. Artaxerxes II lived between 436 and 358 BC and reigned in the period of 404-358 BC.

Taking into account the biblical text of Isaiah, Cyrus can be compared to a bird by its speed in coming at the time determined by God. He came from the east as the rising sun of righteousness, being called to do the will of the Lord. The work of the redemption of Israel was in accordance with the eternal purpose of God, prophesied by all the holy prophets, and now fulfilled. And divine righteousness and salvation are mentioned in the following verses (verses 12-13: "Listen to me, you stubborn of heart, you who are far from deliverance: I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off, and my salvation will not tarry; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory").

Also in Isa. 44: 28 the purpose of God was already written for Cyrus as the shepherd who would lead Israel back to the sheepfold (the land of their fathers): "...who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall carry out all my purpose'; and who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be rebuilt', and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

2) The Hellenistic period (333-167 BC):

Dominion of the Ptolemies on Palestine (323-198 BC)

Dominion of the Seleucids on Palestine (198-167 BC)

In 333 BC the Persian armies concentrated in Macedonia under the command of Darius III were defeated by Alexander the Great (356-323 BC). For him, with no doubt, the Greek culture was the only force to congregate the world. He allowed the Jews to keep their laws and even assured them the exemption of taxes and levies in the sabbatical year. When in 323 BC, Alexander died at 33 years old his empire began to fall and was divided among his generals. Two of them remained with the eastern part: 1) Talmi (Aramaic name of **Ptolemy I Soter**, who lived between 366 and 283 BC; in Greek, Πτολεμαῖος Σωτήρ, 'Ptolemaĩos Sōtér' – 'Ptolemy Savior'), founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty (in 323 BC), received Egypt as his part in the administrative government of Alexander's successors, establishing its capital in Alexandria. 2) Salvacus (To Hebrew historians, Salvacus is the name of **Seleucus I or Seleucus I Nicator**, in Greek, Σέλευκος Νικάτωρ; Nikátōr, 'the victor', founder of the Seleucid dynasty), ruled over the region of Western and Eastern Turkey (called Anatolia in

ancient times), Syria, Iraq, Iran, Persia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of India; and then, the Seleucid Dynasty extended its dominion over Lebanon and Israel. The other two generals of Alexander the Great who stayed with the western part of his empire were **Cassander** of Macedonia (350-297 BC) and **Philip Lysimachus** (360-281 BC). Thus, Israel submitted several times to pagan rulers. During the first hundred years, it stood under Egyptian rule, and in the end of the second century BC it went to Seleucid rule, against which the Jews would undertake a riot. While Israel was under the control of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Jews were permitted to live according to their faith. The king himself considered the Torah (Book of the Law of Moses) a cultural heritage and forced 72 Jewish sages (around 250 BC) to translate it into Greek (Septuagint or Version of the Seventy, LXX). During this phase of the Ptolemaic period the Pharisees, Sadducees and **Essenes** emerged in Israel.

The **Sadducees** were a sect of Judaism of the Second Temple that flourished from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD, which some scholars claim to be descendants of Zadok (Hebrew: Tsadoq, צדוק, which means 'righteous') a priest, descendant from Eleazar son of Aaron (1 Chr. 6: 4-8). He officiated as a priest in the time of David and Solomon. The Sadducees' party was regarded as the party of priests and elites (priestly and aristocratic elite). Most of the Sadducees were wealthy and did not need to depend on ordinary secular work to survive. They fulfilled various political, social and religious functions, among which were the sacrifices and the administration of the Temple funds. They disagreed with the Pharisees on the question of the oral law, which they did not accept, denied the resurrection, angels and spirits (Acts 23: 8). They lasted some time after 70 AD, when the temple and city of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Romans, but they left their mark on all anti-rabbinical tendencies of the early centuries CE and medieval times. The Sadducees were initially partisans of Hellenism, while the Pharisees were of the orthodox faction.

The Essenes were a mystical-religious movement (without political orientation) that rejected the high priests appointed by the Seleucids or the Hasmoneans, considering them illegitimate. The name 'Essene' (in Greek: essaioi; in Syriac: essaya or essenoi; in Aramaic: chasajja; and in Latin: essenii) means 'pious.' Their doctrine was based on the renunciation of pleasures of the flesh in order to achieve spiritual holiness.



Qumran ruins

They lived in Qumran (or Khirbet Qumran, current name of the archaeological site, which in Hebrew means ‘ruin of the gray stain’), which was a place located in the region of Transjordan (West Bank), northwest of the Dead Sea, twelve kilometers from Jericho and twenty-two kilometers from Jerusalem. The colony of Qumran was known as ‘stronghold of the pious’, and held 200 to 300 people. It was abandoned in 31 BC, after a fire and an earthquake, but it was reconstructed and remained till the first century AD, when in 68 AD the Romans destroyed it. The name ‘Qumran’ is modern; it is derived from the Arabic ‘qamar’, meaning ‘moon.’ The name of the site in the period of the Second Temple was probably, Secacah, meaning ‘city of salt.’ Today, Qumran is summed up only in ruins.

The Essenes were too concerned about the cleanliness of the body (they washed themselves constantly) as a symbol of purification of the soul. They made vow of Naziriteship (consecration to God, not cutting the hair, not drinking wine or any product derived from grape and not touching a corpse), so they were called Nazirites (as Samson, John the Baptist and Samuel). In the case of temporary vow, the hair of the Nazirite was shaved and burned at the end of consecration period. The Essenes kept the name of God (the sacred Tetragrammaton – YHWH) given to Moses at Sinai, unlike other Jews (mostly Pharisees and Sadducees) who were forbidden pronounce it.



Location of Qumran

They believed that man was the tabernacle of God on earth, not built by human hands, and also waited for the Messiah. Some of the early Christians were Essenes, for some of them had converted to Jesus by accepting Him as the Son of God and Messiah.

This understanding (‘man was the tabernacle of God on earth’) was also shared by the **Pharisees** (‘separatists’), members of the community of scribes and sages. They

were considered separatists for rejecting Hellenistic culture or for opposing the Hasmonean monopoly on power. During the Hasmonean period, the Sadducees and Pharisees functioned primarily as political parties. The Pharisees (from the Hebrew פרושים) were a group of devotees of the Torah, who emerged almost simultaneously with the other two in the 2nd century BC. (they arose around 150 BC, during the period of Jonathan Maccabeus as High Priest of Israel – 153 to 143 BC). They were the creators of the institution of the synagogue. Pharisee means ‘separated’, ‘holy’. The name, in Latin, is Pharisaeus; which comes from the ancient Greek, Φαρισαίος (Pharisaios), and from the Hebrew, prushim or perushim, which comes from the root parash, which means ‘to separate’, ‘to move away’, as it was a Jewish religious party characterized by its opposition to the other religious groups of its time and by the exaggeratedly rigorous observance of the legal prescriptions of the Torah and the traditions that they had established. The Pharisees probably had their origin in the ‘Hassidim’ (the pious), who supported the Maccabean revolt (167-160 BC). But not everyone was satisfied with Hasmonean rule, for they combined the office of king with that of high priest of the Temple in Jerusalem. A king of Israel was to be a descendant of David from the tribe of Judah. And the high priest was to be a descendant of Zadok, the high priest during Solomon’s reign. The Hasmoneans, however, could claim neither of these lineages. Most of the Pharisees were not of the priestly class and therefore did not depend exclusively on the Temple for their living. They were generally middle-class people who worked in various professions, such as merchants, artisans, and farmers. Some Pharisees were wealthy, but most were middle class and lived off their work.



Alexander the Great

3) The Hasmonean period (167-63 BC):

In the beginning of this period of History, Jews were submitted to a very heavy yoke. In 167 BC, the Seleucid king, King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, conquered Jerusalem, which became permanently controlled by soldiers. The Ptolemies had been

tolerant with the Jews, allowing their religious practices, but the Seleucids (in the person of King Antiochus IV) struggled to foist them Hellenism (Greek culture), introducing the destruction of copies of the Scriptures as law and forbidding the Jewish worship: the observance of the Sabbath, dietary prohibitions and even the circumcision. Antiochus IV sent a large army against Jerusalem and took it by a sudden attack; he killed 40,000 people. Some historians report that in addition to looting the temple and killing the 40,000 people mentioned above, the mothers who were circumcising their babies were killed along with their families; sold many Jews as slaves; installed the statue of Zeus in the temple to be worshiped; committed sacrilege by killing a pig (unclean animal) on the altar and then its blood was sprinkled on the temple. He broke into the Holy of Holies and plundered the golden vessels and other utensils of the temple, equivalent to a thousand talents; he also interfered in the choice of the high priest and the governor of Judah, and this way, with the introduction of Hellenism in Judea, he finished with the sacrifices made in the temple of Jerusalem. The sacrilege of killing a pig (unclean animal) on the altar was mentioned by Jesus: “So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand)” (Matt. 24: 15; Mk. 13: 14, taken from Dan. 9: 27; Dan. 11: 31; Dan. 12: 11).

The oppressed Jews revolted under the leadership of Judas Maccabee (Judas ben Mattathias). His family name was Hamon, therefore, they were known as Hasmonean, and lived in a village called Modiin (in Hebrew: מודיעין), about twenty miles west of Jerusalem and twenty-two miles southeast of Tel Aviv, at the site known today as Modi'in-Maccabim-Reut. The leader was Mattathias, father of five children: John (1st), Simon (2nd) Judas Maccabee (3rd, Judas ben Mattathias), Eleazar (4th), and Jonathan (5th). Mattathias was a priest, but not a high priest; there is no evidence whatsoever of his belonging to the lineage of Aaron as rabbinical sources attempt to link him to the priestly tribe of Jojarib (1 Chr. 24:7). The Hasmoneans combined the office of king with that of high priest of the Temple in Jerusalem. A king of Israel was to be held by a descendant of David from the tribe of Judah. And the high priest was to be a descendant of Zadok, the high priest during Solomon's reign. The Hasmoneans, however, could claim neither of these lines.

In the book of 1 Maccabees 2: 2–5, the sons of Mattathias had double names (one Greek and one Hebrew): John Gaddis; Simon Thassi; Judas Maccabeus (or Judas Maccabee); Eleazar Avaran e Jonathan Apphus). Some names may have been given by Mattathias; others were given later by the people.

Although Gaddi is a name that appears in the Bible in Num. 13: 11 as the name of one of the ten spies sent by Moses, by the tribe of Manasseh, the nickname ‘Gaddi’ for John Maccabeus can be related to Gad, the 7th son of Jacob, by Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, meaning ‘good luck, fortunate, fortune’, which many relate to the ancient heathen god Gad, which means something like ‘lucky’. Gad was the name of the Semitic god of fortune, usually depicted as a male god but sometimes as a female god, and is attested in ancient records of Aram, Babylon and Arabia. Zilpah lived in Aram, with the family of Laban. Gad is also mentioned in the Bible as a deity in the Book of Isaiah (Isa. 65: 11-12 – some translations simply call him ‘Fortune’, as having been worshipped by a number of Hebrews during the Babylonian captivity. Gad apparently differed from Destiny (the god of destiny. In Hebrew, the word used is Mniy, transliterated as Minni). Destiny is a pagan god, responsible by the fate, and acted through numbers, like a game of chance or a numbers game. A glass containing a mixture of wine and honey was placed for him, especially in Egypt, on the last day of

the year. Still another suggestion was made with the term used for 'grain', 'produce', perhaps suggesting John may have been a farmer.

The name 'Thassi' has a connotation of 'the Wise', a title which can also mean 'the Director', 'the Guide', 'the Man of Counsel', and 'the Zealous'. This name may have been given by Mattathias himself, so much so that when he died he named him as a counselor to his brothers in the revolt.

Macabee means 'hammer' (ha'Makabi). His family became known as the Maccabees. Judas in particular was given this nickname because of his ferocity in battle. But the traditional Jewish explanation is that Maccabee (Hebrew: מַכַּבִּים Makkabi) is an acronym for the verse in Exodus 15: 11: "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?" (KJV) or "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD?" (NIV), which in Hebrew transliterated is: 'M i k amocha ba' elim Y HWH' or miy-khâmokhâh bâ'êlim Yhvh and which was the battle cry of the Maccabees; also as an acronym for 'M attyahu ha K ohen bbY', 'Mattathias the priest of YHWH.' [wikipedia.org].

Eleazar Avaran, also known as Eleazar Maccabeus or Eleazar HaChorani, received this nickname because his father saw in him a Zealot among zealots, like Phinehas (Ps 106: 30-31; Num. 25: 7-8; 11-12). Others say that 'Avaran', in the Alexandrian version of the book of 1 Maccabees, is 'Sauran', which was interpreted as "the Piercer" (in reference to his death) or 'to be white' (referring to his light complexion). In other versions it's written 'Horan', possibly derived from 'Hor' = hole,' similar to 'piercer' [wikipedia.org].

Apphus, according to some sources, is of Syriac origin and relates to the word choppus, which means 'the dissembler', 'the diplomat,' because of his personality (1 Macc. 2: 5) [source: Richard Gottheil, Samuel Krauss; <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8773-jonathan-maccabeus>].

The revolt broke out when a group of Greeks gathered the inhabitants of the village in the square where an altar with idols had been erected. The Greek general demanded that John made offerings there. He, however, refused vehemently and his attitude provoked the revolt, for his father, Matthias, killed a Hellenistic Jew who took a step forward to offer sacrifice to an idol. Modern scholars say that it all started in a civil war between traditionalist Jews and Hellenized Jews in Jerusalem. For this reason Zechariah writes: 'I will cause them, every one, to fall each into the hand of a neighbor, and each into the hand of the king [NIV: their king]; and they shall devastate the earth, and I will deliver no one from their hand' (Zech. 11: 6). What began as a civil war and as a religious rebellion was gradually transformed into a national liberation war, when the kingdom of Syria joined the Hellenistic Jews in their conflict with the traditionalists. Mattathias and his five sons fled to the wilderness of Judah.

Mattathias died at old age (166 BC). Of his sons he appointed Simon as counselor and Judas as general. Judas adopted the strategy of guerrilla, catching the enemy in surprise attacks. Judas wanted to retake Jerusalem to cleanse the temple. But by reaching the holy temple, he found only desolation, ruins, statues and idols everywhere. Finally, the Maccabees drove out the troops of Antiochus IV from Jerusalem. Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 8: 14) was referring to the time that elapsed from the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king, until its purification by Judas Maccabeus. The Maccabean revolt lasted from 167 BC to 160 BC, that is, 2,300 days, or more precisely, 6 years, 3 months and 18 days.

Judas Maccabeus died at the Battle of Elasa in April 160 BC.

Eleazar Avaram died crushed at the Battle of Beth Zechariah in 162 BC, after attacking a war elephant thrusting a spear into its belly, believing that it carried the

Seleucid King Antiochus IV. The dead elephant then collapsed upon Eleazar, killing him as well.

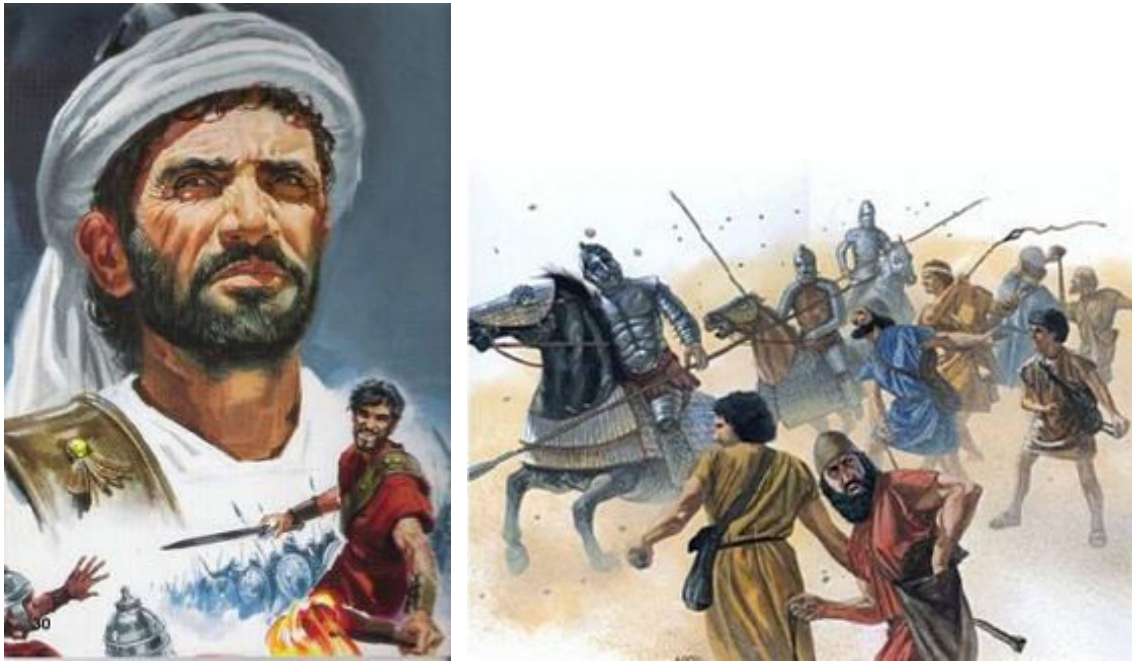
Jonathan Maccabeus (Jonathan Apphus), the brother of Judas Maccabeus, became leader of the Hasmonean rebels in Jerusalem (160-143 BC), succeeding Judas Maccabeus. In 159 he managed to defeat Bacchides, the Seleucid general, who left his trail of destruction and famine in Judea. He and his brothers, Simon Thassi and John Gaddis, and the remaining Maccabees fled to the desert east of the Jordan River. John was killed in 159 BC in Nabataea (southern Moab) by rival tribes from Madaba (a Moabite city). The First Book of Maccabees says that with this 'the sword ceased from Israel', and so nothing is recorded for the next five years (158-153). But during the seven years between the death of the previous high priest, Alcimus (Jakim-Alcimus – 162–160 BC) and Jonathan's appointment as high priest in Jerusalem, it is not known who held that office. There are only hypotheses of a priest descended from Zadok in the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in 1947.

Jonathan Maccabeus served as High Priest of Israel from 153 to 143 BC, appointed by Alexander Balas (a usurper of the Seleucid throne, 150–145 BC). At the Feast of Tabernacles in 153 BC, Jonathan wore the high priestly garments and officiated for the first time. In 147 BC, he was given full control of the territory of Judea after he defeated Demetrius II Nicator, who had sought to seize the throne from Alexander Balas. After Balas' death in 145 BC and the accession of Demetrius II Nicator (145–144 BC) to the Seleucid throne, Jonathan gained a foothold in Samaria, allying himself with Demetrius. Jonathan Apphus was finally captured and killed in 142 BC by the Seleucid king Diodotus Tryphon (142-139 BC), having fallen into his trap of receiving Ptolemais and other fortresses. They were meeting at Baskama, east of the Jordan. The few soldiers of his army who were with him were killed and he remained there until his brother Simon Thassi brought him his two sons as hostages, at the request of Diodotus Tryphon to release Jonathan. But Simon also fell into the trap and Jonathan and his eldest sons were killed. His youngest son became high priest in his place. Rabbinic sources say that one of Apphus' daughters was an ancestor of Flavius Josephus.

Jonathan was succeeded by his other brother, Simon Maccabeus (Simon Thassi, 142-135 BC). He and his two eldest sons, Mattathias and Judah, were murdered in February 135 BC by their son-in-law Ptolemy at a banquet at Dok (a mountain above the city of Jericho).

After the death of his father Simon Maccabaeus, John Hyrcanus I assumed the office of priest and king. However, the Seleucid king Antiochus VII Euergetes or Sidetes (139-129 BC) conquered the Jews after a siege of Jerusalem, and executed their main leaders. In the year 116 BC, two Seleucid rulers started a contention for the throne, and this was a reason for John Hyrcanus I to reaffirm the Jewish independence and bring Samaria and Idumea under the control of Jerusalem. His son, Alexander Jannaeus king of Judaea (103-76 BC), attacked Ptolemais (now called Acre, a city of Galilee, to the north of the Haifa Bay, on the Mediterranean coast located in a promontory near Mount Carmel) and inherited the throne of his brother Aristobulus I (who had died), marrying her sister-in-law Salome Alexandra, through the levirate law. Alexander Jannaeus expanded the Hasmonean kingdom and established the capital in the city of Gamla in 81 BC, where is now the city of Golan.

In 65-64 BC, the Seleucid Empire was annexed to the Roman Republic. Thus, the Hasmonean Period also finished, and the Roman Period began, when Pompey invaded Jerusalem (63 AC). The second temple built by Zerubbabel and restored and fortified by the Hasmonean kings was a so powerful fortress that withstood the siege of Pompey for 3 months.



Judas and the Maccabean Revolt

4) The Roman period (63 BC-476 AD):

In the year 63 BC, the Roman general Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus) or Pompey the Great, conquered Jerusalem, and the provinces of Palestine were subjugated to Roman rule. Pompey was slain in Egypt in 49 BC, and then Gaius Julius Caesar (49-44 BC) rose to power of the Roman Republic and proclaimed himself dictator for life. He was killed and from then on there was a power struggle between Mark Antony (a soldier and a famous Roman politician) and Gaius Julius Caesar Octavian Augustus, great-nephew and successor of Julius Caesar. The Battle of Actium in 31 BC, near Actium in Greece, between Mark Antony and Octavian, was won by the latter and marked the date of the end of the Republic and the beginning of Roman Empire. Caesar Augustus reigned as emperor from 29 BC to 14 AD. The government of each region, part of the time, stayed in charge of princes, and in the rest, under the responsibility of procurators appointed by the emperor. Augustus appointed Herod the Great, governor of Palestine at the time of Christ's birth.

Since then, many emperors followed until the fall of the Roman Empire. In general, the term fall of the Roman Empire refers to the end of the Western Roman Empire, occurred in 476 AD, with the taking of Rome by the Heruli, since the Eastern Empire, which later, the historians denominated the Byzantine Empire, continued to exist for nearly a thousand years, until 1453, when the Fall of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks occurred. The fall of the Western Roman Empire was caused by a series of factors, including the barbarian invasions that led to the final overthrow of the State. Heruli were a Germanic tribe, possibly originating from southern Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden and Norway) and invaded the Roman Empire in the third century. The Heruli with the Goths participated in several expeditions, looting the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea.



Hasmonean Kingdom

As for the Roman Emperors, the subject continues in the volumes 2 and 3 of this book:

<https://www.searaagape.com.br/godispresentinhistory2.pdf>

<https://www.searaagape.com.br/godispresentinhistory3.pdf>

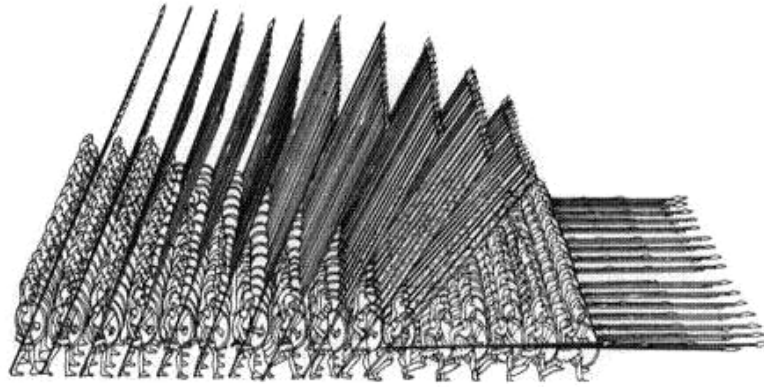
Part 2 - Intertestamental period - Seleucids and Ptolemies

Here, the greater focus will be given to the Hellenistic period, in a more detailed study about the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings, because everything that happened in this period of History was revealed to the prophet Daniel (Dan. 11: 1-45). Besides the kings of the North and South (Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties), we will also talk about the other two generals of Alexander the Great, who inherited the western part of the empire after his death. Although it may seem that we are watching a class of General History, it is important to remember the presence of God in the story of humankind, moving kingdoms and nations according to His will, and how much He desires to reveal His plans to the true prophets, so we can hear His voice and see ourselves through the lives of these characters and learn from them not to repeat the same mistakes.

In 333 BC the Persian armies concentrated in Macedonia under the command of Darius III were defeated by Alexander the Great (356-323 BC). When in 323 BC, Alexander died at 33 years old his empire began to fall and was divided among his generals. Two of them remained with the eastern part: **1) Talmai** (Aramaic name of **Ptolemy I Soter**, who lived between 366 and 283 BC; in Greek, Πτολεμαῖος Σωτήρ, 'Ptolemaíos Sōtér' – 'Ptolemy Savior'), founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty (in 323 BC), received Egypt as his part in the administrative government of Alexander's successors, establishing its capital in Alexandria. **2) Salvacus** (To Hebrew historians, Salvacus is the name of **Seleucus I or Seleucus I Nicator**, in Greek, Σέλευκος Νικάτωρ; Nikátōr, 'the victor', founder of the Seleucid dynasty), ruled over the region of Western and Eastern Turkey (called Anatolia in Ancient times), Syria, Iraq, Iran, Persia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of India; and then, the Seleucid Dynasty extended its dominion over Lebanon and Israel around 168 BC. The other two generals of Alexander the Great who stayed with the western part of his empire were **Cassander of Macedonia** (350-297 BC) and **Philip Lysimachus** (360-281 BC).

Macedonian phalanxes – the formation of Alexander's army, with soldiers very close to each other and spears arranged in a way that hindered the passage of the enemy through the Greek soldiers. Who did not die in the first line of spears died probably in the others. This type of battle formation made Alexander's army practically invincible. The Romans copied the same strategy of battle formation for their infantry legions.





In first place, it's interesting to take a look in the extension of the Persian Empire left by Darius III and the extension of the Empire conquered by Alexander the Great.

Alexander's empire was a little smaller than the Persian. It was the second greatest empire of Ancient times.



Alexander the Great

When Alexander died at 33 years old (323 BC), before his empire was divided among his four generals, there was a first division between them and a great Macedonian nobleman, General and satrap called Antigonos I Monophthalmus (382-301 BC), who served at the court of Alexander and his father, Philip II, and who became the lord of all Asia Minor, establishing the Antigonid dynasty. He reigned for 5 years (306-301 BC), controlling Macedonia and Greece, and lived until 80-81 years old. Thus, from a trusted commander and general, he became king and successor. He was called Monophthalmus (the one-eyed) because he had only one eye; the other one was lost in the battlefield. He was attacked by the other Diadochi, and was too feared by all of them. After his death (in the fourth coalition of Diadochi), the empire was finally divided among the four generals of Alexander.

The Diadochi (Greek Διάδοχοι, Diadokhoi, 'successors') also called epigones (Greek: Επίγονοι, transliterated as Epígonoi, 'children'), in the story of Hellenism, were the successors of Alexander the Great. The Wars of the Diadochi happened after the death of Alexander, and the prophet Daniel speaks of them in his book (Dan. 11: 1-35), when referring to the Seleucid king Antiochus IV who committed sacrilege by killing a pig (unclean animal) on the altar of the temple in Jerusalem. Although, from v. 35 onward, the revelations relate more to apocalyptic times (the Antichrist – vs. 36-39), we can still find in these verses the similarities with the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

If you want to understand better the genealogy of the two dynasties (Seleucids and Ptolemies), download the attachment (PDF):
https://www.searaagape.com.br/genealogy_kings seleucidsandptolemies.pdf



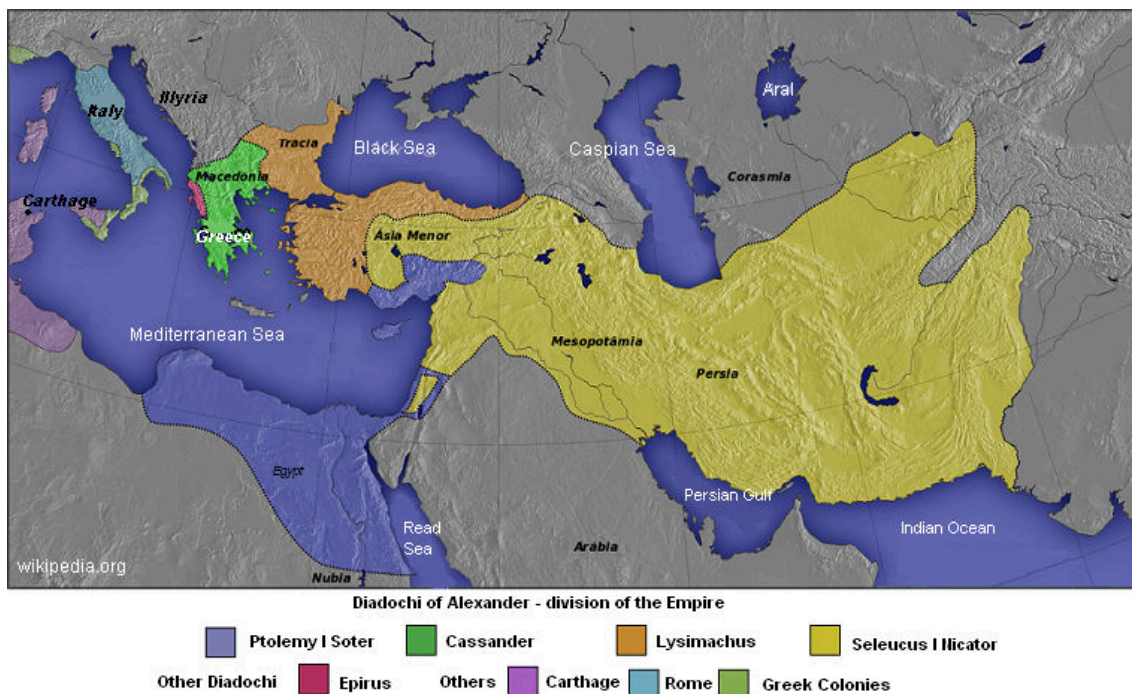
Cassander (350-297 BC) inherited Macedonia (Greece). Cassander was the son of Antipater, one of Alexander's generals and of his father Philip II of Macedonia. There is nothing very interesting to be said about Cassander, except the coalitions that made with the other generals (Diadochi) of Alexander to take the empire from the hands of Antigonus I Monophthalmus. Another factor of interest in Cassander's life was a series of murders he carried out, including Alexander's mother (Olympia) and his son by his wife Roxanne, Alexander IV (at 13 years old – 311 BC). Cassander married Thessalonica of Macedonia and had three children: Philip IV of Macedonia, Antipater II of Macedonia and Alexander V of Macedonia. Cassander died of tuberculosis in 297 or 296 BC in Macedonia. His eldest son and successor Philip IV of Macedonia also died of the same disease four months later.

General **Philip Lysimachus** (360-281 BC) became one of the four Alexander's diadochi. In 315 BC, Philip Lysimachus joined with Cassander, Ptolemy, and Seleucus against Antigonus I Monophthalmus. In this first alliance between the four generals against him, he emerged unscathed. Lysimachus continued to fight his wars to increase his territory. In 306 BC Lysimachus became king of Asia Minor, Macedonia and Thrace (the region between the Black Sea and Macedonia), and reigned for twenty years. In 302 BC, Lysimachus made the second alliance between Cassander, Ptolemy and Seleucus, and with the reinforcing troops of Cassander, he entered Asia Minor. But Antigonus approached, so he retreated to a residence near the city of Heraclea Pontica (on the Black Sea coast, in Turkey), marrying the widow queen Amestris, a Persian princess, niece of Darius III. In 301 BC, the four Diadochi got together for the fourth time against Antigonus Monophthalmus at the battle of Ipsus, near the town of the same name, in Phrygia – name of the old Midwest region in ancient Asia Minor (Anatolia), in modern Turkey. At the time, Cassander ruled Macedonia, Lysimachus was governor of Thrace, Seleucus I Nicator was ruler of Babylon and Persia, and Ptolemy, ruler of Egypt. The four Diadochi allies won the battle, Antigonus Monophthalmus was killed, and his son Demetrius I Poliorcetes escaped, fleeing to Ephesus (Poliorcetes means, 'the besieger' [of cities]).

So Ptolemy gained Egypt; Seleucus, most of the lands of Antigonus in eastern Asia Minor, and Lysimachus received the rest of Asia Minor. Seeing that Seleucus was

stronger, Lysimachus allied with Ptolemy I Soter, divorced Amestris, and married the daughter of Ptolemy, Arsinoe II of Egypt (316-270 BC), who became Queen of Thrace and then, co-ruler of Egypt with her brother and husband, Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Amestris returned to Heraclea and then was murdered in 306 BC by her two sons (Clearchus II and Oxyathres, sons from her previous marriage to Dionysius, tyrant of Heraclea) who, in turn, were convicted by Lysimachus. She also had by him (Dionysius) a daughter named Amestris. Arsinoe II asked him the residence in Heraclea and, in 284 BC, conspired against the eldest son of Lysimachus (Agathocles) so that her children were heirs to the throne. She did this with the help of her brother Ptolemy Keraunos. They made use of lie, accusing Agathocles of conspiring with Seleucus to take his father's throne. This one condemned his own son, which caused indignation in many cities of Asia Minor, which rebelled. His trusted friends left him. Then, yes, her widowed daughter-in-law fled to Seleucus, who in turn invaded the territories of Lysimachus in Asia. Almost at the same time, Demetrius I Poliorcetes, who was out of Greece, came back with hostilities against Lysimachus, but after seeing his towns invaded in Asia Minor he made a peace agreement with the general, staying as ruler of Macedonia. Shortly after, the wars between them returned, but Lysimachus won again, taking possession of the territory. In 281 BC, Lysimachus entered Lydia, and in the decisive Battle of Corupedium he was killed by Seleucus, who also defeated Cassander and died shortly after his enemies. Lysimachus' body was guarded by a loyal dog for a few days, and after this it was found on the battlefield, was handed over to his son Alexander, who buried him in Lysimachia. Alexander was his only child by Amestris.

The four major divisions of Alexander Empire after the battle of Ipsus:



The eastern part: 1) Ptolemy I Soter, founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty (in 323 BC), got Egypt, establishing its capital in Alexandria. 2) Seleucus I or Seleucus I Nicator, founder of the Seleucid dynasty), ruled over the region of Western and Eastern Turkey (Anatolia), Syria, Iraq, Iran, Persia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of India;

and then, Lebanon and Israel. **The western part** of his empire was divided between Cassander (350-297 BC), who received Macedonia (Greece), and Philip Lysimachus (360-281 BC), who received the rest of Asia Minor and Thrace.

Now, let's concentrate in the main **Dynasties: Ptolemaic and Seleucid**.

Ptolemaic Dynasty:



Ptolemy I Soter

Ptolemy I Soter, who lived between 366 and 283 BC, was the founder of Ptolemaic dynasty (in 323 BC). From 323 to 305 BC, he was satrap; from 305 to 285 BC, he was king. Then, he abdicated, and died in 283 BC. Ptolemy I Soter was the son of Arsinoe of Macedonia. History refers to his father as Lagus, who was a Macedonian, hence the name Lagids or Lagidae, also given to the dynasty he founded. But the Macedonians of the second century AD said that his real father was Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, because Ptolemy I Soter was born shortly after the marriage of his mother with Lagus. Ptolemy I Soter received Egypt, establishing its capital in Alexandria. He always concerned to keep Egypt safe because of the wars of Diadochi, also exercising a strict control over the region of Cyprus, Cyrene, Syria and Judea. In 308 BC he took possession of Corinth, Sicyon (old town at the south of Greece in the Peloponnese peninsula) and Megara (an agricultural town to the north of the Isthmus of Corinth). But in 306 BC, during a battle against Demetrius I, son of Antigonos I Monophthalmus, Ptolemy I definitely lost Cyprus. He had already lost Syria to Antigonos, but came to conquer it back for the fourth time in 301 BC, after the death of his enemy in the battle of Ipsus. However, other members of the coalition ascribed Syria to Seleucus. So, for about a century, the issue of possession of southern Syria (Israel) caused a constant conflict between the Ptolemaic dynasty and the Seleucids. In 285 BC, Ptolemy I Soter abdicated in favor of the son of Berenice I, Ptolemy II Philadelphus. He died in 283 BC at the age of 84 years and was the founder of Museum and Library of Alexandria, encouraging the permanence of Greek sages in the city where they chose to stay.

He had three wives and children by them:

1) By Eurydice (whom he married in 321 BC): Ptolemy Keraunos, Meleager of Macedonia, Argaeus, Lysandra and Ptolemais. Eurydice was the daughter of Antipater a Macedonian general who strongly supported King Philip II of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great. In 320 BC, he became regent of Alexander's entire empire. Eurydice was sister of Cassander.

2) By Berenice I (whom he married in 316 BC): Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 BC), Arsinoe II and Philotera. Berenice I was his concubine and also Eurydice's cousin. Later, she became his main wife and future queen. He adopted the children of Berenice I of her first marriage (with a nobleman named Philip): Magas of Cyrene, Antigone and possibly Theoxena, as princes of the royal house of Macedonia.

3) By Thaïs: Lagus, Leonticus and Eirene, the Greek form of Irene (no Historical report is found about them; only that Thaïs of Athens was a courtesan).

Through his daughters, Ptolemy I Soter held many diplomatic weddings, sealing strong and important alliances with the main successor leaders of Alexander and other kingdoms in the Hellenistic period, and ensuring the kingship of his direct descendants in the major kingdoms of the Hellenistic world in the following centuries:

1) Irene (Eirene) married the king of Cyprus.

2) Antigone, the daughter of the first marriage of Berenice I, married the king of Epirus.

3) Theoxena, another daughter of Berenice I, married the king of Syracuse.

4) Lysandra, daughter of Eurydice, married first King Alexander V of Macedon, son of Cassander, but on his death in less than a year, she married Agathocles, son of Lysimachus, and had several children with him. When Agathocles was killed by his own father, accused of treason as we saw above, Lysandra fled with her children to the court of Seleucus I Nicator in Babylon.

5) Ptolemais married Demetrius I, nicknamed Poliorcetes (meaning 'he who besieges cities' or 'the besieger of cities'), son of Antigonus I Monophthalmus, around 287-286 BC. Her husband died shortly after the birth of her only son, whom she named Demetrius 'the fair' or 'the handsome', heir to the Macedonian throne and future king of Cyrene (now a region in the eastern coast of Libya). Demetrius the handsome had two wives: Olympias of Larisa (bore him a son who became king of Macedonia) and Queen Berenice of Cyrene, who would become Berenice II of Egypt. Demetrius the handsome was assassinated by Berenice at being caught in bed with his mother-in-law.

6) Arsinoe II of Egypt was married three times: at sixteen years old, to Lysimachus of Thrace and had three children: Ptolemy of Telmessus (or Ptolemy Epigonos or Epigones), Lysimachus and Philip. The last two would be killed later by their uncle Ptolemy Keraunos (Arsinoe's half-brother), in the so-called massacre of Cassandrea or Kassandrea, a city in Macedonia where she reigned. Ptolemy Keraunos ruled over Macedonia and Thrace, and the death of Lysimachus and Philip occurred when Arsinoe II was marrying him. According to historians, the third son, Ptolemy of Telmessus, who had advised the mother not to marry, managed to escape to Illyria. Arsinoe II fled to Alexandria in Egypt, where she married her brother, Ptolemy II Philadelphus. She did not have children with him.

7) Philotera, daughter of Berenice I and Ptolemy I Soter, was the only daughter who did not marry.

Ptolemy II Philadelphus, son of Ptolemy I Soter and Berenice I, reigned between 285 and 246 BC. He married two women named Arsinoe: Arsinoe I (daughter of Lysimachus) and Arsinoe II (his sister). In fact, Ptolemy II Philadelphus has never been heir to the Ptolemaic throne. Being the youngest son of Pharaoh, he was on the last step of the line of succession, while the first would be occupied by his half-brother Ptolemy Keraunos (son of Ptolemy Soter and Eurydice). But this one was rejected as successor by his father and became king of Macedonia in 281 BC, dying in the following year during a Gaulish invasion. His other brother, Meleager, succeeded him in the Macedonian throne for a short period. With Arsinoe I (daughter of Lysimachus)

Ptolemy II Philadelphus had three children: Ptolemy III Euergetes, Lysimachus and Berenice Syra (Berenice Phernophorus, meaning ‘Dowry Bearer’). By Arsinoe II (his sister), Ptolemy II Philadelphus had no children.

This king appealed to the High Priest in Jerusalem to have a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for his royal library. The priest sent him seventy-two elders to Alexandria with an official copy of the Law. There, in seventy-two days, they made a translation that was read before the Jewish community presented to the king. Because of the number of translators, this translation became known as Septuagint (LXX). That was the original Septuagint. The Septuagint was written in Koine Greek (‘common’ or ‘common dialect’, i.e., popular Greek).

Ptolemy III Euergetes was the successor of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (son of his wife Arsinoe I – the daughter of Lysimachus). He ruled Egypt between 246 and 221 BC. He also took Cilicia and conquered all the lands till the river Euphrates (Third Syrian War or Laodicean War). The Egyptian king continued the domestic policy of his father, colonizing Fayoum, a city in Middle Egypt located 130 kilometers southwest of Cairo. He also ordered the construction of Horus’ Temple (237 BC) and the recovery of statues brought out of Egypt during the Persian domination period. As a result of this achievement Ptolemy was named Euergetes, meaning ‘Benefactor.’ During his reign there were two important events between Ptolemy III Euergetes and Syria: 1) He invaded Syria after an incident with his sister Berenice Syra and his son (we will see this later), in the government of his contemporary, the Seleucid king, Antiochus II Theos (261-246 BC). 2) Two brothers and Seleucid kings (Seleucus II Callinicus and Antiochus Hierax) fought each other, and Antiochus Hierax sought refuge with Ptolemy III Euergetes; he was arrested and escaped but was killed by robbers while fleeing. Ptolemy III married Berenice II (daughter of Magas of Cyrene) and had three children: Ptolemy IV Philopator, Arsinoe III and Magas. He was succeeded by his son, Ptolemy IV.



Ptolemaic army

Ptolemy IV Philopator (244-205 BC): was the successor of Ptolemy III Euergetes after 221 BC. During his reign the Ptolemaic dynasty began to decline, and consequently Egypt. He killed his father and his mother, earning the nickname Philopator (he who loves his father) ironically. Ptolemy IV also commanded his Chief Minister, Sosibius, to kill his brother Magas (the son of Ptolemy III), and his uncle

Lysimachus. He is portrayed by classical authors as a weak and cruel king, who delivered the affairs of state to his ministers and advisers, as Sosibius. In 219 BC King Antiochus III the Great conquered some coastal cities of Celesyria, threatening the Ptolemaic dominion in this region. Ptolemy and Sosibius reorganized the army, for the first time since the Ptolemaic rule, recruiting the native population of Egypt – Fourth Syrian War (219-216 BC). He confronted again the Seleucid king Antiochus III the Great in 217 BC at the Battle of Raphia (or battle of Gaza), in the south of Palestine, where Egypt prevailed. In 210 BC he married Arsinoe III (his sister), with whom he had a son and successor: Ptolemy V Epiphanes, who came to marry Cleopatra I, daughter of Antiochus III the Great (the Seleucid king) to seal a political agreement. After his death, Sosibius and Agathocles ordered the death of Arsinoe III, who was preparing to rule as regent during the minority of his son. Sosibius and Agathocles (his two ministers) died at the hands of the mob (they were lynched), when people heard about the circumstances of the death of Arsinoe III.

Ptolemy V Epiphanes (210-181 BC) reigned from 205 BC, after the death of his father. Some historians say that he became king at the age of five, with a false testament where Sosibius and Agathocles (his two ministers) were considered his guardians. After their death, Ptolemy V was under the care of Oenante, Agathocles' mother. This confusing situation was exploited by the Seleucid king Antiochus III the Great to attack cities in Celesyria – Fifth Syrian War (202-195 BC). Celesyria or Coele-Syria is the region to the North of Syria, later taken by the Romans and Parthians. By Roman intervention, peace was made through the marriage of Cleopatra I, daughter of Antiochus III the Great, to Ptolemy V.



During the reign of his father a Nubian king of the south of Egypt initiated a separatist movement of his territory from the Ptolemaic empire, but Ptolemy V was able to finish with it. By Cleopatra I, he had three children: Ptolemy VI Philometor (meaning 'he who loves his mother'), Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (or Ptolemy VIII Physcon,

meaning pot-bellied or great belly) and a daughter, Cleopatra II. Ptolemy VI Philometor and Cleopatra II were brothers and married, as it was customary for Pharaohs, for the Ptolemaic kings had adopted many customs of the Pharaohs. There was rivalry between the two brothers Ptolemy VI Philometor and Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II. Ptolemy VI Philometor (or Eupator) was the successor of Ptolemy V Epiphanes.

Ptolemy VI Philometor (reign: 180-145 BC) ruled as co-regent with his mother Cleopatra I (after the death of his father) until her death in 176 BC (the new ruler was six years old at the time). Afterwards he stayed under the tutelage of two advisers of the court, who urged him to invade Celesyria. He married his sister Cleopatra II, more or less, in 175 or 173 BC and had children: Cleopatra III, Cleopatra Thea, Ptolemy Eupator and Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator. In 170 BC Ptolemy VI Philometor wanted to put his brother Ptolemy Physcon (later called Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II) as co-regent, along with his sister and wife Cleopatra II. But that same year, his uncle Antiochus IV Epiphanes invaded Egypt and arrested him (Sixth Syrian War – 170-168 BC). Thus, from 170 to 163 BC the nation was governed by the brother of Ptolemy VI Philometor, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, chosen by the people of Alexandria to be king. In 164 BC Ptolemy VI was expelled from the Egyptian capital Alexandria and took refuge in Rome, who decided to intervene in the dispute between the two brothers, putting Ptolemy VI Philometor as king of Egypt and Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II as king of Cyrenaica (eastern coast of Libya), but this one also required the isle of Cyprus. Ptolemy VI Philometor prevented him from achieving this, but fearing the reaction of Rome he let his brother govern Cyrenaica and gave him a daughter in marriage, Cleopatra Thea. However, she came to marry a usurper of the Seleucid throne, Alexander Balas, whose goal was to kill Ptolemy VI Philometor too, as he had done with the legitimate son of Seleucus IV Philopator: Demetrius I Soter. The legitimate successor of this latter was his son Demetrius II Nicator. Thus, Ptolemy VI Philometor considered invalid the marriage of his daughter with Alexander and gave her to Demetrius II Nicator. Faced with such a troubled situation, the inhabitants of Antioch and the Seleucid army asked Ptolemy VI Philometor to become the new Seleucid king, but he refused the offer.

Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (called Physcon = pot-bellied or great belly; He is also known as Ptolemy VIII Physcon) ruled in two periods (170-163 BC and 145-116 BC). The first period of his reign refers to the period in which his brother and Egyptian king Ptolemy VI Philometor was taken prisoner by his uncle, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. During this time he reigned with his sister and sister-in-law, Cleopatra II. With the death of Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II tried to take the throne marrying Cleopatra II his sister who tried to protect the interests of her child, Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator, appointed regent by his father. In 145 BC, on the day of her marriage to Cleopatra II, Ptolemy VIII killed the nephew (Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator). Later, he repudiated the sister and wife to marry her daughter, his niece Cleopatra III, who gave him two children: Ptolemy IX Soter II and Ptolemy X Alexander I, besides three daughters: Cleopatra IV, Cleopatra Selene I and Tryphaena. While she was the widow of Ptolemy VI Philometor, Cleopatra II was supported both by Jews and by intellectuals of Alexandria, which were persecuted by Ptolemy VIII Ptolemy III Euergetes II. Thus, there was a popularity division between the king and the queen, for some citizens supported Cleopatra II and others, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II. So, in 131 BC, he fled to Cyprus with Cleopatra III, his niece and wife. While he was in exile, he knew that his statues were being destroyed. By envy of Cleopatra II, and as retaliation, he murders the

only child of both (Ptolemy Memphitis – 12 years old at the moment. Some historians say that his identity is not yet proven, or that he and Ptolemy Eupator are the same person), sending the dismembered pieces of the child to the Queen on her birthday. In 127-126 BC, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II managed to conquer Egypt, reconciling with Cleopatra II. The three ruled together from 124 BC until the death of Cleopatra II. Demetrius II Nicator tried to invade Egypt, but Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II resisted him. Cleopatra II, who was the mother of Cleopatra Thea and, therefore, mother-in-law of Demetrius II Nicator had promised him the throne of Egypt. Demetrius II Nicator was defeated in a battle near Damascus and tried to flee to Tyre, but his entry in that place was denied and, trying to escape, he was killed (125 BC). Before he died, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II granted the power to Cleopatra III and the two children he had by her to choose which one would be the king, Ptolemy IX Soter II or Ptolemy X Alexander I. Historical records show that Ptolemy IX Soter II ruled twice (116-107 BC and 88-80 BC). Ptolemy X Alexander I reigned during 107-88 BC. Ptolemy IX Soter II married his two sisters, Cleopatra IV and Cleopatra Selene I and had a daughter (Cleopatra, also called Cleopatra Berenice III), who married his uncle Ptolemy X Alexander I.

Thenceforth, the Ptolemaic rulers were (see table at the end of the text):

Ptolemy IX Soter II (116-107 BC)

Ptolemy X Alexander I (107-88 BC)

Ptolemy IX Soter II (88-80 BC)

Ptolemy XI Alexander II (80 BC)

Ptolemy XII (80-51 BC)

Cleopatra VII (51-30 BC)

Ptolemy XIII (51-47 BC) – co-regency with the sister Cleopatra VII

Intervention of Roman Republic in Egypt – Julius Caesar – 47-46 BC

Ptolemy XIV (47-40 AC) – co-regency with the sister Cleopatra VII

Ptolomeu XV Caesar (Cesarion = little Caesar – 44-30 BC)

End of Roman Republic and beginning of Roman Empire – 31/29 BC

Seleucid Dynasty:



Seleucus I Nicator (358-281 BC)

Seleucus I or Seleucus I Nicator (Ancient Greek: Nikátōr, ‘the victor’), founder of the Seleucid dynasty, ruled over the region of Western and Eastern Turkey (called

Anatolia in Ancient times), Syria, Iraq, Iran, Persia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of India; then, the Seleucid Dynasty extended its dominion over Lebanon and Israel around 168-166 BC. Seleucus I settled in Babylon in 312 BC, the year that usually sets the date of the foundation of Seleucid Empire. He ruled, as satrap (from 323 BC), not only Babylon but also the colossal eastern part of Alexander's empire. In the northern part of Syria he founded the city of Antioch (Antioch of Syria), in honor of his father Antiochus (a great general during the rule of Philip II of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great). Seleucus I was only child. His mother's name was Laodice. Seleucus I was born in 358 BC and died assassinated in 281 BC by Ptolemy Keraunos as soon as he reached the European continent. His reign goes from 323 to 281 BC (323-305 BC as satrap and 305-281 BC as king). He was succeeded by his son Antiochus I Soter (281-261 BC).

Since the government of Philip II of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great), four major cities were founded in Asia, with the participation of Antiochus (a general of his army; the father of Seleucus Nicator) and Seleucus I Nicator: Antioch in Turkey; Seleucia ('Seleucia Pieria' – founded by Seleucus I Nicator to the north of mouth of the Orontes river in Syria); Apamea (city of Syria 50 kilometers from the Orontes river, founded by Seleucus I Nicator in honor of his wife Apama); and Laodicea, most likely referring to the city of Laodicea of Lycus (the river Lycus), a city of Phrygia and Lydia in Asia Minor 60 km east of Ephesus. Before, the city was called Diospole (Diospolis, the city of Zeus) and Rhodas, but when it was reconstructed it received this name in honor of Laodice, wife of Antiochus II Theos (in fact, it was him who rebuilt it, around 261-253 BC), the grandson of Seleucus I Nicator. The site currently is deserted, and is called by the Turks Eski-Hissar, 'old castle.'



The ruins of Laodicea

Seleucus I Nicator had two wives: Apama and Stratonice (daughter of Demetrius I Poliorcetes the son of Antigonus). With Apama, he had three children: Apama, Laodice and Antiochus I Soter. Later, after the death of Apama, Seleucus met Stratonice, with whom he had a daughter: Phila.

Seleucus I Nicator was a satrap in the time of Alexander the Great. In Persian, satrap (*khshathrapâvan*) means: 'protector of power [on the territory]' or 'protector of the kingdom', and was the name given to the governors of the provinces, called satrapies in ancient Achaemenid and Sassanid empires of Persia. In other words, satraps were viceroys invested with considerable power, and had their own subjects and territories. Each satrapy was ruled by a satrap, who was appointed by the king. Seleucus I Nicator was moved away from his satrapy in 316 BC by Nicanor, a general of Antigonos I Monophthalmus. In 312 BC, he returned to Babylon, founding the Seleucid dynasty, and in 305 BC he had already managed to put all satrapies of the eastern empire under his rule. His reign reached an area of 3,750,000 square kilometers and a population of 15 million people. Not only Seleucus as all other Diadochi sought alliances with the most privileged classes of these regions (merchants, landowners, priests etc.), for they had riches and prestige and could help them to govern the non-Hellenic populations in peace and with authority, since the immigrants of Greek origin were restricted to only 10% of the population. In the battle of Ipsus (301 BC) described above, where all the Diadochi conspired to overthrow the reign of Antigonos and his son Demetrius I Poliorcetes, Seleucus ended up to set his power in eastern Asia Minor on a great part of the Antigonos' territory, while the other three generals divided the empire of Alexander: Ptolemy won Egypt and Lysimachus received Thrace and the rest of Asia Minor which extended to the River Halys (north of Turkey). Ptolemy claimed no other territorial gain besides Egypt and the recognition of the conquest of the Phoenician port cities. He was also very happy with the end of wars for possession of territories. Cassander, for not having taken the initiative in military confrontation, received very little of the partition, and was content with Macedonia and in taking the part of Greece that Demetrius I Poliorcetes had taken in 307 BC, when he had cast out the ruler of Athens. Seleucus incorporated the rest of Mesopotamia and Syria to his huge territory, gaining the Mediterranean portion of Syrian territory (already conquered by Antiochus his father), which was important commercial region and had a numerous population.

As it was said about Lysimachus, seeing that Seleucus was stronger he allied with Ptolemy I Soter, divorced Amestris and married the daughter of Ptolemy, Arsinoe II of Egypt around 300-299 BC. But here there was also an interest on the part of Ptolemy. So, he made this agreement with Lysimachus through the marriage of his daughter. He wanted to defeat the navy of Demetrius in Cyprus (once he feared the taking of the Phoenician possessions by Seleucus) and conquer the Aegean cities in order to master them.

Thus, Seleucus I Nicator, isolated and flanked by enemies, appealed to his former enemy Demetrius I Poliorcetes and took her daughter, Stratonice as wife (298 BC), performing the wedding on a large ship built by Demetrius to consolidate the covenant of his navy with the Seleucid empire. But later (about 296 BC), seeing the expansion of naval power of Demetrius in the Aegean Sea, Seleucus came back to unite with Lysimachus to expel Demetrius from Cilicia, who ended up retreating to Cyprus. With the death of Cassander, his two teenage children (Antipater II and Alexander V) stayed with the domain of Macedonia, dividing it into two administrative regions. This weakened it and gave way to Demetrius who, with the help of enemies, entered Athens in 295 BC and took it. In the years that followed, Demetrius started showing his ambition openly, what caused many wars for the control of Macedonia and Greece, especially on Corinth and Athens, with the participation of the other Diadochi and Pyrrhus, king of Epirus. After many unexpected defeats and many humiliations, Demetrius I Poliorcetes abdicated in favor of his son Antigonos II Gonatas and died of disease. Antigonos Gonatas was nicknamed Gonatas due to have been born (319 BC)

and raised in Gonnoi in Thessaly (a region bordering Macedonia, Epirus, Central Greece and the Aegean Sea), unless Gonatas is derived from the name of an iron plate (Gonu) protecting the genitals (In Ancient Greek, gonatos). Antigonus II Gonatas died at eighty-three years old and was succeeded by his son Demetrius (the same name as his deceased grandfather). Seleucus I Nicator killed Lysimachus in the battle of Corupedium, and at the end of his life he wanted to take possession of Macedonia and Thrace, but on the way he was assassinated by Ptolemy Keraunos, near Lysimachia (modern Greece) in September 281 BC.

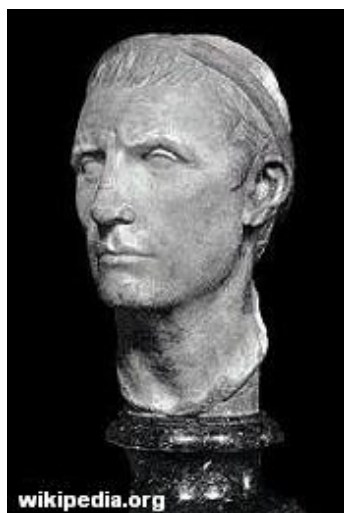
Seleucus I Nicator was succeeded by his son **Antiochus I Soter** (reign: 281-261 BC). Antiochus I Soter was the son of Seleucus I Nicator with his wife Apama. He reigned over the eastern part of the empire (which corresponded to the territory between the Caspian Sea and India) between 292-281 BC, and later (281-261 BC) on its totality. Around 294-293 BC (before his reign) he married the other woman of his father, Stratonice, and had three children: Antiochus II, Stratonice and Apama. After the death of Seleucus I Nicator, he returned to make peace with his father's killer (Ptolemy Keraunos, king of Macedonia and son of Ptolemy I Soter). So he managed to resist the domestic unrest in his kingdom on the part of Syria and the northern Asia Minor. Around 275 BC Antiochus I Soter defeated the Galatians, a nomadic people who came to destroy the cities of Ionia (the region to the southwest of Turkey). For having spared the cities from the destruction of Galatians, he received the title of Soter ('Savior'). He was constantly attacked by his enemy from Ptolemaic dynasty, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, and in 279 BC lost to this one the city of Miletus, in Ionia. Years later, he repelled an Egyptian invasion in the north of Syria (First Syrian War – 274-271 BC), but in later years he lost Phoenicia to the Egyptians (273-272 BC). In turn, Pergamum (in Asia Minor, current Turkey) rebelled against Seleucid dominion in 266-261 BC and fought for its independence, putting the king Eumenes I as their ruler. In the fight against the Galatians in 261 BC, Antiochus I Soter died. Antiochus II came to power after his father's death with the name of Antiochus II Theos.

Antiochus II Theos ('God') reigned in the period of 261-246 BC, rising to power at 26 years old. Antiochus II Theos was the son of Antiochus I Soter and Stratonice. His sisters, Stratonice and Apama married, respectively, Demetrius II of Macedonia (son of Antigonus Gonatas and grandson of Demetrius Poliorcetes) and Magas of Cyrene (son of the first marriage of Berenice I and stepchild of Ptolemy I Soter). Magas was half-brother of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (legitimate son of Berenice I and Ptolemy I Soter) and had a daughter with Apama, also called Berenice. Antiochus II Theos had an older brother named Seleucus, who according to historical sources, died early, probably executed for treason. Antiochus II Theos allied with the king of Macedonia Antigonus Gonatas in the fight against Egypt (Ptolemy II Philadelphus) by the dispute of Syria during the Second Syrian War (260-253 BC). There were six Syrian Wars between the Seleucid Empire and Ptolemaic during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC (274-168 BC) in the region to the north of Syria, called Coele-Syria (or Coele-Syria), later taken by the Romans and Parthians. So Antiochus managed to recover a large part of Asia Minor, including the cities of Ephesus and Miletus, besides to regain the Phoenician coast, lost to Egypt in the reign of his father. In the war in Miletus, for having vanquished the tyrant who ruled there, he came to be known by the people as a god, hence the name 'Theos' added to his birth name.

Antiochus II Theos had Laodice as his first wife, and in homage to her he founded the city of Laodicea. There is no information about her, except that her father was called Achaeus and she had two sons and two daughters with Antiochus II Theos: Seleucus II

Callinicus, Antigonus Hierax (Also known as Antiochus Hierax). The daughters have supposed names: Apama and Laodice. Later, however, intending to make peace with Egypt in the Second Syrian War, he came to marry Berenice Syra, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoe I (daughter of Lysimachus), and sister of Ptolemy III Euergetes and Lysimachus. So Antiochus II Theos divorced Laodice, transferring the succession to the son of Berenice Syra. Laodice was sent into exile in Ephesus, where she continued to foment intrigues in order to recover the crown. In 246 BC, with the death of Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, Antiochus II Theos repudiated Berenice, leaving her alone with her son Antiochus in Antioch, and took Laodice back as wife and queen. Afraid that her husband changed his mind again, Laodice poisoned Antiochus II Theos, and gave Berenice and her son to be killed by two leaders of Antioch. This incident started the Third Syrian War (246-241 BC), against the brother of Berenice Syra (Ptolemy III Euergetes), now the Ptolemaic king. This one returned to invade Syria after the incident with his sister Bernice Syra and with his nephew. Antiochus II Theos died of disease in Ephesus in 246 BC, with the estimated age of 40 year or, according to other sources, poisoned by Laodice. He was succeeded by his son Seleucus II Callinicus (reign: 246-225 BC), appointed by his own mother Laodice. Her other son, Antiochus Hierax, had the nickname 'hawk', because of his ambitious character, and tried to reign over some territories, but after a war against his brother this one sought refuge with Ptolemy III. He was arrested and escaped but was killed by robbers while fleeing. There are very little historical information about Seleucus II Callinicus and his reign. Seleucus II Callinicus was succeeded by his son **Seleucus III Keraunos**.

Seleucus III Keraunos (243-223 BC) had the name of Alexander (birth name). His paternal grandparents were Antiochus II Theos and Laodice, parents of Seleucus II Callinicus and Antiochus Hierax. Seleucus III Keraunos had a brother called Antiochus III the Great. Alexander succeeded his father and took the name of Seleucus III Keraunos (Keraunos means 'thunder', because of his troops). After three years of reign (225-223 BC) Seleucus III Keraunos was treacherously attacked and killed in Phrygia. He was succeeded by his brother **Antiochus III**, also called **Antiochus III the Great**, who began to reign in 223 BC.



Antiochus III the Great

Antiochus III, also called Antiochus III the Great lived for 54 years (241-187 BC), and his reign was between 223-187 BC. During the reign of his brother Seleucus III Keraunos, Antiochus III was a satrap of Babylon. He married Laodice, daughter of King Mithridates II of Pontus, forming an alliance with this powerful kingdom. He had three children with Laodice: Seleucus IV Philopator, Cleopatra I and Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The kingdom of Pontus was located in the north of Anatolia (Turkey), in the southeast coast of the Black Sea. It was called the Euxine by Ionians (Greeks) that explored the region and settled it in the period of 1000-800 BC. His goal was to conquer Syria and parts of Palestine, so he fought the Ptolemaic kingdom (Ptolemy IV Philopator) in the Fourth Syrian War (219-216 BC), but was defeated in 217 BC at the Battle of Raphia, near Gaza. There was a new peace agreement with Egypt.



Battle of Raphia

After the death of Ptolemy IV Philopator in 205 BC, Antiochus III the Great and King Philip V of Macedonia made a deal to divide the Ptolemaic empire. Antiochus would get the south of Syria, Lycia, Cilicia and Cyprus, while Philip would get the western part of Asia Minor and the Cyclades (islands in the South Aegean). After defeating Ptolemy IV Philopator in the Battle of Panium (also known as Paneion, or Paneas) near Baniyas (northwestern Syria) in 200 BC, Antiochus III the Great seized Egypt, Palestine and Celesyria. Antiochus assured the Jews the freedom of worship and allowed them to collect taxes for the temple in Jerusalem. His ally Philip V, however, was involved in conflicts with Pergamum and Rhodes, who asked Rome for help. Antiochus (in 198 BC) invaded parts of the kingdom of Pergamum, and in 196 BC, Thrace. This invasion led him to problems with Rome that demanded the withdrawal of Antiochus from Europe, what he refused to do. The situation worsened when Antiochus III the Great received at his court an enemy of Rome defeated in the Second Punic War (218-201 BC), the Carthaginian statesman and general Hannibal (his name means: 'Baal was kind', or 'Grace of Baal', or else, 'Baal is my lord'). Who had defeated him was Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus the Elder, a general and statesman of the Roman Republic (life: 236-183 AC). Punic Wars was a series of three conflicts between the Roman Republic and the Republic of Carthage, a city-state of Phoenicia in the North of Africa (between 264-146 BC), disputing the lordship of the Mediterranean Sea. The

Romans called the Carthaginians ‘Punici’, originated from the name ‘Poenici’, i.e., of Phoenician ancestry.

On the other hand, his former ally Philip V was defeated by the Romans in the Second Macedonian War, for Antiochus III refused to help him. Instead, he decided to attack Egypt again that could not be helped by the Romans. After having achieved the peace with Ptolemy V Epiphanes, the Seleucid kingdom definitely annexed the south of Syria and the Egyptian territories of Asia Minor (Fifth Syrian War – 202-195 BC). The peace with Ptolemy V Epiphanes (reign: 203-181 BC) was achieved through the marriage of the daughter of Antiochus III the Great, Cleopatra I, to the Egyptian king. Cleopatra’s mother was Laodice III. The girl was born in Syria, and in 193 BC in Palestine she married Ptolemy V Epiphanes. This marriage was arranged when Cleopatra I was still a child because Antiochus III the Great was interested in the agreement with Egypt, for he was seeing the rise of Rome. As a wedding dowry he gave to the Egyptian king the region of Celesyria. Later, the son of Antiochus III the Great and younger brother of Cleopatra I, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (‘Illustrious’ or ‘honorable’) went to war against the child of the union between his sister and the Egyptian king, that is, against his nephew Ptolemy VI Philometor, and denied that this agreement had existed (Sixth Syrian War – 170-168 AC). In 191 BC, Antiochus III the Great was defeated by the Romans at Thermopylae (in Greece), abandoning Europe. But he refused to leave the west region of the Taurus (in the mountains of Asia, at southeast of Turkey), being finally defeated in 189 BC at the Battle of Magnesia (on the plains of Lydia, now Turkey). Through the treaty of Apamea, he was obliged to abandon Europe completely and all of Asia west of the Taurus; he should have only twelve war-ships for the purpose of keeping his subjects under control (although he could have more if he was attacked). He was obliged to pay 15 thousand talents to Rome, to give all the elephants he had in the army and to hand over his son Antiochus IV Epiphanes as hostage along with nineteen persons (twenty persons every three years). Some historians say that Antiochus III the Great and several nobles were killed in battle in Susa in 187 BC. Others say he was killed in a temple of Baal, while trying to get part of the money he had to pay to the Romans. His son **Seleucus IV Philopator** reigned in his stead in the period of 187-175 BC.



Taurus Mountains

Seleucus IV Philopator (Greek, ‘who loves his father’), son of Antiochus III the Great, reigned in his stead in the period from 187-175 BC. Although the empire he inherited was not as big as his father’s before the war against Rome (190-189 BC), it was still sizable consisting of Syria (including Cilicia and Palestine), Mesopotamia, Babylon, Persia and Media. His daughter Laodice married Perseus the Macedonian king. In the same year, he sent his son Demetrius I Soter as hostage to Rome; on the other hand, his brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes came back from there. In 175 BC, pressed by financial needs, he gave orders to his commander Heliodorus to collect taxes in the temple of Jerusalem in order to pay the war compensation demanded by Rome, but this one found opposition by the high priest and returned. In the same year, Seleucus IV Philopator was assassinated (poisoned) by Heliodorus. He was 60 years old when he died. As the true heir Demetrius I Soter, son of Seleucus IV Philopator, was being held as hostage in Rome, a child Antiochus, another son of Seleucus IV Philopator, was formally the king for a few years until his younger brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes who had spent 14 years in Rome as a hostage, killed him. In returning from Rome he also killed Heliodorus and took the Seleucid throne (reign: 175-164 BC).

Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215-162 BC) – Antiochus Epiphanes (‘which manifests itself with splendor’ or ‘illustrious’) was the son of Antiochus III the Great and Laodice, and his siblings were: Seleucus IV Philopator and Cleopatra I. He ruled Syria in 175-164 BC and died in 162 BC at 53 years old. After his father’s defeat in 189 BC at the Battle of Magnesia against the Romans, Antiochus IV Epiphanes lived 14 years as an exile in Rome until 175 BC. He got involved in the **Sixth War of Syria** against Egypt (170-168 BC) and its kings, the brothers Ptolemy VI Philometor and Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, conquering the strategic city of Pelusium (it was an ancient city of Lower Egypt, located in the northeast of the Nile delta, on the easternmost mouth of the Nile in a traditional Egyptian territory). He tried a second invasion of Egypt to take Alexandria in 168 BC, but was interrupted by intervention of Rome, who sent the consul Gaius Popillius Laenas to Alexandria. Antiochus IV, who had already taken Cyprus and Memphis, returned to Alexandria, but met with the Roman consul at Eleusis, on the outskirts of the capital. Eleusis was an ancient Greek city, full of mysticism and closely linked to Greek mythology. There, Gaius Popillius Laenas gave him an ultimatum on behalf of the Roman senate for him to leave Cyprus and Egypt immediately. History says that on that day, Popillius took a sugar cane, drew a circle in the sand around Antiochus (who was trying to gain time) and ordered him not to leave it till make a decision. Antiochus chose to obey. The ‘Day of Eleusis’ ended the Sixth Syrian War and to Antiochus’ hopes to conquer Egyptian territory.

After this episode, Antiochus focused his attention in Judea, also trying to take Hellenism there and annex it to Rome. During the reign of his father Antiochus III the Great, it was granted broad religious autonomy to the Jews who were divided into two parties, one ‘pious’ and another that favored hellenization and romanization, the latter being richer and composed of the most important people before society. Antiochus supported the latter party. In 168-167 BC, in the return from the war against Egypt, Antiochus IV Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem, which became permanently controlled by soldiers. In that place, Antiochus IV committed sacrilege by killing a pig (unclean animal) on the altar. He sought to establish Hellenism by force, introducing the destruction of copies of the Scriptures as law and forbidding the Jewish worship: the observance of the Sabbath, dietary prohibitions and even the circumcision. In the Temple of Jerusalem it was installed a statue of the Greek god Zeus (Jupiter to the Romans). This situation (Romanization and Hellenization of Judea) generated

displeasure among the faithful Jews as Mattathias and his sons, John, Simon, Judas Maccabee, Eleazar, and Jonathan (the Hasmonean family, known as Maccabees). They live in a village called Modiin. The revolt, which began with a forced act of idolatry imposed by a Greek general, became a war where Mattathias died in old age (166 BC), and his son Judas Maccabee, was appointed general. The Maccabees drove out the troops of Antiochus IV from Jerusalem. Judas wanted to return to Jerusalem to purify the temple. But by reaching the holy temple, he found only desolation, ruins, statues and idols everywhere. Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 8: 14) was referring to the time that elapsed from the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king, until its purification by Judas Maccabeus. The Maccabean revolt lasted from 167 BC to 160 BC, that is, 2,300 days, or more precisely, 6 years, 3 months and 18 days. Judas Maccabee died and was succeeded by his brother Jonathan, who became high priest in Jerusalem. The Seleucid king reached the end of his reign in the year 164 BC, with a serious illness (it is thought that it was a cancer, with 'no one to help him') and died in 162 BC. It was succeeded by Antiochus V Eupator his son (164-162 BC). For Israel, it had already begun the Hasmonean Period (167-63 BC).

Antiochus V Eupator (173-162 BC) reigned after Antiochus IV Epiphanes (his father), between 164-162 BC. The name Eupator means 'born of good father.' He became king when he was only nine years old (some historians say twelve). He had a sister named Laodice VI. In 163 BC the Romans recognized him as king, in opposition to Demetrius I Soter his cousin, who was living as a hostage in Rome. Lysias, his tutor, became governor of Coele Syria and Phoenicia. In 162 BC Lysias formed an army to attack the Jews, continuing the war of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Accompanied by the king, he came out against Judea and won a victory over the small group of Judas Maccabee in the battle of Beth-Zechariah. However, when Lysias learned of the return of Philip from Persia and Media (he was the official ruler of Antiochus V but he intended to assume the government), he made peace with the Jews and granted them freedom of worship. In 162 BC, Antiochus V Eupator and Lysias were killed by army soldiers who supported Demetrius I Soter, son of Seleucus IV Philopator and had returned from his exile in Rome, claiming the throne of the Seleucid kingdom. After killing the King Antiochus V Eupator (164-162 BC), his cousin (son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes), Demetrius I Soter established himself as king of the Syrian throne (161-150 BC), but could not win the sympathy of the Romans. A usurper of the Seleucid throne (**Alexander Balas**) ended up killing him and rose to power (150-145 BC).

The legitimate successor of Demetrius I Soter was his son **Demetrius II Nicator**. During a new battle between the Seleucid kingdom and the Ptolemaic at Antioch (145 BC), Ptolemy VI Philometor died, Demetrius II Nicator survived and Alexander Balas was also killed, falling from a horse and fracturing his skull (some versions of the story say something else: that Alexander had his head cut off by the Nabataeans when he tried to flee from Ptolemy VI Philometor, for the Nabataeans wanted peace with Egypt). Demetrius II Nicator rose to power (144-125 BC), but soon after, the general Diodotus Tryphon, the guardian of Alexander Balas' son (Antiochus VI Dionysus) entered Antioch, and the boy three years old at the time was crowned the king of Syria (144 BC). Demetrius II Nicator, unable to return to the capital, settled in Seleucia. Two years later, General Diodotus Tryphon deposed Antiochus VI Dionysus and sat on the throne of Syria, as another usurper, reigning between 142 and 139 BC. The dispute for the throne continued between him and Demetrius II Nicator. In 139 BC, however, this one was forced to go to war against the Parthians. Parthia was a kingdom that incorporated Media and Persia. Mithridates I (the king) took Demetrius as prisoner; and the Seleucid

province of Babylon became part of Parthia. In Syria, however, the general Tryphon was overthrown by the brother of Demetrius II Nicator, Antiochus VII Euergetes (or Sidetes), who also married Cleopatra Thea (his sister-in-law) and reigned in the period of 139-129 BC. He was known as Sidetes, in reference to Sida, a city in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), where he was raised. Mithridates I kept Demetrius II Nicator alive, and arranged his marriage to a Parthian princess named Rhodogune, with whom he had children. However, he tried to escape from exile, but failed. He tried again, and was captured. In 129 BC, his brother Antiochus VII Euergetes marched against Parthia. The new king was Phraates II. He defeated Sidetes, who died in an attempt to free his brother from captivity. Demetrius managed to escape and returned to Syria, trying once again to retake the throne. But he was not welcome by the people. The queen of Egypt Cleopatra II also tried to involve him in a plot against his brother Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, preparing an army for him. Unfortunately, with the desertion of the troops of Demetrius, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II put on the throne of Syria another usurper, Alexander II Zabinas (129-125 BC, supposedly the son of Alexander Balas), but who committed suicide with poison, after being defeated by Antiochus VIII Grypus, son of Demetrius II Nicator. Demetrius was defeated in a battle near Damascus, he tried to escape to Ptolemais, which denied his entry by orders of his own wife Cleopatra Thea. So he tried to flee to Tyre, but was killed while trying to escape by boat. He was succeeded by his wife Cleopatra Thea and then by his two sons, Seleucus V Philometor and Antiochus VIII Grypus in co-regency with their mother. She killed Seleucus V Philometor, and after 120 BC with the death of Thea, Antiochus VIII Grypus ruled alone until 96 BC, despite the dispute with his half-brother Antiochus IX Cyzicenus.

The wars continued between the Seleucid kingdom and Ptolemaic until 64 BC, when General Pompey annexed Syria to Roman Republic. The Jewish people suffered too much because of these successive wars, since their territory was used as passing and sometimes also as a battlefield for the two rival armies.

The Seleucid rulers during this troubled period were (see table at the end of the text):

- Cleopatra Thea – 125-120 BC
- Seleucus V Philometor – 125 BC (killed by the mother – Cleopatra Thea)
- Antiochus VIII Philometor (Antiochus VIII Grypus) – 125-96 BC – co-regent with the mother (Cleopatra Thea) till her death in 120 BC
- Antiochus IX Cyzicenus – 155-96 BC – dispute with Antiochus VIII Grypus
- Seleucus VI Epiphanes Nicator – 96-95 BC
- Antiochus X Eusebes Philopator – 95-90 BC
- Demetrius III Eucaerus (or Philopator) – 95-87 BC
- Antiochus XI Epiphanes Philadelphus – 95-92 BC
- Philip I Philadelphus – 95-84 (or 83 BC)
- Antiochus XII Dionysus – 87-84 BC – Antiochus Epiphanes Dionysus (the name minted in coins)
- Tigranes II of Armenia (Tigranes the Great) – intervention – 83-69 BC
- Seleucus VII Kybiosaktes or Philometor – 83-69 BC – reigning only over some cities that supported him.
- Antiochus XIII Asiaticus – 69-64 BC
- Pompey annexes Syria to Roman Republic – 64 BC
- Philip II Philoromaeus ('Friend of the Romans') or Barypous ('Heavy-Foot') – 65-63 BC
- End of Roman Republic and beginning of Roman Empire – 31/29 BC

Punic Wars was a series of three conflicts between the Roman Republic and the Republic of Carthage, a city-state of Phoenicia in the North of Africa (between 264-146 BC), disputing the lordship of the Mediterranean Sea. The Romans called the Carthaginians 'Punici', originated from the name 'Poenici', i.e., of Phoenician ancestry. The Punic Wars during the Roman Republic were restricted to the dominion of Rome on northern Africa, involving the Iberian Peninsula and some islands of the Western Mediterranean. The First Punic War was in 264-241 BC. The second, in 218-202 BC; and the third, in 149-146 BC. In 146 BC there was annexation of the Greek Peninsula and its islands to the Roman Republic. And this also contributed to the end of the Seleucid Empire and Ptolemaic. For Israel it was also the beginning of a new age, with the end of Hasmonean period (167-63 BC) until the final taking of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 BC and the subsequent installation of the Roman Empire (31 BC), which lasted for about 500 years in the West (476 AD), and nearly a thousand years in the East (until 1453), with the fall of the Byzantine Empire.

Syrian Wars:

There were six Syrian Wars between the Seleucid Empire and Ptolemaic during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC (274-168 BC) in the region to the north of Syria, called Coele Syria (or Coele-Syria), later taken by the Romans and Parthians.

1) First Syrian War (274-271 BC) – Antiochus I Soter repelled an Egyptian invasion in the north of Syria by Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

2) Second Syrian War (260-253 BC) – Antiochus II Theos allied with the king of Macedonia Antigonus Gonatas in the fight against Egypt (Ptolemy II Philadelphus) by the dispute of Syria. Intending to make peace with Egypt, he came to marry Berenice Syra, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and sister of Ptolemy III Euergetes.

3) Third Syrian or Laodicean War (246-241 BC) – between Ptolemy III Euergetes and Antiochus II Theos, because of the death of Berenice Syra and his son

4) Fourth Syrian War (219-216 BC) – between Antiochus III the Great and Ptolemy IV Philopator – the first one wanted to regain Syria and parts of Palestine, but was defeated in 217 BC at the Battle of Raphia near Gaza.

5) Fifth Syrian War (202-195 BC) – between Antiochus III the Great and Ptolemy V Epiphanes still young, after the death of his ministers. The peace was achieved by the marriage between Cleopatra I, daughter of Antiochus III the Great, and Ptolemy V Epiphanes.

6) Sixth Syrian War (170-168 BC) – between Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his nephew Ptolemy VI Philometor (son of Cleopatra I and Ptolemy V Epiphanes). Antiochus IV Epiphanes denied any peace agreement between the two kingdoms.

Conclusion and learning with these dynasties:

Regarding our study about the Intertestamental Period, we can say that this was a period of great darkness for humanity, with all peoples living in idolatry and influencing each other not only with distorted religious concepts, but aggravating the sinful moral patterns of many centuries: incest, adultery, futile wars, murders, struggle for the throne, ambition, birth defects and other diseases due to consanguineous marriages and practically among adolescents without full hormonal maturity, a literature fully focused on mysticism and idolatry and immorality; in short, all kinds of perversion that can be found in a human being due to separation from God by disobedience to His voice through the prophets. If Jesus had not been born at that moment determined by God to bring us Salvation and Light, there would be no chance of redemption for the planet.

I found it interesting throughout this study that the wisdom of God and His vision of the whole are beyond our comprehension, moving people and kingdoms according to His will and using prophets like Daniel, who had already received the revelation of what would happen with his people after the Babylonian captivity and in the distant future, like what we are living today.

What was God thinking when He saw all this violence and still looking for some faithful remnants willing to do His will and urge people to turn to Him? What He must feel today, watching the same violence in humanity, but waiting with great patience and mercy that men realize their mistakes and repent? He could wipe out the planet right now, if He wanted to; however, He remains faithful to His own word always giving to men a chance of salvation.

In writing this study I had my mind broadened to realize the power of God. Those characters were there as if within a scenario, playing a role, but totally unaware of what happened to other people, with their enemies in another kingdom or with their own friends living far away or even as prisoners of war. In short: without the vision of the divine plan behind it all. God, however, was watching the planet from outside; or rather, from above, and with total control over the hidden purpose in every heart. We are less than a grain of sand before His eyes, but, as the apostle Paul says (2 Cor. 4: 7-11), having a treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

Other thing that I realized was the force that was used in the conquest of territories by all these empires; how many soldiers died in battle so that the name of a single man was exalted! How much blood was shed! Transporting this to our days, we begin to understand the words of Jesus. His kingdom is greater than all that ever existed, and our enemy is not flesh and blood, but rulers and authorities, the cosmic powers of the darkness, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph 6: 12), and that were also faced by Daniel so he could receive the revelation from God (Dan. 10: 3; 13; 20-21). Therefore, our promises are available to us (Eph. 1: 3), the blood of only ONE (the blood of Jesus) has been poured in place of many, but it's up to us to pay the price for the taking of possession of our land, of our promises (Gal. 3: 8b; 11b), the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. That's why our dreams delay to be a reality. It is because we are in a war for possession of our territory, until we can put in it the mark of our lordship, or rather, the lordship of Jesus on it. The Lord told us to make His kingdom on earth prevail. That is our mission.

Table of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings (Before Christ):

* Ptolemy VII Neos Philometor was killed by his uncle Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II

** Ptolemy XV Philopator Philometor Caesar (47-30 BC), better known as Caesarion (Greek: Kaisariōn, literally 'little Caesar'; Latin: Caesarion) and Ptolemy Caesar, reigned along with his mother (Cleopatra VII) from 44 BC. He only held the position of sole ruler for some days (August 12th, up to August 23rd, 30 BC), after the suicide of Cleopatra, at the time when his death was ordered by Octavian, who would become the Roman emperor Caesar Octavian Augustus. Cleopatra VII was sister and wife of her two brothers: Ptolemy XIII and Ptolemy XIV

*** Seleucus V Philometor was killed by his mother Cleopatra Thea

Philip II Philoromaeus (Ancient Greek: Φίλιππος ὁ Φιλορωμαῖος, 'Friend of the Romans') or Barypous (Βαρύπους, 'Heavy-foot'), a ruler of the Hellenistic Seleucid

Empire, was the son of the Seleucid king Philip I Philadelphus, and the last Seleucid king.

Kings of the South (Ptolemies) – reign	Kings of the North (Seleucids) – reign
Ptolemy I Soter – 305-285	Seleucus I Nicator – 305-281
Ptolemy II Philadelphus – 285-246	Antiochus I Soter – 281-261
	Antiochus II Theos – 261-246
Ptolemy III Euergetes – 246-221	Seleucus II Callinicus – 246-225
Ptolemy IV Philopator – 221-205	Seleucus III Keraunos – 225-223
	Antiochus III the Great – 223-187
Ptolemy V Epiphanes – 205-180	Seleucus IV Philopator – 187-175
Ptolemy VI Philometor – 180-170 – 1°	Antiochus IV Epiphanes – 175-164
Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II – 170-163 – 1°	Antiochus V Eupator – 164-162
Ptolemy VI Philopator – 163-145 – 2°	Demetrius I Soter – 161-150
	Alexander Balas (usurper) – 150-145
Ptolemy VII Neos Philometor * – 145	Demetrius II Nicator – 145-144
Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II – 145-116 – 2°	Antiochus VI Dionysus – 144-142 + Diodotus Triphon – 142-139
	Antiochus VII Euergetes – 139-129
	Alexander II Zabinas (usurper) – 129-125 / Demetrius II Nicator – 129-125
	Cleopatra Thea – 125-120
	Seleucus V Philometor – 125 ***
	Antiochus VIII Philometor (Grypus) – 125-96
Ptolemy IX Soter II – 116-107 – 1°	Antiochus IX Cyzicenus – 115-96 (dispute with Grypus)
Ptolemy X Alexander I – 107-88	Seleucus VI Epiphanes Nicator – 96-95
	Antiochus X Eusebes Philopator – 95-90
	Demetrius III Eucaerus Philopator – 95-87
	Antiochus XI Epiphanes Philadelphus – 95-92
	Philip I Philadelphus – 95-84/83
Ptolemy IX Soter II (88-80) – 2°	Antiochus XII Dionysus – 87-84
Ptolemy XI Alexander II (80)	Tigranes II of Armenia (83-69)
Ptolemy XII (80-51)	Seleucus VII Kybiosaktes – 83-69
	Antiochus XIII Asiaticus – 69-64
	Syria annexed to Roman Republic – 64
Cleopatra VII (51-30)	Philip II Philoromaeus – 65-63
Ptolemy XIII (51-47) + Cleopatra VII	
Intervention – Julius Caesar (47/46)	
Ptolemy XIV (44-40) + Cleopatra VII	
Ptolemy XV Caesar (44-30) **	
Beginning of Roman Empire – 31/29	Beginning of Roman Empire – 31/29

Part 3 – Revelation of Daniel chapter 11

Now that we know how long the nations reigned during the Intertestamental Period and the story of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings (the kings of the north and south), let's go to the revelation of the prophecy of Daniel (Dan. 11: 1-45), that is, its interpretation.

The book of Daniel was probably written between 536 and 530 BC, shortly after Cyrus conquering Babylon in 539 BC, but reports the story and the visions of this prophet from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Cyrus, the emperor of Persia (Cyrus II or Cyrus the Great), was the one who ordered the return of the Jews in 538 BC (1st return of the exiles to Jerusalem). He reigned from 559 to 530 BC (as king of the Persians, Medes, Lydians and Babylonians). Daniel held the major government posts under Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede and Cyrus, having his last vision on the banks of the Tigris River. In Daniel 11: 1 it is written: "As for me [*who was speaking was the angel sent by the Lord, Gabriel or other angel*], in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to support and strengthen him" [*to strengthen Darius*]. Darius the Mede, who succeeded Belshazzar, descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to power at sixty-two years old, appointed by Cyrus the Persian, as governor of this same satrapy. This Darius the Mede is another person, different from Darius II (Neh. 12: 22), known as Darius the Persian, who ruled Babylon and Persia (424–404 AC) after Artaxerxes. He is also different from Darius I, the successor of Cambyses, who ruled from 522 to 486 BC, when the construction of the temple of Jerusalem began (520-516 BC).

The Babylonian kings were (Neo-Babylonian Period):

- Nabopolassar – 626-605 BC
- Nebuchadnezzar II – 605-562 BC
- Amel-Marduk (or Evil-Merodach) – 562-560 BC
- Nergal-sharezer or Neriglissar (brother-in-law of Amel-Marduk, whom he assassinated to take the power) – 559-556 BC. The Akkadian name of Neriglissar is Nergal-šar-ušur, which means, 'God Nergal preserves / defends the king.' His name is mentioned as one of the high-ranking officers of king Nebuchadnezzar II in the Book of Jeremiah 39: 13 (Nergal-Sharezer).
- Labashi-Marduk, son of Neriglissar – 556 BC (for nine months), and was deposed by the priests.
- Nabonidus – 556-539 BC, and whose son, Belshazzar, reigned as co-regent. Nabonidus was married to Nitocris, daughter of Nebuchadnezzar II

In 539 BC, Cyrus II or Cyrus the Great invaded Babylon and incorporated this kingdom to the vast empire of Media and Persia, making of it a satrapy under the rule of Darius the Mede.

First, let's put the biblical text of Daniel 11: 1-45. The Bible version most used here is NRSV, sometimes completed by NIV.

• Dan. 11:

1 As for me [*who was speaking was the angel sent by the Lord, Gabriel or other angel*], in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to support and strengthen him [*to strengthen Darius*].

2 Now I will announce the truth to you. Three more kings shall arise in Persia. The fourth shall be far richer than all of them, and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece.

3 Then a warrior king [NIV, a mighty king] shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and take action as he pleases.

4 And while still rising in power, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted and go to others besides these.

5 Then the king of the south shall grow strong, but one of his officers shall grow stronger than he and shall rule a realm greater than his own realm.

6 After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to ratify the agreement. But she shall not retain her power, and his offspring shall not endure. She shall be given up, she and her attendants and her child and the one who supported her.

7 In those times a branch from her roots shall rise up in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall take action against them and prevail.

8 Even their gods, with their idols and with their precious vessels of silver and gold, he shall carry off to Egypt as spoils of war. For some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north;

9 then the latter shall invade the realm of the king of the south, but will return to his own land.

10 His sons shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall advance like a flood and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress.

11 Moved with rage, the king of the south shall go out and do battle against the king of the north, who shall muster a great multitude, which shall, however, be defeated by his enemy.

12 When the multitude has been carried off, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall overthrow tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail.

13 For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, larger than the former, and after some years he shall advance with a great army and abundant supplies.

14 In those times many shall rise against the king of the south. The lawless among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they shall fail.

15 Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks, and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, not even his picked troops, for there shall be no strength to resist.

16 But he who comes against him shall take the actions he pleases, and no one shall withstand him. He shall take a position in the beautiful land, and all of it shall be in his power.

17 He shall set his mind to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of peace and perform them. In order to destroy the kingdom, he shall give him a woman in marriage; but it shall not succeed or be to his advantage.

18 Afterward he shall turn to the coastlands, and shall capture many. But a commander shall put an end to his insolence; indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him.

19 Then he shall turn back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found.

20 Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an official for the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he shall be broken, though not in anger or in battle

[NIV: His successor will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle].

21 In his place shall arise a contemptible person on whom royal majesty had not been conferred; he shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom through intrigue.

22 Armies shall be utterly swept away and broken before him, and the prince of the covenant as well.

23 And after an alliance is made with him, he shall act deceitfully and become strong with a small party.

24 Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province and do what none of his predecessors had ever done, lavishing plunder, spoil, and wealth on them. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time.

25 He shall stir up his power and determination against the king of the south with a great army, and the king of the south shall wage war with a much greater and stronger army. But he shall not succeed, for plots shall be devised against him

26 by those who eat of the royal rations. They shall break him, his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall slain.

27 The two kings, their minds bent on evil, shall sit at one table and exchange lies. But it shall not succeed, for there remains an end at the time appointed.

28 He shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. He shall work his will, and return to his own land.

29 At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but this time it shall not be as it was before.

30 For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall lose heart and withdraw. He shall be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant.

31 Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate.

32 He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action.

33 The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder.

34 When they fall victim, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join them insincerely.

35 Some of the wise shall fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and cleansed, until the time of the end, for there is still an interval until the time appointed.

36 The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined shall be done.

37 He shall pay no respect to the gods of his ancestors, or to the one beloved by women; he shall pay no respect to any other god, for he shall consider himself greater than all.

38 He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his ancestors did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.

39 He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall make more wealthy, and shall appoint them as rulers over many, and shall distribute the land for a price.

40 At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him. But the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. He shall advance against countries and pass through like a flood.

41 He shall come into the beautiful land, and tens of thousands shall fall victim, but Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites shall escape from his power.

42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

43 He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the riches of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow in his train.

44 But reports from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to bring ruin and complete destruction to many.

45 He shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with no one to help him.

Let's find out, then, what all this means:

- Dan. 11: 2-4: "Now I will announce the truth to you. Three more kings shall arise in Persia (*Cyrus, Cambyses II and Darius I*). The fourth (*Xerxes*) shall be far richer than all of them, and when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. Then (*After the reign of Xerxes' descendants*) a warrior king [NIV, a mighty king] shall arise (*Alexander the Great*), who shall rule with great dominion and take action as he pleases. And while still rising in power, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven (*among his four generals*), but not to his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted and go to others besides these." (*Alexander's son by his wife Roxanne, Alexander IV, was murdered at 13 years old, as well as the mother of Alexander the Great, Olympias, all killed by his general Cassander*).

Here, the Bible refers to Alexander the Great (332 BC). This fact is also reported in Dan. 8: 5-8; 20-22, where the Bible says that the ram with two horns symbolizes Media and Persia, and the male goat symbolizes Greece. A single horn speaks of Alexander's power, breaking and giving place to four horns (symbol of his four generals), and then, out of one of them comes another horn, a little one, which grows exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the beautiful land (Dan. 8: 9 = Israel), symbolizing Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC).



The kingdom of Greece is also symbolized in the book of Daniel by another animal:

- Dan. 7: 6: “After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it.”



- Dan. 11: 5: “Then the king of the south shall grow strong, but one of his officers shall grow stronger than he and shall rule a realm greater than his own realm” (NRSV); “The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power” (NIV).

The kingdom of the south refers to Egypt, south of Palestine. “The king of the south shall grow strong” = Ptolemy I Soter; “but one of his officers”, or “but one of his commanders” = one of Alexander’s generals: Seleucus I Nicator (to whom Syria was given), who reigned with greater power than Ptolemy I Soter.

- Dan. 11: 6: “After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to ratify the agreement. But she shall not retain her power, and his offspring shall not endure. She shall be given up, she and her attendants and her child and the one who supported her.”

“After some years” = about 50 years later (the grandson of Seleucus I Nicator: Antiochus II Theos); “they shall make an alliance” = the descendants of Ptolemy I Soter and Seleucus I Nicator, respectively, Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Antiochus II Theos.

“the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to ratify the agreement” = the marriage of Berenice Syra (daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoe I) to Antiochus II Theos, the third Seleucid king (261-246 BC) to make peace with Egypt in the Second Syrian War.

- Dan. 11: 7-9: “In those times a branch from her roots shall rise up in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall take action against them and prevail. Even their gods, with their idols and with their precious vessels of silver and gold, he shall carry off to Egypt as spoils of war. For some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north; then the latter shall invade the realm of the king of the south, but will return to his own land.”

“A branch from her roots” = his brother Ptolemy III Euergetes returned to invade Syria, Cilicia and conquered all the lands till the river Euphrates (Third Syrian War or Laodicean War).

• Dan. 11: 10-14: “His sons shall wage war [His sons will prepare for war – NIV] and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall advance like a flood and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress. Moved with rage, the king of the south shall go out and do battle against the king of the north, who shall muster a great multitude, which shall, however, be defeated by his enemy. When the multitude has been carried off, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall overthrow tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail. For the king of the north shall again raise a multitude, larger than the former, and after some years he shall advance with a great army and abundant supplies. In those times many shall rise against the king of the south. The lawless among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they shall fail.”

“His sons shall wage war” [His sons will prepare for war – NIV] = wars between the Seleucid kingdom and Ptolemaic by Egypt, Syria and Palestine, especially among the reigns of the Seleucids kings: Seleucus II Callinicus and Seleucid III Keraunos and Antiochus III (246-187 BC), and the Ptolemaic kings: Ptolemy III Euergetes, Ptolemy IV Epiphanes and Ptolemy V Epiphanes (246-181 BC).

• Dan. 11: 15-16: “Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siegeworks, and take a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south shall not stand, not even his picked troops, for there shall be no strength to resist. But he who comes against him shall take the actions he pleases, and no one shall withstand him. He shall take a position in the beautiful land, and all of it shall be in his power.”

“The king of the north” = Antiochus III the Great in 200-198 BC, who takes hold of Egypt, Palestine and Coele-Syria (Coele-Syria).

• Dan. 11: 17: “He shall set his mind to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of peace and perform them. In order to destroy the kingdom, he shall give him a woman in marriage; but it shall not succeed or be to his advantage” (NRSV;

“He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him” (NIV).

“He shall give him a woman in marriage” or “He will give him a daughter in marriage” = reference to the marriage of Cleopatra I (daughter of Antiochus III the Great) to the Egyptian king Ptolemy V Epiphanes (reign: 203-181 BC).

• Dan. 11: 18-19: “Afterward he shall turn to the coastlands (in other versions: ‘unto the isles’), and shall capture many. But a commander shall put an end to his insolence; indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him. Then he shall turn back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found”;

“Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back on him. After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but will stumble and fall, to be seen no more” (NIV).

“Coastlands or isles” = isles of Greece. “But a commander” = reference to Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus the Elder, a Roman general during the Second Punic War (218-202 BC) and a statesman of the Roman Republic (life: 236-183 AC), what it is in accordance with the date of the government of Antiochus III the Great (reign: 223-

187AC). The presence of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus there symbolizes Rome entering the east for the first time.

- Dan. 11: 20: “Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an official for the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he shall be broken, though not in anger or in battle”;

“His successor will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle” (NIV).

“An official” or “a tax collector” = a reference to Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 BC), son of Antiochus III the Great. He gave orders to his commander Heliodorus to collect taxes in the temple of Jerusalem in order to pay the war compensations demanded by Rome (because of what his father had done), but this one found opposition by the high priest and returned. In the same year, Seleucus IV Philopator was assassinated (poisoned) by Heliodorus. He was 60 years old when he died.

- Dan. 11: 21-28 (NRSV): “In his place shall arise a contemptible person on whom royal majesty had not been conferred; he shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom through intrigue. Armies shall be utterly swept away and broken before him, and the prince of the covenant as well. And after an alliance is made with him, he shall act deceitfully and become strong with a small party. Without warning he shall come into the richest parts of the province and do what none of his predecessors had ever done, lavishing plunder, spoil, and wealth on them. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. He shall stir up his power and determination against the king of the south with a great army, and the king of the south shall wage war with a much greater and stronger army. But he shall not succeed, for plots shall be devised against him by those who eat of the royal rations. They shall break him, his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall slain. The two kings, their minds bent on evil, shall sit at one table and exchange lies. But it shall not succeed, for there remains an end at the time appointed. He shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant. He shall work his will, and return to his own land.”

(NIV): “He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue. Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed. After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power. When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses—but only for a time. With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. Those who eat from the king’s provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle. The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time. The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country.”

“A contemptible person” = Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) made use of all kinds of device of lie, deceit, cunning, flattery and cruelty, as no one had done before him. Epiphanes means: ‘illustrious’ or ‘which manifests with splendor.’ In order to stay in power, he had no scruple. His ascension to the throne of Syria was through intrigues and deceit and was thirsty for conquest, spilling the blood of his enemies in many wars. He enriched with the spoils of war, when he fought against Egypt. The Bible calls him “A contemptible person” or “vile person” because, pretending friendship and alliance, he entered Egypt and took possession of the kingdom of Ptolemy VI Philometor (“the prince of the covenant”). “The king of the south shall wage war with a much greater and stronger army” or “The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him” = Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II or Ptolemy VIII Physcon – 182-116 BC. He really had a great and mighty army around him and could win Antiochus Epiphanes, as History says; but his plan was thwarted by treason within his own army, for his generals disagreed with his ambition of incorporating his kingdom to the Seleucid kingdom. On both sides there was great multitude, both armies extremely numerous. However, the ambition prevailed, and the king of the South (Egypt) was the most involved (“But he shall not succeed, for plots shall be devised against him by those who eat of the royal rations (his generals). They shall break him, his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall slain”). For some years, the Ptolemies and Seleucids made several treaties, in order to find peace between the two empires, but their hearts had one purpose: to deceive each other (“The two kings, their minds bent on evil, shall sit at one table and exchange lies”). These two kings (North and South), according to some historians, again refer to Antiochus and Ptolemy VI Philometor. “The king of the North will return to his own country” = the first expedition of Antiochus IV Epiphanes against Egypt in 170 BC, when he conquered Pelusium in the Nile delta. But difficulties in his homeland (betrayal by his own people against him) forced him to leave Egypt. On the way back (taking too great spoil) he plundered Jerusalem and the Temple treasure. He tried a second expedition against Egypt to take Alexandria in 168 BC, but was interrupted by intervention of Rome, through the consul Gaius Popillius Laenas.

- Dan. 11: 29-30: “At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but this time it shall not be as it was before. For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall lose heart and withdraw. He shall be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant.”

“He shall return and come into the south” = the second expedition of Antiochus IV Epiphanes against Egypt, but interrupted by the intervention of Rome (consul Gaius Popillius Laenas). “Ships of Kittim” is a likely reference to Rome. Kittim was one of the sons of Javan (son of Japheth, son of Noah – Gen. 10: 4; 1 Chr. 1: 7), ancestor of the Greeks, and whose descendants settled in Cyprus and were engaged in maritime trade. The Septuagint translates the word ‘Kittim’ in the Book of Daniel 11: 30 as ῥωμαῖοι = romaioi = Romans.

- Dan. 11: 31: “Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate” (NRSV);

“His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation” (NIV).

Jesus reported the same fact in Matt. 24: 15 with the words: “So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand)” and Mk. 13: 14: “But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand).” The term “the abomination that makes desolate” or “the abomination that causes desolation” (NIV) means desolation, grief, sadness, devastation; to stun, stupefy, make amazed, be astonished, be an astonishment, be destitute, destroy (self), waste.

Antiochus IV sent a large army against Jerusalem and took it by a sudden attack; he killed 40,000 people; sold many Jews as slaves; installed the statue of Zeus in the temple to be worshiped; committed sacrilege by killing a pig (unclean animal) on the altar and then its blood was sprinkled on the temple. He broke into the Holy of Holies and plundered the golden vessels and other utensils of the temple, equivalent to a thousand talents; he also interfered in the choice of the high priest and the governor of Judah, and this way, with the introduction of Hellenism in Judea, he finished with the sacrifices made in the temple of Jerusalem.

This would be repeated with the destruction of the Temple by Titus, who abolished the Mosaic Priesthood once and for all in Israel (Dan. 9: 26-27).

- Dan. 11: 32: “He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action.”

“With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.” (NIV)

“Those who have violated the covenant” = some unbelieving Jews that facilitated the infiltration of Antiochus Epiphanes into the Holy City.

“The people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm” or “the people who know their God will firmly resist him” = it refers to the Maccabees, from 167 BC who challenged the hostile power of Antiochus IV Epiphanes even if it costed them their lives.

- Dan. 11: 33-35: “The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder. When they fall victim, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join them insincerely. Some of the wise shall fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and cleansed, until the time of the end, for there is still an interval until the time appointed.”

“Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.” (NIV)

“The wise among the people” = in the time of the Maccabees, the wise were men with spiritual insight circulated among the people, teaching the Scriptures and continued preaching, even under persecution and death. Many of these wise men were killed but those who survived remained pure until the end. Sword, flame, captivity and plunder are a summary of the life tribulations and sufferings of the faithful men and women from the resurrection of Jesus until today, in all parts of the world, during the process of purification of their souls, the same way as it happens to us. Wise are those who understood the purposes and the right ways of God, those who take pleasure in them, and share their wisdom and experience with other people so that they can also receive the eternal life. In the eyes of God, wise is he who knows and puts His word into practice. They will live forever in the presence of their God.

“The appointed time” = it refers to the time of the Gospel of Christ, at the time of the Holy Spirit and the growth of the Early Church.

- Dan. 11: 36-39: “The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined shall be done. He shall pay no respect to the gods of his ancestors, or to the one beloved by women [NVI: for the one desired by women]; he shall pay no respect to any other god, for he shall consider himself greater than all. He shall honor the god of fortresses; instead of these; a god whom his ancestors did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest fortresses, by the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall make more wealthy, and shall appoint them as rulers over many, and shall distribute the land for a price.”

Explaining:

- The God of gods = The God of Israel.
- He shall pay no respect to the gods of his ancestors = all the Syrian gods, not even Baal.

- Or to the one beloved by women [NVI: for the one desired by women] = here, by the fact that the context is talking about gods, is very likely to be referring to Adonis, the Greek god also called Tammuz (in Babylonian; or Dumuzid, the Mesopotamian god of the shepherds, and also linked to the growth of the plants), worshiped by women, even by Jewish women (Ezek. 8: 14: “Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the Lord; women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz”). In this verse the prophet Ezekiel receives revelation from God about the abominations committed in Jerusalem, including the attitude of women who were crying in the temple because of this foreign god. The cult of Tammuz of Mesopotamia was accepted by the Jewish exiles. Tammuz is the one who dies and is reborn each year, the god worshiped by Jewish women. The proof of this is that the name of the fourth Jewish month post-exile, which corresponds to June-July of our Christian calendar, is precisely ‘Tammuz’, coinciding with the time of grapes harvest. ‘Tammuz’, in Hebrew, means ‘hidden’, ‘son of life.’ Strong evidence that Tammuz was the same Greek god Adonis is a festival called ‘Adonia festival’, commemorated with flowers and fruit, as it was said above in relation to the name of the Jewish month corresponding to June-July of our Christian calendar. Adonis (Greek: Ἀδωνις) is a hero of Greek mythology in the Hellenistic period, loved by Aphrodite and Persephone. He was born of an incestuous relationship between Myrrha and her father Kinyras (or Theias), King of Cyprus (or Assyria / Syria), and spends part of his time in the kingdom of the living and the other in the underworld (or in the kingdom of the dead). He was killed still young by a wild boar while hunting. Artemis (to the Greeks) or Diana (to the Romans) was the goddess of the moon and hunting. She sent a wild boar to kill Adonis as punishment for his arrogance in saying that he was better hunter than she. Adonia festivals in Athens, Alexandria and the Roman world (5th to 4th century BC) celebrate both his death at the hands of Artemis and his love for Persephone (from the kingdom of the dead) and Aphrodite (from the kingdom of the living). These festivals were characterized by the high number of women participating, for their joy and debauchery (Aphrodite or Venus was the goddess of love, beauty and sexuality), and their ritual of mourning. The gardens of Adonis were well-known, where plants after being cut were placed in pots with his image, made of wood, and soon withered (Persephone was the goddess of herbs, flowers, fruit and

perfumes). The cult of Adonis was designed as a god dying and rising. The city of Byblos in Phoenicia was dedicated to Adonis. The worship of Adonis in Byblos was practically the same Phoenician / Canaanite cult to 'Baal.' This god was not only a spring deity or a spirit of vegetation, but an important city god, comparable to Baal-Melcart in Tyre and Eshmun in Sidon. In Syria and Palestine, Adonis was called by a title (Baal, Adon = lord) instead of a proper name.

- He shall pay no respect to any other god = the gods of other nations.
- For he shall consider himself greater than all = He will consider himself a god.
- The god of fortresses = this seems to be Jupiter or Zeus, the supreme god of the Romans and Greeks. In Lexicon Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew word used for 'fortress' can be written in several ways: ma'owz or mauwz or mahoz or mauz; the best known is 'mahoz', and whose plural is Mahuzzim ('fortresses'). It has several meanings: a fortified place; a defense, force, fortress (a military stronghold, especially a strongly fortified town fit for a large garrison), rock, strength, strengthen, strong, stronghold (a place that has been fortified so as to protect it against attack). Besides symbolizing the strength of the glory and money of Rome, the 'god of fortresses' (Zeus, in Greek, or Jupiter, its Roman equivalent) can be called the God of forces of nature, because Zeus, in Greek mythology, is the father of gods and men, and who exercised authority over the other Olympian gods. He is the god of lightning in Greek mythology, king of the gods, the god of heaven, thunder and lightning, the god of law, order and justice. In Syria, Phoenicia and Canaan, Baal was considered the supreme god, including having power over the forces of nature and the atmospheric phenomena.

- A god whom his ancestors did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts = Jupiter (a god that the ancestors of Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria did not know) would be worshiped with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things, because, through this, all men would admire him for his power and wealth.

- By the help of a foreign god = it means the Greek-Roman gods that Antiochus IV Epiphanes adopted, as the Greek god Zeus (Jupiter to the Romans), whose statue he placed in Jerusalem. Jupiter was the son of Saturn and Cybele, and known as the Roman god of the day, often identified with the Greek god Zeus. He was also called Jovis. Jupiter married Juno, the favorite daughter of Cybele. His children were: Mars, Minerva and Venus. In Roman mythology, Mars is the father of Romulus and Remus the legendary founders of Rome.

- He shall deal with the strongest fortresses, that is, the walls of Jerusalem and that of the temple. The Hebrew word for 'fortresses' remains ma'owz or mauwz or mahoz or mauz, with the same meaning: a fortified place; a defense, force, fortress, rock, strength, strengthen, strong, stronghold. However, the whole expression 'the strongest fortresses', can be understood as: 'fortresses of munitions', a fortification, castle, or fortified city; figuratively, a defender, surrounded by a fence, fortress, stronghold. From a primitive root = batsar = to be isolated (unassailable, i.e., inaccessible by height or fortification), cut off, defense or fence, fortify, mighty things, to restrain, strong, wall up, withhold. In this verse, the expression 'strongest fortresses' refers to the temple of Jerusalem and its walls, for in v. 31 he is called 'the sanctuary of strength' [KJV: "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate"]. There, Antiochus placed the statue of this strange god (Jupiter of Olympus).

- Those who acknowledge him ("those who violate the covenant" – Dan. 11: 32), he shall make more wealthy, and shall appoint them as rulers over many (perhaps even the high priest and the governor of Judah); and shall distribute the land for a price =

Antiochus will cause that those who minister to this idol may reign over many, he will put them will in positions of power and trust, and shall distribute the land for a price [NRSV; or KJV: “shall divide the land for gain” (gain = price)], that is, they will receive an extra ‘wage’ for worshiping the foreign god. In other words, ‘the glory and the money of Rome’, because money is a force and a god. So, those people not faithful to God (‘those who violate the covenant’) will honor the god of fortresses with vast treasures dedicated to him (or ‘the gods of the fortresses’: Mahuzzim).

• Dan. 11: 40-45: “At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him. But the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. He shall advance against countries and pass through like a flood. He shall come into the beautiful land, and tens of thousands shall fall victim, but Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites shall escape from his power. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the riches of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow in his train. But reports from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to bring ruin and complete destruction to many. He shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with no one to help him.”

Antiochus IV Epiphanes got involved in the Sixth War of Syria against Egypt (170-168 BC) and its kings (the brothers Ptolemy VI Philometor and Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II), conquering the strategic city of Pelusium (in the northeast of the Nile delta). Libyans and Ethiopians helped him. He tried a second invasion of Egypt to take Alexandria in 168 BC, but was interrupted by intervention of Rome, which sent the consul Gaius Popillius Laenas to this city. Antiochus IV, who had already taken Cyprus and Memphis, returned to Alexandria, but met with the Roman consul at Eleusis, on the outskirts of the capital. There, Gaius Popillius Laenas gave him an ultimatum on behalf of the Roman senate for him to leave Cyprus and Egypt immediately. Antiochus chose to obey.

In 168-167 BC, in the return from the war against Egypt, Antiochus IV Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem, which became permanently controlled by soldiers. He established His palatial tents between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea, in Israel, in the city of Emmaus, near Jerusalem. From there he granted all the power to his captains to continue the war against the Jews with rigor. He placed his tent there as if he had taken possession of the glorious holy mountain. He didn't care with Edom, Moab and the Ammonites because they were his allies, helping him to invade Israel. Antiochus IV committed sacrilege by killing a pig (unclean animal) on the altar of the temple. He sought to establish Hellenism by force, introducing the destruction of copies of the Scriptures as law and forbidding the Jewish worship: the observance of the Sabbath, dietary prohibitions and even the circumcision. In the Temple of Jerusalem, it was installed a statue of the Greek god Zeus (Jupiter to the Romans). This situation (Romanization and Hellenization of Judea) generated displeasure among the faithful Jews like Mattathias and his sons: Simon, Judas Maccabee, Eleazar, John and Jonathan (the Hasmonean family, known as Maccabees or Maccabeus). The Maccabees ended up driving out the troops of Antiochus IV from Jerusalem. The Maccabean Revolt lasted from 167 to 160 BC. The Seleucid king reached the end of his reign in the year 164 BC, with a serious illness (it is thought that it was a cancer – “with no one to help him”) and died in 162 BC.

- Dan. 8: 14 writes: “For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.” He was referring to the time elapsed from the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Seleucid king (around 168-167 BC) until its purification by Judas Maccabeus. The Maccabean revolt lasted from 167 BC to 160 BC, that is, 2,300 days, or more precisely, 6 years, 3 months and 18 days.

One more comment on Dan. 11: 36 and 39

- Dan. 11: 36-39: “³⁶ The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined shall be done... ³⁹ He shall deal with the strongest fortresses [*the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple*], by the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall make more wealthy, and shall appoint them as rulers over many, and shall distribute the land for a price.”

We’ve seen that these were the acts of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. But they also reminds of us the destruction of the Temple by Titus in 70 AD.

Concerning apocalyptic times, the apostle Paul referred to Dan. 11: 36 and wrote in 2 The. 2: 3-4 about the ‘man of lawlessness’ (NRSV: ‘the lawless one’) or ‘the man doomed to destruction’ (NRSV: ‘the one destined for destruction’): “Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day [*the second coming of Jesus Christ*] will not come unless the rebellion [*meaning apostasy*] comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God.”

Since the Epistle of 2 Thessalonians was written around 51-52 AD, therefore, when the temple of Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed by Titus, these verses may also refer to him, who repeated the acts of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and is also a figure of the eschatological Antichrist. Even at the time of Jesus’ apostles, that is, in the 1st century, Christians were expecting the return of Christ in a more immediate time.

As for the eschatological Antichrist, the verse of Dan. 11: 36 [“The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself (cf. 2 The. 2: 3-4) and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods (cf. Rev. 13: 5-6; Dan. 7: 8; 25). He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined shall be done] refers to a ruler [“The king”] who will act according to his own will, a man who comes to power, thrives, grows in strength and then invests against the God of Israel and His saints. This king assumes the role of deity:

- 2 The. 2:4: “He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God.”

The Antichrist opposes Jesus and assumes all power in heaven and earth, making his own new laws in place of Christ’s laws, teaching false doctrines and demanding worship for himself, as mentioned by Daniel and John, blaspheming the very name of God (Dan. 7: 7-8; 24-25; Dan. 11: 36; Rev. 13: 5-6). Therefore, when Paul writes, “so that he takes his seat in the temple of God,” he is not referring to the temple in Jerusalem, which would be destroyed by Titus in 70 AD, before this man of sin was revealed, and would never be rebuilt. But he is referring to the church of God, the believers (1 Cor. 3: 16; 1 Cor. 6: 19; 2 Cor. 6: 16), for the Antichrist will affront and try to destroy the faith of God’s own children (Dan. 7: 21; 25). John refers to this in Rev. 11: 1-2, when the true church of Christ (‘the temple of God’), which between the first

and second comings of Christ was always protected by the Lord during persecutions and spared from great harm, will now in the final moments of the Great Tribulation suffer intense persecution and massacre by the Antichrist (3 ½ years = “they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months” – Rev. 11: 2). In other words, the time when the church is exposed to the persecution of the Antichrist, but will continue to worship God (Rev. 11: 1-2) and prophesy and will not be touched until its work is finished (‘the two witnesses’ – Rev. 11: 3-14).

Therefore, this sanctuary or temple mentioned by Paul does not refer to the physical reconstruction of the 3rd temple in Jerusalem, as Dispensationalist Christians and Jews believe. Many use the text of Dan. 9: 27 to justify this belief. That’s what we’ll see the next chapter.

Part 4 - Prophecies of Daniel and John - Apocalypse

This study is an interpretation of the prophecies of Dan. 7 and 8 (the animals he saw) and Dan. 9 (in special, verses 24-27 about the seventy weeks) and the visions of Apostle John written in the book of Revelation with reference to the end times: the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation, the three Beasts, the False Prophet and the great whore (described in Rev. 17: 1), referring to Rome.

The purpose of this study is to show how important our intimacy with God is, and give us the hope that one day prepared by God ('in the appointed time', as the bible says), all the evil that we see and live in the world will be destroyed, and all unrighteousness will be avenged, for it is necessary that men repent of their sins and recognize that only in Jesus there is freedom, justice, judgment, and eternal life. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John writes not only about future events; he also writes to the believers of that time (in the seven churches in Asia Minor, going through persecution) and mentions in a symbolic way the political circumstances in which he was inserted, involving the Roman emperors, for example, and showing that God was acting and doing justice in the present, the same way He will do in a much more comprehensively manner in the future.

In chapter 7 Daniel has a vision of four animals; a revelation concerning the nations to come after the fall of Babylon. The first animal is similar to the lion and had eagle's wings (Dan. 7: 4) and symbolized Babylon. The second was like a bear with three ribs in its mouth and symbolized the kingdoms of Media and Persia, who conquered Egypt, Babylon and Lydia (The three ribs). The third was like a leopard and had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads. It symbolizes Greece. The fourth animal to be seen by Daniel had a terrifying look, with great iron teeth (Dan. 7: 7; 19), devouring everything around and presenting ten horns on its head. It symbolizes Rome and we can see an allusion to the Antichrist and the ten contemporary kings (Dan. 7: 7-8; 20-25). It is interesting to realize that the vision of the glorified Christ described by Daniel (Ancient of Days), in Dan. 7: 9; 13 and Dan. 10: 5-6 is similar to that described by John in Rev. 1: 13-15; Rev. 19: 6; 12; Rev. 14: 14 and Rev. 1: 7 (coming with the clouds). In Dan. 7: 18, the word written is similar to that written by John in Revelation, that is, the Antichrist will fight against the saints (Dan. 7: 25), but these will possess the kingdom (Rev. 17: 14; Rev. 11: 15).

Daniel 8: 5-8; 20-22, the bible says that the ram with two horns symbolizes Media and Persia and the goat symbolizes Greece. The goat also had a horn between its eyes, symbolizing the power of Alexander the Great, and breaking and giving room to four horns (symbols of his four generals). Then, he sees a little horn that grows in the place of the largest that was broken and becomes strong to the south, to the east and to the glorious land (Dan. 8: 9 = Israel), symbolizing Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dan. 8: 9-11), a Seleucid persecutor of Israel (175-164 BC).

The animals with a terrifying appearance, in the bible, especially the prophetic books of Daniel and John (Revelation), symbolize great forces and empires, a coalition of nations trying to use the power of the Beast (or Antichrist) to defeat the real power in the person of Jesus. Horns relate to power, and the ram symbolizes the religious side – the docile animal used in sacrifices to God in the OT. It is obvious that this interpretation changes according to the biblical context. Jesus also refers to His people as sheep (Matt. 10: 16-17) and taught them to beware of false prophets (Matt. 7: 15-23).

This evil power will be seen in person of the beast that comes out of the sea: a man, or rather a ruler (the sea symbolizes the gentile nations, especially, Rome as John

referred), and in the person of a religious leader who, with lying wonders, will come to deceive the nations, making them believe in the beast as if it were the promised Messiah. Israel, for example, has always seen the Messiah as a physical leader, a material one, manifesting with power in natural world, a king like David that one day will free them from the oppressive power of the Gentiles.

Since the early times of the NT the apostles John and Paul said that the spirit of Antichrist was already among them (figuratively, in the person of the Roman emperors and false believers, and even after a few centuries, in the person of influential political and religious leaders who led thousands of people to death, physical and spiritual).

Antichrist is called 'little horn' by Daniel (Dan. 7: 8); the 'abomination that causes desolation' or 'the desolating sacrilege' by Jesus (Matt. 24: 15; Mk. 13: 14); 'the man of lawlessness', 'the man doomed to destruction' or 'the lawless one' by Paul (2 The. 2: 3; 8-9). Only John in his epistle calls him Antichrist (1 Jn. 2: 18; 22; 1 Jn. 4: 3), and in Revelation calls him 'Beast' (more specifically referring to the beast rising out of the sea – Rev. 13: 1).

Now we can introduce the text of Dan. 9: 24-27, when the prophet intercedes for himself and for the people, recognizing their sin, and therefore the cause of the captivity of seventy years. Here, it is given him a revelation through the angel Gabriel, sent by God to him, about the seventy weeks that were determined about the people of Israel (Dan. 9: 24-26). The seventy weeks represent a time (according to some theologians, the years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem walls in 445 BC, plus God's period of silence after the prophet Malachi) that would end with the ascension of Christ (after His resurrection – 30 AD) and would be completed with the Great Tribulation.

NRSV:

24 Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.

25 Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time.

26 After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one [= *the first coming of Jesus and His death*] shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary [*It refers to Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple*]. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed [*Bloodshed like a flood because of one war after another. Until the end times, Israel and Jerusalem will go through wars, that's what it means*].

27 He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place [*of sacrifice and offering*] shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator."

NIV

24 Seventy 'sevens' [Or 'weeks'; also in verses 25 and 26] are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish [Or restrain] transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. [Or Most Holy Place; or most holy One]

25 Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree [Or word] to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, [Or an anointed one; also in verse 26] the

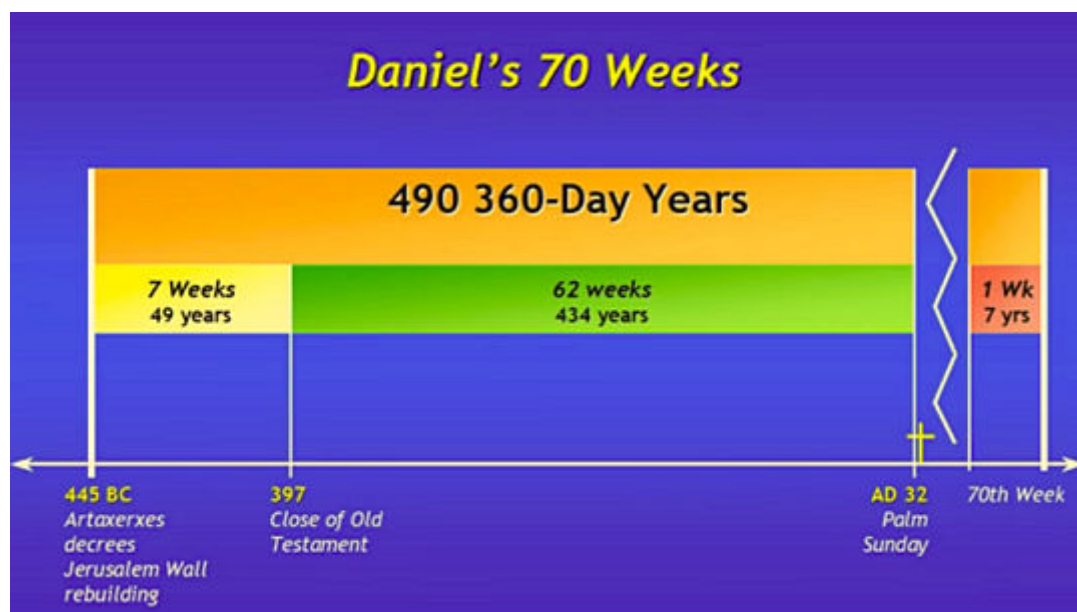
ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens’, and sixty-two ‘sevens’. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

26 After the sixty-two ‘sevens’, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing [= the first coming of Jesus and His death]. [Or off and will have no-one; or off, but not for himself] The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary [*It refers to Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple*]. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed [*Bloodshed like a flood because of one war after another. Until the end times, Israel and Jerusalem will go through wars, that’s what it means*].

27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ [Or ‘week’] In the middle of the ‘seven’ [Or ‘week’] he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him [Or it].”

In the original document in Hebrew, according to the footnote in NIV, it is written: “And one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city.”

Many theologians say that there is a gap in time between v. 26 (which talks about the 1st coming of Jesus) and v. 27 (which corresponds to the 7th week of the 70 mentioned in v. 24). This gap corresponds to the church period, between the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ



In the image above (cf. Dan 9: 25) the angel separates the seven weeks (forty-nine years, which goes from the construction of Jerusalem to the beginning of the Intertestamental Period, and the other four hundred and thirty-four years, that is, sixty-two weeks, until the death and ascension of Jesus). The space with the zigzag line, in white, corresponds to the period between the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ, the church period, where there was the destruction of the temple by Titus in 70 AD. And the last week (seven years) at the end of the figure corresponds to the Great Tribulation and will complete the seventy weeks (four hundred and ninety years) described by the prophet in

Dan. 9: 24. Therefore, this vision not only concerns the first coming of Christ, but also to His second coming.

As to the verse 26, we can say that this occurred in the first Jewish-Roman war (66-73 AD), sometimes called the great Jewish revolt, which was the first of three great rebellions of the Jews of Judea against the Roman Empire. It began in the year 66 AD, initially due to religious tensions between Greeks and Jews with protests against taxation and attacks on Roman citizens. Then, the Roman legions under the command of Titus (Titus Flavius Vespasian Augustus, son of Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasian) besieged Jerusalem, destroying the center of rebel resistance in Jerusalem on 1st August, 67 AD, culminating in the destruction of the temple sometime in August 70 AD, defeating the Jewish remaining forces [3 ½ years]. There is reference to 30th August [Bunson, Matthew (1995). *A Dictionary of the Roman Empire*. Oxford University Press. p. 212. ISBN 978-0-19-510233-8], but perhaps it is a little disconnected from what the Jews call Tisha B'Av (9th day of the month of 'Abh or Av). It was the 17th of Tammuz (Tammuz = June-July), when the first breach was made in the wall by the Romans, and three weeks later, on the 9th of Av, their army managed to penetrate the Temple, plunder it and destroy it. [Flavius Josephus – *The War of the Jews*, book IV, chapters 1 to 4].

The Romans set fire to the Temple (there is disagreement as to whether it was on Titus' order or just a torch accidentally thrown by a soldier). Resistance continued until September, but finally the upper and lower parts of the city were also taken and the city was burned to the ground. Herod's Palace fell on September 7th and the city came completely under Roman control on September 8th. Titus spared only the three towers of the Herodian citadel (Phasaelus or Phasaël, and Hippicus, and Mariamne) as testimony to the city's ancient power; and much of the wall that enclosed the city on the west side.

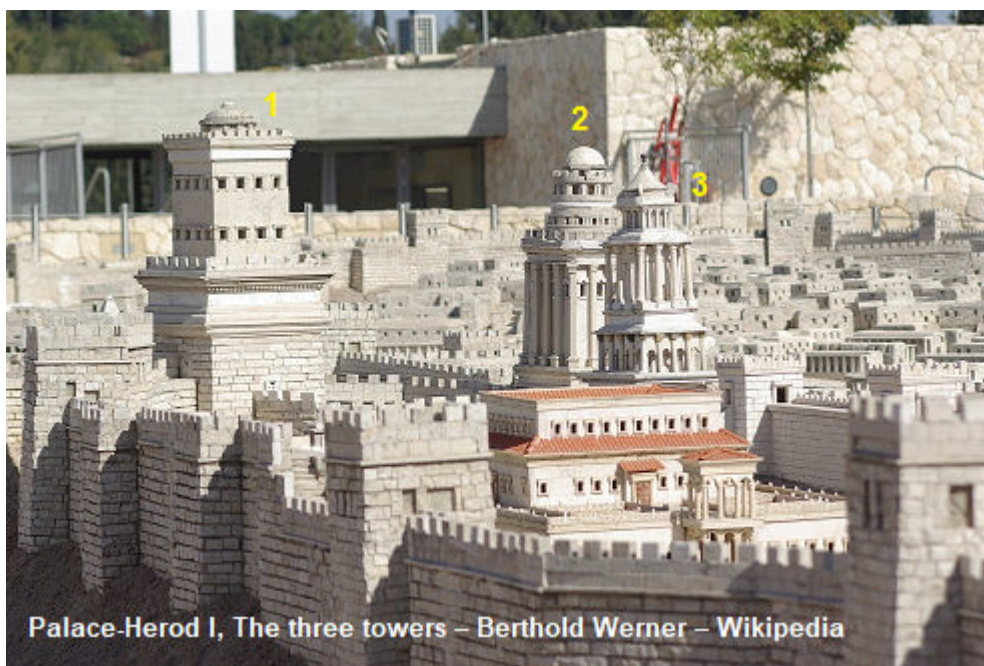


Image above: Jerusalem Model, Palace of Herod I, The three towers: Phasaël, Hippicus, Mariamne from left to right. Photo: Berthold Werner – Wikipedia.org

On the north side of Herod's Palace, next to the wall, were the three great towers that protected it:

1. The Phasael Tower was the largest and was named after Phasael, Herod's brother, and was 45 meters high;
2. The Hippicus Tower was named after a friend of Herod and was 40 meters high; it was rebuilt on its original foundation and became known as the Tower of David.
3. Mariamne Tower – it was 23 meters high; it was the most beautiful and was built in honor of Mariamne I, Herod's second wife, whom he had killed.

This act had a huge impact: many people were killed and enslaved and large parts of the city were destroyed. According to some historians, this wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for those that were in the garrison [in the Upper City], as were the towers [the three forts] also spared, in order to demonstrate to future generations what kind of city Jerusalem was, how well fortified, and which the valiant Romans had subdued; but the remaining parts of the walls and the city were destroyed to the ground.

Tisha B'Av (9th day of the month of 'Abh or Av), that is, of the 5th month of the Hebrew calendar corresponding to Jul-Aug in the Gregorian calendar, is an important date in the Jewish calendar, whose origin is not biblical, but was created by rabbis to lament some disasters that occurred in the history of Israel, practically after the destruction of the first temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC (although Jewish books such as the Talmud mention it since ancient times in the OT, but it is not recorded in the Bible).

One of the last acts of this war [the last 3 ½ years] was the destruction of the Fortress of Masada on 16th April 63 AD, a rugged plateau southwest of the Dead Sea, a natural fortress built by Herod the Great as his palace and as a place of refuge, but occupied by rebel sicarii at the time of its destruction by the Romans. The sicarii were an extremist group within the party of the zealots. Masada means 'safe place' or 'fortress.'



This act of Titus was not only a landmark on the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies (Matt. 24: 1-2; Mk. 13: 1-2), as it was also depicted in the form of relief on the Arch of Titus in Rome. The Arch of Titus, all made of marble, was erected as a triumph, commemorating the conquest of Jerusalem, and built in 81 AD, after the death of the emperor because of a fever. On the Arch are carved: the table with the bread of Presence, the silver trumpets and the Menorah. On it one can read the following inscription:

“SENATVS·POPVLVSQVE·ROMANVS·DIVO·TITO·DIVI·VESPASIANI·(FILIO) VESPASIANO·AVGVSTO”, meaning: “The Senate and the Roman people [dedicate] to the divine Titus Vespasian Augustus, son of the divine Vespasian.”



There was a difference between Pompey's attitude when he entered Jerusalem in 63 BC, annexing the province of Judea to the Roman Republic, and Titus' attitude, in 70 AD. Pompey entered the Holy of Holies with his officers, which was a serious insult to the Jews. However, out of respect for the sanctity of the temple, he ordered that nothing should be removed or damaged. Perhaps, Pompey considered necessary to demonstrate his power by entering the temple, but showed his willingness to respect the Jewish faith and leave their holy place inviolate, unless the Jews forced him to destroy it.

Titus, on the contrary, besieged the city with three legions (V Macedonica, XII Fulminata, XV Apollinaris) on the west side and one legion (X Fretensis) on the Mount of Olives to the east. He cut off the food and the water to the city; he allowed the entry of some Jews to celebrate Passover, and then, denying their exit. After unsuccessful attempts of negotiation between Jews and Romans, Titus entered with his legions, destroying the outer part of the walls and crucifying the Jews who deserted around the walls. The Jews were surrendering because of hunger. The Romans took advantage of this weakness, breaking the inner parts of the walls, and entering the city. They took the Fortress Antonia, which was not only a strong watchtower, but also the residence of the Roman procurator when he was in Jerusalem. More than one million people (according

to Flavius Josephus) or nineteen-seven thousand (according to other historians) were killed during the siege, most of them Jews. Thousands of people were captured and enslaved. Many escaped to sites near the Mediterranean. Under the command of Titus, the soldiers also invaded the temple after being in fire by a torch thrown against it. The city was plundered and the sacred objects taken to Rome. In the south wall of the temple, the Roman soldiers sacrificed eagles to their gods. So, Titus also represents a figure of the Antichrist.

Dan. 9: 27

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, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” (KJV)

27 He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place [of sacrifice and offering] shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator. (NRSV)

27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ [Or ‘week’] In the middle of the ‘seven’ [Or ‘week’] he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him [Or it]. (NIV).

In the original document in Hebrew, according to the footnote in NIV, it is written: “And one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city.”

In verse 27 above, we can compare with Antiochus IV Epiphanes making alliance with the faithless, as we already commented in Daniel chapter 11, and then forbidden the Jewish worship:

Dan. 11: 31: “Forces sent by him shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate.” (NRSV)

Dan. 11: 31: “His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.” (NIV)

The act of Antiochus was also repeated by Titus [after the 1st coming of Jesus, as Daniel refers to it: “the Anointed One will cut off” or “an anointed one shall be cut off” – v. 26] during the 1st Jewish-Roman War (66-73 AD), and who in the first 3 ½ years destroyed the temple (70 AD), and definitively put an end to the Mosaic worship that was performed in the temple by the traditional Jews who had not converted to Christianity. And in the other 3 ½ years he completed his work with the destruction of the Fortress of Masada on 16th April, 73 AD, occupied by the rebellious Sicarii, an extremist group within the Zealot party.

Daniel mentions the removal of the daily sacrifice also in:

Dan. 12: 11: “From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days.”

However, as I explained in Rev. 12: 6, the time of 3 ½ years, which equate to forty-two months (Rev. 11: 2) or 1,260 days (Rev. 12: 6) or ‘a time, two times and half a time’ (Dan. 12: 7 – equivalent to half a week of years); ‘a time, times and half a time’ (Rev. 12: 14), are non-literal measures of time in the bible, but they symbolize a short

period of affliction; a period of time which the Lord would shorten by His mercy. This number (3 ½ years) is the symbol of the victorious power of the world, unlike the number seven, the number of divine fullness. The world felt victorious at Jesus' death, but that was just the beginning of something bigger. The bible says that Jesus made a firm covenant with many (Isa. 42: 6; Isa. 53: 11; Jer. 31: 31-34; Matt. 20: 28; Matt. 26: 28; Lk. 22: 20; Rom. 5: 15; Heb. 9: 28), abolishing (causing to cease) Jewish sacrifices and Levitical temple worship forever, for the old covenant was abrogated; this is what Antiochus IV Epiphanes did in the past, and the eschatological Antichrist will try to do to imitate the deed of Jesus.

Many theologians say that there is a gap in time between v. 26 (which talks about the 1st coming of Jesus) and v. 27 (which corresponds to the 7th week of the 70 mentioned in v. 24). This gap corresponds to the church period, between the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ, for "He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week" or "He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven" means the Antichrist and his coalitions with the ten kings mentioned in Dan. 7: 7-8; 20-21; 24-25 and Jn. 17: 12. "For half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease" or "In the middle of the 'seven' [Or 'week'] he will put an end to sacrifice and offering", that is, in the second half of this time, the covenant is broken and the difficult period of the Great Tribulation begins. "He shall make sacrifice and offering cease" does not necessarily mean that there will be a 3rd temple in Israel where the Mosaic sacrifice will be restored as in the OT, but in some way the Antichrist will put an end to all types of worship of the true God, even because only his religion will be 'valid' from his point of view.

Now, continuing in verse 27, we see another detail that generates debate, because the revelation itself is still hidden:

"and for the **overspreading** of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (KJV)

"And in their place [of sacrifice and offering] shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator." (NRSV)

"And on a **wing** of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him [Or it]." (NIV)

In the original document in Hebrew, according to the footnote in NIV, it is written: "And one who causes desolation will come upon **the pinnacle** of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city."

In three other English versions of the bible we can see the expression: 'the wing of abominations' in Dn 9: 27:

- "And he hath strengthened a covenant with many—one week, and [in] the midst of the week he causeth sacrifice and present to cease, and by the **wing** of abominations he is making desolate, even till the consummation, and that which is determined is poured on the desolate one" (Young's Literal Translation).

- "And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the **wing** of abominations [shall come] one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall [wrath] be poured out upon the desolate" (ASV – 1901).

- "He shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease; and on the **wing** of abominations [shall come] one who makes desolate; and even to the full end, and that determined, shall [wrath] be poured out on the desolate" (World English Bible).

"And for the **overspreading** of abominations he shall make it desolate" or "And in their place [of sacrifice and offering] shall be an abomination that desolates" or "And on

a **wing** of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation” or in the original document in Hebrew: “And one who causes desolation will come upon the **pinnacle** of the abominable temple”, it doesn’t matter the translation, the Hebrew word is the same written in Ruth 2: 12 (wings), Ruth 3: 9 (cloak; corner – NIV) and 1 Sam. 24: 5 (cloak), namely, *kanaph* (כַּנָּף) – Strong #3671. It has several meanings: mantle, cloak, shirt, skirt, corner (of a garment or bed-clothing), border, an edge or extremity (of a bird or army), flap, wing, winged (bird), a pinnacle, covering, protection.

Just as Antiochus IV Epiphanes installed the statue of Zeus in the temple for worship, Titus did something similar. Some scholars relate the expression “the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate” or “And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation” or “And one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple” or “by the wing of abominations he is making desolate” or “upon the wing of abominations [shall come] one that maketh desolate” or else, “on the wing of abominations [shall come] one who makes desolate” to the Roman ensigns (eagles) brought to the east gate of the temple, and eagles (birds) being sacrificed on the south wall by his soldiers.

Regarding the eschatological Antichrist, some Dispensationalists (Dispensational premillennialism) suggested an idol placed on a ‘wing’ of the new Jewish temple (3rd temple) where he will demand worship, establishing worship for himself (only if it is an abominable temple built by the Antichrist himself). But neither Jesus, nor the NT letters, nor the prophets suggest the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem (a third temple). In the original document in Hebrew, according to the footnote in NIV, it is written: “And one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city.” This can suggest that the Antichrist himself will build an abominable temple where he can be worshiped.

If we think that ‘wings’ in this text has a meaning of ‘protection’, we can imagine (in the spiritual sense) that the phrase: ‘on the wing of abominations [shall come] one who makes desolate’ means that the Antichrist will come protecting, covering, and allowing all kinds of abomination that can be placed in the temple of the Lord (which means: instead of the true worship of God within each heart of those who do not have a true alliance with Christ, that is, the church not sealed with His blood), for he will also be under the covering of ‘the master of abominations’ which is Satan; all this by permission of God, until His Holy project is completed.

Because of the abominations committed by ungodly people against the Holy One, the Lord will not only destroy the holy city, but He will also allow that desolation continues until the appointed time, when the power of the world is judged and the dominion is given to the holy ones of the Most High (Daniel 7: 26-27). The word ‘desolation’ means: a state of complete emptiness or destruction. He will judge the Antichrist and his followers. This is another way of describing the scene of Jesus’ coming and His judgment on the agents of evil (Rev. 19: 11-21).

Even if the spirit of Antichrist is already among us (meaning the idea, the dominant force, the temper, the tendency, the thought contrary to Christ), the Antichrist will be known only in the form of a man during the second half of the Great Tribulation, when he will show his true character:

- Dan. 9: 27: “He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator” [or: “And on a wing of the temple he will, set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him”; or else: “And one who causes

desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city”].

- 1 Jn. 2: 22-23: “Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.”

- 1 Jn. 4: 2-4: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world. Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

- 2 The. 2: 3: “Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day [*he refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ*] will not come unless the rebellion [meaning apostasy] comes first and the lawless one [NIV, ‘the man of lawlessness’, or ‘the man of sin’] is revealed, the one destined for destruction [‘son of sin’, or ‘the son of destruction’; ‘destruction’ or ‘perdition’, in Greek, *apoleias* = ruin or loss, physical or spiritual, damnation (condemnation to hell), destruction, death, perdition, perish, pernicious ways, waste, devastation].”

- 2 The. 2: 6-12: “And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes [*the law, so he will appear at a time when there is no longer law (anomia = lack of law, disrespect or violation of law)*]. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power (Greek: *dunamis* or *dunamei* – *δυναμει* – Strong #g1411 = ability, power to perform miracles), signs, (Greek: *semeion* = miracle, sign, token, wonder), lying wonders (Greek: *teras* or *terata* or *terasini* = of uncertain affinity; a prodigy or omen, wonder, sign, token, proof), and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned [*God allows them to be deceived by the enemy, for they don’t believe in His truth*].”

Visions and prophecies of Apostle John in the book of Revelation

I) The Beast rising out of the sea is the Antichrist, who will carry out the role of king or ruler. He will rule the world during the second half of the Great Tribulation. The spirit of the antichrist means a system of government, empires, kings, a totalitarian state opposed to the Work of God, as it was the powerful Roman Empire, for the sea represents the world, the unbelieving nations):

Rev. 13: 1-3: “And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority. One of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed. In amazement the whole earth followed the beast.”

The animal (beast) seen by John corresponds to the fourth beast seen by Daniel (Dan. 7: 7), where the ten horns are ten kings who will come out of this kingdom (referring to Rome – in the visions of Daniel and John) and represent the last form of

anti-Christian world power, represented by unbelievers, an empire of ten confederate kings, covering the sphere of authority of ancient Rome.

Rev. 13: 4-10 refers directly to the emperor, who is the Beast: "They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?' The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months [*3 ½ years*]. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb (Rev. 13: 8; Rev. 17: 8; Rev. 20: 15; Rev. 21: 27) that was slaughtered. Let anyone who has an ear listen: If you are to be taken captive, into captivity you go; if you kill with the sword, with the sword you must be killed. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints."

The imperial cult in the province of Asia Minor surely suggested some of its features to John.

Therefore, for the time of John the beast that emerges from the sea means an Emperor of the mighty Roman Empire. The sea represents the world, the unbelieving nations (Rev. 17: 15: "And he said to me, 'The waters [*sea*] that you saw, where the whore [*the city of Rome; the apostate church, prostituted with worldly abominations*] is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.'") The term 'beast' comes from the Greek 'thêrion' (= dangerous animal), and is depicted by a large and ferocious animal that within the biblical symbolism represents a powerful kingdom, a great empire.

Rev. 13: 1-2: "And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority."

Here, John describes the beast: it resembles a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. It also had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name (cf. Dan. 7: 8; 11; 20; 24). Let's remember the appearance of the animals seen by Daniel (Dan. 7: 1-28): lion with eagle's wings (Dan. 7: 4 = symbolized Babylon), bear with three ribs in its mouth (symbolized the kingdoms of Media and Persia. The three ribs refer to Egypt, Babylon and Lydia, conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire. They were called 'ribs' because they strengthened it; and 'in its mouth' because they were grounded and crushed by the Medes and Persians), leopard with four wings of a bird on its back and four heads (It symbolizes Greece), and the fourth animal with terrifying look, with great iron teeth, exceedingly strong (Dan. 7: 7), devouring everything around and presenting ten horns on its head (Dan. 7: 7; Dan. 7: 19; Dan. 7: 24 = symbolizes Rome). Its horns are borrowed from the fourth beast of Daniel (Dan. 7: 7); its seven heads indicate that its authority derives from the dragon (Rev. 12: 3; Rev. 12: 17). Later, we'll see how John interprets all this.

The three animals: leopard, bear and lion (found in Dan. 7: 4-6 as symbols of empires that preceded Rome) instilled all their features on the qualities of the Roman Empire: the swiftness of conquest of the Macedonians (Greeks), the strength and tenacity the purpose of the Persians and the Babylonian greediness. After its fall, the Roman Empire turned into separate kingdoms, ending the imperial form of government.

Even so, it continued to exist. The head wounded to death ('One of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow') symbolizes the lack of an emperor to rule it. The prophecy of Rev. 13: 3 symbolizes the restoration of imperial form of government; more than a confederate empire, the head whose deadly wound was healed means that there is an emperor again (the Beast), so the empire was restored.



The animals seen by Daniel (Dan. 7: 1-28)

Several characters in History have been considered as the Antichrist: for Daniel, he was personified in the person of Antiochus IV Epiphanes; Titus was another emperor considered a figure of the eschatological Antichrist, for he destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD quite violently and persecuted both Christians and Jews. For John, the Antichrist was Nero, for he supposedly burned Rome during the night of July 18th to 19th, 64 AD, the fire lasted 5 or 6 days, and then blamed the Christians. Opinions differ as to this event among the ancient writers: Suetonius, Dio Cassius, Tacitus, and others. After Nero's death, a legend arose that he would be resurrected. Domitian was considered the second Nero (Among the many atrocities he committed, this emperor exiled John to the island of Patmos). In the 16th century, the Antichrist was the figure of the Pope, according to the reformer John Calvin. The phrase that is written in Latin letters on the Pope's miter, 'Vicarius Filii Dei', i.e., 'Substitute for the Son of God' inspired this view among church reformers. Hitler and many other rulers in the Contemporary Era were also considered 'antichrists', for they instilled terror and death, persecuted the church and tried to destroy Christianity. But the Antichrist will arise indeed at the end of time, at the time of the second coming of Jesus.

Thus, the Antichrist (the Beast that rises out of the sea) will carry out the role of king or ruler. He will rule the world during the second half of the Great Tribulation. In the 1st half, the Antichrist will be favorable, trying to unify countries and pacify the world and will promise solution to world problems, but in the second half he will reveal his true character. He will unite all nations under his economic, political and military power against the true Church of Christ, but the Messiah, Jesus, will defeat him:

- Rev. 16: 14b; 16; 17; 21: "who [*frogs = demons*] go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty... And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Harmagedon... The seventh

angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, 'It is done!'... and huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, dropped from heaven on people, until they cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague."

"Armageddon" is the Greek word used in the Textus Receptus; in Latin is "Harmagedon"; and in Hebrew, the name is 'Megiddo' or 'Esdrelon'). Textus Receptus, meaning 'Received Text', is the name given to a series of prints of the NT in Greek, which was the basis for several translations between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Armageddon = hill of Megiddo, mount of the place of multitudes; Megiddo = place of troops. The battle of Armageddon – There are not four battles, but one described in several ways: Rev. 16: 14b; 16; 17; 21; Rev. 17: 14; Rev. 19: 17-21; Rev. 20: 7-10.

- Rev. 17: 14: "*they [the beast and the ten kings he summoned, and the false prophet] will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.*"

- Rev. 19: 17-21: "Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, 'Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and their riders—flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great.' Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against the rider on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh."

- Rev. 20: 7-10: "When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them. And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

II) The beast that rose out of the earth (The false prophet):

Rev. 13: 11-18: "Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of all; and by the signs that it is allowed to perform on behalf of the beast, it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived; and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast could even speak and cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for

wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.”

The beast coming out of the earth (The False Prophet) represents the apostate religion.

While the horns of the beast that rises out of the sea (Rev. 13: 1) are political (kings), acting in the physical world, the power of the false prophet (the beast that rises out of the earth) is meek, it acts in the spiritual ambit, making use of piety and persuasion, deceiving people. The two horns represent the religious power structure that began in Israel with the priest and the prophet; in this case, the false prophecy and false priesthood. That's why Jesus spoke about the false prophets. Pretending to be a lamb, the False Prophet is, in fact, a wolf in sheep's clothing. He will make use of lying wonders (2 The. 2: 9), and will deceive people, causing them to believe in the beast (The Beast rising out of the sea or Antichrist: Rev. 13: 1-10) as if he were the promised Messiah. Israel, for example, has always seen the Messiah as a physical leader, a material one, manifesting himself with power in the natural world, a king (like David, for example) who one day will come to deliver them from the oppressing power of the Gentiles. He will unite all religions under the same doctrine (A religious syncretism), demanding the Antichrist to be worshiped as a god. We can already see today this religious syncretism mentioned above in the occult sects mixed with the doctrines of the church, in the eastern sects infiltrating the West, the increasing influence of Satanism, of the sects that use the invocation of the dead and in the worship of man (Humanism). Humanism is an outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. Humanist beliefs stress the potential value and goodness of human beings, emphasize common human needs, and seek solely rational ways of solving human problems. The False Prophet will do signs and wonders, all in deception and lies:

- 2 The. 2: 9: “The coming of the lawless one [*Here it's about the Antichrist, the anti-Christian power of the world, allied with the false prophet, the anti-Christian religious power*] is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power (Greek: dunamis or dunamei – δυναμι – Strong #g1411= ability, power to perform miracles), signs, (Greek: semeion = miracle, sign, token, wonder), lying wonders (Greek: teras or terata or terasin = of uncertain affinity; a prodigy or omen, wonder sign, token, proof).”

- Rev. 19: 20: “And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.”

- Rev. 13: 12-15: “It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of all; and by the signs that it is allowed to perform on behalf of the beast, it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived; and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast could even speak and cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”

- Rev. 19: 20: “And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.”

But the false prophet will only deceive those who have not accepted and will not accept Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (Rev. 13: 8: those whose name has not been

written from the foundation of the world in the Lamb's Book of Life), for the true Church, faithful to Christ, those who accept Him and acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior will withstand the false prophet and the Beast. They won't give up faith.

Another thing I think is important here is the Greek word for 'earth' (4 times in this version of the passage of Rev. 13: 11-18): 'ge' (γῆ, Strong #1093), meaning: the contracted form of a primitive word with the signification of: soil, therefore, a region, or the solid part or the whole of the terrene globe (including the occupants): the earth, soil, land, region, country, inhabitants of a region, country, earth, ground, land, world. By consequence, we can say that here the bible is talking about the planet Earth, in a complete way. The beasts will have universal dominion:

- Rev. 3: 10: "Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth."

- Lk. 21: 35: "For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth."

III) The beast that comes up from the bottomless pit (NIV: Abyss):

- Rev. 11: 7: "When they [*referring to the two witnesses*] have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit [*NIV, Abyss*] will make war on them and conquer them and kill them."

The beast that comes up from the bottomless pit (cf. Dan. 7: 3; 20-21; 25; Rev. 13: 5-7; Rev. 17: 8), if we compare it with these references, is the Antichrist himself. The bible writes 'bottomless pit' or 'Abyss', which suggests that its power is satanic. Furthermore, the references are placed in different sections of the book of Revelation:

Rev. 11: 7 (3rd section – Chapters 8–11)

Rev. 13: 1; 5-7 (4th section – Chapters 12–14)

Rev. 17: 3; 8 (6th section – Chapters 17–19)

Abyss = the Greeks employed this word in reference to the underworld of spirits, a huge bottomless pit into the depth of the earth, where evil spirits were imprisoned until the final punishment. The word used for 'bottomless pit' or 'abyss' is 'abussos' or 'abussou', and conveys the idea of a place so deep that it becomes unfathomable (cf. Lk. 8: 31). 'Abussos' or 'abussou' = bottomless, immeasurably deep, infernal, abyss, deep, bottomless pit. They also use the word 'phrear' = pit, a hole in the ground (dug for obtaining or holding water or other purposes), i.e., a cistern or well; figuratively, an abyss (as a prison), well, pit.

The Hebrew word for Abyss (or 'deep') can be written as thowm or thom or têhom, meaning an abyss (as a surging mass of water), especially the deep (the main sea or the subterranean water-supply), deep place, depth.

In Gen. 1: 2, the Hebrew word tehôm (deep place) was translated as deep: "the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters", with reference to the primitive idea of a vast mass of water on which the world floated or with reference to the underworld (habitation of demons, the place of the dead, the place of torment – Sheol = hell).

- Rev. 9: 1-2: "And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star [*an angel*] that had fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit; he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft."

The expression "of the bottomless pit", in Greek, is: 'tou phreatos tês abussou.'

- Rev. 9: 11: “They [*the locusts, the personification of demons liberated to torment men*] have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit [*NIV, the Abyss*]; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.”

Abaddon or Apollyon (Rev. 9: 11) is the satanic angel of Abyss (Bottomless Pit), whose name in Greek means ‘Destroyer’ (figure of Satan). In Hebrew, ‘abhaddôn’ means ‘Destroyer, i.e. Destroying Angel’ or ‘place of destruction’ and is regularly translated as such in certain versions of the Old Testament, to denote the grave (region of the dead). This region was considered by ancient Jews as ‘hell’, in Hebrew, Sheol; Hades and Geenna, in Greek.

Abaddon (the ‘Destroyer’ of Rev. 9: 11) can be the demon that was released to kill all the firstborn of Egypt in Ex 12: 23 (‘the destroyer’ – KJV, NIV, NRSV), hinting a proper name (‘the Destroyer’, as in Rev. 9: 11), although it can refer also to a destructive action from God Himself (shachath; Strong #7843: ruin, batter, destroy, destroyer, destruction, to corrupt, perish, lose, spoiler, waste).

- Ex. 12: 12-13: “For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and *no plague shall destroy* you when I strike the land of Egypt.”

- Ps. 78: 49: “He let loose on them his fierce anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of *destroying angels*” (referred to the Destroyer and his demons).

- Ex. 12: 23: “For the Lord will pass through to strike down the Egyptians; when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over that door and will not allow *the destroyer* to enter your houses to strike you down.”

The word **Abyss** (or **bottomless pit**) can also be found in:

- Rev. 20: 1-3: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit [*NIV, Abyss*; in Greek, ‘abussou’] and a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit [*in Greek, abussou*], and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be let out for a little while.”

The bible says that in the end, the victory will be achieved by Jesus:

Rev. 20: 10; 14-15: “And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever... Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

IV) The Great Babylon

- Rev. 17: 1-18: “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk.’ **3** So he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; and on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: ‘**Babylon the great,**

mother of whores and of earth's abominations.' And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly amazed. But the angel said to me, 'Why are you so amazed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. **8** The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to **ascend from the bottomless pit** and go to destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will be amazed when they see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. **9** This calls for a mind that has wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; also, they are seven kings, **10** of whom five have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a little while. **11** As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. **12** And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. **13** These are united in yielding their power and authority to the beast; **14** they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.' **15** And he said to me, 'The waters that you saw, where the whore is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. **16** And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire. **17** For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by agreeing to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. **18** The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.'"

The book of Revelation was written by John the apostle of Jesus (90-95 AD) to the provinces of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), during the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD), while he was a prisoner on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1: 9). He died a natural death in Ephesus, 100 or 103 AD, when he was 94 years old, after being released from prison under Nerva, the Roman emperor who succeeded Domitian.

- Rev. 17: 1-4: "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk.' So he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication."

The woman identified as a whore is seen in the wilderness, sitting on a scarlet beast. The description of the scarlet beast clearly associates it with the beast of the sea, the Antichrist (or the beast of the abyss – cf. Dan. 7: 3; 20-21; 25; Rev. 11: 7; Rev. 13: 1; 5- 7; Rev. 17: 3; 8), while they fiercely persecute God's people (v. 13-14). Like the dragon, this beast is also red in color (Rev. 12: 3).

She is seated 'on many waters', which means that this apostate religion mixed with the world's profane anti-Christian system has a worldwide influence (cf. v. 15: "And he said to me, 'The waters that you saw, where the whore is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages'").

"The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of

her fornication” – this shows her wealth, ostentation, trying to impress the world and seducing people.

- Rev. 17: 5: “and on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: ‘Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth’s abominations.’” This is an interesting comparison with the custom of ancient Rome, where prostitutes carried their names on their foreheads. False religion, that is, the worship of gods other than the one true God, is called by Him spiritual prostitution. The word ‘mystery’ is explained in v. 7-8.

- Rev. 17: 6: “And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly amazed.”

The woman called Babylon is drunk with the blood of Christian saints and martyrs (Matt. 24: 21), as well as with the wine of her fornication (Rev. 17: 2). Both violence and fornication are repugnant to the Lord, for they persecute God’s people. In this verse the woman’s hatred of Christianity is clear. To be drunk with the blood of the saints indicates a time of extraordinary slaughter. The Roman Empire worshiped emperors. Christians were opposed; then martyrdom came. Papal Rome under the regime of the Inquisition sentenced millions of faithful to death. In the 20th century, the world wars, with the Holocaust, consequently, the ‘iron curtain’ and the ‘bamboo curtain’ and the Islamic countries with their persecutions of Christianity led millions of faithful to Christ to death.

- Rev. 17: 7-8: “But the angel said to me, ‘Why are you so amazed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will be amazed when they see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.’”

For John’s time, the beast rising out of the sea, or the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit (or Abyss) it is the same entity, and means the mighty Roman Empire. For other times, it was represented by many pagan empires. In the case of the eschatological Antichrist, a totalitarian state opposed to the work of God.

This means that the view of this text is not just for John’s days, or just for the Middle Ages, for example, but for the entire history of the church and for the end times. The Roman Emperors embodied, so to speak, the spirit of the antichrist, for they rose up against God and His doctrine brought by Jesus. But he has not yet personified himself in the eschatological Antichrist, who will bring Christ’s final victory over evil. Antichrist will only have power over those who do not have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

- Rev. 17: 9-10: “This calls for a mind that has wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; also, they are seven kings, of whom five have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a little while.”

As we saw previously, ‘beasts’ (terrifying-looking animals) are symbols of empires. The angel told him that the seven heads are seven mountains and also seven kings.

‘Mountains’ can be a reference to the seven hills along the Tiber, a well-known designation of the city of Rome (“on which the woman is seated”), influencing peoples and multitudes and nations and languages, but it can also refer to the successive world empires, since mountains are symbols of kingdoms and empires of the earth (Ps. 30: 7;

Jer. 51: 25; Dan. 2: 35; 44-45). Antichrist embodied himself in the Roman emperors, but it can also refer to empires that have passed (before the Roman Empire) and also have fallen, and to those that are yet to come.

“Of whom five have fallen” – besides the seven mountains referring to the seven hills of Rome, on which the corrupt religion is seated, the seven heads, the seven mountains, symbolize the great empires of History that have passed: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece.

“One is living” means the Roman Empire, in which John was inserted and which would last materially until the 15th century (1453), but would continue to exert its spiritual influence.

“And the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a little while” – the seventh king or kingdom. This is linked to the next verses (v. 11-12), about the ten kings:

- Rev. 17: 11-12: “As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.”

It means that the anti-Christian spirit has materialized in various rulers throughout History, but it is not yet the real character, the 8th king, who will trigger the return of Christ and the restoration of all things, that is, the eschatological Antichrist. The ten kings (the ten contemporary kings) will be the kingdoms of the world (‘the seventh king’ or ‘the seventh kingdom’) that will support the eschatological Antichrist, but they will be short-lived (‘One hour’) and out of them the Antichrist will arise (‘the 8th king’), who will claim full honor and sovereignty. They will all gather against the Lamb for Armageddon (v. 14), but they will be destroyed, just as Antichrist will be slain by the sword that comes out of Jesus’ mouth (“it goes to destruction”). We can think of the seventh world empire as a kind of revitalized Roman Empire over which the Antichrist establishes the imperial authority of a dictator, and will become the 8th and final king demanding universal authority.

- Rev. 17: 13-14: “These are united in yielding their power and authority to the beast; they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”

The ten kings who have not yet received the crown are the ten contemporary kings. When John wrote about the sea beast in Rev. 13: 3 (“One of its heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed. In amazement the whole earth followed the beast”) he was saying that the mighty Roman Empire (The Beast rising out of the sea, in the figure of a leader and a confederate empire) even after being divided and fragmented among many nations and without a single emperor to rule (“the head that seemed to have received a death-blow”), in the future will find restoration of its imperial form of government, as it will have an emperor again (the Beast).

These kings will receive power for a short time (“for an hour”) and will support the Antichrist. They will unite (Battle of Armageddon) to fight against the Lamb, but they will not prevail. This means the world will collapse and be defeated at the 2nd coming of Christ. The church follows the victory of the Lamb (v. 14). The church is God’s elect, those faithful to Him, those who believe; who seek holiness and life with God; therefore, they are blameless.

- Rev. 17: 15: “And he said to me, ‘The waters that you saw, where the whore is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.’”

In the same way that John uses two figures of speech to describe the church of Christ (‘bride’ and city, the ‘new Jerusalem’), he also uses two images to describe the apostate, corrupt church: ‘Babylon’ and ‘whore.’ Here it is clear that the whore is known for her worldwide influence (“whore who is seated on many waters”, i.e., nations, peoples, multitudes, and languages); therefore, the apostate church acts in the world and uses the culture of the world; it is Satan’s ecclesiastical system that speaks in the name of God, it is mixed in a religious and political syncretism that leads people to apostasy and false salvation. But it is not neutral, it is opposed to God, it is anti-Christian. Rome tolerated all the gods of the nations, but didn’t tolerate true Christianity; so Rome persecuted Christians. Continuing in his description of the whore, John shows that she is also known for wealth, vanity, pomp, arrogance, spiritual prostitution, violence, cruelty, thirst for conquest, greed and ostentation of power and a limitless ambition, wanting to reach the crowds and impress the world with her appearance (v. 4-5). In this respect, the city of Rome in the time of the emperors or the city of Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar was not different from the city of Nineveh in the time of the Assyrians, described by Zephaniah and Nahum: an arrogant and very confident city, bloodthirsty (for it lived on wars and spoils), known for its cruelty, full of lies and theft (Nah. 3: 1), and lived on spiritual prostitution for the multitude of gods with which it corrupted other nations; ‘mistress of sorceries’, who led astray many peoples (Nah. 3: 4); mercantile city (Nah. 3: 16), greedy and insatiable, which devoured what it saw ahead (Nah. 3: 17). Like Babylon, the city of Nineveh had a great supply of water and very great wealth (Nah. 2: 2-4; 7-9).

- Rev. 17: 16-17: “And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by agreeing to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.”

God will provoke an internal war in the kingdom of the beast, that is, the kings will turn against the whore (Rev. 17: 16-17), for God has put this idea in their thoughts (v. 17), and they will totally destroy her.

The Antichrist, ‘the man of lawlessness’ (or ‘the man doomed to destruction’ or ‘the lawless one’ – 2 The. 2: 3; 8-9), whose political power has always been opposed to God throughout the centuries and with greater intensity at the end of time, uses religion according to his convenience, but in the end he will turn against apostate religion and will destroy it. The religions that support the Antichrist will also be destroyed by him. He will look for a single religion. He will position himself as the supreme king and as a god (in place of the true God – cf. Dan. 11: 36; Matt. 24-25; 2 The. 2: 4).

- Rev. 17: 16-17: “And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire.” – As this description is similar to that of God’s judgment on Babylon (Rev. 18: 8), it seems that the Lord uses the armies of the beast as His instrument of judgment over the kingdom of Antichrist (Rev. 18) before they themselves are destroyed (Rev. 19: 19-21). As it was God Himself who instilled this division, this proves His sovereignty. He never lost control of History.

- Rev. 17: 18: “The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

As I have explained above, the woman in John's vision (v. 1-6) is Rome, symbol of the great city of Babylon (Rev. 16: 19) and also the ancient mother of whores (Rev. 17: 5). Thus, the Satanic influence of this city on world leaders continued from Babel through Babylon to Rome (v. 9-10), its classic manifestation in the first century AD.

The bible says that in the end the victory will be Jesus':

Rev. 20: 10; 14-15: "And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever... Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."

Conclusion:

Antichrist is not a person yet; it is a symbol of a power of evil against everything that symbolizes Christ (the Spirit of God's love), and that nowadays is manifested in a spirit contrary to Jesus (here, the word 'spirit' does not refer to a specific spiritual entity, but means the idea, the dominant force, the temper, the tendency, the thought), logically under the action of Satan and spiritual Rulers and Authorities, making use of what is in the world, such as science, technology, money, knowledge, fame and rulers who exert great influence, and even religion (religious leaders) leading large masses of people into deception, with new doctrines, false teaching and false prophecies; in short, everything that tries to show that it is stronger than the true God and arises as a god in the spirit and the life of people, moving them away from the truth and simplicity of Jesus.

John also called this anti-Christian force Babylon, not only referring to the ancient city in Chaldea or the city of Rome, as well as the confused, perverse and profane world system, antagonistic to the Kingdom of God, using not only religion (The apostate church, prostituted with worldly abominations, that is, the religious system of the Antichrist, which began with Romanism in the NT) but also secular powers (such as the world monetary system, trade and politics) to oppress and try to steal faith in God's word preached by Jesus.

In fact, the Antichrist (the Beast rising out of the sea) will manifest (2 The. 2: 3; 2 The. 2: 7-12; Dan. 9: 27; Dan. 11: 31; Dan. 12: 11) in the person of a political leader, an ungodly ruler (Rev. 13: 1-10 – symbolizing the Roman Empire), allied with ten kings and helped by a religious leader, the false prophet (the beast rising out of the earth – Rev. 13: 11-15), in the period of the Great Tribulation (Dan. 9: 27; Dan. 12: 1-2; Matt. 24: 15-31; Mk. 13: 3-27; Lk. 21: 5-28; Rev. 7: 14). In the 1st half, the Antichrist will show favorable to the nations, but in the 2nd half he'll reveal his true character. He will unite all nations under his economic, political and military power against the true Church of Christ, but the Messiah (Jesus) will defeat him: Rev. 16: 14b; 16; 17; 21; Rev. 17: 14; Rev. 19: 17-21; Rev. 20: 7-10.

The Beast rising out of the earth has a meek power, acting in the spiritual realm. He will perform lying wonders (2 The. 2: 9), causing people all over the earth to believe in the Beast rising out of the sea (Antichrist: Rev. 13: 1-10) as if he were the promised Messiah. But the false prophet shall not deceive those whose names are written in the in the Lamb's Book of Life, for the true Church, faithful to Christ, won't give up faith.

The beast of Abyss or Bottomless Pit (cf. Dan. 7: 3; 20-21; 25; Rev. 11: 7; Rev. 13: 1; 5-7; Rev. 17: 3; 8) is, actually, the Antichrist himself (the Beast rising out of the sea). Beside the beasts, the bible reveals the generator of all this: Satan, represented by the

figure of a dragon, but all of them will be defeated by Jesus, who will throw them into the lake of fire and sulfur (Rev. 20: 10; 14).

As for the real identity of the future confederate kings we don't have certainty yet. We only know that the kings of several nations will make a coalition in Israel for the great battle of Armageddon where the Antichrist (the last anti-Christian power) will be defeated at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 19: 11-20), along with the beast and the false prophet. These kings are interpreted by some scholars as the barbarian peoples that occupied the Earth after the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476 AD): Alamanni (Germany); Franks (France); Burgundians (Switzerland); Anglo-Saxons (England); Visigoths (Spain); Swabians or Suebi (Portugal); Lombards (Russia and divisions); Vandals (North Africa, Mediterranean); Heruli (Italy) and Ostrogoths (Austria). Other theologians say it could be a coalition of Western nations; and others, a unified Europe.

Part 5 - The Great Tribulation

This theme continues the study about the prophecies of Daniel and the visions of John in relation to the Apocalypse. The Great Tribulation will be a period of great hardships, before the Rapture of Christ's church, involving the whole Earth (Lk. 21: 35; Rev. 3: 10) and especially the Holy Land (Israel), where the Antichrist will exercise a cruel reign. The judgments of God will arise too: the plagues, against those who carry the mark of the beast. The beast will be defeated by Jesus.

Many Christians ask, "Will the people of God stay here on Earth during the Great Tribulation?"

The answer is, "Yes! The Church of Christ will face the Great Tribulation." (Lk. 21: 35). But the Lord will not allow His people to be afflicted before they have His seal on their foreheads, that they may be prepared against all the conflicts – Rev. 7: 3b; Rev. 9: 4b; Rev. 14: 1; Rev. 22: 3b-4; cf. Ezek. 9: 4-6. The seal of the Spirit will be clearly visible both by friends and enemies. Then, the Lord will come to fetch her (Matt. 24: 29-31). After the rapture, it will be the time of the plagues for those who didn't repent of their sins and carry the mark of the Beast on the foreheads and hands (Rev. 13: 16; 18). The Beast will be defeated by Jesus.

God always protected His people from the calamities that He Himself brought to the wicked. He delivered those who were His from His wrath but He did not take them from the place where they were. He left them there to see His action, His judgment and His justice. The people witnessed the plagues of Egypt, watched God's judgment on Babylon before they were delivered from there but they were not removed by Him before His work was completed. The people survived Haman's death decree against the Jews in Susan, Persia, but through struggle. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego did not bow to the statue erected by Nebuchadnezzar but were freed from death, for believing in Him and resisting oppression. Jesus said: "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world" (Jn. 17: 15-16). He also taught us to pray: "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matt. 6: 13). Ps. 30: 1-2 says: "I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me."

The Great Tribulation will be a period of unprecedented difficulties in the second half of the week described in Dan. 9: 26-27; Dan. 12: 1-2; Dan. 12: 9-12; Rev 7: 14, involving the whole Earth (Lk. 21: 35; Rev. 3: 10), with its apex in the Holy Land (Israel – Rev. 11: 1-2), where the Antichrist (the beast rising out of the sea) will be known in the form of a man (In the first half of Daniel's week, that is, in the first half of the Great Tribulation, he will appear favorable to all peoples), receiving power and authority directly from Satan (Rev. 13: 4-5) and exercising a cruel reign (in the second half, when he will reveal his true character). During this period there will be a big activity of demons who are allowed to torment men (Rev. 9: 2-11), along with the judgments of God (the plagues or bowls) against those who have the mark of the Beast and we not caught up. Thus, the Great Tribulation will be immediately followed by the return of Christ (The Rapture of the Church: Matt. 24: 15-31; Mk. 13: 1-27; Lk. 21: 5-28; Lk. 17: 20-36). The seventh trumpet mentioned in Rev. 11: 5 is the moment of the Rapture of the saints and the beginning of God's judgments over the wicked, that is, the plagues, the bowls of God's wrath).

- Rev. 11: 13-14: "At that moment there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified

and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed. The third woe is coming very soon.”

This scene speaks of Jesus’ second coming (cf. 1 The. 4: 16-17), the moment of the Rapture, when the saints ascend with the Lord and the wicked are frightened by His judgment and what happens to nature around them.

- Rev. 11: 15: “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet (The 7th trumpet), and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.’”

Now the glory of the kingdom of God has come over all, hence the songs of praise. Here the power of Christ is seen in its fullness. The 7th trumpet is not just an event, but it leads to the seven plagues of God’s total wrath (Rev. 15–16), hence the despair of the wicked (Rev. 11: 11; 13). Thus the seventh trumpet heralds the time of the end; the kingdom of the world became Christ’s.

- 1 The. 4: 16-17: “For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.”

NIV: “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

- Dan. 9: 26-27: “After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one [NIV: ‘The Anointed One’ = *the first coming of Jesus and His death*] shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary [*It refers to Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple*]. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed [*Bloodshed like a flood because of one war after another. Until the end times, Israel and Jerusalem will go through wars, that’s what it means*]. He [*] shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator [NIV: And on a wing of the temple he will, set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him]. In the original document in Hebrew, according to the footnote in NIV, it is written: “And one who causes desolation will come upon the pinnacle of the abominable temple, until the end that is decreed is poured out on the desolated city.”

[*] The bible refers to the end times and to the Antichrist, who will establish this desolation (‘sacrilege’ – Dan. 11: 31) in the second half of the prophetic week of Daniel (*in the last three years and a half*).

We cannot be categorical in stating a literal time here of 3 ½ years in relation to the eschatological Antichrist, but we can say that it will be a period of time that the Lord will shorten by His mercy (Mk. 13: 20). This number (3 ½ years), as we can see from the prophecy of Dan. 9: 26-27, is the symbol of the victorious power of the world, in contrast with the number seven, the number of the divine fullness. In this particular case, referring to Jesus, time seems to have been fulfilled from a literal point of view (the time of His ministry), as well as in relation to Titus, in the first Jewish-Roman war (66-70 AD), when the Roman legions under his command besieged and destroyed the center of rebel resistance in Jerusalem on 1st August 67 AD, culminating in the

destruction of the temple in 70 AD, and defeated the Jewish remaining forces [3 ½ years].

In relation to the eschatological Antichrist this time is still unknown, but we can realize his malice, deceit and haughtiness this way: he tries to repeat an act of covenant that was done by the Anointed One, the true Messiah, Jesus (mentioned in v.26). It was Jesus who came to make an ultimate covenant through His blood, and thus, He confirmed the new covenant with His people, abolishing (making cease) the Jewish sacrifices and the Levitical worship in the temple forever, for the old covenant was revoked. This happened in the first half of the week, that is, three years and a half, the time of His ministry, which symbolizes the half of a week of seven years, that is, 3 ½ years. This number is the symbol of the victorious power of the world, in contrast with the number seven, the number of the divine fullness. The world felt victorious with Jesus' death but this was only the beginning of something greater. The bible says that Jesus made a strong covenant with many: Isa. 42: 6; Isa. 53: 11; Jer. 31: 31-34; Mal. 3: 1; Matt. 20: 28; Matt. 26: 28; Lk. 22: 20; Rom. 5: 15; Heb. 9: 28.

- Rev. 13: 4-5: "They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?' The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months" [3 ½ years].

- Dan. 12: 1-2: "At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book [*The bible was referring to the book of Life*]. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

- Rev. 11: 1-2: "Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, 'Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months'" [3 ½ years].

In the eschatological context, this means Christ's church being separated and protected by God in a time of intense persecution and massacre of the Antichrist, where the distinction is made between the true worshipers and those who are not under the true covenant with God, but the church still will be preaching His Word (the two witnesses – Rev. 11: 3-4). In other words, the time when the church is exposed to the persecution of Antichrist, when the two witnesses will be prophesying and cannot be touched until their work is done.

- Dan. 12: 9-12: "He said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked shall continue to act wickedly (Rev. 22: 11). None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days. Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred thirty-five days.'" [*]

It is written (v. 10): "Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined", which means that the people of God living at that time will also be passing their particular test of faith and perseverance in Christ to enter His kingdom like all the saints of the past passed theirs; hence, the verses below say:

- Rev. 7: 14: 'I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'these are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

• Rev. 3: 10: “Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth”.

[*] As it was written above, Dan. 12: 11-12: “From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days. Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred thirty-five days.” We know that the forty-two months or 3 ½ years or 1,260 days corresponds to the time of action of the Antichrist wanting to be worshiped as a god (‘the abomination that desolates’ or (‘the abomination that causes desolation), that is, although the second period of the Great Tribulation has this duration, an additional period of thirty days completing one thousand two hundred ninety days. And the angel adds “Happy are those who persevere and attain the thousand three hundred thirty-five days”, that is, still another period of 45 days till 1,335 days.

According to the theological line of Dispensational premillennialism, which believes in the establishment of Christ Millennial Kingdom on Earth, after de Rapture of the Gentile church and when He reigns here physically with His saints, materially fulfilling the OT prophecies for the Jews, this additional period of 30 days after the Great Tribulation seems to be required to purification and restoration of the Temple, and still another period of 45 days until the full blessing of the Kingdom of the Messiah (1,335 days).

However, from the Amillennialism point of view (which is being followed in this study and the book of Revelation), this period of 75 ‘extra’ days may not be literal (as the 3 ½ years does not signify a literal time) and perhaps (this is my speculation) these days may correspond to the 3 ½ days of Rev. 11: 9 which are the days in which the ungodly world celebrates the victory over the death of the two witnesses, before they are resurrected and ascend to heaven in a cloud:

Rev. 11: 9-15 says: “For three and a half days members of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb; and the inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and celebrate and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to the inhabitants of the earth. But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and those who saw them were terrified. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here!’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them. At that moment there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed. The third woe (*the seventh trumpet*) is coming very soon. Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.’”

Explaining better: the Beast and his followers celebrate the supposed victory over the church of Christ (the two witnesses) after their fierce persecution, but this time may be a last chance for repentance given by God before the coming of Jesus and the rapture of the Church (“And they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them”) and the release of His plagues on those condemned to hell (“seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and **the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven**”). The third woe, the seventh trumpet, is the representation of the coming of Christ, the judgment on all His enemies and His total dominion over the world. This short break would not only be a time to benefit sinners by giving them the

chance to repent, but above all, to prepare and restore His church, despondent and tired of persecution, for the joyful moment of her redemption.

We can also see a similarity between the death of Jesus and His stay in the tomb for 3 days, which made hell happy, because He seemed to have been destroyed, but the Son of God rose again after three days and showed Himself alive, putting the enemy to shame and surprising men and demons (Col. 2: 15), because they saw once again the power of God. In the same way, when the Antichrist thinks that the church of Christ has been destroyed, it will show itself alive and will be raptured, and the Christians who were already dead in the body will be resurrected.

Jesus' prophecies

• Matt. 24: 1-31:

1 As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.

2 Then he asked them, 'You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down'.

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'

4 Jesus answered them, Beware that no one leads you astray.

5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will lead many astray.

6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, **but the end is not yet.**

7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places:

8 all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

9 Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name.

10 Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another.

11 **And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.**

12 And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold.

13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

14 And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; **and then the end will come.**

15 **So when you see the desolating sacrilege** standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand),

16 then those in Judea must flee to the mountains;

17 the one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house;

18 the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat.

19 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!

20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath.

21 For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.

22 And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; **but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.**

23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'There he is!' – do not believe it.

24 For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, **to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.**

25 Take note, I have told you beforehand.

26 So, if they say to you, ‘Look! He is in the wilderness’, do not go out. If they say, ‘Look! He is in the inner rooms’, do not believe it.

27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, **so will be the coming of the Son of Man.**

28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

29 Immediately after the suffering of those days [*The Great Tribulation, that’s what it means*] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and **they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**

31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and **they will gather his elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.



• Mk 13: 1-27:

1 As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!’

2 Then Jesus asked him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down’.

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately,

4 ‘Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?’

5 Then Jesus began to say to them, Beware that no one leads you astray.

- 6 Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray.
- 7 **When you hear of wars and rumors of wars**, do not be alarmed; this must take place, **but the end is still to come.**
- 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.
- 9 As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them.
- 10 **And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations.**
- 11 When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.
- 12 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death;
- 13 and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.
- 14 But when you **see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be** (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains;
- 15 the one on the housetop must not go down or enter the house to take anything away;
- 16 the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat.
- 17 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!
- 18 Pray that it may not be in winter.
- 19 **For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been** from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be.
- 20 And if the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he has cut short those days.
- 21 And if anyone says to you at that time, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'Look! There he is!'—do not believe it.
- 22 False messiahs and false prophets will appear and **produce signs and omens**, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.
- 23 But be alert; I have already told you everything.
- 24 But in those days, **after that suffering**, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,
- 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
- 26 **Then they will see the Son of Man** coming in clouds with great power and glory.
- 27 **Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect** from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

• Lk 21: 5-36:

- 5 When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said,
- 6 'As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down'.
- 7 They asked him, 'Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?'
- 8 And he said, Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them.

9 When you hear of **wars and insurrections**, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, **but the end will not follow immediately.**

10 Then he said to them, Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom;

11 there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

12 But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name.

13 This will give you **an opportunity to testify.**

14 So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance;

15 for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict.

16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death.

17 You will be hated by all because of my name.

18 But not a hair of your head will perish.

19 By your endurance you will gain your souls.

20 When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.

21 Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it, and those out in the country must not enter it;

22 for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written.

23 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days!

For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people;

24 they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; **and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled** (cf. Matt. 21: 43; Rom. 11: 25; Rev. 11: 2).

25 There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, **for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

27 Then **they will see the Son of Man** coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, **because your redemption is drawing near.**

29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees;

30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near.

31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.

33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly,

35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth.

36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."



Important comments on the three passages above

1) There are passages that apply to all eras of Christianity between the 1st and 2nd coming of Jesus, for there have always been wars, persecutions of His followers, famines, epidemics and natural events, but we know that these will intensify as the end approaches: Matt. 24: 1-14; Mk. 13: 1-13; Lk. 21: 5-19.

2) In the verses of Matt. 24: 15-21, Mk. 13: 14-19 and Lk. 21: 20-24, Jesus speaks about the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and the interesting thing is that Lk. 21: 22 says: “for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written.” This was not a coincidence, but rather a consequence of the sin and unbelief of the Jews and an evident rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. He had already warned them about this punishment from God:

- Lk. 13: 34-35: “Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem. ‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!’”

- Lk. 19: 41-44: “As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.’”

“But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be” or “So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel” or “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that

its desolation has come near” – this refers to Titus entering the Temple, desecrating it, as Antiochus IV Epiphanes did in the past.

The Jews who had the chance fled to the mountains or to Pella, in the Decapolis region, or towards the Mediterranean, and managed to escape the Roman massacre. Entering the city was also dangerous for those who were outside (“the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat”; “those out in the country must not enter it”). That is why Jesus was already warning them not to worry about trivial things (“the one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house”), because they had to leave in a hurry. Pregnant and nursing women would have difficulty fleeing or defending themselves, because the violence of the Romans would not spare their newborn babies or those still in the womb. And this was under God’s control because of their rebellion and hardened hearts in the face of the chance for salvation that He had given them through Jesus (“for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written... For there will be great distress on the earth and wrath against this people”).

This makes us reflect on what God feels about attitudes of idolatry, rebellion and rejection of Jesus Christ by a person and on the strength of His wrath against evil in all ages of humanity, even more so in the last days!

Indeed, it was one of the great disasters in Jewish history, remembered to this day (“For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be”; “they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations, that is, the Diaspora”). It is not known what day of the week the siege of the city began or the major destruction occurred. What is known is that it was Passover time when the siege began, around April 14th, and lasted until September 8th, 70 AD – 4 months, 3 weeks and 4 days; on August 1st, 67 AD they destroyed the center of rebel resistance in Jerusalem, culminating in the destruction of the temple sometime in August 70 AD (some rabbis say it was a little earlier). Herod’s Palace fell on September 7th, and the city came completely under Roman control on September 8th. According to Flavius Josephus [‘The War of the Jews’ book IV, chapters 1 to 4] it was the seventeenth of Tammuz (June-July) when the first breach was made in the wall by the Romans, and three weeks later, on the 9th of Av (July-August), their army managed to penetrate the Temple, plunder it and destroy it. Therefore, we are certain that it did not occur in winter, as mentioned by Jesus (“Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath”), but we do not know whether it was on Sabbath. And finally, He adds in Lk. 21:24: “and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (cf. Matt. 21: 43; Rom. 11: 25; Rev. 11: 2).

3) In the last group, Jesus speaks about the period of the Great Tribulation: Matt. 24: 22-31; Mk. 13: 20-27 and Lk. 21: 25-36. More than that, He says that everything will be unexpected (Matt. 24: 27): “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” This corroborates the statement made above about the times referred to by Daniel as the end time not being literal; for what would be the use if the wicked knew the date and prepared themselves?

- Dan. 12: 10: “Many shall be purified, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked shall continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.”

The verse that most sustains the faith of the Christian is: “Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Lk. 21: 28).

The book of Revelation brings three texts of interest to us

Rev. 7 (Hundred and forty-four thousand sealed of Israel):

3 saying, 'Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.'

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel:

5 From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,

6 from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,

7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,

8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph [Ephraim] twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand sealed.

Rev. 7 (The great multitude in white robes):

9 After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.

10 They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

14 I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

Rev. 14 (The Lamb and the 144,000):

1 Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps,

3 and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth.

4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb,

5 and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless.

The number twelve symbolizes the number of the elective purposes of God; in other words, the number of the election and the calling. One hundred and forty-four means twelve times twelve. One hundred and forty-four thousand mean a number infinitely great of saved to the Lord; it is the symbol of totality (12x12x1000), referring to all who will be saved (in the OT and the NT) and those who will be sealed at the time of the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7: 3, Rev. 9: 4 cf. Ezek. 9: 4-6; Rev. 7: 13-14) with the seal of the Father and the Son, instead of having the mark of the beast (Rev. 13: 17); therefore, to be preserved from the calamities to come. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7: 9; 13-14): "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and

languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands... Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

There is no separation between Jews and Gentiles in these texts; all are saved in the same way: by faith in Jesus and by His grace. That is why it is written in Rev. 5: 9b-10: "for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth."

What happens is that these are two phases of the same vision of the church of Christ, of the spiritual Israel of God: the first phase where John 'hears' the number of those who will be sealed, before God pours out the seventh bowl ('I heard the number of those who were sealed' – v. 4), and who will face the ordeals. Then John sees, as a consoling promise given by God, that same multitude, already victorious, redeemed and glorified, before the throne of the Lamb, celebrating the victory ('After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands').

In the third text (Rev. 14: 1-5), John speaks of the one hundred and forty-four thousand "who have been redeemed from the earth" (verse 3). In this text, the Bible says that "It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless" (Rev 14: 4-5). They are the same 144,000 who were sealed from all the tribes of Israel (chapter 7) and who resisted the lies and attacks of the beast, and didn't allow themselves to be corrupted with idolatry, separating themselves to Christ and not denying His name.

"Redeemed from the earth" may mean the Earth, in general, in the period of the Great Tribulation.

"And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth" (Rev. 14: 3) – this verse means the song of victory (cf. Rev 5: 9-10) for their redemption by Christ and only those who are already in heaven and the 144,000 bought from the earth can sing it.

The bible also talks about the "the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion," which is probably the heavenly Jerusalem (the only reference to Zion in Revelation – cf. Heb. 12: 22). These 144,000 are already in heaven. Therefore, the bible says they are the 'Firstfruits'; because they are saved at the time of the harvest and the vintage (Rev. 14: 14-16 – the harvest; 17-20 – the vintage), i.e., they were separated from the wicked, which corresponds to the same scene of Rev. 16: 16 (the Rapture of the Church before the battle of Armageddon), before the Lord brings the punishment described in Rev. 16: 17, that is, the seventh bowl, and His wrath be consummated on the wicked.

"Firstfruits" means all those saved unto God ("to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" described in Heb. 12: 23), for in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless, that is, they are blameless as to the testimony of Christ, they have spiritual purity.

"These follow the Lamb wherever he goes" – it means those who follow Jesus to the end, even if it is to martyrdom, and who are now with Him in glory, alongside His person, as a reward for their faithfulness to Him.

The twenty-four elders

Dan. 7: 9-10; 26: “As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One (*God*) took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court (*God and the twenty-four elders*) sat in judgment, and the books were opened... Then the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away (*to take away the dominion of the beast, that’s what it means*), to be consumed and totally destroyed.”

In the book of Revelation, ‘the twenty-four elders’ are mentioned in:

- Rev. 4: 4; 10-11: “Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads... the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.’”

- Rev. 5: 5; 8-10: “Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals’... When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.’”

- Rev. 11: 16: “Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God.”

- Rev. 19: 4: “And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, ‘Amen. Hallelujah!’”



The twenty-four elders

The twenty-four elders will participate in the judgment of evil, in the end times. But in all the texts we’ve read above, they only bow down before God and worship and praise Him for His justice and judgment. They do not speak words of judgment from their own mouths. All we can think is that they know the thoughts and the will of God

more than anyone else, and they are in accordance with the Lord. Before the Lord, they are holy; so can sit at His side. They are not angels; they are humans who were redeemed, for the bible speaks of crowns; and angels won't receive a crown, but the saints (1 Cor. 9: 24-25; 1 Pet. 5: 4).



The twenty-four elders and the great multitude of the redeemed before the Lamb

But as for the identity of the 24 elders, it is difficult to say exactly who they are, that is, identifying them with the patriarchs and with the twelve apostles of Jesus is not entirely correct; hence it is more accurate to say that they represent the court of God (Dan 7: 9-10; 26), the OT and NT Church, the universal church of Christ in the position of honor, because they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

In Jn 5: 22 it is written that the Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son (Jesus).

During the Last Supper, we can read:

- Matt. 19: 28: “Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

- Lk. 22: 28-30: “You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

In Rev. 3: 21 (letter to the Church of Laodicea) it is written: “To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

Paul also says:

- 1 Cor. 6: 2-3: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels – to say nothing of ordinary matters?”

- 1 Cor. 9: 24-25: “Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one.”

When Paul speaks of judging angels, he probably is referring to Satan and the fallen angels, what is implicit in the fact that we'll agree with the trial of God, which it is already decreed upon all of them. In other words, we are one body, whose head is Jesus.

So, on the Judgment Day, we will take part in it, having Christ as eternal judge and the representative of all His elect, who agree in all His decisions.

Peter says:

- 1 Pet. 5:4: “And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away.”

Summing up: Believers are and still will be incredibly blessed to participate in the kingdom of God, to receive the crown of glory (the very likeness of Christ) and still have the right to sit on thrones as the apostles of the Lord and the twenty-four elders. All the saints will participate in the judgment given by God over evil, over the fallen angels and on the apostate Jews who refused to accept Jesus as Lord and Son of God, and all who have the mark of the beast.

God also brings the plagues for those wicked who have not been caught, that is, to those who served and worshiped the beast. The beast and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire and sulfur:

- Rev. 19: 20: “And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.”

- Rev. 20: 4-5: “Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.”

- Rev. 20: 6: “Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years.”

The first resurrection

The resurrection of saved believers (‘the first resurrection’ quoted above) is called the ‘resurrection of the righteous’ (Lk. 14: 14) or ‘resurrection of life’ (Jn. 5: 24: “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life” – the life, that is, the spiritual resurrection now, of him who accepts Him; Jn. 5: 28-29a: the bodily resurrection in the future, as it is written in Dan. 12: 2), also referred to by Paul in 1 Cor. 15: 20; 23-28; 44; 51-52 and 1 The. 4: 13-17 (when he speaks of the bodily resurrection of those who received the spiritual resurrection here on earth by giving their lives to Jesus); Rom. 6: 4: “Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” – cf. Col. 2: 12: “when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”

After this, comes the ‘resurrection to the judgment’ or ‘the resurrection to condemnation’ (Jn. 5: 29; Dan. 12: 1-2) on the Day of Judgment before the great white throne (Rev. 11: 18; Rev. 20: 11-15), and which will determine the fate of all. That’s why the bible talks about the books of the lives of men being opened to be judged by

the Lord according to their works (Rev. 20: 12; Dan. 7: 9-10; cf. 1 Cor. 4: 5). The saved will not have their books opened to be condemned but to receive the Kingdom of God.

The two resurrections are two future events without distinction of time. In Jn. 5: 24-25; 28-29, Jesus was teaching about the entirety of the resurrection for the saved and the unbelieving, not the time it would take place:

- 1st resurrection: the ‘resurrection of the righteous’ (Lk. 14: 14) or ‘resurrection of life’ (Jn. 5: 24) – the spiritual resurrection now, of those who accept Jesus, are born again in the spirit, dies to the old self and resurrects to a new life with Christ.

- 2nd resurrection (the ‘resurrection to the judgment’ or ‘the resurrection to condemnation’) – on the Day of Judgment, the day of the bodily resurrection of the dead: the dead of the wicked will receive condemnation, while those who received Jesus in life as Lord and Savior, those who have gone through the experience of the 1st resurrection (the spiritual one), will not go through death, will not enter into condemnation. However, all Christians will have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14: 10; 2 Cor. 5: 10), not to be punished for sin, but to receive the inheritance in the Kingdom of the Messiah. They will only take possession of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, for their names are written in the Lamb’s book of Life. Their resurrected body, soul and spirit will be with God in eternity.

This makes us think that the coming of Jesus and the consummation of the ages doesn’t take days, months or years; they will occur at the very moment of Jesus’ coming. He comes, defeats darkness, and makes His judgment (Matt. 24: 29-31; Matt. 25: 31-34; Matt. 16: 27), passing the kingdom to the Father: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matt. 25: 31-34).

The Day of Judgment

On the Day of Judgment (Rev. 11: 18; Rev. 20: 11-15), the second death will take place (the lake of fire and sulfur); in other words, ‘the resurrection to judgment’ or ‘resurrection of condemnation’ (Jn. 5: 29; Dan. 12: 1-2). The dead that did not come to life in the first resurrection will be judged when the books are opened (Rev. 20: 12; Dan. 7: 9-10). Death and hell, as well as those whose names were not found in the Book of Life (Those who are not Christ’s); all of them will be cast into the lake that burns with fire and sulfur (the second death – Rev. 20: 14-15; Rev. 21: 8):

- Rev. 20: 10-15: “And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it [*Jesus*]; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened [*The books where our stories are written and everything good or bad that we did*]. Also another book was opened, the book of life [*where the names of the saved are written*]. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. And the sea [*Symbol of the nations*] gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades [*the hell, that’s what it means*] were thrown

into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire” cf. Dan. 7: 9-10; 26-27: “As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened... Then the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away (*to take away the dominion of the beast, according to the reasoning of this text by the prophet, that’s what it means*), to be consumed and totally destroyed. The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them.”

“This is the second death, the lake of fire” = death means the definitive separation from God for all eternity.

The first death was the sin of Adam and Eve (1 Cor. 15: 21-22) that separated spiritually man from God, so Jesus came and died on the cross for us so we could be reconciled with the Father. What we call death, that is, to be buried, to God is only ‘to sleep’ (1 Cor. 15: 20; 1 The. 4: 13-18).

Let’s read together verses 13 and 14 (Rev. 20:13-14): “And the sea [*Symbol of the nations*] gave up the **dead** that were in it, **Death** and **Hades** gave up the **dead** that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. Then **Death** and **Hades** [*the hell, that’s what it means*] were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second **death**, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life (Rev. 13: 8; Rev. 17: 8; Rev. 20: 15; Rev. 21: 27) was thrown into the lake of fire.” Bold words in Greek have interesting meanings:

The two words for ‘dead’ in Greek are nekros (νεκρός or νεκρούς – Strong #3498), which means: dead, lifeless, subject to death, mortal, a dead body, a corpse. It originates from the word ‘nekus’, which means: a corpse; dead (literally or figuratively).

The three words ‘death’ in Greek is thanatos (θάνατος – Strong #2288), which means death, physical or spiritual, and comes from another Greek word, thnesko: death (literally or figuratively), deadly.

And the word Hades (‘hell’; Greek: hadés, ᾅδης – Strong #g86) comes from ‘a’ (as negative particle) and ‘eido’; properly, the unseen world, i.e., ‘Hades’ or the place (state) of departed souls; grave, hell; the habitation of the dead in the underworld until the last judgment. Hades is equivalent to the Hebrew word ‘Sheol.’ The word Hades is written in Lk .10: 15; Lk. 16: 23; Rev. 1: 18; Rev. 6: 8; Rev. 20: 14.

The region of the dead was considered by ancient Jews as ‘hell’, in Hebrew Sheol (Strong #7585: grave, hell, pit, lower world, underworld); Hades in Greek. The Jews thought Sheol was like a shell where the dead remained and were put on trial. There, could have a separated place for the righteous and the wicked.

The other Greek word ‘Geenna’ (Greek: Gehenna, γέεννα – Strong #g1067) comes from ‘ge’ (Valley) ‘Hinnom’ (Valley of Hinnom), where idolatrous sacrifices were made to the south of Jerusalem or a place underneath the earth, a place of punishment for evil; also used (figuratively) as a name for the place (or state) of everlasting punishment; hell. The Greek word Gehenna can be found in the NT in the following verses: Matt. 5: 22; 29; 30; Matt. 10: 28; Matt. 11: 23; Mk. 9: 43; 45; 47; Lk. 12: 5; Jam. 3: 6.

There seems to be a difference between the words Hades and Gehenna, for Hades conveys the idea of ‘the place (state) of departed souls; hell, grave’, whereas Gehenna

seems to refer to something stronger than simple grave or physical death. It suggests spiritual death, true hell or eternal punishment, as we saw in the definition.

In 2 Peter 2: 4, in our translation, ‘hell’ (NIV), it’s written the Greek word ‘tartarus’ (tartaroó, ταρταρώ – Strong #g5020: cast down to hell; the deepest abyss of Hades; to incarcerate in eternal torment).

Returning, then, to the text of Rev. 20: 13-14: “And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”...

... What we can deduce is that the nations (the sea) gave up the physical bodies of their dead (nekros), Death and Hades, that is, the place (or state) of the departed souls, gave up the souls of the ungodly and wicked that were in them. And afterwards, they themselves (Death and Hades) were also cast into the lake of fire, or Gehenna, we can say so, the place of eternal punishment or ‘true hell’, the definitive separation from God, where there will be eternal torment.

Therefore, Jesus said: “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire [Where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched].* And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell, [Where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched].* And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched. *[The eldest manuscripts do not bring these verses].” (Mk. 9: 43-48 cf. Isa. 66: 24). In Matt. 18: 8 it is written ‘the eternal fire’; and in v. 9, ‘the hell of fire.’

If you remember Rev. 20: 10, it is written: “And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” This means that they will not be exactly annihilated, as the words make us understand, but ‘they will be tormented day and night forever and ever,’ that is, they will suffer eternal penalty, they will be tormented for the rest of eternity.

This makes us think, on the other hand, of what happens to those who have been saved, those who have a part in the ‘first resurrection.’ After the death of the body [‘sleep’, according to the bible: 1 Cor. 15: 20; 1 The. 4: 13 (*)], their souls go to heaven to be with Jesus (Rev. 6: 9-10; Rev. 20: 4; 2 Cor. 5: 8; Phil. 1: 23; 1 The. 5: 10; Lk. 23: 43: “He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise’”). At His second coming they will have a glorified body, resurrected body like Jesus’ (Lk. 24: 5-6; 31; 36; 39; Jn. 20: 14; 19; 26; Jn. 21: 1; 4; 14; 1 Cor. 15: 4; 12; 20; 35; 42; 49; 51-54; Phil. 3: 20-21) and as He showed Himself to His disciples on the mount of transfiguration (Lk. 9: 29). We can imagine that after the death of the body, the souls of the wicked, stay in some place known to God (cf. Lk. 16: 23), other than paradise; and on the Day of Judgment, their bodies will rise to eternal damnation (Rev. 20: 5; 13).

(*) Let’s make a parenthesis here to clear the doubts of some brothers: With the second coming of Jesus, the resurrection of the saints that Paul refers to in 1 Cor. 15: 20-27 and 1 The. 4: 13-15, concerns the glorified body, which will be joined to the saved soul that is in heaven. Explaining better: the bible says that when the person departs, the body will sleep in the earth (Gen 3: 19; 1 Cor. 15: 20; 1 The. 4: 13), the spirit will return to God (Ecc. 12: 7; Ps. 146: 4) and only the souls of those who surrender to Jesus will go up to heaven and will stay there (Rev. 6: 9-10; Rev. 20: 4; 2

Cor. 5: 8; Phil. 1: 23; 1 The. 5: 10; Lk. 23: 43) until the second coming of Jesus for the day of the Rapture of His Church (with his/her glorified body) and, then, the judgment of God (Heb. 9: 27). Those who have not made their choice for Jesus, that is, those whose names are not found in the Book of Life (Rev. 13: 8; Rev. 17: 8; Rev. 20: 15; Rev. 21: 27), remain in some place known to God (cf. Lk 16: 23), other than paradise; and on the Day of Judgment, their bodies will rise to eternal damnation (Rev. 20: 5; 13).

Many interpret the verses 1 Cor. 15: 20 and 1 The. 4: 13 ('those who have fallen asleep') as if death were a state of unconscious sleep, but the situation Paul was relating here is that the Greeks actually believed in the immortality of the soul but doubted the resurrection of the body (as they were doubting the resurrection of Jesus), so they quarreled with him at the Areopagus at Athens (Acts 17: 31-34). Areopagus was a kind of Athenian court, an assembly of magistrates, scholars and men of letters. If Jesus said to the repentant evildoer crucified beside him that he would be with Him in Paradise that very day, and John reports in Rev 6: 9-10 that the souls of the martyrs cried out for justice, it is because they were conscious in heaven with the Lord. And in Rev 20: 4 he writes that the souls of those beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus lived and reigned with Christ.

Conclusion

Christ is now enthroned at the right hand of God (Mk. 16: 19; Rom. 8: 34; 1 Peter 3: 22); but His kingdom is not evident to the world, therefore He will return in a visible way to those who do not believe, and to carry out His judgment. After His victory, when all things are subject to Him, His kingdom will be handed over to the Father (1 Cor. 15: 24-28).

The Lord will appear in heaven, will catch up His living saints (with their glorified bodies) and resurrect the saints who are asleep (dead). He will make His judgment upon those who have the mark of the beast (Rev. 13: 16-17; Rev. 15: 7, Rev 16: 1-2; 3; 4; 8; 10-11; 12; 18-21; Rev. 18: 9-10; 21) and will deal with darkness (1 Cor. 15: 24-26; 28; Rev. 19: 11-21; Rev. 20: 10). The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15: 26; Rev. 20: 14). In other words, the second coming will immediately inaugurate the consummation, the final judgment, and the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21: 1; Isa. 65: 17; Isa. 66: 22; 2 Pet. 3: 13; 1 Cor. 15: 23-28).



- Rev. 21: 1-5: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the

new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.'"



As for the Roman Emperors, the subject continues in the volumes 2 and 3 of this book:

<https://www.searaagape.com.br/godispresentinhistory2.pdf>

<https://www.searaagape.com.br/godispresentinhistory3.pdf>