

# **REVELATION**

**An Alliterated Exposition  
of the Last Book in the Bible**

**by**

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## Chapter One

### SEEING CHRIST MORE CLEARLY

Each lesson in this study will be introduced in the manner you see here. I want you to have a *feel* for what we are writing about in each lesson. Each lesson is being delivered just as it was preached in the church pastored by this writer. Preaching requires interpretation and application for it to truly be preaching. When someone picks up this book, I want them to feel the passion and the fire coming from the pulpit. We will also look at this book as a student, making sure we see the technical arrangement of the words and the verses with its proper significance. In making our interpretations, we will use sound hermeneutical principles to protect us from error. This Book is being written with this theme, “Seeing Christ More Clearly”. This theme has been chosen because Revelation is a book that was given to us to reveal Christ more clearly. In these *last days*, we want to do just that.

May God strengthen us as we study together. This book is being dedicated to the memory of my parents, Harmon and Mattie Alderman who are now *seeing Christ more clearly!*

#### **Text: Revelation 1:1-7**

*1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

*2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

*3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

*4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;*

*5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first*

*begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,  
6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.  
7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*

## **I. JOHN'S INTRODUCTION OF THE REVELATION PROPHECY. (Vv. 1-3)**

When did John receive the signification? There are two main thoughts concerning this. One says that John was banished to the Isle of Patmos during the reign of Nero, and during the lifetime of Paul. The reason some stress this time is that it accommodates those who believe that the tribulation spoken of in Revelation describes the destruction of Jerusalem by Emperor Titus in 70 AD. Others believe that John the Beloved, who is also John the Apostle, was banished under the reign of Domitian toward the end of the first century. This seems a much more reasonable time in regards to what is being described in the text concerning the seven churches. Each of these churches had gone through spiritual decline with the exception of two, and that was the church at Philadelphia and the church at Smyrna. The decline that each church experienced very likely took no more than just a few short years. If we take the position that John was banished to the Isle of Patmos under the reign of Domitian, this would allow at least thirty years for the churches to reach the point as they are described.

### **A. He Introduced The Things Coming To Pass. (V. 1)**

The first verse speaks of the things that will *shortly* come to pass. This does not necessarily mean that all of the events in Revelation will happen soon. Instead, it more likely means that once the events do start, it will be happening swiftly. The same Greek word is translated

“speedily” in Luke 18:8 (Ryrie).

When the Lord introduces the seven churches in chapter two, He is doing so in such a way that describes His attitude towards each church. He shows His love, His compassion, and His requirements for the church. He will also show how the churches picture the entire scope of church history, beginning with the apostles and ending with the apostates.

When chapter four begins, it signals the start of the post-Church period. This is when the rapture of the saints takes place and the tribulation begins. This period describes those things that will *shortly* come to pass.

### **1. The Revelation was given with great authority. (V. 1a)**

The Revelation was revealed in this manner. It was first given by the Father to the Lord Jesus Christ, and then sent and signified by His angel “unto his servant John.” John made it clear that what he is making known to the churches has already very appropriately and correctly been made known unto him. He had the signified Word of God given to him that is now a part of the official canon of Scripture.

### **2. The Revelation was guaranteed by His Angel. (V. 1b)**

His angel signified the message. The word *signify* means to manifest or make known. A heavenly messenger with acceptable credentials presented himself to John. Had it been a messenger of satanic origin, John surely would have been discerning enough to know. The sent angel was able to manifest only that which the Lord could have foreknown. No one but God has true predictive abilities. No one but God could have delivered such a message as the book of Revelation. Today, the Scriptures are complete and will never be added to or taken from, with God’s blessings.

For this reason, we do not deem credible those who claim to have seen a vision as being worthy of re-introducing new material to the closed canon of Scripture. We have the King James Bible that is God’s Word, complete as it is.

## **B. He Introduced The Testimony Of The Prophecy Giver. (V. 2)**

The way verse number two reads, John gives record as having accepted what he had received as the very Word of God. The use of the word *testimony* gives indication that the Revelation prophecy is legally correct. This means that it would be supported as being absolutely true, just as evidence would be considered as being trustworthy for the purpose of courtroom use. Perhaps the reason that such is said of the Revelation book is that there are so many expressions and illustrations given that have never been considered in the religious and the literary world before. It is true that much of what is referred to in Revelation had its beginnings in the Old Testament, but Revelation has all of these truths compressed into one single book.

The future things that John saw had to be explained in such a way that his contemporaries could understand them. If John was seeing things that were occurring in the second millennium, can you imagine the task of describing those events in word pictures that those he wrote to could understand? Therefore, for these and similar reasons, there had to be legal proof that what was being said was true. John was convinced of such and said he “bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.”

## **C. He Introduced The Token Of The Promise. (V. 3)**

There are seven beatitudes in the Revelation prophecy, with this being the first. The others appear in 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14. This blessing could be given because of the natural tendency to shy away from this book. The Anglican Church does not schedule the reading of Revelation because of this same reason. I am also aware of Baptist churches that shy away from this great book. The Lord being aware of these natural tendencies to be afraid of

this book offers a threefold blessing to encourage this book to be read. May I show you how each of us may be blessed in this study?

### **1. A blessing to the reader of the prophecy. (V. 3a)**

Many blessings come when one reads any portion of the Bible, but the Lord implies that additional blessings will come to the person who reads the Revelation. By offering these blessings, it is God's way of coping with human nature. This is not to say that in His Sovereignty He could not force the reading of this book, for He could. He chose not to force it; He operates as a Gentleman. In Revelation 3, when considering the church of Laodicea, the Lord is seen on the outside of the church knocking. He does not force the door of the church open but allows man to exercise his own free will. In every aspect of service including salvation, God wants man to choose to worship Him. In that same spirit, He offers benefits and blessings to the person who will faithfully choose to read the Revelation prophecy.

It may be interesting to do as the old Puritan students did when they would study a portion of God's Word. They would take that portion of God's Word and begin meditating on it to consider all that the Lord was trying to say. If we would do the same, we might ponder some of the benefits or blessings that would come to the reader of the Revelation prophecy. One considerable blessing could very well be the spiritual insight that the earnest student of the Scriptures would obtain by reading the Revelation prophecy. There could also be the blessing that comes from reading and then sharing what you have read with someone else. Another blessing could be the opportunity to transfer what you have read to someone else in a witnessing encounter. People are interested in what Revelation says in view of the current events that are taking place. These events seem to have strong connection back to the Scriptures. With that being so, many are wondering what will happen next...

## **2. A blessing to the receiver of the prophecy. (V. 3b)**

Years ago, when I first was preaching through the book of Revelation, I got to this portion of Scripture and said that a person is blessed if he reads Revelation and he is also blessed if he hears it read. After the service Brother Willis Newman came to me and said, “Preacher, I sure am glad that you told me that, because I can’t read.” This dear man of God certainly started listening mighty well because he wanted that blessing that God promised to the ones who heard this prophecy.

## **3. A blessing to the retainers of the prophecy. (V. 3c)**

This threefold blessing comes also to the ones who keep the sayings of this book of prophecy. The keeping aspect of this blessing takes place when the reader or the hearer lets the Word take possession and then it becomes a part of that person. It likely is in the same spirit as spoken by James when he said, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.”

## **II. JOHN’S SALUTATION IN THE REVELATION PROPHECY. (V. 4)**

In an immediate sense, this letter was addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor, but in an extended sense this letter is addressed to all of His true churches of all ages. It is addressed to us as well, while we involve ourselves in this study.

### **A. The Salutation Addressed To The Seven Churches That Were Real Churches. (V. 4)**

These seven churches actually existed and were addressed just as the Scriptures say that they were. They were not the only churches that existed in this region, but they were the churches that the Lord with great purpose

addressed. They each were dear to the Lord as all churches are. The Lord had specific concerns and things to say when He addressed these churches. If you will notice, there were *seven* churches that were addressed. The number seven carries great significance in the Word of God. God uses numbers to categorize Truth. For example, the number one in the Scriptures is the number that is associated with *unity* and is the number for *God* in the sense that there is only one God. The number two is the number for *witness* or *division*; the number three is the number for the *Trinity*. The number four is the *earth number* or *creation number*. For example, there are four directions and four seasons. The number five is the number for *grace* or *faith*. If you recall, David took five stones against Goliath. It only took one though, because God was with him. The number six is the *number of man*, even as man was created on the sixth day. The number seven is the number of *completion* or *perfection*.

Lehman Strauss made this observation concerning the number seven in his Revelation commentary. “God completes His work in cycles of seven. Seven colors make a perfect spectrum. Seven musical notes make up the scale. Seven days constitute one week. At the fall of Jericho there were seven priests, seven trumpets, and on the seventh day the people marched around the wall seven times. There are seven set feasts of Jehovah (Leviticus 23); seven secrets in the kingdom parables (Matthew 13), and seven sayings of the Saviour from the cross. In this chapter in verse four there is a reference to the “seven Spirits which are before his throne.” This seems to refer to the perfect and complete manifestation of His Holiness about the throne. In Revelation the number seven appears forty-nine times, or seven times seven.”

Starting in Revelation chapter two, when we deal with the seven churches, we will discover that these churches picture the entire scope of church history. These churches picture different aspects of church history beginning with

Ephesus. Ephesus was the church that left its first love, but also pictures the church during the apostolic age. Smyrna was the church that pictured the age of persecution in respect to the Church. As we study Revelation chapter two and three we will detail these truths. As we indicated earlier, the Lord spoke primarily to these distinct churches, yet still speaks to all.

## **B. The Salutation Addressed To The Seven Churches That Were Representative Churches. (V. 4)**

These were real churches, but they also were representative churches for all Church history. One might say, when looking at these churches that you are seeing in one broad sweep, the entire panorama of church history. We will study these churches in this manner. We first will consider the *proper interpretation*, the *practical application* and then the *prophetic implication* of the lessons pertaining to these seven churches.

## **III. JOHN'S EXALTATION IN THE REVELATION PROPHECY. (Vv. 5-8)**

“And from Jesus Christ” is the way verse five begins. We must keep in mind that the Revelation came from Him and is a Revelation of Him. John begins by exalting Him as the faithful and the credible Witness. Again, this is a word used often in a courtroom setting. John wants his reader to know the strange things that he will be writing are absolutely credible and must be believed. John then lists reasons that Jesus Christ is believable.

### **A. John Exalts Christ The Conqueror. (Vv. 5-6)**

John shows Christ to be the all-powerful One. His power will be demonstrated throughout this book. He will be seen as the one who conquers by the Word of His mouth, as riding on a white horse with many crowns upon His

head, as the One who treads out the winepress, and the One who fights the last war at Gog and Magog.

### **1. He's the conqueror over death. (V. 5)**

No one has conquered death as did Jesus Christ. He is the living force that grants life and sustains life; He does this as the Creator. For it was He that created life, and it is by Him that all things consist (Colossians 1: 17). Paul when he wrote his letter to the Colossians said this about Christ, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." (Colossians 1:15-19)

Death is a dreaded ending to life for most, but not necessarily for the believer. The believer may not look forward to death, but he has no reason to fear dying because the believer knows that Christ has conquered death. In Revelation there will be many Christians who will be persecuted and tortured unto death. Knowing that Christ was the death conqueror should have been a great encouragement during the time that led up to their deaths. They knew that they would die, but they would be with the Lord once they did. They knew that, like Christ, they would be raised from the dead; for the Lord Jesus Christ witnessed it by His own resurrection.

### **2. He's the conqueror over dominions. (Vv. 5-6)**

As the prince of the kings, He is the source of all authority under the authority of God the Father. This section of study has already given us the lineage of Truth in regards to this Revelation study. It began with God, then the Son,

then the angel and was received by John. Christ is mentioned as the Prince. The prince is a designation given to the son of a ruler. The Father is seated on the throne and the Son is seated on the Father's right hand as the Prince. Yet, He is the Prince of all the kings of the earth. He is introduced here as the Prince; not at all inferior to the kings of the earth. He is Prince as the Son of God. He later will be introduced as the "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS". (Revelation 19:16).

Throughout the Word of God, His King designation is given. He is referred to as the King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2); the King of Glory (Psalm 24:7); the King of the Heaven (Daniel 4:37); and the King of Israel (John 1:49), etc. More than that, He is the King of Kings (Revelation 19:16).

## **B. John Exalts Christ In His Coming. (V. 7)**

John wonderfully created a focal point for the entire book when he made the statement, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Again, this information was something that could only come as revealed Truth. It was an encouraging Truth as well because those who were in any kind of tribulation could have the blessed hope of His appearing, and the promise that He was going to bring sure judgment upon the enemies of Christ.

### **1. He will come visibly. (V. 7a)**

Christ Jesus will not slip in quietly as a little babe in a manger or even as a Lamb, but will come instead as a Lion. When Christ Jesus comes again, He will be seen even as promised in Acts 1:11.

### **2. He will come victoriously. (V. 7b)**

From this first chapter on, we may be assured that the Lord will powerfully come as the Worthy One and reclaim

all that had been lost to sin. He will come back as the great Kinsman Redeemer and open the book; He also will stand on the sea and upon the land and rightfully claim that which was His. Praise His Holy Name!

In these seven verses, we have seen the wonderful introduction of this great Revelation prophecy. God saw fit to present it as a completely trustworthy book to be appreciated and loved by all those who hold His Word dear. May this study make us more aware of His soon coming.

## Chapter Two

### THERE IS NONE LIKE HIM

#### Text: Revelation 1:8-20

*8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

*9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

*10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,*

*11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

*12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;*

*13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

*14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;*

*15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

*16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

*17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

*18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

*19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;*

*20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

The intelligent eternity of God is seen in this eighth verse as Christ reveals Himself as the Alpha and Omega. With Him being such, He is qualified to communicate to all people-groups, of all ages, as the *Almighty*. Every Hebrew event that took place that involved the Almighty One, such as the parting of the Red Sea, the fall of the walls of Jericho, the slaying of Goliath, the preserving of the three Hebrew children, the protection of Daniel while in the den of lions, and making the sun stand still, are examples that demonstrated that He truly is the Almighty One. The nation of Israel, by their continually witnessing the power of God being displayed, knew that He was the Almighty One.

In our text the Almighty is revealed as being the LORD of the Old Testament even as He is here. We know this to be true because He introduces Himself as the one “which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” The Jews will one day recognize and accept Christ Jesus as the One whom they *pierced*.

When He gives His proper name as being Alpha and Omega, He is using the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. Every word that can be constructed has its origin in its alphabet. He is the Alphabet, and with this being so, He reveals to mankind all that which would have been spoken by the Father. This is a reason that Jesus uses His name *Word* in John 1:1. This truth is also indicated in the book of Hebrews when it says, “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; (Hebrews 1:2-3).

As the Almighty, God is in control; He has *His hands on everything*. Look at the meaning of His name Almighty and how it is used in our text. *Almighty* is *pantokrater*, "the one who has his hand on everything;" this word is used ten

times in the New Testament, and nine of the ten occurrences are found in Revelation. (Guzik)

It very well could be that the Lord wanted the tribulation saints to know from the beginning of Revelation that He is absolutely in control; He has His hands on everything. As we watch the news, we can see how a national or worldwide event can capture our attention for days or even weeks at a time. Such an event can cause panic to grip our hearts, and cause millions of people to sink into deep despair. Such happened when parts of Asia were devastated by the Tsunami. As awful as this may have been, when the tribulation begins, there will have been no past occurrences in history to compare to the events that will be taking place then. Panic and pandemonium will grip the world. With this entire happening, God will still absolutely be in control. The *Ancient of days* has always been in control. Yet He still will allow these events to transpire to perform His ultimate purpose in judging the world and mankind because of sin.

## **I. THE GREAT COMMENCEMENT OF THE REVELATION PROPHECY. (Vv. 8-11)**

John was going to show how, where, and when he was commissioned to write the book of Revelation. As he introduced himself, he was very careful not to exalt himself. Again, this is significant because John wanted to reveal Christ instead of reveal himself.

This first chapter is laying the groundwork to prove to the honest seeker of truth that this Revelation book is absolutely reliable. It also is going to identify the change that had taken place when Christ took upon Himself a transfigured, glorified body. His body that is being described here will appear very strange, but keep in mind that each descriptive term is going to reveal something about God's attitude towards sin and how sinful man is to be judged. This is a very revealing portion of scripture as it reveals Christ.

Also continue to remember that Revelation is the revealing of Christ as the Almighty One. It is He who will be seen having the keys of Hell and death.

### **A. Commenced With John Being Introduced As The Writer. (Vv. 8-9)**

Though John was selected to write this book from the Isle of Patmos, which was located southwest of Ephesus on the Aegean Sea, he wanted to make his readers immediately know that he was not the person to be worshiped. He told them that he was John who is also “your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” In verse nine, John made it clear that he was there for the “word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ”.

#### **1. He introduced himself with a contrast. (Vv. 8-9a) (Cf. I John. 3:1)**

Eusebius says that John was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos under the reign of Domitian. Yet, John makes no reference to this at all. He took what may have been a tremendous hardship and turned it into a ministering opportunity. Patmos has been described as a “Roman Alcatraz” with jagged rocks and was very desolate, about six miles by twelve miles in size. John shows that our *place of service* does not have to affect our *attitude of service*. John is contrasting himself to the Lord. He was very much like another John that we read about. This one was John the Baptist who told those who wanted to worship him as Jesus or even claim him to be the Messiah that he was not even worthy to loose the shoe latchet of Jesus.

John wanted his readers to know that he was only a companion in tribulation, not the *Alpha and the Omega* and the *Almighty* as was Jesus. To the reader, this should be a lesson for us in contrasts. We are nothing apart from Him, but everything with Him. Our weakness requires having His

strength. Those who were going to go through great tribulation as tribulation saints should realize that though they were weak, they could have His strength from the beginning to the end.

## **2. He introduced himself as a companion. (V. 9b)**

People can relate to people whom they identify with. John very much wants his readers to identify with him. He wanted them to know that he was a victim or a companion in tribulation as they were, but did not give the graphics or spell out what he was going through. He wanted them to know that he could relate to their troubles and problems, just as Christ does when He is touched by the feelings of our infirmities.

John wisely demonstrated that people can be more readily ministered to if they can relate to the minister. The preacher ministering to his people does not have to do what his people do in order to reach them, but he should relate to them as being a person who has human feelings for them. Sometimes preachers give the impression that they do not have battles involving the world, the flesh, or the devil. It is almost like they are sending signals that they are immune to temptations. John was not like this.

## **3. He introduced himself as a communicator. (V. 9c)**

John communicated truth as a testifier of Truth. When the truth was revealed to him, he wrote it down and made it available to the seven churches that were in Asia Minor. Then it became a part of the canon of Truth.

## **B. Commenced With John Being Instructed As The Writer. (Vv. 10-11)**

The Lord is letting John know that He is the qualified giver of Truth as the Alpha and the Omega. From this vantage point the Lord instructs John to write the Revelation prophecy.

### **1. John saw the things that he wrote about. (Vv. 10-11a)**

This is a fantastic verse as it tells us how John received the record of the events that he was going to write about. With our modern technology, we have the ability to video activities and events and watch what we recorded *after* they have happened. We can record the sounds that are being made along with the video and play it back at a later date. Much differently than what I have just described, the Lord let John see the events *before* they ever happened. Even with our superb technology we are incapable of recording an event before it actually happens. Only God can absolutely reveal the future in this way. This is exactly what God did when He told John to write what he saw.

### **2. John sent the things he wrote about (to the seven churches in Asia Minor). (V. 11b)**

We must keep in mind that God has a purpose and a time for every event “under the sun.” Nothing in God’s economy is by mere chance; it was by His design that these seven churches were addressed. There was great reason for Christ writing to them, and each church had its own particular message from Him. Yet, students of the Word know that there are ongoing benefits that can be applied to all churches of all ages from the letters that were addressed to these seven churches. A close study of these churches will reveal universal characteristics that may be found in churches of all ages. May we be helped with this being so.

## **II. THE GREAT CHRIST OF THE REVELATION PROPHECY. (Vv. 12-20)**

A very solemn thing is about to happen as John turns to see the One who is speaking to him. What he sees had never been seen before by mere mortal man. He turns and sees Christ Jesus in His majestic splendor. He sees Him as the glorified Prophet, Priest, and King. The description that John

gives of Christ is unlike any description that had ever been given of Him before. The closest earthly parallel would be when Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 6 said in verse five, “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

What John is describing is Christ taking on the role of a Warrior with a sword coming from His mouth. The symbolic language that John uses in describing the Lord Jesus Christ is for the purpose of pronouncing the serious work that lies before Him who “in righteousness he doth judge and make war” Rev. 19:11.

### **A. The Great Description Of Him. (Vv. 12-16)**

There is a magnificent, incomparable beauty that describes the Lord. The majestic qualities of Christ are clearly revealed as John sees Christ this way. Think with me what it might have been like to have seen him many years before for the last time in all of His humanity and now see Him in all of His deity. John does not in any way see Christ in His *kenosis* or humility. He sees Christ in His glorification and in His exaltation. He does not see Christ at this appearing with His lamb-like qualities, but instead He sees Christ with His lion-like qualities. This does not mean that Christ appeared in a beastly state. This is just a symbolic way of comparing Christ’s incarnation to His exaltation.

There was much symbolism in what John saw. Christ was revealing Himself in respect to His new role. Christ is now presenting Himself as the victorious conqueror that has come to judge sin. He also is revealing Himself as the glorified Prophet, Priest and King.

These qualities will be seen in different respects throughout Revelation. May we now look at some of these descriptive qualities mentioned in our text?

## 1. His purity is described. (Vv. 12-14)

The immediate impression that John had was that this person he saw was “like unto the Son of man.” This tells us that John saw the recognizable features that he had known so many years before when he had seen Jesus for the last time. Now, he sees Jesus in His “highly exalted” state (Philippians 2:9). This attributes to the unusual way that He is being described.

He is “clothed with a garment down to the foot.” This pictures Christ as the *anointed one who keeps*. He will not lose one of His own and will recover the property that had been lost at the original fall in the Garden of Eden. In our Revelation study, we will be looking at the recovery work that is done by our Kinsman Redeemer later on.

Christ must have a legal right to conquer the forces of Satan and also to recover that which had been lost to sin. As the undefiled Priest who offered His own sacrificial blood, He is qualified to open the book that is spoken of in Revelation chapter five and also to stand placing “his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth” as shown in Revelation chapter ten. In both of these instances Christ is seen as the qualified, legal, priestly Warrior taking control.

When John saw Christ standing before him wearing His priestly attire, it must have reminded him of what is recorded of Him in Hebrews 7:26, “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” To John, Christ Jesus was *harmless*, but to the sinner He is the angry Warrior soon to conquer.

The *golden girdle* upon His paps or chest shows Christ to be the representative of the royal kingdom which He judges. He is no longer seen sitting upon His throne as He was in Daniel 7:9 as the “Ancient of days,” but standing while taking on the role of the Almighty Judge. It is in the spirit of Romans 12:19 where it says, “Vengeance is mine; I will

repay, saith the Lord,” that He stands as the righteous Judge. The golden girdle symbolizes His strength and His authority to judge.

In verse fourteen it speaks of His head and His hairs being “white like wool, as white as snow.” The symbolism here shows His purity. The white wedding garment symbolizes that the bride has kept herself pure as a chaste virgin for her wedding moment. It may not always be the case as the bride walks down the isle to meet her bridegroom, but it certainly is the case with the Lord Jesus Christ. He never has had one impure moment in His eternal existence.

The white hair also speaks of His antiquity as Daniel seven refers to Him as being the “Ancient of days” and Psalm 90:2 describes Him in this way. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” When the Lord is referred to as the *Ancient of days*, that does not mean that He is growing incredibly old with all that accompanies aging. Hebrews 1:10-12 describes His eternal existence in this manner. “And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

The symbolism involving His hair being white as wool and snow pictures His incomparable wisdom. Proverbs 3:19 says, “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.”

The first impression that John had of Christ must have been quite impressive when he saw the penetrating eyes of Christ light up “as a flame of fire.” This pictures the probing, penetrating, and piercing eyes of judgment with nothing concealed from His omniscient gaze. Christ can see

all with nothing being hidden from Him. This is also true in our day. God not only sees it all, He knows it all. There are many people who think they have their hidden secrets, only to find that nothing can be hid from His searching eyes, except what He chooses not to see involving our sins after we have been forgiven.

## **2. His power is described. (Vv. 15-16a)**

Again, we learn from the symbolism and the metaphors that describe what John saw. In verse fifteen, we are told that his feet were like fine brass “as if they burned in a furnace.” *Feet* carry the idea of purposeful mobility. We use our feet to get us from place to place with deliberation and purpose. Our vehicles may take us to the vicinity of where we are going, but our feet take us to the exact spot. The Lord is not just going to powerfully judge sin in its vicinity or deal with it in general. He will go to the exact spot where sin is to be dealt with and deal with it specifically. Christ is revealing Himself as the Almighty who will totally, without reservation deal with sin. There will not be a place or person upon the earth that will escape His powerful judgment.

We are told that His voice has the “sound of many waters.” Rushing waters can silence everything around it or at least seem to. Rushing waters take on a prominence that is its own. On several occasions, I have had the privilege to stand on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls and travel by boat to the foot of the falls. The cascading and falling water would drown out all other sounds. The message that John was conveying was that the *voice* of Jesus Christ will have that kind of prominence during the Great Tribulation.

At the present, it is almost criminal to mention publicly the things that pertain to God. President Bush, in his second inauguration, made four references to God and immediately there were those who said that President Bush was being “too heavenly.” Praise God! When King Jesus begins His rulership, His voice will drown out all other voices. His

powerful words will rule, control, and destroy at His bidding. The powerful effects of His words are further indicated by the expression, “out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword.” The sword is a powerful instrument of war. His words will be spoken as “he doth judge and make war.”

### **3. His prominence is described. (V. 16b)**

There is nothing more prominent in our solar system than the sun. The sun is recognized and respected by all. Even the blind person who cannot see the sun can feel the heat thereof. The transfigured glory of Christ is seen in all of its brilliance by John. It was so overwhelming that John fell as a dead man at the feet of Christ Jesus. In the eyes of the present worldly system the face of Jesus seems to be dimly lit. But He who is the Light of the world will reveal Himself fully as He comes to bring judgment to this world. The time will come when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord as the lumens of His brilliance begins to shine.

### **B. The Great Declaration By Him. (Vv. 17-18)**

When John fell before Jesus as a dead man, I am not sure if this was his way of saying that he had fainted after seeing the revealed Christ. The Scriptures tell us that he fell “as dead.” Whatever happened, happened because of John’s fear. He collapsed, he fell, but the Lord told John that he was not to be afraid. God took His strong powerful right hand and laid it upon John. Can you imagine what that was like? Can you but imagine how it felt to have been touched this way by glorified Deity, to be *touched by God*?

It is the powerful touch of God that casts out fear. In a spiritual sense, it is comforting to feel the touch of God upon your life. I certainly desire God’s hand upon my life and I sincerely desire the hand of God upon this church. It makes all the difference in the world to have God’s touch upon your life.

## **1. He declared His coming from the dead. (Vv. 17-18a)**

The one speaking to John is the same One that he wrote about in his Gospel in John 11:25-26. “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die, Believest thou this?”

Not only is Christ the resurrection and the life, He is the One who was dead, but is “alive for evermore.” The grave could not hold Him. He was letting John know that it was not time for him to die, but to write the Revelation prophecy. Had not the Lord comforted John in this way, John could have become very much afraid because of what he was going to witness. The thing that John witnessed could have really *scared him to death*. Yet, the laying of God’s right hand upon him must have made an indelible impression that would remain in his memory for a very long time while at the same time bringing him the comfort and the peace that he so desperately needed.

## **2. He declared His conquering of death. (V. 18b)**

Keys lock and unlock. Christ holds the key that unlocks the gate called death. For this reason, the Scriptures tell us that it is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment. God has the key to that appointed day. He also has the key to the gates of Hell. The symbolism of the key paints the picture of someone holding that key and him using the key at his discretion. To illustrate this, when I have the key to my automobile I determine when and how that vehicle is to be used. The Lord is simply letting John know that death and Hell is under His control.

When the enemy surrounds me, I need not fear, because I am going to be here until God is through with me. He was letting John know the same. I believe it was John R. Rice who, when preaching against the liquor crowd, was told that if he continued that he was going to be shot and killed. John

R. Rice answered the person that threatened him, “You don’t frighten me when you threaten me with Heaven!”

### **C. The Great Directive From Him. (Vv. 19-20)**

John was commissioned to write what the Lord wanted him to write. There was no reluctance on the part of John. What he was to write about would cover the entire Church Age and then record the time of Great Tribulation. After the Great Tribulation, John would tell about the second coming of the Lord when He fights the Battle of Armageddon. He will write concerning the thousand year reign during the Kingdom Age to be followed by the Battle of Gog and Magog. He will show the doom of Satan, the beast, and the false prophet. There will be much more in addition to this in which John will be writing.

#### **1. Told John to write the things in the past that he saw. (V. 19a)**

When John was told to write the things that he saw, he was being given a natural division of the way Revelation was to be written. The first part of Revelation deals with the immediate revealing of Christ. This is a major part of Revelation in that it sets the tone for the entire book. One must have a proper respect for the One who is being revealed and to what purpose He is being revealed.

The first chapter may be a very brief part of the total study, but it is a very important part. It is in this section that we see the integrity of Christ and the majesty of Christ unfolded.

#### **2. Told John to write the things in the present that he saw. (V. 19b)**

This instruction tells John to write to the present Church Age or the “things which are.” The seven churches were churches that actually existed when John was writing the book of Revelation. The Lord wanted these seven churches

to hear from Him and learn of Him. It will be interesting to note that the Lord is very longsuffering during the Church Age while He pleads with the churches to repent and to do right. When the age of grace and opportunity is expended, then the Lord will come with great indignation and fury to bring to justice those who have stood against the holy things of God.

### **3. Told John to write the things prophetic that he saw. (V. 19c)**

The major portion of Revelation will deal with this third section of study. There will be much explanation given as we will be looking at the seven trumpets, the seven vials, the seven seals, the four horsemen, the great harlot, Babylon the great, and the Great White Throne Judgment, etc. John will explore all of these events and more that are yet future that we call eschatology. These things will be covered in this third section. Before this third section takes place, which covers the prophetic events, we will look very closely at the seven churches that reveal the entire scope of Church history.

### **D. The Great Defining By Him. (V. 20)**

The Lord is concluding this first section with an explanation of what these symbols represent. He uses the word *mystery* to denote that there is a hidden meaning that is to be revealed.

#### **1. Defined the mystery of the seven stars. (V. 20a)**

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches with the word *angel* meaning messenger or pastor.

#### **2. Defined the mystery of the seven candlesticks. (V. 20b)**

The seven candlesticks are the churches that are located in Asia Minor.

The writer of the Revelation prophecy that the Lord chose to use is John. We learned that God qualified him to write this most important book. We have also learned that Jesus Christ is being revealed to show the way that He works with the Church and how He will bring swift and sure judgment upon the earth after the Church Age.

Before we look beyond the Church Age, may we see what is now going on in our churches and profit thereby. When we recognize that we need to be challenged or corrected, may we have a sensitive spirit to that end.

## Chapter Three

### EPHESUS-A DRIFTING CHURCH

**Text: Revelation 2:1-7; I Corinthians 13:1-8**

*1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;*

*2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:*

*3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

*4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

*5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

*6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

*7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

### I Corinthians 13:1-8

*1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

*2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

*3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

*4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

*5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

*6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

*7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

*8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

When studying the panorama of Church history, one should begin with the seven churches of Asia Minor. These seven churches listed in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 were actual churches that existed when John the apostle wrote the Revelation epistle from the Isle of Patmos. Even in our day, God uses these churches to teach and warn us of problems we can be confronted with and can also destroy us. He also shows us the traits we should emulate in several of these churches.

These seven churches were definite churches that God selected out of all of the existing churches to convey prophetically the entire scope of Church history. Just as we do with the rest of the Bible, we should study this Scripture with the purpose of finding the proper interpretation, its practical application, and its prophetic revelation. In this study, we will attempt to do just that.

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor, and was a leading seaport. The Isle of Patmos, from which the letter was written, was located almost directly west of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea. Paul was used of the Lord to evangelize Ephesus, and he worked out of the church for about three years (Acts 18:18-21; 19; I Cor. 16:8). May we notice some of the characteristics that marked this church.

## **I. THE PRAISING OF EPHEBUS. (Vv. 1-3)**

The One speaking to the church at Ephesus is the Lord Jesus Christ. He describes Himself as the One who is walking “in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.” The seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches. When He refers to the “seven stars,” He is possibly referring to the pastors of the churches. The word star as used here refers to angels, who are normally supernatural created beings, but may not be such in this instance.

The word *angel* means messenger. The messenger that is

referred to in our text is likely the pastor. The pastor or messenger is therefore responsible for delivering the “message.”

### **A. He Praised The Activities Of The Work. (Vv. 1-2a)**

The church at Ephesus had remained faithful to the work for over 40 years. Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey, but only was there for a brief period of time. He came back on his third missionary journey and faced opposition from Demetrius, because Demetrius was concerned about his business. He made silver shrines and images that were used by those who were worshipers of false gods. The new converts were destroying their false gods and worshiping the true and living God. With this taking place, Demetrius’ business began to fail.

Christianity in Paul’s day made inroads into the city that was known as the “temple keeper of the great Artemis.” A similar situation took place when Billy Sunday came to town. It is said that the bars would close down when he preached against the liquor crowd. Perhaps we should question what effect our churches are now having on the towns and the cities in which we live.

### **B. He Praised Their Action Against The Wicked. (V. 2b)**

The church at Ephesus continued to discipline those who attempted to do evil against the church. They were very orthodox and vigilant in keeping the faith. You might even say, borrowing from our vernacular, that they were “straight lace” and separated from evil. This is certainly commendable for a church, but as commendable as it might have been, we will discover in our text that it was not enough, for they were guilty of leaving their first love. The church at Ephesus not only recognized the evil workers but they also rejected the evil workers. Our churches, as a result of sound Bible preaching, should be able to both recognize evil and reject that which is evil.

### **C. He Praised Their Attitude Towards The Work. (V. 3)**

The church at Ephesus had many sterling qualities, and on the surface would have been perceived as a wonderful church. As I do this study, the Lord seems to be showing me that this is where many of us may be in our fundamental churches.

The church at Ephesus was described in this manner: “hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” Certainly this is commendable, but we shall find in our next consideration that something was still lacking, for they had left their first love.

### **II. THE PROBLEM OF EPHEBUS. (Vv. 4-5a)**

The Ephesians had gotten to the place that they were serving God out of orthodoxy and out of tradition rather than out of true love to the Lord. The Lord said that *they had left their first love*.

“The church that loses its love will soon lose its light, no matter how doctrinally sound it may be” (Wiersbe).

If churches continue to be doctrinally sound and yet lose their love for the Lord, they will get to the place that they are intolerant of those who do not measure up. This does not mean that they should compromise, but it does mean that they should not be mean spirited in preaching against sin. The love of God is not at all wimpy, and it is not at all wimpy to patiently love and teach those who do not at first measure up.

We should realize that there will be people who visit our church, who come from a background of teaching that is entirely different from what we teach; if they are shown we love them they will be more likely to accept our teachings and values than if we simply snub them and fail to love and

teach them?

### **A. The Church At Ephesus Did Not Realize That It Had Drifted From Its First Love. (V. 4)**

I use the word *drift* here because that seems to be what happened to the church at Ephesus. It was something that happened to them over a period of forty years. Churches do not usually get where they are overnight. It may be described as the gradual encroachments that occur with the passing of time. When this drifting occurs, it is not usually detected as would be a more blatant departure from the Lord. For this reason a church can feel comfortable in having good orthodoxy and even good standards, yet be far from the Lord because of having left its first love. I dreadfully feel that many of our churches are there now and do not even realize it.

The Word of God speaks of having “strength and beauty” along with having “grace and truth.” Our churches should be described in this manner. We should be very strong to the Truth, but have grace to love in Truth.

### **B. The Church At Ephesus Needed To Remember How It Had Drifted From It’s First Love. (V. 5a)**

The Lord said remember and repent or He would remove... Many times one may get to the place that he forgets where he went wrong. It may be that one chooses to forget. This seems to be the case with the church at Ephesus. The Lord is telling this church to recall where they went wrong. This calls for each of us to do some soul searching, and find what it was that began to steal our love. There are so many attachments and distractions in the world to amuse us and cool our affection for the Lord.

The word *amuse* by definition tells us that it does not take much thought to be entertained by the world. The word *amuse* comes from two words, *muse* which means “to think,” and *a* which means “not.” When the two words are put

together, the word *amuse* means *not to think*.

Yet the Lord is calling upon the church at Ephesus to think and remember, “from whence thou art fallen.” May we do the same, if we find that our love for the Lord is not what it must be.

### **III. THE PUNISHMENT OF EPHEBUS. (V. 5b-c)**

The Lord has identified the problem with Ephesus and is going to give a space of time for them to repent. He is warning of the severity of correcting the problem *quickly* or face having the candlestick removed. Each church must be lit by His presence, for He is the Light. If our church is to be a lighthouse in this community, He must be that light.

#### **A. The Lord Will Move Quickly In Time Of Judgment. (V. 5b)**

The Lord is patient but very sure in requiring us to do what He says. He told the church at Ephesus He would come unto them quickly and remove the candlestick if they did not repent. Our churches need to do all they can to return to where God would have them to be. There have been many changes in the Church in the last several decades that involves change that is unacceptable to the Lord. There are those, like this church of Ephesus, who maintain their orthodoxy, but who no longer have the love of Christ as their motive for ministry. Then there are those who have yoked up with the world, bringing worldliness into the church, which are also void of His love, as well. These people are motivated by those things that appeal to the flesh, instead of being led by the Spirit.

If our churches will be sensitive to the will of Christ according to His Word, we will see the mighty power of God continue to work in our midst. I am saddened to see churches that have had their candlestick removed because they refused to take heed to the warnings of Christ as a result

of His Word being preached.

## **B. The Lord Will Remove Quickly In The Time Of Judgment. (V. 5c)**

Again the word *quickly* gives indication to the urgency of the Church doing right. God never wants the Church to delay in getting to where it needs to be spiritually. We need to remind ourselves that as we speak of the Church that we are the Church. We individually must take heed to the Word of God.

You have heard it said, “Delayed obedience is the same as disobedience.” It certainly is true when the Lord instructs us, for He may suddenly bring swift and sure judgment upon the Church if we fail to obey Him.

## **IV. THE PROMISE OF EPHESUS. (Vv. 6-7)**

The Lord tells the church of Ephesus that He hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans, even as the congregation of Ephesus does.

We know little of the Nicolaitans who were obviously followers of a person named Nicolas (cf. Acts 6:5). Irenaeus, who lived in the latter part of the second century, wrote that they were without restraint in their indulgence of the flesh and practiced fornication and the eating of foods sacrificed to idols. The word “Nicolaitans” is a transliteration of two Greek words that mean, “to conquer” and “people.” For that reason Nicolaitanism describes any system that seeks to dominate rather than serve people.

“The teaching of the Nicolaitans was an exaggeration of Christian liberty which attempted an ethical compromise with heathenism” (Tenny).

There seems to be a trend today even among fundamentalists to give liberty to any kind of vice. We

must strongly reject this evil temptation. We must continue to label sin as sin while still loving the sinner. Now may we look at the promise given to those who overcome.

**A. The Promise Was Backed By A Great Person (Vv. 5-7a)**

Such a wonderful and living Savior as Christ is, He promises great benefits to those who obey. Yes, there are many rewards for the believer when he obeys, and the promise can be believed because of Who made it.

**B. The Promise Involved A Great Place. (V. 7b)**

The place of the one who overcomes is Heaven. The one who overcomes shall have the joy and the privilege of eating of the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God. The fact that the believer is going to have so many eternal blessings and benefits should serve to motivate him to serve the Lord faithfully.

This first letter also pictures the beginning of the Church Age, or the Age of the Apostles. As indicated previously, it is no accident that there are seven churches. Seven is God's number of completion or perfection. Students of the Scriptures have long recognized these seven churches picture in succession the panorama of Church history. We will study these churches for the practical and the prophetic lessons that might be learned from such a study. We will learn new lessons from old churches...

## Chapter Four

### SMYRNA-A DELIGHTFUL CHURCH

#### Text: Revelation 2:8-11

*8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;*

*9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

*10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

*11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*

As we look at this second church, we will soon notice that the Lord had no rebuke for this church. I wish to refer to this church as being a delightful church. It was a church that faced persecution for doing well. Even though it had many pressures and difficulties during its existence, it continued to do well. Even its name says something about the persecution that it went through. Notice this about Smyrna:

*Smyrna* – The name “Smyrna” signifies “myrrh”

Myrrh was made from the gummy sap of the Commiphora myrrha tree. The sap would be collected by slashing a branch or the trunk of the small tree, and then the gum hardened into a solid resin. The resin would then be pounded and ground up, then mixed with oil, forming a perfume. It has been said about myrrh, that the more this resin was crushed, the more fragrance that was emitted. There was something about the make-up of this substance that made this phenomenon so.

Smyrna, as a church had been slashed, cut, and bruised; yet because of what it was made of, it emitted a sweet smelling fragrance, thus the name Smyrna. May we consider

our own attitude towards suffering as we make this study? May we apply the truths learned from this study to our own hearts? May we realize that as we are going through difficult times that the Lord may be teaching us to have a more precious fragrance coming forth from our lives? Each cut, slash, or bruise may be God's way of revealing what is really inside of you.

Another interesting thought concerning the word Smyrna is that it means myrrh or bitterness. The sappy substance would naturally be bitter, but as the oil was mixed with it and it was crushed, the sweet fragrance would come forth. Throughout the Scriptures, oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. When we are going through our bitter trials, the oil of God's Holy Spirit will also bring out the sweet smelling fragrance that is in us.

## **I. NOTICE SMYRNA'S PRAISE FOR DOING WELL. (Vv. 8-9c)**

As the Lord speaks to each church, He introduces Himself in a manner that is both particular and different to each church. The way that He introduces Himself would be worthy of a study in and of itself. Notice how each of these introductions has its subject matter relating to its own situation.

**Ephesus:** "These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks;"

**Smyrna:** "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;"

**Pergamos:** "These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;"

**Thyatira:** “These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;”

**Sardis:** “These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;”

**Philadelphia:** “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;”

**Laodicea:** “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;”

The significance of these introductions will be considered in each of these studies that pertain to the seven churches. While considering Ephesus, the Lord was establishing both His authority, and His presence as seen in the way He introduced Himself. The right hand speaks of His *protective authority*, and His walking in the midst of the churches, shows *His presence assured*.

With Ephesus being the first church mentioned, His introduction shows that He is establishing Himself as the sole authority of the church, and showing that He is present in the church for their protection. When looking at the church at Smyrna, the introduction gives us a clue as to the suffering that Smyrna was going to face.

The Lord revealed to Smyrna that He suffered, died, and was raised from the dead. Certainly this was an inspiration to Smyrna as she went through her time of suffering, and should be to any Christian that is being called on to suffer.

#### **A. The Lord Praised Smyrna In Her Performance. (Vv. 8-9a)**

When the Lord began this letter, He said, “I know.” By saying such, He implied a most intimate acquaintance to the

church at Smyrna. How very encouraging it is to know that He knows. He knows all about us. We can never escape His attention. It is more than just His foreknowledge that He has; He has all knowledge.

He told Smyrna, “I know thy works.” If the Lord were to personalize such a letter to our church, He would also say, “I know thy works,” for He certainly does. Smyrna may have had the famed Polycarp as its pastor for the purpose for which this letter was addressed.

Polycarp was burned alive at Smyrna in the year of our Lord, 166 AD. We have an ancient account of his martyrdom, which has been translated by Cave, which states that the Jews were particularly active in his martyrdom and even brought the wood by which he was consumed.

The Lord knew such even before it took place. He also knew the fidelity and the faithfulness of this church while it was under Satan’s attack. For this reason, He praised Smyrna’s works.

## **B. The Lord Praised Smyrna In Her Persecution. (V. 9b)**

It is said by the historian Josephus that when Polycarp was brought before the judge, and commanded to adjure and blaspheme Christ, he firmly answered, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me wrong, how then can I blaspheme my King who hath saved me?” He was then set ablaze and suffered cheerfully for Christ his Lord and Master.

The church at Smyrna must have had many who had the same spirit as Polycarp during their time of suffering. Historically, this church pictures the “age of persecution”, a time when Christendom in general was going through severe persecution.

Knowing that these letters were written for our example then, how willingly we should suffer for the cause of Christ and His Church. Those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, as God’s Word tells us.

### **C. The Lord Praised Smyrna In Her Poverty (V. 9c)**

The very nature of Smyrna's persecution entailed suffering and poverty. The Lord called attention to this poverty, which they experienced, as being a part of their persecution, and contrasted it with the true riches that they possessed. Their persecutors would see only their extreme poverty, but the Lord saw them as spiritually rich because He owned them.

Smyrna was a "poor-rich church," whereas Laodicea was a "rich-poor church." The world's model of what it considers to be the example of riches and success does not meet the standard that God deems as true riches and success. Remember that poverty is no hindrance to having the favor of God.

## **II. NOTICE SMYRNA'S PROBLEM FOR DOING WELL. (Vv. 9d-10a)**

The religious Pharisee Jews, in their rejection of Christ, became enemies to the Christian faith. Just as Christ faced much opposition from this Jewish element, so did several of these churches here mentioned. They were against Christ, and will continue to be so until their blindness is removed, and then they will see "whom they pierced."

### **A. Smyrna Faced The Problem Of Imposters. (V. 9d)**

Our text shows how subtle the enemy can be when it infiltrates the church. Notice the warning that Christ gives when referring to these counterfeit Jews, "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

There is not much known about what Christ was referring to in this passage, but I am sure that it was very obvious to those who were members of the church of Smyrna. The Lord did not even honor these counterfeit Jews as being members of His Church, but Satan's instead.

We could draw a similar parallel to this by saying, “You call yourself a Christian, but you really belong to Satan.” There are people in all of our churches who make up the chaff instead of the wheat.

## **B. Smyrna Faced The Problem Of Imprisonment. (V. 10a)**

A person could, just as did the members of the church of Smyrna, face imprisonment for doing right. Brother Lester Roloff spent time in jail for his courageous stand involving the separation of church and state. He would not take a license from the government for his girl’s home.

We should, in our modern day churches, not only take stands for right, but be prepared to face imprisonment if necessary. I am hoping that our churches will start taking stronger stands against Satan and all of the churches’ enemies, even if it means persecution.

## **III. NOTICE SMYRNA’S PROMISE FOR DOING WELL. (Vv. 10b-11)**

The Lord both knows what we must face, and also encourages the believer not to fear the things he will be called upon to suffer. His encouragement comes with the promise of rewards for being faithful unto death. The churches historically went into a difficult time of persecution under the Roman Catholic system. The Church at Rome persecuted and put to death many Christians by accusing them of being heretics. The Roman government, beginning with Nero, did the same. There were ten Roman leaders in succession that persecuted the Church. We may look at them later on in this study.

Some of our early Baptist forefathers were called Anabaptists for their insistence upon baptizing their new converts who may have been baptized as infants or in another faith. They were given the name Anabaptist in

derision for taking a strong stand on baptism following conversion. The prefix *Ana* meant “re” as in re-baptize. This is an example of how the early Baptists were persecuted and put to death for maintaining and practicing their beliefs.

### **A. Smyrna Was Promised A Courage For Being Faithful. (V. 10b)**

For one to have courage, he must have confidence or faith that either there is nothing to fear, or there is no good reason to fear. The Lord told them that they could have the promise of being delivered past and beyond the persecution. He did not promise that the church of Smyrna would not face persecution, nor be delivered from the persecution, but that they would be given a crown of life.

Christ introduced Himself as having been the One that was dead, and is now alive, and promised the same to those who made up the membership of this church. This is what made the early church courageous.

### **B. Smyrna Was Promised A Crown For Being Faithful. (Vv. 10c-11)**

The crown of life was promised to these faithful martyrs in allusion to the Gentiles who would crown their dead. The difference here is that the Lord would crown living men who were once dead as opposed to the Gentiles who were crowned as dead men.

These faithful martyrs were also told that they would not “be hurt of the second death.” They would be able to enjoy the full benefits of eternal life even though their life upon earth was cut short. This should encourage every believer to place his complete trust in the Lord.

Even though this church met much persecution in its faithfulness to the Lord, it was a very delightful church. Jesus said nothing against this church. This should inspire

us all to be more Christ-like when we face our own trials. It should encourage us to be more patient, loving, and understanding with those whom we come in contact. We should even love our enemies with a Christian love without compromising to do wrong. May these studies help us all...

## Chapter Five

### PERGAMOS-A DIVIDED CHURCH

#### **Text: Revelation 2:12-17**

*12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;*

*13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*

*14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

*15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

*16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

*17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

Pergamos was the capital of Mysia, which was a Roman province that was located in the northwestern portion of Asia Minor. When Paul heeded the Macedonian call, he passed through this province, embarking at the port of Troas (Acts 16:7-8). This very religious city of Pergamos was located about twenty miles from the sea. Though this city was not a city of commerce, it was a very religious and a very wealthy city.

This city had heathen temples that were erected in honor of its gods, such as Zeus, Aphrodite, and Asclepius with the latter being the god of medicine who was worshiped under the form of a serpent (Strauss). With Satan knowing how religious the people of Pergamos were, in worshiping their false gods, he must have felt very comfortable setting up his throne there.

We need to keep in mind that Satan does not do his most effective work in houses of ill repute which are located next door to the taverns, bar rooms, and the clubs, but right in the middle of our religious institutions. Satan does not care how religious you are, as long as you do not believe in the Biblical Christ.

## **I. NOTICE PERGAMOS' PRAISE. (Vv. 12-13)**

The Lord is careful to observe the believer who is being faithful when it is very difficult to do so. The location of Satan's seat is obviously not an easy place to worship. One can only imagine the tribulation and the pressure that these early Christians had to face being right where Satan's seat (throne) was located. This is not to say that Satan was not anywhere else, but it indicates that Satan was certainly intensifying his efforts in this location. It is also true today that Satan intensifies his efforts against those who take a stand for God and against him. Satan will not bother a church that does nothing, says nothing, and fails to take a stand for Truth. It is only when people and churches sell out to the Lord that they begin to face intense opposition from Satan. Pergamos was such a church.

### **A. For Her Fidelity During Great Temptation. (Vv. 12-13a)**

This twelfth verse introduces Christ as the One who "hath the sharp sword with two edges." This reference is in regards to the way that Christ will speak and perform according to His Word. With Him giving His Word sword-like qualities, He is describing the attitude that He has towards Satan and those who are worshiping him. The Lord is in a perpetual war against Satan and those who are satanic. He will not tolerate anyone worshiping any other gods, without there being an ultimate confrontation with Him, based upon the truth of God's Word.

Hebrews 4:12 shows that the Word is likened unto a sword as it deals with man in respect to his humanistic mindset. The minds of so many have been humanized to only think apart from God with no respect as to what God's Word has to say. Such is the reason that there are those who are making every effort to tear down the Ten Commandments, to remove the manger scenes, and then take God out of the schools. Such thinking will one day be cut into and exposed by the cutting sword of Truth. Then, it will be absolutely recognized by all that it was not such a bad idea to worship God, rather than Satan.

Listen to this verse:

*“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)*

### **B. For Her Faithfulness During Great Trial. (V. 13b)**

You can learn much about a people group when you see the way they respond to persecution. The Christians of Pergamos would not deny the name of Christ even though one of their own had been martyred. Those who embraced the name of Christ during the time period of this church did it knowing that there would be a price to be paid, but did so anyway. We should do the same, and not be intimidated by this world that is controlled by Satan. For the believer, as the song says, “There’s just something about that Name.” We should honor It as such.

## **II. NOTICE PERGAMOS’ PROBLEM. (Vv. 14-15)**

To get a complete understanding of what this church was guilty of would involve a thorough study of Numbers 22-25.

Briefly stated, Balak, the king of Moab offered Balaam the prophet a considerable sum to curse Israel. Upon the first offer he refused, but then when the amount was increased he agreed to curse Israel; but God kept this from happening three times.

Balaam was a very gifted person but could be bought for a price. Such was the case at Pergamos. Pergamos had some very gifted preachers and speakers, but they would compromise with the world. They saw no reason not to invite the world into the church. This kind of worldliness was weakening and dividing the church.

Balaam, when he found that he could not *curse* the church, he began to *corrupt* the church by suggesting that the Israelites yoke up with the heathen tribes. This is what began to happen to the church at Pergamos as it yoked up with the world. The church became just like the world.

This is where so many of our churches are today. You cannot tell them apart from the world. It has shown up in their lack of standards, the wrong kind of music, worship services that feed the flesh and a departure from the Old King James Bible.

**A. They Had Those Who Had A Covetous Spirit In Their Ministry (Held To The Doctrine Of Balaam). (V. 14)**

Just as Balaam could be bought for a price, there were those in the church at Pergamos who would rather have the applause of the world, and the praise of man, than the favor of the Lord. With this being so, they would tolerate worldliness. We must be warned knowing that the same thing is happening to many of our churches today. We must constantly be on guard against this subtle intrusion of Satan. If Satan cannot curse you, he certainly will attempt to corrupt you. Churches with its membership who take a stand against worldliness will never be that popular with the world.

Pergamos historically pictures the time when Constantine

contended with Maxentius over the throne that had been occupied by Diocletian up until his death. Old tradition has it that the night before the battle at Milvian Bridge, Constantine saw a vision in the shape of a cross in the sky with this Latin inscription, *in hoc signo vinces*, (by this sign conquer). It was that night that Constantine bargained with Satan and would join the church if he were victorious. It was after this battle that he marched his soldiers into the church, and the church and the state were wedded together. After this, it was then popular for a person to say that he was a Christian even though there was no real evidence to show that he was truly a follower of Christ. This was the way that the Roman Catholic Church developed and this Roman system is still hated by Christ for its departure from Truth. In the spirit of ecumenicalism, many churches today have yoked up together and they are compromising Truth to do so.

### **B. They Had Those Who Had A Conquering Spirit In Their Ministry (Held The Doctrine Of The Nicolaitans). (V. 15)**

Louis T. Talbot wrote: “The two words *nikao*, meaning ‘to conquer’, and *laos*, meaning ‘the people’ or ‘laity,’ form the root of the name ‘Nicolaitans’. The term was applied to those who originated the system, which divided the Church of Jesus Christ into two divisions—the clergy and the laity.” When we come to the study involving especially the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira, we will discover that this system is in full bloom with bishops, archbishops, and other religious dominating taking place.

This kind of religious system does not properly recognize the priesthood of the believer. It causes men to believe that they cannot personally come to the Lord.

### **III. NOTICE PERGAMOS’ PUNISHMENT. (V. 16)**

The Lord desires the church to maintain its fidelity by

not allowing unbelievers to find safe haven in our churches. If a person does not give evidence of real, genuine conversion, then that person should not be allowed to come into the membership. God's definition of the New Testament church involves baptized believers.

The church also should exercise church discipline to avoid the church from having a tolerant attitude towards sin. The discipline should be done in such a way that provides for firmness and fairness, in a way that also demonstrates Christian love. We, like Christ, should hate the sin but love the sinner.

**A. Unless They Repented There Would Be Sudden Judgment. (V. 16a)**

The Lord does not lightly regard sin nor does He lightly deal with sin. He told the church at Pergamos that they were to repent or face His sudden judgment. Each of us should recognize the seriousness of sin, and neither tolerate it in our personal lives nor in our churches.

**B. Unless They Repented There Would Be Sure Judgment. (V. 16b)**

He warned the church at Pergamos that He would execute judgment with the sword of His mouth. Can you imagine the Creator God who spoke into existence everything that is, speaking judgment against your sin? Again, we should not have a light regard for sin. We should see it as He does.

**IV. NOTICE PERGAMOS' PROMISE. (V. 17)**

Christ does not want an individual or a church comprised of individuals to remain defeated by either sin or any other hindrance to the cause of Christ. He is always encouraging us to do right. To this church, it is the same. To our church, it also is the same. God wants us to go on in grace.

### **A. Be Fed With A Spiritual Nutrient. (V. 17a)**

The Lord told the church at Pergamos that He would give them the right to eat of the “hidden manna.” The hidden manna is the blessings that come to His own who are walking in the faith. It is hidden to the worldly wise man, and the sinner. Manna, as indicated in the Scriptures, was a type of God’s blessings and provisions. In the wilderness the manna was given to sustain the people of Israel. It was given according to God’s design, and according to His timing.

For a church to receive the ongoing blessings of the Lord, it has to be separated from the world, just as the Lord required of the church at Pergamos.

### **B. Be Furnished With A Spiritual Name. (V. 17b)**

The Lord promised a white stone to the overcomer. No one today knows for sure what the white stone was, but the church at Pergamos knew. Whatever it was, it was good because the Lord gave it. It also promised a new name written in the stone. The Lord made something special to offer to the church at Pergamos for their doing right. This shows how important it is to the Lord for His people to be a separated and a peculiar people.

Each of these churches that we are studying has special lessons for us to learn. Sometimes these lessons are hard lessons to be learned, because our flesh does not enjoy being corrected. Such could be the case as we study this church because it is so difficult to stay separated from the pull of the world without having the strength that comes from the Lord. May we have His strength...

## Chapter Six

### THYATIRA-A DEPRAVED CHURCH

#### Text: Revelation 2:18-29

*18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;*

*19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.*

*20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

*21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*

*22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.*

*23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*

*24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.*

*25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.*

*26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:*

*27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.*

*28 And I will give him the morning star.*

*29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

As we learn about these churches that were located in Asia Minor, it is important that we keep in perspective what God is teaching us. As we have already learned, we study this great last book of the Bible with three things in mind. We want to first learn what the primary interpretation of the passage is. Then, what is the practical application to be learned? Finally, what is the prophetic implication?

Thyatira could have been founded, with Lydia the seller

of purple, having a beginning influence. Lydia, who was converted at Philippi, was from Thyatira (Acts 16:14). Thyatira was not a large city, and was not known for its religious persecution as some of the other churches of the seven, but it did have a strong economic base, which allowed it to be mostly known for its industry.

About the church located here, many good things are said about it. Such words as *charity*, *service*, *faith*, and *patience* are used to describe this church. Yet, the Lord also had a few things against this church. We will analyze and study this church and determine why this church was a depraved church.

## **I. NOTICE THYATIRA'S PRAISE. (Vv. 18-19)**

Notice that the Lord is very gracious even when rebuking these churches. If He is able to find something commendable about the church, He will do so. Such is the case with this church under consideration. There were some good things that could be said, but as you study this letter to Thyatira, you get the impression that the evil things about the church outweigh the good. Many of our churches are like this today. For most of our churches, something good can be said about them, but sadly there is often so much wrong that the good hardly is noticeable. Churches need great Biblical balance. Churches need strong doctrine, but they also need steady duty. Churches need the love of God, but they must balance it with the law of God.

### **A. Praised The Integrity Of The Work. (Vv. 18-19a)**

When the Lord is addressing Himself to this church, He is calling attention to having “eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.” This is God’s way of saying, “I see what is going on, and I will judge you accordingly”. He begins by saying that He is aware of this church by its works being done.

Churches need to be busy about doing the Lord's work, as the church at Thyatira was. Our churches have a wonderful role in the development and the making of a people. Can you imagine where our own country would be if it were not for the positive influence of our churches? As I am writing this, the ACLU is constantly going to court with the agenda of taking away the core values that made our country great. They have effectively had part in the removal of manger scenes, the taking down of the Ten Commandments, suing the Boy Scouts of America, taking the cross off the California symbol, and changing the name of the Christmas tree to the holiday tree, just to name a few.

Church groups and concerned citizens are beginning to fight this group on the basis that it should not support its trial lawyers with American tax dollars. Also, churches across the land were said to have impacted the last election with its concern and influence over rising moral declension.

The church at Thyatira was also commended for its charity. Charity is an unselfish, Christ-like, giving love. This church was known for having this kind of love. This kind of love is sincerely reaching out and ministering to others. Sadly, our text indicates that a church having this kind of love can still be wrong. This should be our warning as we consider this church. A church is stronger when it is built on balance. We get in trouble as churches when we go to the extreme in either direction. The Scriptures use Scriptural couplets to find this balance. There are a couple of examples: The Bible speaks of having "grace and truth" or "strength and beauty." It is no accident that God worded His Truth as He did.

Though God is a God of LOVE, He also is a HOLY God, and will not compromise His Holiness for His love. This is the reason that we sometimes say, "love is tough." In addition to Thyatira being commended for its works and its charity, it was also commended for its service. The word service in this context carries the idea of ministering to

others by receiving the command or instructions of another. This very likely was the way that the Lord commended this church for obeying their pastors. Hebrews 13:17 says , “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

The church at Thyatira was also commended for its faith. When you think about this church, you see that it has a very impressive list of positive qualities. Faith is one of them. Faith must characterize the true church of God. Can you imagine doing God’s work without exercising faith? We could very easily call the church a venture of faith! Every work of the church ought to be an ongoing adventure of faith. The church also should be a patient church as the church at Thyatira was described. The word patient as used here means *the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.*

## **B. Praised The Increasing Of The Work. (V. 19b)**

Another notable quality that describes this church was that its last works were more than those at the first. The church was doing the things we just mentioned in an increasing capacity. They were not like the church at Ephesus, which drifted from its first love, but instead were loving the things of God even more. Yet, with all of these outstanding qualities mentioned, the church still had problems that were destructive to its very existence.

The warning that I feel as I deliver this sermon is that even churches like ours can have such good qualities yet still come up so short. Let us be warned and helped as we look at Thyatira’s problems.

## **II. NOTICE THYATIRA'S PROBLEMS. (V. 20)**

When the Lord used the phrase, “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.” He was letting the church know that it had some very serious problems. May I say, most all of our churches have serious problems according to God’s standards. If we do not recognize this, we cannot truly experience revival and see God do what He wants to do in our churches.

We have a wonderful church, but God is very much impressing on my heart that we too have very serious problems. Remember, we must measure according to God’s standards. As your pastor, God is showing me many areas that I need to personally address. Also, God is showing me areas of weakness that is among you that need to be addressed. Please be both sensitive and pliable to His will as we do these studies.

### **A. Had A Jezebel That Called Herself A Prophetess. (V. 20a)**

In the Old Testament, the name Jezebel is an awful name. I cannot recall one instance of commendation that is given to her. She fornicated the holy things of God, causing her husband Ahab to embrace the heathen gods of the land. She was a murderess, who would cheat and kill to get her way. One commentator in describing her vanity of powdering her face said that she would put on her war paint in the morning, and go on the warpath in the evening.

This Jezebel mentioned in our text undoubtedly had the spirit and the characteristics of the Old Testament Jezebel. This woman had a dominating spirit that prevailed in the church, which resulted in the Lord’s servants being seduced by her. This indicates she had so much satanic power that

she could manipulate the minds of even the servants of the Lord causing them to do those things they would not normally do.

## **B. Had A Jezebel That Caused Her Subjects To Fornicate. (V. 20b)**

Just as seductive women can enter into a healthy marriage and cause harm by seducing the man, so was this woman doing the same to God's servants. Historically, this church pictures the time that we now know as the "dark ages," which covered the time period from 600AD to 1500AD. It was when the Roman Catholic Church, as a religious state, wanted to dominate the entire world.

This was the time when the Church in Rome took the Bible away from the people and said that only the Church could interpret it. It was the beginning of Mariolatry, when Mary was called "the Mother of God," and "the queen of Heaven." It was the time when all prayers were to go through Mary. Jesus Christ was given a lesser prominence.

The Roman Catholic Church in recent years has been involved in ecumenical movements to bring all of the faiths together. This is warned against in the book of Revelation in several other places even as it is here. We will in a later study notice how the Church of Rome is referred to as the "MOTHER OF HARLOTS" (Rev. 17:5) and "the whore" (Rev. 17:15). Such a descriptive reference as this shows how the Church at Rome is involved in spiritual fornication, and how the Lord describes it.

Many of the Protestant churches that originally pulled out of the Church of Rome are now making inroads back into the system. This may be noted by their similar doctrines, their practice involving the priesthood and their liturgical styles that are similar.

### **III. NOTICE THYATIRA'S PUNISHMENT. (Vv. 21-23)**

Our text indicates that the Lord dealt very severely with Jezebel and those who were associated with her at Thyatira. The language of the Lord indicates to us how much that the Lord hated what Jezebel was doing and to whom she was doing it to. Likewise, the Lord now hates for us to tolerate and yoke up with those who have a corrupt system of theology. The King James Bible is our sole authority for doctrine and practice, which helps to protect us from corrupt theology. Can we not recognize how easy it is for man to depart from the Truth when he lessens his love and respect for the King James Bible?

#### **A. Tribulation Will Come Because Of Jezebel's Deeds. (Vv. 21-22)**

The church of Thyatira faced tribulation for its failure to deal with the prophetess Jezebel. Likewise, the religious system that is divorced from God will face very intense tribulation during the Great Tribulation. Revelation 18, beginning in verse number 4, describes the great punishment that will fall upon the GREAT HARLOT. Notice these verses as an indication of what is going to take place .  
(Revelation 18:4-8).

*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

*For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

*Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.*

*How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*

*Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*

**B. Tragedy Will Come Because Of Jezebel's Deeds.  
(V. 23a)**

The severity of God's judgment is demonstrated in these verses. I am finding more and more people who want to magnify the love of God above the holiness of God. They despise making any judgments against both the sinner and his sin. There is a prevailing spirit in many of our churches to "not rock the boat" and do not offend anyone. God is convicting me even as I write, "Yes, we must love," but "No, we must not tolerate sin."

Having a tolerant attitude towards sin can be just as devastating as having a too demanding attitude towards the sinner. Once again, it is the Word of God that balances it all out.

**C. Trials Will Come Because Of Jezebel's Deeds. (V. 23b)**

When the Lord says, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works," this is the Lord's way of saying, "I will put you on trial, and try your motives". The Lord knows the true motive of each church, and each person.

**IV. NOTICE THYATIRA'S PROMISE. (Vv. 24-29)**

There were promises given to this church for those who did not embrace the teachings of Jezebel, and did not learn the ways of Satan. There also seems to be strong teachings relating to and going beyond the tribulation right on to the Kingdom Age. When reference is given to them having, "power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father," there seems to be a solid connection to the Millennium.

### **A. To The Pure He Will Give Protection. (Vv. 24-25)**

There is an ongoing principle that is found throughout the Word of God. This principle has been called the “If-But” principle. This principle simply stated says, that IF you do that which is right, you will have the blessings of God, BUT if not you will have the curse of God upon you.

The Lord is promising His blessings to the one who “overcometh.”

### **B. To The Pure He Will Give Power. (Vv. 26-27)**

He will also give power to the person who obeys and does His Word. Today, in doing the work of the Lord, we desperately need God’s protective power. It can be had as a reward for faithfully doing what His Word says.

### **C. To The Pure He Will Give Permanence. (Vv. 28-29)**

The morning star is a star of antiquity. It also is a symbol of permanency. For a person or a church to enjoy the glory and permanency of the morning star, it needs God’s favor and His blessings. I certainly want this church to have just that...

This is another great study or lesson from an old church that we should give heed to. May we be the kind of church that will please God.

## Chapter Seven

### SARDIS-A DEAD CHURCH

#### **Text: Revelation 3:1-6**

*1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

*2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

*3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

*4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

*5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*

*6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Sardis was east of Smyrna and south of Thyatira, but a neighbor to both. Not much is known about the start up of this church, but the church through a messenger had visited John while he was on the isle of Patmos. It was by this messenger that the letter was delivered to the church at Sardis. Sardis was a very rich city and also the ancient capital of Lydia.

In studying the meaning of the word Sardis, some say that it means “escaping ones” or “remnant.” Prophetically, this church pictures the time known as the reformation. It was on October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his famous Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. It was during this time that Calvin, Knox, Zwingli, and others attacked the very citadel of Rome causing the very foundations of papal Rome to be shaken.

There were two major emphases during the reformation. One was the return doctrinally to the truth *Justification by*

*Faith*, and the other was the emphasis on the Scriptures as being the sole authority. The battle cry of the reformation was *Sola Scriptura* or *the Scriptures alone*.

In addition to the reformation taking place, Protestantism was born. Sadly, the break that the Protestants made was not nearly enough. We will consider this more in depth as we continue this study.

## **I. NOTICE SARDIS' PROBLEM. (Vv. 1-2)**

The letter begins with a complaint by the Lord, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." In creation, our solar system takes 33 years for the light to travel from the Polar Star to the earth. If it exploded 30 years ago, it would still be seen on earth for 3 more years. In a similar statement, one could then say about the Polar Star, "You have the appearance of being alive, but you are dead." Tragically, there are many churches today that are just like this.

William R. Newell, the old commentator said this about Protestantism, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Nothing could describe *Protestantism* more accurately! As over against Romish night and ignorance, she has enlightenment and outward activity: the great 'state churches', or 'denominations', with creeds and histories, costly churches and cathedrals, universities and seminaries, 'boards', bureaus of publication and propaganda, executors of organized activities, including home and foreign missions, even 'lobby' men to 'influence legislation' at court! You and I dare compare the Church with no other model than the Holy Spirit gave at Pentecost and in Paul's day!"

### **A. The Church Had Inconsistencies Before God. (V. 1)**

With all of our activities, and churchy events, it comes down to this one consideration, "What does God think about it?" To know God's thoughts is to know God's Word.

Wonder what God thinks when we start shutting our doors on Sunday nights, and quit frequenting our mid-week prayer services, and I hear that some churches are shutting down for the summer. Faithfulness to the church ought to be as natural as breathing. There should not be the need for carnal attractions to keep people in church. There should be a love for the Word, and a desire to worship and praise Him based upon real life.

When God saw this church, He saw that it was engrossed in activities, and that it was doing religious things but was really dead... God saw their inconsistencies, and He also sees ours, as well.

### **B. The Church Had Imperfections Before God. (V. 2)**

*“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.” (V. 2)*

The Lord saw very little vitality in this church at Sardis; He saw that this church was dying, and it was for this reason that He gave this very serious and solemn warning to the church. The command to be watchful is another reference to the second coming of the Lord. Two references are given to the seven churches in regards to the second coming of the Lord. The Lord was telling Sardis to be looking for the Lord.

When a Christian and a church have their eyes on the coming of the Lord, they will be more likely to be ready for the coming of the Lord. Also, the church at Sardis was told to strengthen the things that remain. A worthy endeavor on the part of pastors and preachers is to preach messages that cause its membership to be mindful of the coming of the Lord, and to also be preaching messages that strengthen the church. Obviously, our flesh does not like such preaching, and for this reason our churches are dying.

The truth of this verse is supported in Colossians 1:23, where it says, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and

settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.” Being “grounded and settled” speaks of strength. It says something about the foundation. If the foundation settles, the building crumbles. If the foundation of Truth is removed, then the church begins to crumble.

## **II. NOTICE SARDIS’ PUNISHMENT. (V. 3)**

*“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”* This verse speaks of swift, full, and complete judgment. We falsely develop the opinion that we can change the requirements and the rules of God to suit our own lifestyle, and to live as we please. We live as though we forgot that God is still in control.

Just as God told the church of Sardis to remember how they had received and heard, they were also told to hold fast and repent. If they did not, God was promising sure and swift judgment upon them.

### **A. The Lord Will Come As A Thief. (V. 3a)**

This certainly does not mean that the Lord is a thief. It just means that He will come as a thief in a manner that is not expected. He is telling the church at Sardis that He will come suddenly and will bring judgment upon them. There will be no clue as to when it will happen. Would it not be an awful tragedy to disregard the warnings of God, only to have Him swiftly come and remove His presence, while at the same time bringing His judgment with Him?

### **B. The Lord Will Come Unannounced As To Time. (V. 3b)**

It is with significance that the Lord uses the expression

“Be watchful” here as it pertains to judgment upon the church at Sardis, and also when describing His second coming. Each church and its people should be looking for the eminent return of Christ. Usually when the Scriptures speak concerning the coming of the Lord, it also speaks of judgment that will befall the people who are left behind.

### **III. NOTICE SARDIS’ PRAISE. (V. 4)**

The Lord is careful to give praise when and where it is deserved. Such is the case concerning those who are remaining faithful in the church at Sardis.

*“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”*  
(V. 4)

Certainly, we who are the King’s children should walk as such. Just as a few in the church at Sardis were commended for not defiling their garments, we should not either. I have always been impressed with the soldier who took great pride in the way that he wore his uniform. Looking back, I can see why the drill sergeant would require us to spend so much time preparing our shoes and our uniform. The uniform identified the soldier with both his unit and his country.

We are royal ambassadors representing a Heavenly country. With such being so, we should never do anything to defile the uniform that marks us as being Christians. Sin certainly defiles. The word garment is used in our text to show recognition to those who were not defiled. The color white pictures both purity and worthiness. The Lord Jesus Christ made us worthy by clothing us in robes of righteousness.

#### **A. There Were A Few Not Dead. (V. 4a)**

When the Lord spoke of the church at Sardis having a name that it was alive but was dead could mean two things.

It certainly meant that there were those who had lost all of their effectiveness to the cause of Christ. They were void of any recognizable traits that identified them as being converted. Then, also, there could be a greater reference to the church being slowly taken over by lost men. When the Word of God is constantly being watered down and there is a lesser and lesser regard for the Word of God, one can be assured that it is only a matter of time before that church is nothing more than a part of history.

Lost people who are members of the church will have no real living passion for the things of God. There will be a “form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” that marks such a congregation. Though a few may still be converted, most will be lost just going through the motions.

#### **B. There Will Be A Few Not Defiled. (V. 4b)**

Just as there were a few who had not defiled their garments at Sardis, historically there were also the Baptist groups during the Protestant Reformation who were neither Catholic nor Protestant. This remnant stayed true, and continued even as they had started. The Protestants during this time were not friendly to the early Baptists. I can still hear in my mind Dr. Harold B. Sighthler saying, “Martin Luther was never a friend of the Baptists.” Some of the greatest persecution came upon the Baptists from the Protestants after the Protestant Reformation.

Even today when so many religious groups are taking the interdenominational and the no denominational road, there are still a few Baptists who will not compromise their doctrine or their duty. They continue to remain true to the King James Bible, and all that it involves, knowing that it is becoming less and less popular to do so.

#### IV. NOTICE SARDIS' PROMISE. (Vv. 4b-6)

This next section has a very interesting expression; “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

The expression *blot out his name* has been either much discussed or not discussed at all. We will look at what seems to be the truth of this expression as we look at these passages, with some comments being made as we do.

Using the *Law of First Mention*, we will note the first appearing of this expression. “*Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin -; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.*” (*Exodus 32:32*). Moses has such a love for his people that he was willing to have his name removed from the book of living, which will eventually become the book of life. God has a register that He keeps of all who would ever live. This is a way that the Lord is able to show that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance. When the sinner refuses his last opportunity to be saved, then his name is blotted out, thus it would never be in the book of life. Moses was referencing to such a registry in this passage.

Now, look at this passage in Psalm 69:28, which gives additional insight to this expression. “*Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.*”

Praise God, all who are believers will have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. All of those whose names have not been blotted out will be included. Will your name still be there?

#### A. There Was A Promise Regarding Their Walk. (V. 4b)

What is absolutely thrilling about this promise is that the Scriptures say, “they shall walk with me in white.” How thrilling to walk with Him. How thrilling to know that

He now walks with us who are believers. Can you but imagine how wonderful that it will be to forever be with the Lord, and to be able to go on a long walk with Him and not even use up one second of eternity?

**B. There Was A Promise Regarding Their Wardrobe.**  
**(V. 5a)**

To be clothed in white raiment, speaks of the requirements and the righteousness of God. It speaks of the approval and the acceptance of God. It speaks of the favor and the faithfulness of God. It speaks of the glory and the grandeur of God. He awards the wardrobe which says it all.

**C. There Was A Promise Regarding Their Well-being.**  
**(Vv. 5b-6)**

Nothing means more than to have Christ to confess the believer's name before the Father and the angels. It often is exciting to have your name spoken publicly in a good way, but not nearly as exciting as having your name spoken by Him in this way.

Studying these seven churches certainly offers some new lessons from old churches. Really, these lessons may seem new, but they have been around for a long time. These studies are God's way to teach us to pattern our churches in a way that will be pleasing to Him. I trust that this is happening.

## Chapter Eight

### PHILADELPHIA-ANOTHER DELIGHTFUL CHURCH

**Text: Revelation 3:7-13**

*7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*

*8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*

*9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*

*10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

*11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

*12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

*13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

This would be the church! Out of the seven churches listed in our study, this is the one that I would most rather be a member of, and would most enjoy being the pastor. Now back to the real world... Sadly, there are not many churches like this. If the ratio of such churches would be the same as it is here, it would be one out of seven. Yet, I am afraid that it would probably be much less than that. Churches that meet the Biblical standard of God are few and far between. These studies of the seven churches are showing me that this statement would be so.

Philadelphia was an interesting place that was built by Attalus Philadelphia. This city which was located nine

hundred feet above sea level suffered much from earthquakes and volcanic activity. This contributed to the land being rich and fertile making it well suited for the cultivation of fine grapes.

The church at Philadelphia was located about thirty miles southeast of Sardis leading to Laodicea. This city was nicknamed “Little Athens” because of its beautiful buildings, and unique culture. The following historical statement shows why this is so:

*“The original purpose behind this key city was to make it a center for spreading Greek language, culture and manners throughout the Asian provinces.” (Hocking)*

Even though this city had the strong Greek cultural influences, it still did not negatively affect the church of Philadelphia that was located there. May we discover what made this such a delightful church.

## **I. NOTICE PHILADELPHIA’S PRAISE. (Vv. 7-8)**

There is absolutely no better praise than the praise that comes from the Lord. The highest ambition of any church or Christian ought to be to serve in such a way as to have the praise of the Lord. The Scriptures have much to say concerning the way that the Lord rewards faithfulness. This particular letter gives us much insight as to the character of Christ. We will note from whom the praise was given.

### **A. Note From Whom The Praise Was Given. (V. 7)**

A wonderful description is given in our text concerning Christ as the very One who praised the church at Philadelphia. We will very carefully consider the way the Lord is described as we explore the text. We also will look at some related passages that give information about Him. This will help us better understand how wonderful it is *to be praised by Him*. Consider this enlightening passage that is found in Hebrews 1:3-4.

*“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”*

This passage tells us something about His Majesty on high, and how He came to us as the Savior and takes consideration of us, while being the Sovereign One. Christ Jesus upholds all things by the word of His power. No one but He has this ability and power. Colossians 1:18-19 further demonstrates this same truth. *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.”* The Word of God clearly proves that Christ pleases the Father as being *“the head of the body, the church.”*

As the Head, Christ has the right to govern the church. The church is His government; He is its absolute governing Head. As the governing Head of the church, He can make observations and praise the church if He finds it to be worthy. He is absolutely qualified to do so, as these scriptures remind us. Our text that we are considering also voices this right by showing or listing how He is qualified. May we now consider these qualifications.

### **1. Praise came from the Sanctified One- “is holy.” (V. 7a)**

Christ is indeed the Sanctified One or the Holy One. The word holy comes from a word that means awful one. Not awful like one who is deplorable or wicked, but as one who is full of awe. The Holy One is the Reverend One. The more holy we become, the more like Christ we become. A church’s capacity to reverence God will be proportioned to the way it regards His holiness. The word holy is a separating word in that the word *holy* means to make a

difference. Christ Jesus is absolutely different from all others. There is no heathen god that can be compared to Him in any manner. He far outshines them all. He is separated from all in His splendor, His majesty, and His power. He alone is God!

## **2. Praise came from the Sure One- “is true.” (V. 7b)**

The word *true* as used in our text, according to *Strong’s*, means “opposite to what is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated or pretended.” Christ Jesus is true because *He is the Truth*. There is nothing counterfeit, or imaginary about Him. As He spoke to each of these churches, He spoke the Truth. There could have been those in the church at Philadelphia who needed to have Truth confirmed. We, in our churches today can have the Truth confirmed by virtue of having the King James Bible as our sole authority. There must be a proper Truth reference point. Jesus Christ was that reference point as He spoke to the church at Philadelphia. He told them everything upon the absolute basis of Him being true. Today, a church is strong only when it operates absolutely according to the truth of God’s Word.

## **3. Praise came from the Sovereign One-“key of David”. (V. 7c)**

When the expression, “he that hath the key of David” is used, it describes the ruling authority that the Lord Jesus has. David’s authority was passed on to Eliakim, Isaiah 22:22, and in a spiritual sense it was then passed on to the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s sovereign power is exercised in Heaven and upon the earth. Everything pertaining to His power originates in the throne room. Romans 13:1 says, “*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*”

When thinking about the key of David, one can see how God blended the human with the Divine. It was according to God’s sovereign purpose that David was selected in

preference to a “head and shoulder” man such as Saul. God, within His sovereign purpose, selected David and then allowed Himself to be placed in the human lineage of David by being born of a human mother that was of David’s descent. It will be Christ Jesus who will take both the seat of David, and the key of David according to His own sovereign purpose. It is in this manner that He introduces who He is to the church at Philadelphia.

As the sovereign *key holder*, Christ declared that He was the One who opens and closes doors. Just as this was true when He addressed the church at Philadelphia, it is also true as He addresses our churches today. It is equally true in respect to personal ministry. Even as I stand before you as your preacher, it is only because the Lord opened a door of opportunity and service nearly twenty-five years ago. I continue to serve here because God has not chosen to close that door. When He does, my ministry here will be completed. It is with that confidence and knowledge that I now serve you. It is He that has the keys.

Many years ago, I would have older and wiser preachers counsel me on how I could know the will of God. They would say, “God opens doors that no man can close, and closes doors that no man can open.” It has been my desire to be sensitive to when God is either opening or closing a door. This is what contributed to my waiting so long to actually begin our building program for our new church facilities. I had to absolutely know that it was in God’s perfect timing. As a church, we patiently waited for God to give us the go-ahead and I am glad now that we did. It is so much better to trust God with the *key*.

The church at Philadelphia pictures historically the missionary church or the church of the open door. This period began around 1750 AD and continued until around 1950 AD. During these years, there were many revivals in different parts of the world. England and the United States experienced a *great awakening* as did those who were

associated with the famed Welsh Revival. God raised up men like William Carey, John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Adoniram Judson, Charles Finney, Dwight Moody, “Billy” Sunday, John R. Rice, Oliver B. Green and many more. My own parents were saved as a result of this Great Awakening. Over 50 years later our church is still enjoying the benefits of the Philadelphian Church Age, having been born under the influence of the Great Awakening.

Sadly, we are now living in the Laodicean Church Age. Because of this, our churches as a whole are in desperate need of a Heaven-sent revival.

## **B. Note To Whom The Praise Was Given. (V. 8)**

Philadelphia had suffered many earthquakes and knew what it was to suffer great loss and face tremendous hardship. It would have been very easy for them to live in a constant state of fear and dread, yet such did not seem to be the case. Their adversity seemed to make them more resilient to hardship. The Lord commended them for their faithful fidelity and promised them that He would honor them for their faithfulness.

### **1. Praise was given to a church that was faithful in her weakness. (V. 8a)**

When the Lord told them that they had a little strength, it could have been in a relative sense. The Lord may have been saying, “Though your number has been greatly diminished, you still, with your small number, have an open door of service that no man can shut.” This could be a means of encouraging our churches today that have small numbers but continue to practice faithfulness to the Lord. A little strength coupled with God’s strength means great strength.

## **2. Praise was given to a church that was faithful to the Word. (V. 8b)**

The Lord told the church at Philadelphia that they had kept His Word. Certainly that was a wonderful commendation for the church at Philadelphia, and would be for any church so commended. A church will be rewarded according to the way that the Word of God is kept. There will be a day of reckoning as indicated by Hebrews 13:17. *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”*

Preachers should be very careful to deliver the Word of God to the people, and the people should be very careful to keep the Word that has been delivered to them. I recall a preacher who once said that it was his responsibility to *preach God’s Word as it is to men as they are*. When a bridge of trust has been built between the people and the preacher, and they mutually have a desire to please God by keeping the Word, that makes a wonderful combination. May we together strive to be absolutely faithful to the Word of God as was the church at Philadelphia.

## **3. Praise was given to a church that was faithful in her worship. (V. 8c)**

Philadelphia in no way denied the name of the Lord. There were those who brought persecution to the church while attempting to get the members of Philadelphia to deny the Name of Christ. There would have been a carnal temptation to deny Christ in hopes of having an easier existence, but they would not deny Christ. It could have been difficult to survive after a major earthquake with the food supply either cut off or under the control of the government. With this being so, those who worshiped Christ may have been told that unless they recant their faith

in Christ they would starve to death. The Lord told them that even though they had just a little strength while facing their adversity, they would still be rewarded by Christ. He would make them pillars of strength in the Temple of God. (V. 12). This would be God's way of perpetually honoring those Philadelphia church members for their faithfulness.

## **II. NOTICE PHILADELPHIA'S PROMISES. (Vv. 9-13)**

In these verses there are at least five promises that the Lord made to the church at Philadelphia.

1. I will make them to come and worship before thy feet.
2. I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.
3. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.
4. I will write upon him the name of my God.
5. I will write upon him my new name.

May we consider these promises in three different groups.

### **A. The Lord Promised Honor To The Faithful Of Philadelphia. (V. 9)**

There seems to be evidence that the counterfeit Jews were persecuting the genuine saints of the Philadelphian church. The Lord will cause them to come and worship before the church, and will also be shown that the Lord loved those whom these counterfeit Jews did not love. These religious Jews were guilty of religious pretense, and were said to be of the synagogue of Satan. That certainly is a strong indictment against their counterfeit religious activity. That shows us that the Lord is not at all impressed with religious pretense.

In a similar way as here, the Lord will one day reveal

Himself to the world as the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, with every knee bowing before Him. At this time all religious counterfeits will be finally and forever exposed. Also at this time, the faithful in Christ will be honored and rewarded.

### **B. The Lord Promised A Haven To The Faithful Of Philadelphia. (Vv. 10-11)**

This church at Philadelphia had faced so much trial and tribulation, yet remained faithful to the Lord. In a way that only involved the actual church addressed here, the Lord is offering them special protection when they would not have to face the *hour of temptation*. This could very well be a way that the Lord is promising the church that it will not go through the Great Tribulation. The phrase hour of temptation refers to a time that will be of a measured duration. The tribulation will have a limited time of seven years. The Church, praise God, will not have to go through the Great Tribulation.

### **C. The Lord Promised A Heaven To The Faithful Of Philadelphia. (Vv. 12-13)**

These verses show the wonderful benefits and the wonderful blessings that would come as the faithful church members were taken to Heaven. For all of the faithful church members at Philadelphia, they will be identified as to the name of the Lord, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of the Lord. There will be no mistake as to who the genuine children of God are, as opposed to the Jews who are of the synagogue of Satan.

The church at Philadelphia certainly gives us a great pattern to go by. Once again there are great new lessons that can be learned from these old churches. May we be the church of the open door in the 21<sup>st</sup> century right here in Statesboro, Georgia.

## Chapter Nine

### LAODICEA-A DISGRACEFUL CHURCH

#### Text: Revelation 3:14-22

*14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

*15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

*16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

*17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

*18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

*19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

*20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

*21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

*22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

I have such a different feeling when coming to this church after leaving the church at Philadelphia. I was trying to think of words that would best describe this feeling. An event that I will never forget came to my mind as I was thinking. I remember going to Brother Wallace Ward's house on a very dark night. I was in the backyard and decided to go to the front of the yard. I was walking in pitch dark, and I took a step that seemed like it would never end. I had stepped off of a retaining wall into empty space. I finally hit bottom, and thank the Lord, with no broken bones.

In a different sense, that extreme feeling that I felt then, I

now feel. We have just spent time learning about the very best church of the seven, and now we are going to learn about the very worst of the seven churches. It is almost like stepping from the top rung of a ladder to the bottom in just one step.

Yet, the Lord would have us to see this miserable contrast of these two churches. It could be as a warning to let us know how we could be when He is operating as the True Governor of the church, or what it is like when He has been forced out of His church. This church was located about forty-five miles southeast of Philadelphia, and was a very wealthy city that had independently grown into a very successful commercial and financial center. Unlike the church at Philadelphia, this church, like water to a sponge, had absorbed into its surroundings. Some have called this church, “the rich-poor church.” It had so much wealth, but so little of God. “It is frequently noted that Laodicea prided itself on three things: financial wealth, an extensive textile industry, and a popular eye-salve which was exported around the world.” (Mounce)

## **I. NOTICE THE PROBLEM OF LAODICEA (Vv. 14-17)**

The Lord has no commendation to give to this church. He identifies Himself as being the *Amen*. The word Amen means Truth. The word “amen” is a most remarkable word. It was transliterated directly from the Hebrew into the Greek of the New Testament, then into Latin and into English and many other languages, so that it is practically a universal word. It has been called the best known word in human speech. The word is directly related—in fact, almost identical—to the Hebrew word for “believe” (amam), or faithful. Thus, it came to mean “sure” or “truly,” an expression of absolute trust and confidence.

The Lord very credibly begins to address this church,

emphasizing as He does, that He is “the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” There seems to be indication from our text that this church is so self-sufficient that it thinks that it does not even need God, hence He is seen on the outside of the door knocking for entrance back into the church that He founded. The self-sufficiency of this church is probably the spirit of the Laodicean people. After an earthquake devastated the region in 60 AD, Laodicea refused Imperial help in rebuilding the city, and was able to rebuild the city by using their resources. They could have had the attitude both in the city and in the church that they did not need anyone’s help. This could be the reason that Christ referred to Himself as, “the beginning of the creation of God.” He wanted to impress to this boastful, self-sufficient people that everything that they had or owned, He created.

#### **A. Their Problem Was Exposed. (Vv. 14-17)**

God again uses an expression that only He can use in its totality, “I know.” His complete knowledge of everything involving this church is shown in the way that He identified their problem. When He said, “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot,” He could have been relating to them this way because of His knowledge of an irritation that they constantly experience. Their water supply was provided by a six-mile aqueduct from the hot-springs of Hierapolis. Because the water came from such a great distance, it was lukewarm by the time it arrived.

##### **1. The Lord was aware of their problem. (Vv. 14-15)**

Just as their drinking water was tasteless, it was also distasteful. This is also a way of describing the way the Lord felt about this church. He wanted to spue this church out of His mouth. Charles Spurgeon had a very graphic way of describing the attitude that the Lord had towards this church. “The great danger is, first, *to be rejected of Christ*. He puts

it, 'I will spue thee out of my mouth,'—as disgusting him, and causing him nausea. Then the church must first be in his mouth, or else it could not be spued from it. What does this mean? Churches are in Christ's mouth in several ways. They are used by him as his testimony to the world; he speaks to the world through their lives and ministries. He does as good as say, 'O sinners, if ye would see what my religion can do, see here a godly people banded together in my fear and love, walking in peace and holiness.' He speaks powerfully by them, and makes the world see and know that there is a true power in the gospel of the grace of God. But when the church becomes neither cold nor hot he does not speak by her, she is no witness for him. When God is with a church the minister's words come out of Christ's mouth. 'Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword,' says John in the Revelation and that 'two-edged sword' is the gospel which we preach. When God is with a people they speak with divine power to the world, but if we grow lukewarm Christ says, 'Their teachers shall not profit, for I have not sent them, neither am I with them. Their word shall be as water spilt on the ground, or as the whistling of the wind.' This is a dreadful thing. Better far for me to die than to be spued out of Christ's mouth." (Spurgeon)

## **2. The Lord was angry because of their problem. (V. 16)**

His anger is a controlled anger that is exercised when His patience has been used up. He has a predetermined time when enough is enough. For this church the Lord got to the place that He had had enough because of their lukewarmness. The lukewarmness of this church shows that all passion has been lost. When telling them that they are neither cold nor hot He is describing how truly disinterested they are to the things of God. They are just as the generation was that the Lord Jesus described in Matthew 11:16-17. *"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,*

*and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.”* These verses describe the callousness of those who were being entertained. They neither had the capacity to enjoy things that should have brought them cheer, nor were they able to shed tears upon hearing something sad. They simply did not have any feelings. They also were neither cold nor hot.

The church at Laodicea likely had problems in the pulpit and in the pew. The preacher made no attempt to stir the people up or either they would not be stirred. When and if the preacher preached on sin, the members made no effort to change. They may have even commended the preacher for preaching such a fine message, but they did not let the Word germinate in their hearts to cause obedience to the Word that was preached.

Jesus viewed with searching eyes all the works of the church. All that glitters is not gold. Jesus scratched below the surface and looked upon the heart to really see what was there. What He saw made Him sick!

## **B. Their Problem Was Extreme. (V. 17)**

He saw a church that had no idea how wretched, poor and miserable they were. There are two phrases in verse seventeen that sums up their true condition, “thou sayest... and knowest not.”

### **1. Yet they were unaware of their awful position. (V. 17a)**

They were in a state of misery or distress, and did not even know it. The Lord told them that they were wretched. The only other time this word appears in the New Testament was when Paul used it to describe himself, “O wretched man that I am!” In Paul’s case, he knew with conviction that he was in this state because of his indwelling sin. When Paul saw his true state before God, he immediately repented.

This church at Laodicea was only going through the motions. It had forgotten what it was like to weep over sinners, to witness to the lost, or spend much time in prayer. Once again Spurgeon understands this church, even as he preached to his own church on Sunday morning July 26, 1874. Listen to what he told them. “Alas, this state of lukewarmness is so congenial with human nature that it is hard to fetch men from it. Cold makes us shiver, and great heat causes us pain, but a tepid bath is comfort itself. Such a temperature suits human nature. The world is always at peace with a lukewarm church, and such a church is always pleased with itself. Not too worldly,—no! We have our limits! There are certain amusements which of course a Christian must give up, but we will go quite up to the line, for why are we to be miserable? We are not to be so greedy as to be called miserly, but we will give as little as we can to the cause. We will not be altogether absent from the house of God, but we will go as seldom as we can. We will not altogether forsake the poor people to whom we belong, but we will also go to the world’s church, so as to get admission into better society, and find fashionable friends for our children. How much of this there is abroad! Compromise is the order of the day. Thousands try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, they are for God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, truth and error, and so are ‘neither hot nor cold.’ Do I speak somewhat strongly? Not so strongly as my Master, for he says, ‘I will spue thee out of my mouth.’” Such describes the miserable condition of the church at Laodicea.

**2. Yet they were unaware of their awful poverty. (V. 17b)**

This church had money, but it did not have the things that money cannot buy, such as the blessings and the riches of God upon them. For a church to really be rich it must possess those things that only God can provide. We can

have our form, but not have His power. We can have His songs being sung, but not have His saving going on. We can have our prayers being prayed, but not have our prayers being answered. We can have our buildings, our meetings, our choirs, and our programs, and still not have Him. This church had kicked Jesus out; can you hear Him knocking at the door?

### **3. Yet they were unaware of their awful plight. (V. 17c)**

When lukewarmness takes over a church, it is usually so slow and so subtle, that it is hardly noticed. In our text the Lord uses one of the commodities that made Laodicea wealthy to challenge them. He told them to anoint their eyes with eye salve so that they might be able to see. This may have been the Lord's pointed way of saying, "You claim to help others to see with your costly eye salve, but are yourselves blind." Our prayer, as theirs should have been, "Lord, open our eyes that we might see." Our 20-20 vision can only come from the light of God's Word.

## **II. NOTICE THE PLEADING WITH LAODICEA.**

### **(Vv. 18-19)**

As lethargic as Laodicea was to the things of God, the Lord still pled with them to change. That is the kind of God that we serve. Though in their present state, they were fit only to be spued out of the mouth of the Lord, He still was pleading with them to repent and to seek after the real values in life.

### **A. Pled With Them To Seek After Real Riches. (V. 18a)**

Laodicea knew the value of business enterprise. They knew how to make a deal and how to make money. They knew how to appraise the value of things. The Lord spoke to them in a language that they could understand when He said, "Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich."

They considered themselves rich, but He, using figurative language, said that He was the source of real riches. The world has a distorted view of what constitutes real riches and sadly, that view had infiltrated the church. In Isaiah 55:1, the Lord said, *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”* The buying that the Lord is describing is the kind that only grace can buy. The true riches that may be possessed by the Christian is only the kind that can be obtained by grace. A church cannot properly work without grace. It takes grace to be saved, to serve, to sing, and even to shout. What would we even have to shout about if we did not have His grace?

**B. Pled With Them To Seek After Real Righteousness.  
(V. 18b)**

Not only does the Lord tell this church to “buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich,” but He also tells them to buy “white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.” This language is very similar to the language that God used when covering the nakedness of Adam and Eve. They tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. Such did not please God, because only God could provide a suitable covering for their sins. This covering involved the slaying of an innocent animal which typifies or pictures the slaying of Jesus upon the Cross.

Laodicea was religiously attempting to satisfy God based upon their terms rather than upon God’s. The Lord used the words, “I counsel thee” to express His desire for them to very tenderly, and very seriously consider doing what He told them to do. He wanted them to acknowledge that their religious pretense was not acceptable to Him. The Lord can also see through the rags of our religiosity, or the rags of our own righteousness. He knows what is in your heart.

**C. Pled With Them To Seek After Real Revelation.  
(V. 18c)**

The Lord, when telling them to anoint their own eyes with eye salve, was impressing upon them the importance of having true spiritual discernment. Without true spiritual discernment, no man can see the Lord, or cannot see afar off as Peter describes it in 2 Peter 1:9, “*But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*” One reason for blindness is walking afar off; the other is because of being lost. The backslider has no practical capacity for the things of the Lord. The lost, unregenerate person has *no* capacity for the things of the Lord. I Corinthians 2:14 says, “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” I am sure that the church at Laodicea had both saved and lost members. It very likely had more lost than saved in its membership. Certainly, the same could be said about our churches today. Sadly, we are now living in the Laodicean Church Age with all the characteristics that marked this ancient church. We, in our churches, certainly need to anoint our eyes with a spiritual eyesalve so that we may see clearly.

**D. Pled With Them To Seek After A Real Repentance.  
(V. 19)**

The Lord gives the reason for His strong rebuke and chastisement. He does it because He loves His own. Hebrews 12:5-6 tells us the same when it says, “*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*”

The church of Laodicea that has been described as the

worst of the seven is still loved by Him. He pleads with them for the purpose of their repenting. As wicked as they were, He still loved them. Church, can you still hear Him pleading?

### **III. NOTICE THE PASSION FOR LAODICEA.**

**(Vv 20-22)**

#### **A. As Seen By The Way The Lord Pled With Them. (V. 20)**

This letter to Laodicea ends with Christ Jesus standing outside of the church knocking on the door. He even told them that it was He who was knocking, but there was no indication that they were going to let Him in. The Creator God reserved Himself to the role of a Gentleman, meaning that He was not going to tear the door down to get in. Hear me well; the same is true in regards to you who are lost. In a similar way, He stands outside your heart's door very lovingly and tenderly pleading with you to let Him in. How could you ever refuse the One who loved you so much that He went to the Cross and was crucified for you? There was no greater display of the passion of Christ than that which He exhibited while nailed to the cross. He lovingly draped Himself on that old rugged cross to bleed and die, so that by His death, burial, and resurrection the poor lost sinner could be set free. Hallelujah!

#### **B. As The Lord Promised Them. (Vv. 21-22)**

The Lord told those of this church that if they overcame they would be able to sit with Him in His throne. Again, this is such a gracious and generous offer to the overcomer, an offer from the One who also overcame.

This seventh letter shows how wicked people can be and yet still be offered the long arm of God's grace. A study of these seven churches should stir us all to desire and

seek after the favor and blessings of God, as we worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. May we sincerely be challenged from these *new lessons from old churches...*

## Chapter Ten

### A THRONE OF MERCY BECOMES A THRONE OF JUDGMENT

#### Text: Revelation 4

*1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*

*2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*

*3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*

*4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*

*5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

*6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.*

*7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.*

*8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

*9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,*

*10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

*11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

This fourth chapter is a transitional chapter. We have completed our studies that concern and consider the Church

Age in the immediate context. We are moving from the age of the church to that which follows. We are leaving the church dispensation that covered a time period of at least 2000 years and will be entering the dispensation of the kingdom including the Tribulation period. There are those who have problems detecting God working differently in respect to different time periods. They abhor or at least detest the use of the word dispensation. Historically, dispensations has been taught by very learned and respected students of the Scriptures for at least a hundred years and a lesser number of the ancient students and theologians taught it much earlier than that. I recall asking Dr. Harold B. Sightler when I was a student at Tabernacle why he thought that most of the teachings pertaining to eschatology have been taught in the last hundred years or so. His answer was that he believed that the closer to the Lord's return the more teachings on end times we would be hearing. He also felt the last day preachers would have additional insight pertaining to end time teachings as the coming of the Lord drew nigh. It is my conviction that this does not grant us a license to develop radically new teachings concerning the last days. The traditional and historical teachings throughout the years by our conservative forefathers should serve as a reference point as we teach.

I will be teaching this study from the pre-millennial, pre-tribulation position as a dispensationalist. I am not a hyper-dispensationalist and will not be teaching from that position. I will also admit that there is much that I still can and will learn from a study such as this. Please bear in mind that I am approaching this study as a student and as a pastor teacher. By nature of the disciplinary restraints that I have placed upon myself, I will not give my time and energies to debating any or every aspect of the positions that I am taking. With the passing of additional time, I may need to readjust my thinking in certain areas, but until then I am trusting God to help keep me focused on what He would

have me to teach and preach during this series. This commentary is different than most, in that I am giving you what I gave my dear people as their pastor. This study will be more sermonic in structure than most commentaries.

This fourth chapter shows the ending of the Church Age and the beginning of the Tribulation, which is preceded by the catching away, or the rapture of the saints. There are key indicators as to what is happening by a close examination of the text. An example of this would be an almost abrupt departure from any mention of the Church beginning in chapter four. The overwhelming significance of this is that *the church is not around* during the Tribulation, because, the rapture has taken place.

There are several personalities in the Scriptures who typify the rapture. A dear pastor brother recently shared with me how these personalities illustrate this event. Notice how Pastor David Johnston gives a list of personalities that picture the rapture.

***a. The Rapture illustrated by Enoch***

Genesis 5:24 - And Enoch walked with God: and he [was] not; for God took him.

***b. The Rapture Illustrated by Lot***

Genesis 19:22 - Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

***c. The Rapture Illustrated by Elijah***

2 Kings 2:11 - And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

***d. The Rapture Illustrated by Paul***

2 Corinthians 12:2 - I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

***e. The Rapture Illustrated by John***

Revelation 4:1 - After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

May we continue by examining what will be happening starting at the end of the Church Age by looking at the first verse.

**I. THE MAJESTY OF THE THRONE. (Vv. 1-3)**

I am trying to explain the emotion that I feel when I read this first verse. This may be a very crude way of saying what I feel, but listen anyway. Instead of a cannon ball going with full force out of the cannon, I feel the reverse happening. I see the force of the cannon ball going full force back into the cannon. John is being summoned to Heaven, "Come up hither" and then our text says "*immediately I was.*" Now back to the cannon ball. John pictures in my mind the cannon ball being sucked up into the presence of God with a reverse force almost like the cannon ball rushing back to its origin. The most natural place for John and the Church to be during the Tribulation is with Jesus in Heaven.

You may be asking why such a comparison? To me it is

so natural and so right for the Christian to be removed from tribulation; it would almost be like the cannon ball rushing back to its cannon. We are not to be shot away from God, but *back* to God. When the flood came, God invited Noah and his family to come into the ark where He was. God did not as some of our modern translations say, “Go into the boat” (TLB) which signified leaving the presence of God, but instead God said, “Come thou and all thy house into the ark.” Likewise, John who pictures the Church is being summoned up before the tribulation begins.

When Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica, he says in verse 16, “*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.*” Just as God told Noah and his family to come into the ark, God is telling His Church to come to Heaven. In the case of Noah it was for the purpose of being removed from the judgment of the Flood. For the Church, it will be for the purpose of being removed from the judgment of the Great Tribulation.

Just as there was a door of mercy that opened into the ark where God was, there is also a door of mercy mentioned in this very first verse where God is. The door had to be entered to escape the Flood; likewise the Door, Christ Jesus also has to be entered to escape God’s wrath. In our text, the door opens into Heaven. When the rapture takes place, the believer will be immediately caught up or seized and then enter into the door of Heaven. This door will allow the Church to escape the Great Tribulation. If you have trusted Christ Jesus, who is *the Door*, as your Savior, that grants you the right to also enter into the door of Heaven.

### **A. The Summons To The Throne. (V. 1)**

John chronologically and experientially is a type of the Church being raptured. John heard a *voice as it were of a trumpet* talking to him that said *Come up hither* and

immediately he was caught up to Heaven in the spirit. The suddenness of him being caught up will be the same when the Church is caught up to be with the Lord. The event in regards to the exact moment will be unexpected and sudden.

John in respect to time was caught up *after he heard* the voice as a trumpet, so shall it be with the rapture of the Church. This satisfies the chronology of events with John being a type of the believer when the Church is raptured.

### **1. It was a personal summons. (V. 1a)**

Just as John was personally lifted up, so shall every believer be. It will happen in a moment and it can happen any time. In every facet of our existence, God deals with the individual. We have a very personal existence. Our very hairs are numbered; we have individual unique fingerprints that no one else has or will ever have. There are no two snow flakes the same nor are there two stars that are alike. Personal accountability requires that each one of us must give account of ourselves and then answer to God. When it is time for the rapture to take place, not one person who is unsaved will be caught up nor will one saved person be left behind. Within the scope of God's omniscience God will never make a mistake. He both knows and controls all things. As we learned earlier, He has His hand on everything.

### **2. It was a prophetic summons. (V. 1b)**

John was first commissioned on earth to speak to the churches. In Revelation 1:10-11 John said, "*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*" During this commission John is said to be *in the Spirit on the Lord's Day* with Spirit being capitalized. In chapter four John

says that he was again *in the spirit* with spirit not being capitalized. In the first case, I believe that John was emphasizing that he was commissioned by the Lord to do what God had called upon him to do and that it was a very spiritual undertaking requiring that he be filled with the Spirit and that he was Spirit led. During the entire Church Age the Holy Spirit is at work serving both the Father and the Son. Paul said that the Holy Spirit makes the Gospel of the grace of God effectual (Ephesians 3:5-8). Paul knew that the power of God required the Spirit of God to work. He also describes this work as previously being a mystery that was revealed to the *holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit* (Ephesians 3:5).

After the Church Age is concluded there is no further reference to the Spirit. In this fourth chapter, John describes himself being in Heaven *in the spirit*. In this case, I believe that John is simply saying that he was caught up into the presence of God in the spirit and not *bodily*.

John was caught up in his spirit to see the things, which *must be hereafter*. It is these things that John faithfully wrote about in his Revelation prophecy. We are indebted to the Lord in His using John in this manner. There also have been many willing and useable servants in Christendom that we are indebted to.

Excluding those who were used in writing the Scriptures, think of those who have been faithful to teach, write, witness, or preach the Word. Such faithful ones have impacted each of our lives in delivering the message. John also has faithfully delivered the message as a major writer of the New Testament, writing more in volume than did even the apostle Paul.

## **B. The Sight of the Throne. (Vv. 2-3)**

What a sight it must have been to see not only the throne, but also He who sat upon the throne. Donald Grey Barnhouse had this very interesting insight concerning the

throne, “Now if there is anything which this vision is not, it is not a vision of Christ in the act of occupying His Father’s throne. The great prophetic psalm outlines the events. ‘The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool’ (Psalm 110:1). The commentator whom I have quoted makes this vision of Revelation to be that of Christ taking His seat at the Father’s right hand. This, however, was no revelation but a fact already known to the Church. Peter had preached it on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). Stephen had proclaimed it at the moment of his martyrdom. The epistle to the Ephesians is built upon Christ’s presence there.

Rather, this is a vision that perfectly fulfills the psalm. ‘Sit on my right hand until...’ It is the *until* that we are to see now. It is not Christ taking the throne before the age of grace, but it is Christ rising from the throne at the end of the age of grace. It is perfectly conceivable that this event evokes the greatest of all outbursts of praise. The day of evil is about to close. The eternal plan and righteousness of God is about to be vindicated forever. The day of the Lord is about to dawn. So this vision is in reality that of Christ about to leave His Father’s throne where He has been throughout the age of the Church.”

In the next chapter and thereon until the great white throne judgment, the Lamb of God or Christ is no longer seen sitting on the throne. He is seen standing for the purpose of taking the book with seven seals while being the only One who is worthy and qualified to open the book. From that moment on, the Lord will not be seen sitting on His throne until He brings judgment upon the earth and vindicates Himself. As Barnhouse and the Psalmist said, He will not be seated on the Father’s right hand until the *until* is taken care of as given in Psalm 110:1.

## 1. A sacred development involving the throne (V. 2)

John had an experience that was limited to only two or three people in the human families' existence. He was able to go to Heaven and was able to see the throne room. Lazarus and the apostle Paul may have also had this same privilege. Just think what a sacred honor that it was for John to see what all believers will one day be able to see and enjoy for all eternity. John was able to go to Heaven and then come back and write about it.

## 2. A strange description at the throne. (V. 3)

There is something very majestic about what John saw. There is also something very sacred about the way John described this heavenly scene. I have read numerous commentaries and have not a clear answer to the reason John selected the three colors that are also names of precious stones. These three stones were worn on the breastplate of the high priest along with nine other stones, yet there does not seem to be a strong connection to the stones on the priestly breastplate. One commentator did make these interesting remarks that could convey what John was trying to impress upon his reader.

“This is all but a description of the glory of God, as he appeared to John in this vision. The *jasper stone* is famous for its transparency, and variety of colours it offereth to the eye, and may signify the various and infinite perfections of God. The *sardine stone* is red, and of a bloody colour, which may signify the power, justice, and terror of God. The *rainbow* was the sign of God's covenant with Noah, signifying his being so far reconciled to the world, as that he would not again destroy it by water.” (Poole)

We can read too much into the symbolism if we are not careful. Poole's explanation seems to be reasonable and

certainly characterizes the attributes of God. I am sure John was thinking of the most appropriate and convincing way to describe what he saw. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to use just the most appropriate words in describing the Lord in such an encounter? Paul seemed to struggle with how best to describe what he saw when he was caught up into paradise. He said, *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure”* (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul said there was a desire to glory in what he saw, but did not want to come across as being a fool.

The next thing John describes is the rainbow around the throne. It is a circular rainbow. I never thought that I would see a circular rainbow until I got to Heaven, but I did. I was on the way back from Grenada and was looking down and saw a circular rainbow. The only way a person can see a circular rainbow is when he is above the earth’s surface looking down. John was above the earth when he saw the rainbow.

You remember the rainbow was a token God gave to the world that He would not destroy the earth again with a flood. It was a visible symbol that the judgment was past. When the redeemed get to Heaven, all trials, and tribulation will be past. The rainbow will be a welcomed site to those who have been spared having to go through the Great Tribulation. The color green is the life color. The circle like the wedding ring is unending. The circle is the symbol for eternity having no beginning or ending. Therefore, the green-circled rainbow pictures life unending. When we all get to Heaven it will be forever.

With the circle surrounding the throne and Christ being in the center of the circle it is as though we are being given the message that real life centers on Christ. After all, He is the Resurrection and the Life.

## II. THE MASS SURROUNDING THE THRONE. (Vv. 4-8)

We have briefly described the throne and the One upon the throne, now may we consider what lies around and about the throne. Verse four says, "*And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*"

Keeping in mind that this great book of Revelation has much symbolism in it, we need to focus on the significance of *twenty-four elders* being mentioned. Why not twenty-five or thirty? Dr. Harry Ironside, one of history's greatest Bible teachers, had this to say, 'I do not think we need be in any doubt as to their identity if we compare Scripture with Scripture... In 1 Chronicles 24, we read of something very similar...Twenty-four elders were appointed by King David to represent the entire Levitical priesthood. He divided the priests into twenty-four courses, each course to serve for two weeks at a time in the temple that Solomon was to build. The same arrangement was in force when our Lord's forerunner was announced. Zacharias was *of the course of Abia*, the eighth in order (Luke 1:5). The priests were many thousands in number. They could not all come together at one time, but when the twenty-four elders met in the temple precincts in Jerusalem, the whole priestly house was represented. And this is the explanation, I submit, of the symbol here. The elders in Heaven represent the whole heavenly priesthood—that is, all the redeemed who have died in the past, or who shall be living at the Lord's return...The Church of the present age and Old Testament saints are alike included. All are priests. All worship. There were twelve patriarchs in Israel, and twelve apostles introducing the new dispensation. The two together would give the complete four and twenty."

Dr. Ironside certainly seems to have the proper interpretation on this passage of scripture. Realizing that

there is significance in the way the Lord uses numbers in the Bible, this value of twenty-four would also be with significance as used here.

#### **A. The People About The Throne. (V. 4)**

As we recognize the twenty-four elders in our text as being representative of all of the redeemed, we may agree that it represents a very large number of believers. These are *crowned believers* who were crowned after the rapture and before the tribulation that is another proof the Church will not have to go through the Great Tribulation. The Apostle Paul wrote, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”*(2 Timothy 4:7-8). We must realize the expression “at that day” refers to the day of Christ’s coming for His own. He says, *“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”* (Revelation 22:12).

#### **B. The Power Out Of The Throne. (V. 5)**

This verse should let the reader know that the throne is not a throne of mercy any longer, but a throne of judgment. Can you sense this as we read this fifth verse? *“And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

In Christendom, we certainly should appreciate knowing that God has been sitting on a *mercy* throne. How awful it would be if that were not so. Yet, we should also appreciate a *judgment* throne, knowing God does not lightly regard sin. We have all heard the expression, “too much rain makes swamps and too little rain makes deserts.” In nature there must be balance. In our civil society mercy and judgment must be balanced in proper proportions. Too much judgment

may lead to tyranny, but too much mercy could lead to anarchy. God balances His love and mercy with holiness and judgment.

There is also a symbolic clue given showing there will be a perfect justice being performed. This is indicated by God's Spirit being likening to *seven lamps of fire burning before the throne*.

The use of the word lamp could indicate that it will be a searching judgment. One can be assured when God deals with the sin and the sinner, there will not be anything hidden from Him. Everything will be exposed and uncovered. The number seven used to describe the seven Spirits does not mean that there were seven different Spirits. Instead, there is a manifold operation of the Spirit where the number seven denotes a perfect arrangement and combination of the attributes of God's Holy Spirit.

The present day symbol of the Holy Spirit is that of a dove. In the setting that John is describing the symbol of the Holy Spirit is fire. The raging fire of God's judgment will burn across the earth during the time of Great Tribulation like nothing before.

### **C. The Praising Around the Throne. (Vv. 6-8)**

While the throne room is being prepared for judgment there will also be heavenly praise going on. The throne was encircled with creatures that were four in number. Four in the Scriptures is often used in association with the earth or pictures some aspect of creation. The four beasts had recognizable features that we can associate with as being earthly creatures. There appeared a beast that was like a lion, which represents the wild animal kingdom. There was a beast like a calf that pictures the domesticated animal kingdom. Then, there was the third beast that had a face as a man who represents the human family. The fourth beast was like a flying eagle that pictures the fowls that were created. It is interesting to note that these are four representative types

of God's creation that entered the ark. The fish did not for obvious reasons. It was these main groups that were taken from judgment and spared to insure created life goes on. In the book of Psalms there are a number of psalms that are given to praise. Psalm 148 says in verse 10, "Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl;" are listed as those creatures which should praise the Lord. Then in Psalm 150:6 it says "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

When we notice some of the particular features of these beasts, we must notice there were six wings on each of these beasts being "full of eyes before and behind." Keep in mind there is much symbolism in these passages we are trying to interpret. Also keep in mind that the stage is set for judgment upon the earth or the world. With four being the world or creation number and six being the number of man, it is like God is going to swiftly judge the earth along with mankind and it will be a most holy judgment that is taking place. The wings of these beasts speak of the swiftness of judgment. The many eyes could indicate that during the time of the holy judgment nothing will be overlooked. It says these beasts give glory, honor and thanks to Him that sat upon the throne. The thanks may be the gratitude that creation expresses for being spared judgment. Keep in mind, whatever these beasts represent, they are still a part of the creation that is being spared. This is the reason they are thanking God and at the same time acknowledging His holiness. All the saved who made it to Heaven will be witnessing the judgment that is to be meted out to all mankind and will publicly declare His holiness through praise.

### **III. THE MESSAGE BEFORE THE THRONE. (Vv. 9-11)**

The heavenly host that is being described here is

expressing its appreciation for all that God has done for them and is worshiping the Creator who both showed mercy and judgment as it was appropriate. They are not at all questioning the right that God has to carry out His holy purposes.

#### **A. It Was A Message Of Appreciation. (Vv. 9-10)**

The twenty-four elders show their gratefulness by casting their crowns before the throne. These elders realized that their crowns were made possible only by the grace of God. Not one elder could claim the glory that belonged to the Lord.

#### **B. It Was A Message Of Adoration. (V. 11)**

The focal point of Heaven will be the throne and He who sits upon it. All the redeemed in heaven will acknowledge that everything that is and has been was created for His pleasure and glory.

This entire chapter is showing what is taking place as Christ is preparing to leave the throne. During the Church Age, the throne that Jesus sat upon was a throne of mercy, but now it has become an empty throne of judgment. It will continue to be a throne of judgment even when the Lord returns to sit upon it. It then will be the great white throne judgment from which the wicked dead will be judged.

## Chapter Eleven

### WHO IS WORTHY TO OPEN THE BOOK?

#### **Text: Revelation 5:1-7**

*1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.*

*2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?*

*3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.*

*4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.*

*5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.*

*6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*

*7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.*

We appreciate having chapter divisions to help us locate passages of Scripture with greater ease than if none were there. Yet we must remember that the divisions are not critically placed as they are to indicate that the flow of thought ends with the beginning of another chapter. Sometimes such *is* the case, but not in this instance. Chapters four and five need to be studied together with hardly a pause between the two. Donald Grey Barnhouse said that it was when “John’s eyes had become accustomed to the light of glory, he began to see more of the details of the heavenly scene.” Such marked a transition from chapter four to five. I am not saying that John’s eyes had to get adjusted, but there is definitely a transitional moment as indicated by the word *and* when chapter five begins. A great hermeneutic principle says that *Scripture must be studied in its context*. For proper interpretation, we will look at these two chapters as being

connected together.

This chapter moves the focus from the *throne* to the *scroll*, but in doing so the scene retains the same setting. John is in the throne room seeing the events that transpire immediately after the rapture takes place. The fourth chapter emphasizes the *throne*, the first seven verses of chapter five emphasize the *scroll* and the last seven verses emphasize the *song*.

## **I. THE GREAT CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SCROLLS (V. 1)**

This setting is sacred just as those scenes which preceded these were. John is in the presence of Deity. In this one setting his eyes are upon the Trinity. In John's presence, the One who sat on the throne that holds the book. Then, there is the Holy Spirit who is described as being "the seven Spirits of God." There is also the Son who was described in great detail in chapter four and will be likened unto a Lion and a Lamb in this chapter. Certainly the tension is mounting as John stands as no mortal has before or since. He was soon to be given a visual representation of what was going to happen after the rapture of the Church.

Now, John is being called upon to witness the Person who is legally qualified to open the seals on the book or the scroll. Just what is this book? Many have their suggestions as to what this scroll has for its contents. They know that it is written on both sides and know it has something that pertains to redemption, with the emphasis being on the recovery of that which had been lost to sin originating in the Garden of Eden.

It seems that John is being introduced to the One who was going to serve as the Kinsman-Redeemer. It will be most helpful if we briefly study the way the kinsman-redeemer's role is described according to the Levirate system. The book of Ruth would be an excellent companion study to the book

of Revelation when studying the fourth and the fifth chapters. We can only glean from this book as we briefly explain the system under study. Each of the characters in the book of Ruth pictures some aspect of redemption.

Naomi left the land and went out to exile which pictures Israel's departure from God. Ruth pictures the Gentile bride of Christ. Boaz is a picture or type of Christ who is our Kinsman Redeemer; the brother of Boaz is a picture of the law that cannot redeem.

The "kinsman redeemer" is a *Goel*. The word means to redeem, receive or buy back. According to the Levirate system a provision was made in the Law of Moses for the poor person, who was forced to sell his property or even himself into slavery, to allow his nearest of kin to step in and "buy back" that which his relative was forced to sell (Leviticus 25:48). Three conditions had to be met for this to happen.

1. He must be near of kin. (Leviticus 25:48; Ruth 3: 12, 13).
2. He must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:4-6).
3. He must be willing to redeem, or pay the price. (Ruth 4:6).

Redemption took place only when the price was completely paid (Leviticus 25:27; Ruth 4:7-11).

Jesus, in every way, met the requirements of being a Kinsman-Redeemer and was worthy to therefore open the book. Notice this article that appeared in "The Hope of Israel" that describes the work of the kinsmen redeemer.

"The kinsman redeemer was a rich benefactor, or person who frees the debtor by paying the ransom price. *If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.* (Leviticus 25:25; cf. Ruth 4:4,6). The nearest of kin had the responsibility of redeeming his kinsman's lost opportunities. If a person was forced into slavery, his redeemer purchased

his freedom. When debt threatened to overwhelm him, the kinsman stepped in to redeem his homestead and let the family live. If a family member died without an heir, the kinsman gave his name by marrying the widow and rearing a son to hand down his name (Deuteronomy 25:5; Genesis 38:8; Ruth 3-4). When death came at the hands of another man the redeemer acted as the avenger of blood and pursued the killer (Numbers 35:12-34; Deuteronomy 19:1-3). *Goel* was used of things consecrated to God (Leviticus 27:13-31), of God as redeeming man (Exodus 6:6; Isaiah 43:1; 44:22; 48:20; 49:7), and those redeemed by God (Isaiah 35:9; 51:10; Job 19:25). The right of redemption and the office belonged to the nearest kinsman (Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 3:12; 4:1, 6, 8, etc.).

God is the great Kinsman of His people. When their liberty was lost in Egypt, He rescued them from bondage. "I am the LORD . . . I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments" (Exodus 6:6). The ancient patriarch Job complained that no one came to redeem him! His faith is seen reaching out and proclaiming that Yahweh will provide His *Goel* (Kinsman redeemer)! "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." (Job 19:25). Job's hope looked to the coming Messiah. He affirmed his faith that his redeemer will come to the earth" (Hope of Israel).

This is what John sees just before it takes place. Jesus is coming as the Warrior-Redeemer to take possession of the earth. In Revelation chapter 10, He set His right foot upon the sea and the left foot upon the earth to reclaim that which had been lost to sin. He is seen at this time with the book or scroll in His hand.

### **A. The Scrolls Were Being Held. (V. 1a)**

In the right hand of God the Father is the book being held in safeguard. The book as we have already mentioned, has something to do with redemption. Theologians such as M.R.

DeHaan and Lehman Strauss believed this book to be the title deed of inheritance or the book of redemption. They felt that this book contained the legal descriptions and requirements to regain that which had been lost at the *original fall*. We should all agree that there is much that we will not know until we get to Heaven. That which we do comment on, we attempt to do so in agreement with the Scriptures.

When God the Father releases the book to be opened, it will be publicly witnessed by the God-head, the family of the redeemed and the angelic host that the One who opens the book is absolutely worthy to do so.

## **B. The Scrolls Were In Heaven. (V. 1b)**

What better place to ensure the safety of the title deed to earth than to have it in the Father's right hand in Heaven. His own integrity and character will not allow Him to release the deed or book to anyone who is unworthy. The perfect character of God is personally exercised by Him and never violated; the book is absolutely safe in His hand. The book is further sealed with seven seals.

The ancient writers describe this scroll as being written on a material that could be rolled and unrolled, having narrow columns about three inches long. If the book of Revelation was written in such a manner it would be about fifteen feet long when unrolled. Normally the reader would hold the scroll in his left hand and unroll with his right hand. When a section was read, the unrolled section would then be re-rolled and when the entire reading was completed the reader would then unroll, reading the back side following the same procedure. By doing it this way the scroll or book could then be read again or by someone else from start to finish.

The legal documents and readings that needed to be kept private would be sealed with strings and wax seals. The wax seals would be located at the knots. If more than one seal

was broken that would cause the reader to be suspicious of someone tampering with the scroll.

## **II. THE GREAT CONSIDERATION OF THE SCROLLS. (Vv. 2-5)**

Perhaps the tensest moment of John's journey to the throne room is now when the question is being asked, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" A strong angel with a loud voice asks this question. The voice was loud and heard by all. The question must have penetrated the hearts of each person there. Each person knew the seriousness of the question, especially John. It immediately seemed that no one "in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." This had to be a chilling moment of time, so much so that John began to weep much. When John was caught up into the presence of God, he was caught up in the spirit. At this time he did not have perfect or complete knowledge. The perfect or complete knowledge was to come later after his permanent return to Heaven. Therefore, by not completely understanding the workings of God, he did not know if anyone was worthy to open the seals. John must have had some concept of what the book contained by feeling this way. For this reason he wept much.

### **A. The Question Of Opening The Scroll Was Asked. (V. 2)**

The question is a two part question, "Who is worthy to open the book and who is worthy to loose the seals?" When thinking of who is worthy, one must recognize that the angels were not legally qualified, nor were any of the disciples qualified. People often question why forgiven people are not qualified to do certain things such as pastor a church after having suffered through a divorce or serve as a

deacon. Every person that is in Heaven is forgiven but not qualified to open the book or loose the seals. This is so, because God has a sovereign purpose that is of His own design. He does not have to explain His ways because His ways are not our ways. He declares His ways as He pleases. The requirements and the qualifications of the One who is worthy to open the book and loose the seals must meet the requirements that God Himself demands. His requirements are as holy as is His Word and is as holy as He is. Jesus was the only Person who walked upon the face of the earth who walked without sin. He alone was qualified. As the perfect Son of God, He offered His precious blood. The Lamb of God prevailed as we will learn from our text.

### **B. The Qualification Of Opening The Scrolls Was Announced. (Vv. 3-5)**

While John was weeping one of the elders who had perfect knowledge said, *“Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”* There is a lesson on *perspective* not *contradiction* as seen in this verse and in the next one. From the elders vantage point Christ was a Lion with strength to prevail against the enemy and open the book and loose the seals thereof. The next verse says, *“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”*

What John saw from his vantage point is the Lamb as it had been slain. Which of the two descriptions would be right? They both are! One is from the perspective of having already gone to Heaven having been in the presence of the Mighty Conqueror as was the case of the elder. The other was from John who was still living his human life and had been closely acquainted with Christ as the Lamb that had been slain. I think it is very appropriate that John described

what he saw as he did. John went on and described Him as the Lamb who was to take control of the world and its government as indicated by the *seven horns and seven eyes*. This also symbolizes three attributes of God with the seven horns picturing His omnipotence and the seven eyes picturing His omniscience. The “seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth,” I believe, pictures His omnipresence.

If we have not recognized it yet, this is a very sacred scene that John is describing which very much reveals who the Lord Jesus Christ really is. Passages like this prompt me to give this study the title, “REVELATION: Seeing Christ More Clearly.” May God help us to do just that...

### **III. THE GREAT CONQUEROR TAKES THE SCROLL. (VV. 6-7)**

After the Lord had been shown worthy to take the book, He did just that. As the Scriptures declare in verse seven, “*And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.*” This is the climax of John’s journey to Heaven. For if there was no one found worthy to open the book, then there could be no legal redemption. This great event will be followed by singing, praise and worship all because Someone was found worthy to open the book.

#### **A. The Saviour Had Paid The Price To Open The Scrolls. (V. 6a) (“Stood a Lamb as it had been slain.”)**

In verse number five we are told that the Lion had prevailed to open the book and to loosen the seals. The word *prevail* means, as it is used here, to conquer or get the victory. The victory that the Lion was to accomplish was a total victory. This victory was won through the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Savior.

When John saw the Lion, he saw the *sovereign* One; when he saw the Lamb, he saw the *sacrificial* or the *suffering* One. When Christ Jesus paid the *price* of redemption, that granted Him the legal right to carry out the *process* of redemption.

## **B. The Saviour Had Prevailed In Power To Open The Scrolls. (Vv. 6b-7) (“Having seven horns...”)**

We see Christ no more seated upon His throne but is now walking in Heaven to take charge as the Mighty Warrior. Upon receiving the book, He is also receiving His commission to do battle. With the opening of each seal there will be a further revelation of how the judgment is going to be rendered. With the opening of the first seal there will be the sound as it were “the noise of thunder.” We will learn that with each seal being opened a different scene will be described to the writer John.

We will examine the actual opening of the seals and the significance thereof when we get to the sixth chapter. This chapter and these verses mostly show that Christ is the only One qualified to open and the only One who has the authority to retake that which had been lost to sin. Also, verse eight shows celebration in Heaven because Christ Jesus was able to open the seals.

We have had the opportunity of seeing Christ more clearly as He is being revealed in this great book of Revelation. He shows Himself qualified and strong to open the book and to loosen the seals. May we translate what we learn about Him to living a more devoted life as Christians?

## Chapter Twelve

### A NEW SONG IN HEAVEN

#### **Text: Revelation 5:8-14**

8 *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*

9 *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*

10 *And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

11 *And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;*

12 *Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

13 *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

14 *And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*

The worthy Lamb has taken the book that He alone could open. Immediately upon His receiving of the book the atmosphere changed. The weeping has now turned to singing. The tense environment that had marked the place before, that seemed to spell *tragedy*, now spells *triumph*. The Apostle John is only beginning to write what he will be seeing. The mood and the temper will be changing almost immediately from one scene to the next. The thunder and lightning that had been described as being around the throne could symbolize the events soon taking place just as the lightning and thunder signals a violent and an angry storm. The only thing, no storm will be anything like that which

John will be describing while the Lamb is pouring out His judgment against sin.

The scene now is not that of judgment being poured out upon the saints, but extreme gratitude by the saints for having been spared and delivered. The twenty-four elders are picturing the saints as they fall down before the throne with harps and golden vials full of odours, “which are the prayers of saints.” When I saw the latter expression, “which are the prayers of saints,” I began to yearn for the Lord to give me the proper interpretation of this passage. I had been taught that this was the *bottled prayers* of the saints of all ages, but this teaching did not satisfy me, not that the prayers of all the saints are not precious and valuable to the Lord, but within the context of what is taking place there seems to be something different taking place. I read a paragraph in Donald Grey Barnhouse’s commentary on Revelation that seemed to drive my thinking in the direction of finding a proper interpretation. Listen to what he says, “It should be noticed in passing that there is incidental teaching concerning prayer. The literal translation is that the golden vials are full of incenses, which are the prayers of the saints. Today, prayer consists of confession, intercession and worship. When we confess, we are occupied with our sins; when we intercede, we are occupied with human needs, others; and ours but when we worship, we are occupied with him alone. The day will come when prayer will be emptied of its need for confession. There will be no more laver. Prayer will be emptied of its need for intercession. There will be nothing remaining but that which may be symbolized under the bowls of incense, and all our prayer shall be praise and worship.”

Just as the twenty-four elders symbolize all of the redeemed; it seems that the vials having the *prayers of the saints* would be the prayers of *worship*. The previous prayers of the saints while on earth would have contained the prayers of confession of some wicked deed, or the failures confessed

while living in sin. There would be also intercessory prayers that were prayed for someone else who may have been living in deep sin. These prayers will no longer serve any purpose. The incense, which is the prayers of the saints, will be the prayer of worship and praise that will be prayed throughout eternity.

Thank God, we will not need to pray for one more lost person or person with cancer, nor will we ever need to pray for the backslidden. In Heaven, both the prayer of *intercession* and *confession* will serve no purpose.

## **I. THE SONG WAS A UNIQUE SONG. (Vv. 8-10)**

Singing is a very common means of expression. We sing songs just as we recite our poetry. Poetry has a message that is communicated in words with the emphasis upon both the sound and the meaning of the sounds. Not all poetry contains rhyme and meter but poetry is basically the work of the poet, just as a song is the work of the singer. Here is Merriam-Webster's definition of poetry, "writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm". The reason for which I give you this definition is that much of the singing in the Bible is in poetic form. Yet our text speaks of a "new song" being sung. In the Old Testament, we have an entire book of the Bible that is a songbook. The early Church, for the purpose of retention especially, sang the Psalms. Any student of the Scriptures can detect the poetic quality of the Psalms. The Psalms have a spiritual purpose to be served when they are either read or sung. The Psalms are inspired, as is any other part of the Bible. The Lord used *confluent inspiration* just as He did with the rest of the Bible. Confluent inspiration just means that God used the personality of the writer when inspiring the Word. Likewise, He did the same with the

Psalms. The new song in Heaven is not from the Psalms nor were they taken from the hymns that were sung upon the earth.

One purpose of the Psalms is to instill Truth by the repeating of and the remembering of the lines. We could very well say that the singing of the Psalms would be the singing of old songs. John is not describing the singing of old songs but the singing of a *new song*. The new song is being sung to absolutely describe experiences that have never before been known. What John is describing is a very joyous but a previously unknown experience and the saints are expressing this joy with a new song. When the sinner is saved the Lord puts a new song into his mouth. He sings expressing that new experience. The new song of Heaven is expressing the newest of experiences. There have never been any experiences as John the writer of the Revelation prophecy describes here. This may be the reason that this *new song* is being given this special significance; for no event has ever been like what the elders are singing of and John is writing about.

It is interesting to study the different places that the *new song* is used in the Scriptures. There is a special uniqueness about this song, meaning that there is none like it. Let us notice some of the ways that the *new song* is used in the Scriptures. The *law of first mention* states that the first appearing of a word gives a clue as to how that word will be used throughout the Scriptures. The first time that *new song* is used is as follows: Psalm 33:3, “Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.” New song as used here means *fresh, adapted to the occasion* and that meaning may be applied here in the same way that the words *new song* are used originally in Psalm 33:3. There is no previous happening that relates to this scene that is being described by John. For this reason this song will sing of this event with words that could not have been applied at any time before this time. It is indeed a “new song.”

## A. It Was A Unique Song Because Of Who Was Singing (V. 8)

Among those who were singing were the redeemed as symbolized by the twenty-four elders. This is a very unique setting because never before had the entire family of the redeemed been gathered together as they are here. The rapture has taken place and the saints are gathered to sing the *new song* of redemption. To me this is a strong argument that teaches against the Church saints going through the Tribulation. This is the major reason for them singing this new song that describes a new event in their lives. They have been spared the awful agony of having to go through the Great Tribulation.

Another argument that comes to my mind as I am thinking of why the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation is that there is no mention of the Gospel of the grace of God being preached. Instead, the *Kingdom Gospel* and the *Everlasting Gospel* is being preached during the Tribulation. The Kingdom Gospel tells of the good news of Christ's kingdom being set up. The Everlasting Gospel is the good news that speaks of Israel's deliverance. In both of these Gospels it is good news for Israel, not the Church. The good news for the Church is that the Church has been caught up to be with Jesus. The saints who assemble during the tribulation will be doing it in much the same way as in the book of Acts. Out of necessity, there will likely be *smaller* groups meeting to carry out the work of the Lord.

If they are smaller groups that are worshipping, there will still be a large number of conversions because 144,000 male virgin Jews will be evangelizing having special powers similar to the powers enjoyed by some of the Apostles. We will look at this more closely when we get to our study involving the 144,000.

## **B. It Was A Unique Song Because of What Was Sung. (Vv. 9-10)**

The family of the redeemed was saved out of every cultural group. In our own particular groups, we may start thinking that we are the only ones who Jesus died for; that is a blatant and arrogant form of pride. Jesus died for “Whosoever.” I have been privileged to preach in over 25 foreign countries and have found believers in each place that I preached. The Scriptures tell us in our text that the Lord “hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” This means that people have been saved in every people group.

There are people that choose to reject that our Gospel is a “Whosoever” Gospel. I was in Saint Lucia and was witnessing to a Rastafarian and was told that Christianity was a “white man’s” religion. I am sure that such a statement hurt the Lord when this verse plainly tells us that He came to redeem all who would come to Him.

### **1. It was unique as it told of the Person of redemption (V. 9b)**

The word *Thou* directs the focus in the song. *Thou* is whom the song is about. *Thou* speaks of the Lamb who was slain. *Thou* speaks of the Lord who was worthy to open the book and *Thou* also speaks of Him who redeems. It would, indeed, be a profitable study to study the word and name *Thou* as it appears in the Scriptures relative to Deity. The word *thou* appears in the Bible over 5000 times.

John saw the Redeemer as the One who was slain. Redemption as required by God could never have taken place without the Lamb being slain. Hebrews 9:15 illustrates this great and precious truth. “*And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions [that were] under the first testament, they which are called might receive the*

*promise of eternal inheritance.”* The eternal inheritance is what is being finalized at this event in Heaven. The blood of the Lamb was the price; the receiving of the book was the legal transaction. Hebrews 9:12 shows how Christ entered into the holy place to gain the redemption that we enjoy. *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption [for us].”*

None of those benefits involving redemption that Hebrews describes could have been obtained without there having been first the slaying of the Lamb.

## **2. It was unique as it told of the price of redemption.**

### **(V. 9c)**

Without the shedding of His blood there is no remission of sin. When Christ Jesus shed His blood, He offered the acceptable sacrifice to the Heavenly Father. It was the holy recognition on the part of the family of the redeemed that caused them to sing as the Lamb stood up and took the book. Notice the way Lehman Strauss worded this great event in his Revelation commentary. “When the Lamb with the death wounds in His body stood up, turned to the throne of Him who held the book in His right hand, and took the book, every redeemed person-millions of them-burst into a song that never had been sung before. This act of the Lion-Lamb guaranteed the subjection of this wicked earth including Babylon, Antichrist, the dragon, and the host of others who spurned the love of God as it was shown in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because He died the death of the cross to pay the debt of sin, Christ had every right to take the book and thus complete the work of redemption by rescuing this forfeited earth from the dominion of the devil. He can claim the title deed because He both created the world and redeemed it. Little wonder all the redeemed of all ages took their harps and played and sang the praises of the Redeemer! The odor of this united praise to the Lamb filled Heaven with

a sweet fragrance.” Let there be no question about who paid the price of redemption. “Jesus paid it all” as the song says.

### **3. It was unique as it told of the people of redemption. (Vv. 9d.-10)**

Angels are created beings that will never personally experience redemption. Redemption is a benefit that belongs to the human family only. Though the angels did not experience the redemption they were able to sing about it. One of the things that caused heartfelt singing was that the redeemed were made kings and priests unto God. There are wonderful benefits and blessings that come to the family of the redeemed that will certainly be worth singing about.

## **II. THE SONG WAS A UNIVERSAL SONG. (Vv. 11-13)**

John could not number this choir that he was listening to. The voices were coming from everywhere as verse number 13 strongly indicates, “*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*” There is no human way to word and to describe what is taking place that John was privileged to witness.

### **A. Every Creature Was Heard As They Sang. (V. 11).**

This congregation involved both the celestial and the terrestrial. There were those who had their creation existence in Heaven and formed part of this Heavenly choir. Then there were those who had their birth existence upon earth who were also there. All of creation was focused upon this great moment before the seals were opened. I do not know whether I fully grasp what is being described in

verse 13 when it says that all of creation is joining in to praise the Lamb, but it is very exciting to even imagine what is going on.

There are seven ways that only God the Father could extol His Son. Philippians 2:5-11 describes the manner in which only He highly exalts His Son. Notice this passage: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* This passage of Scripture almost parallels with our Revelation text. Such exaltation is what John is describing here.

## **B. Every Creature Was Honoring as They Sang. (Vv. 12-13c).**

We have learned that this is a *new song* being sung. It is a song of praise that gives honor to the Lamb who hath prevailed. He is the victorious conqueror who is being honored. Our text lists the seven ways of describing the result of the Heavenly Father exalting the Son. Again, this is a number that shows completeness. He was slain to receive power.

The first thing mentioned is *Power*. The Lamb had the power to come forth from the grave as the victorious conqueror and also has another power that is a governing power. We call this power His authority as described in Romans chapter thirteen. The power here according to Strong's is an inherent power. This is the way the word

power is used here according to Strong's. Strength, power, ability (these words show) **a)** inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth, **b)** power for performing miracles, **c)** moral power and excellence of soul, **d)** the power and influence which belong to riches and wealth, **e)** power and resources arising from numbers, **f)** power consisting in or resting upon armies, forces, hosts.

The second thing mentioned in our text is *Riches*. We must be mindful that as the Redeemer, Christ is regaining all that had been lost to the curse of sin. Here is Strong's definition of how the word riches is used in our text.

Riches: **a)** abundance of external possessions, **b)** fullness, abundance, plenitude, **c)** a good, i.e., that with which one is enriched. In the book of Ephesians we are shown the way Christ's riches will be expressed throughout eternity. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6-7). Think now about all of those who are assembled around the throne. They have literally been raised up to "sit together in heavenly places" to enjoy His riches for all eternity. They are praising Him because of this.

The third thing mentioned in our text is *Wisdom*. This is the divine intelligence that belongs to the Lord alone. This is the way that Strong's defines it. **b)** Supreme intelligence, such as belongs to God. **1)** To Christ. **2)** The wisdom of God as evinced in forming and executing counsels in the formation and government of the world and the Scriptures. This word wisdom is used to indicate that the Lord has all of the knowledge to form and execute His own government or Kingdom. The redeemed are recognizing as they sing their *new song* that the Lord is intellectually capable of totally governing His own creation.

The fourth word that we must consider is the word

*Strength.* This word means ability with the proper exercising of force. God will know just how much force to be employed during the Great Tribulation while exercising His entire purpose and program.

The fifth word is the word *Honour*. This word means that one is revered because He is qualified by reason of rank and state of office. Who is any greater and more worthy than He? There is none worthy of the honor that is His alone. He is the pre-eminent One. The *new song* is being sung to express such high honor, for it was He alone that could take the book and loose the seals.

The sixth word is the word *Glory*. There is something that belongs to God alone and no one else. It is His glory. The word glory means: the kingly majesty which belongs to him as supreme ruler, majesty in the sense of the absolute perfection of the deity. (Strong's). Philippians says that Christ is "highly exalted." This is such a wonderful way of describing His glory. This is another attribute that will be greatly recognized at the throne.

The seventh word in this list is the word *Blessing*. This word comes from the same word that we get our word eulogize. It means to show praise or laudation. Often when we eulogize someone we do so after the death of that person. That person lived, died and then was eulogized. In the case of Jesus Christ, He lived, then died and lived again to be eternally eulogized. The truth of the matter is, there is only one Person who is worthy of eulogy in the form of praise and laudation.

### **III. THE SONG WAS AN UNCHALLENGED SONG (V.14)**

The heavenly host agreed that the Lamb was the Worthy One. This agreement was signified by the word *Amen*. A dear preacher brother did a study on the word *Amen* that I very much appreciated and I received

permission to use the introduction from his study. Many thanks to Al Hughes for this excellent study: “There are four words that are the same in every language: “Amen,” Hallelujah,” “OK,” and “Coca-Cola.” “Amen” is one of the most widely known words in human speech.

“Amen” is a transliterated word. It is originally a Hebrew word (am-ané / aw-mane), which means truly or so be it. It was first transliterated into Greek, then into Latin and English and many other languages. A transliterated word is not a translated word.

- A translated word is when you take a word in one language and find another word in a different language that means close to the same thing.
- A transliterated word is when an entire word in one language is transferred into another language to form a new word that means the same thing.
- For example: “Baptism” is a transliteration of the Greek word “baptizo.”

The word “Amen” occurs 78 times in a King James Bible. No word is used more in devotion than “Amen.” It means more than just a way to end a prayer.

- It means “to confirm or make firm,” “true / faithful,” “so be it.”
- It is an expression of approval, support, acknowledgment and certainty.
- To say “amen” is to give our endorsement to whatever has been said or decreed.
- “Amen” is another way of saying “yes,” “that’s right,” or “that’s the way it is.” When saying “Amen” at the end of a prayer, we are really saying, “May the Lord make it so.”

In the 30 times “Amen” is used in the OT, it nearly always occurs as an affirming response to what has just been spoken. By responding with an “Amen” the people accepted what had just been said as if they had said it themselves.

- For example, notice where “Amen” is **FIRST MENTIONED** in Scripture—Numbers 5:22—“... *the woman shall say, Amen, amen.*” Instead of formally repeating all the words of an oath, a Jew would merely say, “Amen,” – “That is what I say too.” The repeating of the word was designed as an evidence of the woman's innocence, and a willingness that God would do to her according to what the curse said.
- Deuteronomy 27:15–26 (where “Amen” appears 12 times) the people responded with “Amen” after each statement of a curse directed toward those who disobey God. Deut. 27:15-16 —“*Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.*”

“Amen” is one of the names of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Amen” describes something about the character of Christ. The Lord Jesus is the Amen. He is the Ultimate Authority, the Finality of all things, the “Bottom Line,” the Last Word” (Hughes).

The elders, when they said *Amen* around the throne, this meant that they absolutely did not challenge the truth that the Lamb was the only One who was worthy to take the book. They also by saying *Amen* said “So be it.” All of the creation will acknowledge that the Lamb of God is completely in charge and is worthy of such an honor.

Chapter five ends and so begins chapter six. The seals will be opened and the tribulation events will begin to

unfurl. We should now have a most healthy understanding that Christ is completely in control of all that will transpire. This chapter just studied was carefully laid out with the intention of showing just how qualified and worthy Christ the Lamb was to perform and do all that He will be doing during the tribulation. It has been the intention of this writer to show how Christ is being revealed more clearly in this Revelation book. May we indeed see Him as we should.

## Chapter Thirteen

### THE OPENING OF THE SEALS: PART ONE

#### Text: Revelation 6:1-8

*1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.*

*2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

*3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.*

*4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*

*5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.*

*6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*

*7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.*

*8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

When the seals are opened the throne of mercy will officially become the throne of judgment. The throne is vacated as the Lion-Lamb begins to put forth the recipe of judgment that is scheduled in the seven seals. The judgment that is to take place is described in Daniel's prophecy as the seventieth week (Daniel 9:27).

John is now describing the beginning of tribulation. The first half of the tribulation will be relatively mild when compared to the last three and one half years. This period of time is known as "great tribulation" or the time of Jacob's trouble. The Antichrist will reveal himself as a person of great charisma and be accepted as a truly great leader only to

later be revealed for the hypocrite that he is. With the opening of the seals, his personality changes will be revealed. He will be shown as the diabolical creature that he really is.

The plagues which will strike the earth will further indicate the extreme judgment that God will allow to fall upon the earth. It will be an excruciating time when men will be praying for the mountains to fall upon them for the purpose of taking them out of their misery, but all will be to no avail. Judgment has begun after the first seal is opened. We will now look at the first seal as it is being opened and also look at the four horseman of the apocalypse. We will start with the rider who is on the first horse which is a white horse.

## **I. FIRST SEAL: JUDGMENT THROUGH DIPLOMACY. (Vv. 1-2).**

The first horseman is a counterfeit even though many students of the Scriptures have tried to make him to be the actual Christ. Some current teachers also try to make the first rider a representative of some spiritual force that will be prevalent in these last days. Revelation chapter nineteen, beginning in verse eleven, gives an entirely different description of the rider on a white horse who in that case is the Lord Jesus Christ. Why would the rider on the first horse be considered a counterfeit instead of actually being Christ? Remember, for something to be considered a counterfeit there must be similar recognizable features that mimic the real thing. Yet, for the discerning student of the Scriptures, those differences that are not the same will be distinguished. Note also the impracticality of the Lamb opening the seal and then being instructed by the beast to mount the first horse. After that, the Lamb will be opening the second seal. This would be an impractical and illogical interpretation. May we again give our attention to these symbols mentioned

concerning the opening of the seals.

Notice very carefully that this horse has features that are symbolic. The horse is associated with war. The color white is the color of purity. Yet there is something very impure and lacking about the rider of this horse. He carries a bow with no mentioned arrows. The bow is also a symbol that is associated with war, but not the most efficient implement of war. What makes it less efficient is that the bow does not have its arrows. The symbolism here is that there is going to be an attempt to conquer without bloodshed. The rider desires to conquer but without “firing a shot.” His battle will be a diplomatic attempt to bring all of the nations and all of the governments together from a state of détente to an even more peaceful coexistence. Further into the book of Revelation it will be equally noted that there will be an attempt to bring all of the religious systems together.

There is additional indication that this rider is a counterfeit who is presenting himself as the false Messiah while pretending to be the real one. He does this by wearing a crown. He wears a *stephanos* instead of the *diadema* that is worn by Christ. *Stephanos* means just one crown, whereas *diadema* means many crowns.

Now, get the picture. The counterfeit rider is the Antichrist who goes “forth conquering, and to conquer.” He will make diplomatic advances that will be unparalleled in recorded history. Some of the reasons this will take place is that our technology has taken a “quantum leap” and our ability to communicate is now at the speed of light. Factor this in with the diabolical forces of Satan working through the Antichrist and you will see diplomacy working as it never has before.

Leading up to the time when the Antichrist will be taking control there will be technological, ecumenical, governmental and sociological advances that will set the stage allowing for such a conqueror to take center stage. We are very subtly moving to such a position even as I prepare

this commentary. We are much closer than you would imagine. I do not make any attempt to sensationalize the Scriptures, nor do I bury my head in the sand. It should be very plainly noticed that there are forces already at work to make such a take over by the Antichrist conducive.

The time leading up to the rapture will increase in intensity while making the transition of setting up a *one-world government* a very smooth event. There could very well be a world-wide tragedy that causes people to be suddenly focused upon the need for immediately coming *together*. This is when a very charismatic leader will be able to step forward and take complete control. Notice how Daniel 9:27 describes the chronology of such an event taking place, “*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.*” This verse shows that the Antichrist will spend approximately three and one half years developing his agenda involving diplomacy and then afterwards reveal himself as the *great desolator*. This verse describes the seventh week of Daniel taking place. Each of the seven days represents a year. Midway through the seven years is three and one half years. This first seal is representing the period of time that is given to diplomacy and the creation of a false peace by the Antichrist. During this time there will be less actual tribulation than that which will begin when this rider reveals himself for who he really is. This midway point has been called the *abomination of desolation*. We will deal with this in more detail in later studies. This will be a time when the Jews will recognize who the Antichrist really is, especially after he desecrates the temple, as did Antiochus Epiphanies when he offered a swine in the temple.

It was in 167 B.C. that a Greek ruler by the name of

Antiochus Epiphanies set up an altar to Zeus over the altar of burnt offerings in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. He also sacrificed a pig on the altar in the Temple in Jerusalem. This event is known as the “abomination of desolation.” Jesus, knowing how serious of an offense this was to the Jews, spoke of this advent in Matthew 24:15 nearly 200 years after it had occurred. As He speaks in Matthew, He is describing a similar future event that will happen in reference to Daniel’s prophecy as found in Daniel 9:27. This will be where the Antichrist will break a seven-year covenant that he had made with the Jews.

## **II. THE SECOND SEAL: JUDGMENT THROUGH DESTRUCTION. (Vv. 3-4)**

In Matthew chapter twenty-four, Jesus is describing what will be taking place when the second seal is opened. Beginning in verse four, *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you, For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places, All these are the beginning of sorrows.”* (Matthew 24:4-8). Verse 15 explains how the Antichrist will be revealed as the one who is to take peace from the earth. *“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)”*

I Thessalonians 5:3 also describes this time period when it says, *“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”* The

Antichrist during the opening of the first seal will be bringing a false peace to the earth. When the second seal is opened, the earth will then know that it was a counterfeit peace that they had been experiencing. True peace will only come when the second rider of the white horse appears in chapter nineteen. There will be some overlapping of events when we see the pouring out of the vials and the blowing of the trumpets. We will show the “roman candle” effect in a later study, when we show how one judgment series will be birthed out of a previous judgment series.

The horse mentioned with the opening of the second seal is red. The color red pictures bloodshed. Much blood will be shed during this period. The rider of this horse is seen carrying a great sword which is another symbol of war and of bloodshed. It is through the personality of this second rider that Satan is being clearly seen for the murderer that he is. John 8:44 tells us that “He was a murderer from the beginning.” It was as though Satan was using the Antichrist to lull the world into a state of thinking that it was enjoying its greatest time of peace, while in actuality, it would only be a matter of time before the world would plunge into its most difficult time of great tribulation. With the Church removed, the first three and one half years will be very difficult for those who resisted the Antichrist and his government. There will be no New Testament Church believers upon the earth during this time, but there will be those who will turn to Christ when they see Him whom they have pierced. After the midpoint of the tribulation, there will be many souls converted to Christ upon recognizing that the rider of the first and second horse was not the true Messiah. This will be a time when large numbers of Jews will be converted to Christ under the evangelism of the 144,000 male virgin Jews who were saved and sealed.

As we look at the red horse and the work of the Antichrist, we may ask the question, “Why did the

Antichrist not just come and reveal himself as the mighty conqueror with the spirit of Nimrod of old, instead of first coming as a peace maker?" He knew tactically that there would have been an immediate resistance to him coming that way. The Antichrist would have been on the scene taking complete control if he thought that he could have gotten away with it. We know from reading 2 Thessalonians 2:5-9 that the only thing that is hindering the Antichrist from revealing himself now is that the Holy Spirit is living within the believers and they absolutely will not submit to his wicked government. We also know from studying this passage, that the Antichrist will immediately be revealed once the Church is taken out. For those who believe that the Church will go through the tribulation, passages such as this make it difficult for the Antichrist to come to power while the Church is still upon the earth. The Church simply will not give its allegiance and worship to a false-Christ.

There will be tribulation saints who will resist the Antichrist's monetary system, his government, and as we have learned they will not submit to his form of worship. The tribulation saints will be comprised of the 144,000 male virgin Jews who are saved and sealed sometime after the rapture. We are told about this happening in Revelation chapter seven. The 144,000 will be saved long before the sixth seal, near the beginning of the tribulation. In Revelation chapter seven, this is only an interlude explaining some things that will be happening during the period of the tribulation. This is not describing the actual chronology of events. The opening of the seventh seal is shown taking place in Revelation chapter eight.

The tribulation saints will also comprise the Jews and the Gentiles who refuse to receive the mark of the Beast and are converted to Christ. These precious souls will resist the Antichrist to the point that he will pour out his fury against them resulting in much blood shed. The intensity of

this persecution will increase right until the battle of Armageddon as indicated by the second horse. This second seal with the red horse and the rider having a great sword coincides with the seventh chapter of Revelation. The false system of government and religion will give its full support to the killing of the tribulation Jews and saints by the Antichrist. Historically, the Roman system has persecuted the saints because they would not adhere to the teachings of the “mother” church. This same Roman system will be more intense than ever during the tribulation. In Revelation 17:6 it says, “*And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw, I wondered with great admiration.*” We will discover in our future studies that this woman is the “MOTHER OF HARLOTS” which is the Roman Catholic Church.

Concerning the way the Antichrist will be working during this time, look at the meaning of this passage in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, and 8. “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he (*Holy Spirit*) who now letteth, will let, (*hinder*) until he (*Holy Spirit*) be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (*Antichrist*) be revealed,...” (Italics and explanation mine). The persecution against the Jew during this time will be extremely intense, thus it is called “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” It is the red horse that symbolizes this time period.

### **III. THIRD SEAL: JUDGMENT THROUGH DIET** **(Vv. 5-6)**

The third beast says, “Come and see”. The opening of the third seal revealed a black horse. The color *black* pictures a time of famine. Famine is a natural consequence of the persecution and the killings that are taking place as a result of the Antichrist going forth to destroy and to

conquer. Many of the saints that were killed would have had a part in raising the crops necessary for food. There would also be the destruction of the crops as a means of warfare by the army of the Antichrist. There is no way of really describing just how vile and wicked the Antichrist is. He is Satan personified.

Living in the South, I remember the old timers telling of how Sherman marched through on his way to the sea destroying everything in his path. Some would tell how their grandparents would describe the slaughtering of the livestock and the destroying of the fields as a means of demoralizing and destroying the South so that it would be unable to fight. The same thing will be happening on a more mammoth scale during the Tribulation. Even during the War Between the States there were citizens who defied the enemy. One of my favorite stories was told of a granny who stood in her yard raking the yard with her yard broom as General Sherman approached. The story is told that when the General got to where she was, she took her yard broom and started beating him and his horse. One of the soldiers said, "Ma'am, you just as well stop... you can't hurt the General and stop this army." She replied, "I know, but I sure can let him know whose side that I am on!" Likewise, there will be the tribulation saints that will be resisting the Antichrist every step of the way only to face *greater* persecution. It will be very much so during the Tribulation that the *godly shall suffer persecution*.

We often refer to the eco-system or the *ecology of the world* when describing the way everything seems to balance out providing just enough food to meet the needs of the world. Many of the scientists of the world think that this is just one of the benefits of the "evolutionary process." They are convinced that everything just "Big-banged" together. They use words like *random, chance, and good mutation* to describe the eco-system getting to where it is. The Bible believer is convinced that it is by Him that everything

consists... This much is for sure, whether they will accept it or not, when the Lord turns His fury loose upon the earth, there is no eco-system that can withstand His anger. Hebrews tells us of such anger. Hebrews 12:26-27 says, *“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”*

The extent of the famine is described in verses five and six. The scale or balance shows that food cannot be wasted; it must be weighed out instead. The value of the food is given in a relative sense and by checking what these figures meant during the Church Age one will find that the value of food increases by about twelve times and that a person would have to work for a day to pay for one meal. Any way that you should interpret this or word it, it means the same. There is a famine that is gripping the land. People are starving; so indicates this third horse.

#### **IV. THE FOURTH SEAL: JUDGMENT THROUGH DEATH. (Vv. 7-8).**

Death will characterize each time aspect of the Tribulation as indicated by the opening of each of the seals, but none as much as when this fourth seal is opened. This seal will show that the earth is experiencing great tribulation. With the opening of this seal there is a horrible scene being described that will result in one-fourth of the earth being under extreme judgment. The carnage of such judgment will have happened as a result of those killed by the armies of the Antichrist, death resulting from starvation, death by disease and death by the beasts of the earth.

The Antichrist will never achieve his diabolical goals. His devices will have terrible effect upon the world as he

deploys them but never obtaining the complete control that he desires. In this way, he is also like Satan who always fails to take complete control of creation. Satan and the Beast will eventually be completely removed from the scene and cast into the Lake of Fire along with the false prophet. Until this happens, each involved in this unholy trinity will do all they can to advance their unholy campaign against God and His people. It is with this spirit that the Antichrist will try to govern the entire world. He attempted this first as a deceiving charismatic figure who the world thought must *really be* the Messiah. He then turned upon the world as the strong warrior out on a mission of death. The pale horse has as its rider the personification of death and was named Death. Hell followed with him. Using these two names to describe these personalities shows how terrible the tribulation was becoming. “Death” could speak of an effort to destroy the body, while “Hell” spoke of the effort of taking one’s soul. Death is such a terrible word apart from God’s grace. It is a by-product of the original sin curse. When people now die without God, it is such a terrible eternal curse. This fourth seal gives a hint of just how terrible this kind of death is. Yet, those who were tribulation saints died the horrible death as calculated by the Antichrist, but were delivered finally out of their persecution of dying and death by God’s grace.

The four horsemen and their horses have been revealed giving additional insight to the way that the tribulation will unfold. As this is so, we also are seeing Christ more clearly. With all that we may consider this is the preeminent part of our focus. It will continue to be my desire to focus upon Christ. After all, Revelation is the revelation of Christ...

## Chapter Fourteen

### THE OPENING OF THE SEALS: PART TWO

#### Text: Revelation 6:9-17

*9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:*

*10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

*11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

*12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;*

*13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.*

*14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.*

*15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;*

*16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:*

*17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

The opening of the fifth seal signals a transition or perhaps an interlude that shows what is happening to the tribulation saints during the earlier part of the Tribulation when the judgment is coming from the Antichrist. With the opening of the sixth seal the scene will focus upon the judgment coming supernaturally from Heaven. The opening of the fifth seal shows the saints that have been martyred. They are crying for vengeance. There are so many differences during the Tribulation that are not found during the Church Age that in no way can the Church Age exist

during the Tribulation. During the Age of Grace, no one will cry for vengeance in the same way that the tribulation saints will during the opening of the fifth seal. The Tribulation is specifically a time of great judgment unlike the Grace Age. This is another argument that speaks against the Church going through the Tribulation.

To grasp a clearer sense of what these saints will be going through and experiencing during their time of persecution and death, we will consider the *vision*, the *voice*, and the *victories* of the martyrs who had been slain.

## **V. FIFTH SEAL: JUDGMENT THROUGH PERSECUTION AND DEATH. (Vv. 9-11).**

The first four seals showed the way that the Antichrist rushed on the scene and attempted to swiftly take control of the human government. Taking control of the human government had been the desire of Satan which began at the original fall. Satan had several ambitions during the time that he lifted himself up in pride. Notice these statements concerning Satan, who was also known as Lucifer, which attributed to his fall.

Isaiah 14:12, *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! [how] art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”*

Isaiah 14:13, *“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north.”*

Isaiah 14:14, *“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.”*

Isaiah 14:15, *“Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”*

His ambitions are still the same, and he will attempt to take control during the Tribulation just as he has since his first attempt as described in Isaiah chapter fourteen when

God originally cast Lucifer out of Heaven. His practicing of his diabolical schemes during the tribulation will be triggered by the removal of the saints and the Holy Spirit who indwells the lives of the saints during the Church Age. The Holy Spirit as we have learned in 2 Thessalonians is a hindrance to the effectiveness of the Antichrist being able to take control of human government just as the saints are.

When the saints are removed, before the tribulation begins, Satan will perform most of his purposes in a natural way using the Antichrist, whereas the Lord will perform His purposes in a supernatural way as the true Christ.

#### **A. The Vision Of The Martyrs Who Had Been Slain. (V. 9)**

What John is describing is very intense. He is describing the tribulation saints who have been slain and are under the altar. There must be significance to the purpose of the saints crying from underneath the altar. God's Word has purpose in all that is contained therein. The altar spoken of is of the genius of God; it is not man-made as are those upon the earth. The altars upon the earth were often built to express man's appreciation to God. Such was the case when Noah built his altar to the Lord. After the sacrifice was made, the Lord described the offering as a "sweet savour" (Genesis 8:20-21). After Noah made this offering at the altar that he had built, God made what we refer to as the *Noahic Covenant*.

When God made the Abrahamic Covenant with Abraham, Abram built an altar showing his gratitude to the Lord for such. Again, this was an instance where man built an altar to God to show his appreciation for *what the Lord had done*. To gain some insight as to why the souls of these martyrs were seen under the altar, it seems reasonable to believe that God has built this altar in Heaven and the *sacrifices* were those tribulation saints who had been put to death. Just as man would take his very best and then sacrifice

it unto the Lord, the Lord was taking His very best (those who were willing to sacrifice themselves unto the Lord) and placing them under His altar. These precious souls had made the ultimate sacrifice for the ultimate reason. The Lord demonstrated in the building of this Heavenly altar that He was well pleased.

We must understand what John is describing is yet to happen and will not happen until the tribulation begins. With this being so, it should inspire us all who are Christians to present our “bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” which indeed is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1).

### **1. They were true to the Word. (V. 9a)**

In describing those who are true to the Word, they were described as souls. The word soul simply means that they were living creatures who had a living, intelligent awareness of all that was taking place. This is absolutely a strong argument against soul sleep. These who are under the altar are not in a comatose state. When the descriptive word *soul* is used it is used in the sense that it describes will, intellect and emotions. It is the Greek word *psuche* which means *the soul as an essence which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death (distinguished from other parts of the body)* (Strong's). The soul is also described as the seat of the emotions.

With this insight, we may safely infer that these were real human beings under the altar who were traceable back to the first family of Adam and Eve. They were just as human as we are; they also may be alive upon the earth today. The reason for their martyrdom will be their having been faithful to the Word while upon the earth and their believing upon the Lord unto their death. God rewards those who are faithful to Truth or His Word in each dispensation. Noah built the ark unto the saving of his house as Hebrews 11:7 tells us, “*By faith Noah, being*

*warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."*

The Scriptures tell us that Abraham "believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God" (James 2:23). These verses illustrate how God honors all those who have faith in His Word. The tribulation saints will certainly honor Jesus Christ in and during the most difficult times and circumstances.

## **2. They were testimonies to the Word. (V. 9b)**

The Greek word *marturia* is used to describe the tribulation saints as being *testifiers or witnesses of Truth*. Obviously some of the tribulation saints will be given an opportunity to either remain silent in regards to their faith or to recant. They will do neither, for which reason they will be executed. When I think of political prisoners who were executed during the Iraqi war, I could not help thinking of those who had their heads cut off. This barbaric act, which was witnessed by many during the war in Iraq, will be repeated throughout the entire Tribulation with the Antichrist thinking that he will be able to take control away from Christ and then set up his own government. He will very aggressively attempt to do this by demoralizing the Christians only to find "*the flame of opposition will grow brighter!*" Such has been the case throughout history but will be even more prevalent during the tribulation.

The tribulation saints will be witnessing that the Antichrist's government is also Satan's and is to be refused and rejected. The Antichrist is going to attempt to put down all of those who reject his government as he will also be promoting his own. His promotion began with the opening of the first seal as described earlier as a time of diplomacy. When he sees there is strong resistance due to the tribulation saints and the work of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, he

will then use any means to establish his government along with his religion and economy. The great sword symbolizes this.

**B. The Voices Of The Martyrs Who Had Been Slain.  
(V. 10)**

The martyred tribulation saints are crying for vengeance which according to Lehman Strauss was a characteristic of the Tribulation and not of the Church Age, as described by what he wrote in his Revelation commentary: “The language in verse 10 sounds strange to the Christian. These martyrs are actually calling for vengeance against their persecutors. How unlike the attitude of Christ and of His followers in this present Church Age! Our Lord prayed for the forgiveness of His murderers (Luke 23:34), as did Stephen (Acts 7:60). The attitude of the tribulation martyrs marks the change of dispensation. We in this dispensation of grace must deal with others in grace as God has dealt with us. The tribulation saints will be living in the dispensation of judgment, thus they pray according to the ruling principle of that period of time in which they find themselves. Their cry for vengeance explains somewhat the imprecatory psalms. The cry, ‘How long?’ is the familiar Jewish cry during the time of Jacob’s trouble (Psalm 74:9-10; 79:5; 89:46; 94:3-4). The Christian in this present period of grace is taught that vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:19), but the persecuted Jews in that day will seek vengeance upon their murderers without any sense of guilt for doing so. It is the time of judgment. The judgment throne is set.”

Some may argue, who believe that the Church is going through the Great Tribulation, that the cry for vengeance is a result of the Antichrist being permitted to exercise his purpose and plan. It cannot be this simply explained considering that the entire Gospel thrust will be changed from grace to judgment.

As mentioned earlier, the preached message will be

changed from preaching the Gospel of the Grace of God to the Everlasting Gospel as indicated by this proof text found in Revelation 14:6, *“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”* The Everlasting Gospel is the good news that the Jews would be vindicated during this time of judgment. When we get to the fourteenth chapter, we will learn that the message involving the Everlasting Gospel will tell how Babylon the Great will fall and there will also be a promise and a warning to the Saints. There will be a warning not to receive the mark and not to bow down and worship the beast. There would be a promise of rest to those who died keeping their witness.

This warning cannot apply to the Church; it is specifically for the tribulation saints. The other Gospel that will be preached that will require a witness, is the Kingdom Gospel. Jesus said that this Gospel will be preached before the end came. It was also preached as a preview before the Church was inaugurated. When Christ postponed His kingdom because the Jews rejected Him as their Messiah, the Kingdom Gospel had no more immediate purpose. Christ did however tell them, that when the end comes, this Gospel would be preached once again as His Word teaches us in Matthew 24:14, *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”*

Some may argue that all three Gospels will be preached during the tribulation. The difficulty with this interpretation is that there is no indication of it going on during the Tribulation and not one specific instruction given to the Church as to how it should operate. Can you imagine the difficulty of the Church going through something like this with no specific instructions on how to cope with it? Something that has the magnitude of the seven year tribulation must have specific instructions for the Church if

the Church is required to go through it. The cry of the souls under the altar is uniquely that of the suffering tribulation saints, and not that of the Church who are gathered around the throne with no concept experientially of what is going on.

### **1. They cried to the Judge. (V. 10a)**

The cry that is described is imprecatory in nature. The passion of these martyred tribulation saints is so great that it is almost as if they are praying a curse upon their persecutors. They desperately desire a holy vengeance upon them and that is exactly the spirit in which they cry to their Lord and Judge. The tribulation saints also recognize the integrity of the Judge who is both *holy and true*. It is in this attitude to Him that they cry for the Lord to *avenge* them. It is their desire that the Lord does something quickly. This was not the spirit of Stephen, when Stephen cried in the manner described in Acts 7:59-60, “*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*”

Stephen could have been the prototype of the Church in its attitude towards the persecution that it would face. Stephen had the same spirit that Christ had when He was on the cross when He said, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do...” Again, this is not the spirit of the tribulation saints that John is describing.

### **2. They cried for justice. (V. 10b)**

There may be questions as to why the tribulation saints have an entirely different attitude towards the persecutors than did the Church during the Church Age. The main difference seems to be based upon the horrendous way in which the tribulation saints were treated and that the Lord let them at least enter emotionally into the judgment of the

persecutors.

I recall from childhood an event that took place involving my brother and a bully that lived on our street. My mother did something that she may have regretted later, but she was our hero then. The bully came over to our house and brought his expensive toy airplane. He told my mother to put the plane up and not let me or my brother “mess with it.” She put it up out of our reach. My brother had this little toy set that required cutting designs out with a set of little red toy scissors. Walter wanted to play with my brother’s scissors and snatched them from him. My brother tried to get them back but with Walter being older and much bigger than Ronnie, he was unsuccessful. My mother saw the commotion and attempted to take the scissors back. With the scissors being plastic and very fragile they broke. That should not have happened. Immediately my mother went and grabbed the bully’s plane and called Ronnie and me to where she was and told us to help tear his plane up. After we had it in pieces, Walter then picked up the remains and said to my mother, “Mrs. Alderman, I have decided that you are as much to blame as Max and Ronnie are.” Neither I, nor my mother later would recommend doing what we did, but at that time she was vindicating my brother and me. She also allowed us to have a part in seeking vengeance. As I think about it, that is what God is doing on a much larger and more spiritual scale. When all of the bullies during the Tribulation begin to harm and kill his little children, He says, “I have had enough.” He then comes in and wars with a twoedged sword vindicating all who have been done wrong. Praise be unto God!

### **C. The Victories Of The Martyrs Who Had Been Slain. (V.11)**

The token of a white robe signals that the tribulation saints will be both vindicated and rewarded for their faithfulness until death. Chapter thirteen tells how awful the

persecution will be and it is for this reason that the martyrs under the altar must wait until the last martyr had come to Heaven before there could be a complete victory celebration. One day the entire family of the redeemed will be home and there will be no more death, sin, or heartbreak.

## **VI. SIXTH SEAL: JUDGMENT THROUGH PHYSICAL DISTURBANCES. (Vv. 12-17)**

It is the conviction of many Bible students that the opening of the first five seals indicates what will be happening upon the earth when the Antichrist is revealed. As mentioned already, the Antichrist will be intent on setting up his own government at any cost. It does not bother this murderer to shed blood and kill whoever is necessary to achieve his diabolical purposes. The opening of the sixth seal indicates when the Lord will very intently begin His judgment. This could happen any time after the abomination of desolation which takes place midway during the tribulation. Some believe that the time of God's wrath will be sudden and at the very end of the tribulation. I believe that the Battle of Armageddon will be at the very end, but the Lord can stretch out His anger as long as He pleases. His patience is described as "longsuffering." This means that the Lord puts up with sin and the sinners for a very long time, desiring that all would come to repentance.

If He could patiently wait for the wicked to turn to Him, He could also take as much time as He wanted to judge the wicked without mercy. Even if God's wrath is poured out for over three years upon the earth, that is nothing to compare to the eternity of Hell.

### **A. The Power Of Judgment Was Universal. (Vv. 12-14)**

Many theologians try to allegorize these verses letting them represent the convulsion of power when the Antichrist takes control. There is absolutely no reason why one should

twist the Scriptures to make this kind of interpretation. It would require much imagination to let the earthquake represent a catastrophic display of the Antichrist's power. The same could be said in regards to the sun becoming black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon becoming as blood as some try to either symbolize or allegorize.

The events described is not a convulsion of what the Antichrist is capable of, but instead is a result of Christ the Judge bringing supernatural judgment upon the earth. Christ who is the Creator is also able to speak to the earth as He did the sea and the earth and they listened. He said to the sea, "Peace, be still" and the violent sea became as a muzzled dog. It yielded itself to the mighty power of God. Likewise God can cause the land surface to either bend or buckle at His bidding and it will happen. During the Flood upon the earth, God caused the waters to come down and the fountains of the deep to release its violent forces in cataclysmic fashion. For forty days and for forty nights the waters rose upon the surface until there was finally an assuagement of the waters.

The Lord supernaturally allowed the plagues to strike Egypt; He allowed the parting of the Red Sea which in turn allowed the nation of Israel to walk on dry land and afterwards released the same waters upon the Egyptian soldiers suddenly causing their deaths. The same energy that was available during this time will also be available during the Great Tribulation.

### **1. As seen in the skies above the Earth. (Vv. 12-13).**

Very strong language is being used to describe the intensity of this judgment being lashed out by the rider on the horse that is described in chapter 19. This judgment involving the skies above the earth is not describing the work of the Antichrist. Instead, it is describing the supernatural work of *the* Christ. Christ is releasing His fury against sinful humanity in unlimited measure. There will be no way that

the kingdoms of this worldly system can impede the directed power of God. The heavens are being shaken not as explained natural phenomena, but as a planned event of God.

Many times I have read where modernists have attempted to explain away supernatural events that were performed by God. Such examples would be the dividing of the Red Sea. They explain that instead of the Red Sea being divided, it was actually the Reedy Sea being waded through. The big laughable problem with such an interpretation as this is that the Egyptian army was drowned by three to six inches of water. To further illustrate the lengths that the modernists will go to discount the Biblical record, they said that Goliath suffered tunnel vision and that all David had to do was move out of his line of vision and that he then could bring Goliath down from his blind side. When interpretations such as this are made, it usually takes much more effort to describe and believe what they say than what the Word of God says.

Verse thirteen tells us that the stars fell to the earth even as a “fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind” (V. 13). The intended purpose of the fig tree is to produce fruit in a timely manner according to its season. It is not natural for the tree to release its fruit before the fruit is ready. It is not natural for the heavens to release its stars or its starry meteors in such fury as described here. This is not a natural ongoing phenomenon that is taking place. Instead, this is the great judgment of God that is taking place. The heavens will be greatly affected by the judgment of God being described, but with this being so, this is still not the end of the tribulation. The great earth quake that is mentioned in our text is the first of three more that will follow. The other two are mentioned in chapter 11:13 and chapter 16:18-19.

## **2. As seen on the surface of the Earth. (V. 14)**

The vengeance of God is not only being felt in the atmosphere above the earth but also upon the earth. The

movement of the mountains and the islands show the magnitude of this kind of judgment. Some attempt to interpret these events as only being symbolical of powers being disrupted during the Great Tribulation. The Scriptures should be taken literally when not signaled otherwise. I am very respectful of the writings of Donald Grey Barnhouse, but cannot accept his rendering of this passage when he says, “The disappearance of central authority is not of great primary importance so long as local authority continues, *but the stars, the symbols of local authority*, fall like unseasoned fruit.” (Italics mine). This is an example of how commentators symbolize passages when it is not necessary. I do not believe that the stars were massive intact stars that fell to the earth, but representative separated parts from the mother stars that fell. We use the expression, “I saw a shooting star” which describes a fragment of its original star that it was a part of. We know that these are meteors or if they strike the earth, we know them to be meteorites. In 1833 on the night of November 13th history records one of its largest recorded meteor showers. It lasted for three hours and was described as “a terrible spectacle.” Many believed it to be what they described as, “the end of the world!”

I see no reason not to accept what is being described as taking place literally in the skies and also upon the earth. Such will be the kind of judgment to expect from God Almighty.

## **B. The Prayer Meeting Of Judgment Was Universal. (Vv. 15-16)**

The wicked followers of the Antichrist are sensing that they have followed the wrong Christ; they must sense also that they are under the divine wrath of God. There will be a universal prayer meeting involving these enemies of Truth who pray not to the Rock of Ages, but to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them. The wicked do not very easily humble themselves and such is the case in respect to these

who are praying for their death for the purpose of escaping what they are experiencing. The enemies who are described here are from every imaginable group. This will include racial, social, ethnic, religious, political, and economic groups.

The enemies of Christ made a *great request* in that they were praying for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from “the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” They also were making a *great recognition* when they realized that “the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” This verse argues against those who believe that the day of wrath is fixed at the very end of the tribulation as this time is between the first and the second earthquake with a total of three having to take place before the very end of the tribulation.

The sixth seal has been opened and examined. Chapter seven is going to be an interlude which will show some of the parallel events that took place during the opening of the first six seals. After chapter number seven, we will look at the opening of the seventh seal and all that transpired during that time.

## Chapter Fifteen

### THE SAVED OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

#### Text: Revelation 7

1 *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.*

2 *And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,*

3 *Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

4 *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

5 *Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.*

6 *Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.*

7 *Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.*

8 *Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.*

9 *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

10 *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

11 *And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,*

12 *Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

13 *And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?*

*14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

*15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

*16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.*

*17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

Perhaps it would be appropriate and honest for me to say that this study is an extremely rewarding study and also a very challenging one as well. There are times when I find it difficult to understand the proper chronology of the Revelation events. This will become more apparent as this study continues. It will become more obvious that some of the events overlap and are also repeated for a different emphasis. As students we need to properly discern the teachings of this great book. May God's Spirit guide us to all truth. Dr. Lehmon Strauss says "In chapter 6 we saw the opening of the first six seals and the judgments which are to follow. We might naturally look for a description of the seventh seal and its judgment, but the seventh does not follow in order. The Lamb does not open the seventh seal until chapter eight. Were we to omit chapter seven entirely, and continue reading from 6:17 to 8:1, we would have a running narrative and a completed picture of the seal judgments. The omission of chapter seven would not detract in any way from the rest of the picture from man's viewpoint. But the parenthesis is here, and it was put here by our Lord for a reason. What was the reason?"

As chapter six concluded with the opening of the sixth seal, we are told that "the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" John shows his concern as he asks this question: John has never seen such a description of judgment upon the earth, nor has any man. At the time of

this vision, John wonders if any will be able to survive. As John is observing and describing the awesome judgment of the Lamb, he sees four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth. This is John's way of describing the four directions as it would appear on a compass. North, South, East, and West. Even today we describe directions from four vectors. If you drew lines depicting these four directions of equal length and then tied the ends together you would have a square with four corners. This does not mean that the earth literally has four corners, but we refer to the earth as having four directions. The earth also has four seasons and four has long been recognized as the world or the earth number.

These angels are taking control of the weather across the world. These angels seem to be bringing in a brief calm for the purpose of sealing the 144,000. We will make comment on this as we consider, *The sealed ones ministering for the Saviour* (vv. 1-8).

## **I. THE SEALED ONES MINISTERING FOR THE SAVIOUR. (VV. 1-8)**

There are different discussions as to why the angels held back the winds and also the angels were told not to hurt the earth during the sealing of the 144,000. A common interpretation is that this was a thing that God did to show mercy during the tribulation. I may eventually find that such an interpretation is true, but I believe that God's hand of judgment is not being restrained for the purpose of mercy, but to emphasize how intense the Great Tribulation is and to show how important of an event that it is as the 144,000 are being saved and sealed. The sealing will not require much time and this brief period of calm will be nothing more than the *calm before the storm*.

## **A. The Responsibility Of The Angels During The Sealing. (Vv. 1-3)**

We cannot ignore or refuse to accept the role of the angelical host within the economy of God. Angels have been commissioned at pinnacle points throughout the record of God's Word. The work of angels preceded the creation of man or at least began in close proximity to man's creation for the purpose of them serving as ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. (Hebrews 1:14)

The first verse of chapter seven indicates that there are four special commissioned angels who will hold the winds for the time necessary to seal the 144,000 Jews. As this event takes place during the tribulation, the holding of the winds and the immediate withholding of judgment could be the Lamb's way of capturing the attention of both earth and Heaven as the sealing takes place here upon the earth. Some say that this is a time of mercy, yet I believe that it is a strong signal that greater judgment is to come. If you read chapter six and then go immediately to chapter eight, you will find that chapter six ends and then picks up again with the continuing thought in chapter eight. At least this seems to be the common interpretation of the way chapter six flows right into chapter eight. However, I sense that there may be something different than the more commonly held interpretation. Chapter seven begins with, "After these things" and goes on to describe the work of the angels followed by the sealing of the 144,000 and then John witnessing the great multitude of the redeemed from all nations described as so great "which no man could number." These are the tribulation saints who were either slain and taken to Heaven or as some commentators say, they may include those who have been raptured into Heaven, "which came out of great tribulation (v. 14) before the great day of the Lamb's wrath had taken place (6:17).

This definitely would not be the rapturing of the Church, for this took place before the tribulation somewhere between Revelation three and four. There seems to be only two possible ways for this large number to be standing before the throne, and that is either by death or by a special rapturing of these tribulation saints. We will look more into this thought a little later in our study.

The angels are told to hold the wind and do no harm to the earth, the sea and the trees until the servants of God have been sealed (v.3). In contrast to what had been transpiring upon the earth there is now a calm or a quietness that has come briefly upon the entire creation. In chapter eight, there seems to be a corresponding event of quietness in Heaven. This happens with the opening of the seventh seal. Verse one says, “there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.” This in Heaven may not be taking place simultaneously with what is going on upon earth, but the two are in close proximity to each other. My thinking is that there is a silence in all of God’s creation which demonstrates who really is in control and signals great tribulations. For it is under God’s instructions that all of this takes place.

The staying power of God’s hand has been graciously given at different times in each of our lives; I can only think how it would be if this were not so. Just as it is true on a lesser, personal scale, it is also so in the greater universal scale. We should remind ourselves when everything seems to be calm, even as we sin, that this could only be the prelude to God’s sure impending judgment and is an opportunity to repent and draw nigh unto the Lord. With the sealing of the 144,000 there was going to be one of the greatest groups of evangelists that the world has ever seen. Many souls will be converted during this ministry. The quietness or calm will give man opportunity to consider what is taking place.

## **B. The Angels Are Holding Back The Wind's Strength (Vv. 1-2)**

Wind in the Bible is often used as a means of bringing judgment upon people or is used during a time of testing. When Job was hearing the reports of all that was happening to his family, he was told that, “there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead;” (Job 1:19). Later, when God was speaking to Job he described the wind as being an “east wind upon the earth.” The reference to it being an east wind indicates that it was not just a natural phenomenon of wind blowing, but a Heaven-sent wind. God told Isaiah that the wind shall carry his enemy away and the whirlwind shall scatter them (Isa. 41:16). In Jeremiah 18:17, God tells Jeremiah that He will scatter the disobedient as “with an east wind before the enemy.” Again, the east wind is a reference to God’s sovereign judgment upon the nation of Israel. When God brought judgment upon Jonah He describes it with the sending of a “great wind into the sea” (Jonah 1:4, 10-12). During the interlude between the opening of the sixth seal and seventh seal, the holding of the four winds implies that His judgment is briefly withheld or that the withholding of the wind only signaled that the judgment was going to intensify.

### **1. The angels hurting not the earth's surface (v. 3)**

There is no clear reason given as to why the angels were told not to hurt the earth, the sea, or any tree; yet using the same reasoning as to why the wind was withheld seems to be a way to again emphasize the severity of judgment that is about to take place. The indication is that God’s judgment is going to be greatly increased with the opening of the vials and with the blowing of the trumpets. The pause in judgment will be very brief as compared to the long period of judgment to follow when the trumpets being blown signal

that the second seven judgments have officially begun.

### **C. The Revealing Of The Servants During The Sealing (Vv. 4-8)**

Verse two tells us that “another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God” comes to seal the “servants of our God in their foreheads” (v.3). This is a very sacred sealing in that it is God-sent (from the east and is described as the seal of the living God). Our text tells us in verse four that John heard that the number sealed were 144,000 “of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” We are told in verses five through eight that there were 12,000 Israelites out of each of the listed tribes. As we look at these tribes, it would be profitable to examine the meanings of the names, realizing that the meaning of the names of the Old Testament people carried great significance. This is especially true in regards to the sons of Abraham.

*“Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand.”* The word “Judah” means PRAISE GOD.

*“Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand.”* Genesis 29:32 tells us that the word “Reuben” means SEE THE SON.

*“Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 30:11, the word “Gad” means A GREAT COMPANY.

*“Of the tribe of Asher were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 30:13, the word “Asher” means BLESSED.

*“Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 30:8, the word “Naphtali” means WRESTLINGS.

*“Of the tribe of Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 41:51, the word “Manasseh” means FORGETTING.

*“Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 29:33, the word “Simeon” means HEARING MY WORD.

*“Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 29:34, the word “Levi” means JOINED.

*“Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 30:18, the word “Issachar” means REWARDED.

*“Of the tribe of Zebulon were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 30:20, the word “Zebulon” means DWELLING.

*“Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 30:24, the word “Joseph” means ADDED.

*“Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.”* In Genesis 35:18, the word “Benjamin” means SONS OF GOD’S RIGHT HAND.

Out of the twelve tribes you will notice that the tribe of Dan is left out and the name of Manasses was substituted in his stead. According to Judges 18:30, the children of Dan set up a graven image. This could be the reason that Dan was removed from the list. This shows us God’s attitude towards idolatry. We must be careful not to put anything before God. To do so will involve very costly consequences. There are also some teaching that the

Antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan and was refused for that reason.

As students of the Scriptures, may we look at the names of these tribes as they appear in order: PRAISE GOD, SEE THE SON, A GREAT COMPANY, BLESSED ONES, WRESTLING, FORGETTING, HEAR THE WORD, JOINED, REWARDED, DWELLING, ADDED, SONS OF GOD'S RIGHT HAND. Perhaps it would be a profitable study to examine these names more closely. Every name and every word in the Bible has meaning. Let's not forget that.

If we examine the number twelve as it is used in our Bible and especially in the book of Revelation, we will remind ourselves as we do that the number twelve is the number that stands for governmental perfection or completion. There were twelve tribes and twelve apostles that we immediately think of. In Revelation 21, we study and find that the New Jerusalem had twelve gates, and "at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (Revelation 21:12). We may also discover that "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (V. 14). In verse 16 of chapter 21, we are told that "he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs." Verse 17 tells us that "he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. Certainly, once again, it is no accident the way God's Word describes the use of twelve.

We may recognize God's government in the use of the number twelve. The 144,000 is a multiple of twelve. The number ten is the number in the Bible for God's law that governs. The number ten is the number of commandments in the Decalogue that is a standard for the way God's government works. If you take ten to the third power you have one thousand. You multiply this number by the 144

and then arrive at 144,000 and you see God's government at work as these evangelists introduce God's government in preference to Satan's and the Antichrist's.

## **II. THE SAVED ONES MEETING AROUND THEIR SAVIOUR. (Vv. 9-17).**

It is certainly my desire and prayer to God that He give me insight as I preach and study these lessons on the Great Tribulation with you. I must say that every time I preach the book of Revelation, God enlightens my understanding. As indicated earlier there is still much to learn; please let the Holy Spirit direct you in your personal studies, for there is no greater Teacher than He. As we continue to look at this great seventh chapter, I am thinking that chapter six is a summary of the entire tribulation leading up to the Battle of Armageddon. The first three and one half years are for the most part represented by the rider of the first horse. The red horse pictures the beginning of the last three and one half years.

When the seventh seal is opened and the trumpet judgments begin, this reveals a more detailed account of the last three and one half years of the tribulation known as Great Tribulation. With this being said, maybe it would be entirely appropriate to recognize the seventh chapter as emphasizing some important events that are happening during the course of the tribulation. We have already shown the sealing of the 144,000 and now we will look at the tribulation saints who are gathered around the throne. There are interpretational issues that must be considered as we examine these redeemed ones. Who are they? How did they get to where they are and when did they arrive? We will very carefully consider some possibilities without being overly dogmatic with our position. The main reason I say this is that there seems to be some gray areas of establishing a strong chronology of when everything is taking place. We shall

begin by looking at this great family of the redeemed.

**A. Note The Great Number Of The Redeemed. (Vv. 9-12)**

We know that there is a great number assembled around the throne because the Bible describes this number as “a great multitude, which no man could number.” Because there is no time reference point, it is difficult to say exactly when this scene is taking place in Heaven. The language that is used here according to Roy A. Kemp in his Revelation commentary seems to describe these saints escaping the Great Tribulation just as the Church did. They also could be those who have suffered a martyr’s death during the tribulation. Kemp takes verse 14 and interprets it in this manner. First, notice the verse. “*And he (one of the elders) said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*” Now, notice his interpretation. “The Greek word “ek” is used here in reference to taking these out of earth, up to Heaven, This same word “ek” is used in 3:10 where God promised that He would “ek” out the physical believers *from* the tribulation period—“ek” them *out before* the rapture. See the point? If it means that God will “ek” out his physical saints *before* the tribulation starts—and it does—then it means that He will also “ek” out this great company of saved Gentiles at the time element of 7:9—and He will!

Of course the first group (living believers at the rapture before chapter 4) will “ek” out and NOT have to go through ANY of the tribulation period. Whereas, this *great multitude of Gentiles*—saved after the resurrection of the Old and New Testament saints and their rapture—WILL HAVE TO GO THROUGH SOME THREE YEARS OF TRIBULATION. That is, from the rapture (mentioned above) to the time element of 7:9.” (Kemp).

What Kemp has to say could certainly be food for

thought, but it may prove safer to say that this passage describes those who have been martyred during the tribulation and have been reunited with those souls seen crying for vengeance who were martyred earlier and were waiting for their *fellow-servants* to be joined with them. This section seems to be describing those who were to be joined with the tribulation saints who were under the altar during the opening of the fifth seal.

### **1. They were before God and the Lamb. (V. 9)**

The saints were of great multitude and came from all people and language groups and were clothed with *white robes*, and *palms in their hands*. This was indeed a victory celebration for all of the saints who were gathered for the purpose of rejoicing and worshipping God. The white robe and the palms in their hands showed that they had come through, victoriously, the Great Tribulation.

God certainly is capable of bringing his own to the throne of victory. You can rest assured that God did not lose one of His own. The great aspect of serving such a great God is that He will not lose one of His sheep. The Good Shepherd both knows His sheep and is known of His sheep. When you find yourself going through your own personal tribulation as a Christian, you can have the same confidence that the Good Shepherd is going to bring you through safely just as He did these tribulation saints. In the case mentioned here, the *Lamb* safely had all of His sheep together in one fold on the other side!

### **2. They were blessing God and the Lamb. (Vv. 10-12)**

Certainly it will be great when the tribulation saints are finally brought into the presence of God, the angels, and the redeemed of all time. This group will be praising God for very obvious reasons. We shall all be praising Him to whom all glory belongs. Notice from our text how this

praise and worship will be rendered. In verse 10 it says, “*Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*” We are also shown that “*all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*” This worship and praise is rendered to the Lamb of God for the very same reason that we should praise Him in our worship services. We praise Him because He is absolutely worthy and we are appreciative of all that He has done for us concerning our own redemption.

### **B. Note The Grateful Number Of The Redeemed. (Vv. 13-15)**

The emphasis in these next verses seems to be on the extreme gratitude that the redeemed had for having their robes made white by the blood of the Lamb and for being brought from *tribulation to triumph!* The white robes symbolized the cleansing power of the blood. In ancient history during the early days of the Church, the person who was to be baptized was baptized in his common apparel and upon coming out of the water was given a white robe to symbolize that he had been washed clean by the blood of the Lamb and in baptism was going to walk in newness of life. Those around the throne were assembled having come out of great tribulation and were going to serve the Lamb day and night in His temple.

### **C. Note The Glad Number Of The Redeemed. (Vv. 16-17)**

Most all of the tribulation saints had greatly suffered pain and extreme heartache while upon the earth. They knew what it was to hunger and to thirst. They knew what it was to be in extreme poverty for they were unable to buy or sell

unless they had the mark of the beast. Now, they are in the presence with great gladness knowing that they will never hunger and thirst nor weep, because the Lord will wipe away the tears from their eyes and lead them unto living fountains of waters making sure that they will never again suffer. Can you only imagine what it is going to be like around the throne?

We have had the joy of seeing the way that the Lord will redeem and save His own. May we now remind ourselves that we need to be ready? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb?

## Chapter Sixteen

### TRUMPET JUDGMENTS: PART ONE

#### Text: Revelation 8

*1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.*

*2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.*

*3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*

*4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.*

*5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*

*6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*

*7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*

*8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;*

*9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.*

*10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;*

*11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.*

*12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.*

*13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!*

We have already read of the six seals being opened; now the seventh seal is opened and there is silence in Heaven. We have discussed the quietness upon the earth and the silence in Heaven in our last study. Removed from our last study, I would like to summarize what I think is taking place. I hate to use the word *think* when interpreting Truth, but had rather use *think* when I do not *know*, than to use *know* when I *think*. So with all honesty, I will tell you what I think is taking place based upon the evidence of Truth and upon Scriptural logic.

When the sixth seal was opened, “there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;” (chapter 6:12). There were also frightening events taking place in the starry heavens and upon the earth. This will be the time when mankind will begin praying for the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them. It was in our previous study that we suggested that the four angels will be holding back the four winds and the four angels would also be holding back *hurt* from the earth with the idea that this is only a prelude to the blowing of the trumpets. It could have been during this time that the people would think with the wind not blowing and the angels not sending hurt to the earth, the sea, and the tree that they had survived the tribulation.

It is my belief that this quietness will turn into eeriness. Prior to the opening of the seventh seal, this pause will take place leaving each person with an acute awareness that the driving force of judgment had been paused. During this pause, they are given time to reflect upon what has happened. One but can only imagine what they must have felt when they saw the carnage and the devastation that was everywhere. If all that they had seen had been done by the Antichrist, they would have thought it was only a means of punishing the tribulation saints, but they knew different. The force that was being unleashed upon the earth was not just satanic; it was God showing His absolute displeasure with

sinful humanity. When God brought destruction upon the sinful human family, during the days of Noah, it was because of the sinfulness of man. We should not think for a moment that God's attitude toward sin is any different now than it was then, for it is not. God still hates and judges sin!

When Noah left the ark, there was an awesome quietness that he must have felt. Noah had never experienced such a quiet world. What Noah felt was a signal that judgment had passed. The quietness that is taking place in our text is just an interlude of what is yet to come, for there is yet much judgment that will take place.

## **I. THE PRELUDE TO TRUMPET JUDGMENTS. (Vv. 1-6)**

The seven angels are seen standing before God and are given seven trumpets. Trumpets are used throughout the Scriptures for different purposes. The word trumpet appears in the Scriptures 61 times. The first time the trumpet is used in the Word of God is in conjunction with *battle*. The trumpet is used mostly in the Bible during times of battle, but it is also used in the time of *building* to excite the builders as they work. The trumpet is also used in the Bible during times of celebration and worship. In Numbers 10:10, we have an example of this. *“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I [am] the LORD your God.”* As we see here, the purpose of the trumpet being blown was for celebration. As the word trumpet appears in the Scriptures when it involved Israel and the Jews, it was mostly used in relationship to judgment or war.

Such is the case with these trumpets that are about to sound. God is judging the world and the earth involving the

sinner upon it. He is warring against the government of Satan and the government of the Antichrist. Before the trumpets sound upon the earth there is a prayer meeting taking place in Heaven. One would be amiss in thinking that prayer is just an earthly activity before we get to Heaven. It is also a heavenly activity as our text so clearly demonstrates. I believe that there is the possibility of prayer having a place for all eternity.

The prayers of all the saints were going to be offered upon the golden altar that was before the throne. An angel stood at the altar with a golden censer and *much incense* and made the offering that “ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.” Immediately after the prayers were made the censer was filled with fire of the altar, and was cast “into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”

After the prayers and the offerings were made, the angels prepared themselves to sound the trumpets. Now they are about to blow the trumpets and with each trumpet sound there will be a description of the awful, indescribable judgments that would be upon the earth and in the skies.

## **II. THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS OF THE EARTH.** **(Vv. 7-11)**

The first angel sounded, which means the first angel blew the trumpet of judgment. The stopping of the wind and the hurting not of the trees, the earth, and the sea is over. The pause that took place for whatever reason is absolutely over. Judgment is underway and what is being described will be taking place in the last three and one half years of the tribulation and we refer to it as Great Tribulation. Great Tribulation is under way. While it is going on, there are no cries for mercy by the believers. For those who are following the Antichrist, this is a time when God is seen vindicating those who had suffered. God is

going to vindicate every tribulation martyr.

**A. Notice The Judgments On The Surface Of The Earth. (V. 7).**

Hail, fire and blood is mentioned in this first judgment. All three of these mentioned have been associated with judgment. If one studies the plagues in Egypt, he will see a parallel in these trumpet judgments. Pharaoh was a type of Satan in that he wanted to govern the world including the nation of Israel. God used the plagues upon Pharaoh to demonstrate that He alone is the Creator God and also the God of His creation.

During the time of judgment upon Egypt, the Lord let the hail fall as the fire ran along the earth with the hail being mingled with fire. This had to be a strange miraculous judgment as witnessed by the Egyptians and the Israelites. With the blowing of this first trumpet, there will be hail and fire mingled with blood. With the nation of Israel, the blood of the Lamb of God *had not* been shed when God was judging Egypt, but with this tribulation judgment God could have been reminding the people that the blood *had* been shed for even them. The world despises the Biblical truth involving the blood. There have been successful ongoing attempts and efforts to remove any mention of blood from the hymns and even the Bible. There is still power in the blood and every person who witnesses the blowing of the first trumpet and all that takes place will have object lessons showing a great contrast with the hail and fire coming down from Heaven which is mingled with the blood. Even as the hail and fire teach a lesson on contrasts, so does the blood have a lesson on power. Though the blood is despised by many, to believers the blood is extremely precious.

Some argue that these judgments and objects are only symbolism. This should cause each of us to give attention

to what this theologian said against such a teaching. "The truth is, if *earth*, *trees*, and *grass* do not mean earth, trees, and grass, no man can tell what they mean. Letting go the literal signification of the record, we launch out upon an endless sea of sheer conjecture" (Seiss).

I have much respect for the *old writers*, but must tell you that many of these ancient writers did not have the insight pertaining to eschatology that we do in these more recent days. It seems that the Lord is giving additional insight with the passing of time. Many of the old writers would overly emphasize symbolisms and allegories and would refuse a literal interpretation. I have no explanation why this is so, except to say that there was much that the early Christians did not understand about the Church until God gave an understanding of this mystery to Paul in the Church Epistles. God revealed, as He saw fit, truth pertaining to the Church and likewise seems to be doing the same as it pertains to the coming of the Lord.

Perhaps the biggest reason that there is not more enlightenment upon the subject of eschatology as it pertains to Revelation is because we shun studying this great book as we should. I have taught through this book several times during my ministry and I am more enlightened to its truth each time that I study it. The main reason that I am writing this commentary is to discipline myself with the hopes of learning more as I write. One of the old writers said something to this effect, "Reading makes a learned man; writing makes an exact man."

When the first angel cast judgment upon the earth, I believe that this gave indication that this judgment was coming from God rather than Satan. I read just a few moments ago that one commentator thought that this was an atomic bomb that is being released under the direction of Satan. I do not accept this as being the case because I believe that this is a judgment from God which shows, as the book of Colossians teaches, that by Him all things

consist (hold together). Though the Antichrist is attempting to demonstrate his control of the earth and its people, God is going to show them differently.

This first trumpet signals that the third part of the trees and the grass will burn up. This is a horrendous judgment against creation at least in magnitude. Can you imagine the effects of such a blaze? Localized forest fires capture the attention of an entire nation when they burn. This will not be just a localized event, but a universal one. There will be the loss of that which is burnt by the fire, but there will also be the smoke that will shroud the earth as the fire blazes. With such a devastating fire there will be homes and businesses that will be consumed by the fires. There may be even entire cities that will be gutted out by the fires. Certainly the fires will fall on buildings as it does the trees and the grass. People who have breathing disorders will suffer and even die. There will be people burnt to death. This first trumpet is being blown with the fury of God being expressed!

I recall burning off a piece of property several years back. I was amazed at how fast the fire traveled with just a slight breeze once the blaze was set. I fear the intensity of such a blaze as that which is being described by the blowing of the first trumpet for those who will be trapped upon the earth. This is only a slight preview of what Hell is going to be like. There will be much devastation in property and in life when this judgment takes place in a way that is historically unparalleled.

## **B. Notice The Judgments On The Seas Of The Earth. (Vv. 8-9)**

When we think of national calamity, we generally do not think of anything happening to the oceans. We do know that there are storms and earthquakes that can originate in the oceans, but generally it's the land that is affected. The terrible effect of the tsunami has its origin in the ocean, but brings its damage to the land. What is being described in our

text shows that the damage will be in the oceans and the seas. In Revelation chapter ten, our Kinsman Redeemer will stand with one foot upon the earth and the other upon the sea to claim it as His own. When God brings such damaging judgment upon the earth, He is doing so as the one who will recover back to Himself that which had been lost to sin. When He brings “as it were a great mountain burning with fire” into the sea, there will be great devastation affecting the life of the sea and the life upon the sea. The phrase *as it were* is used to describe this judgment with something that is familiar to each of us. In this case something is cast into the sea *as it were* a great mountain. People can immediately see the great mass of such an object falling into the sea.

A third part of the sea life is going to be destroyed along with a third of the ships being destroyed. The Scriptures tell us that a third of the sea became blood. Once again, every liberal and modernist and also unbeliever who despised the blood of Jesus will see blood everywhere he turns. God’s majesty and power is revealed in this second trumpet judgment in a very clear manner. May God challenge us by these Scriptures to take Him and His Word very seriously? Also, the blood that will be everywhere no longer pictures eternal life, but instead it pictures eternal death.

If you have not already noticed, I am treating the word *sea* generically. By saying this I am letting the word *sea* represent all of the oceans. There is a possibility that the word *sea* could be referring to a more local use of the term. It could even refer to the body of water in close proximity to the Antichrist as he is attempting to set up his government. Considering the scope of God’s judgment, I am inclined to believe that it is referring to much more than a localized sea. For this reason, I have been approaching this study in this way.

### C. Notice The Judgments On The Rivers And Springs Of The Earth. (Vv. 10-11)

Water is such a precious unappreciated commodity until we do not have it, or do not have a good supply of it. This meteorite that falls into the waters supernaturally, causes a third of the waters to become extremely bitter. Observing our text, you will discover that the star that fell was named Wormwood. There is a reason for giving it this name. Roy A. Kemp has this to say about *wormwood*. “The name of the star is WORMWOOD, and the very nature, or ingredients of the star will be bitter—bitter in name and nature. The word “wormwood” in Bible days meant bitter. During the days when Revelation was written there grew a wild weed in Palestine—and later in France—called the “wormwood” weed. This weed was extremely bitter. In fact, so much so, until the ancients, when they wished to express the bitterness of any certain thing they would liken it to wormwood saying, “as bitter as wormwood.” We—as of now—have a phrase, “as bitter as quinine.” So, this Revelation scripture, though verbally inspired, is cast in an old Jewish mold—the language of that day—a star as “bitter,” in its parts, as wormwood!”

Some who either may be reading this commentary or hearing this message as it is being preached may realize that the waters of this wicked, worldly system have become awfully bitter. One does not have to continually drink out of the bitter troughs of this world, but can have the sweet waters of the Lord, instead. If the falling of the Wormwood star does nothing during the Great Tribulation but remind the inhabitants of the world that they are in bitter waters, there may be some who will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the *Fountain of Living Waters*.

As this world continues to sing, “I can’t get no... satisfaction!,” the redeemed can enjoy the Living Waters that come only from the Lord Jesus Christ and be

completely satisfied. Are you satisfied with Him today? Our text indicates that many will die in this state of drinking bitter waters or by refusing to drink at all during the Great Tribulation. If your waters are bitter, please come now to the cleansing fountain of Living Waters. Christ, who gave the women at the well living waters can do the same for you. Please, drink of Him now...

### **III. THE TRUMPET JUDGMENT ABOVE THE EARTH. (Vv. 12-13).**

The activities that had been restricted to the earth are now affecting the skies with the blowing of the fourth trumpet. There is no way to definitely describe what is happening in the sky. We are told that the sun, stars, and the moon are smitten and darkened where they will not shine for a third part of the time. If you reduced 24 hours by a third, there will only be 16-hour cycles. This will be a miracle that only God could perform. In Matthew 24:21-22 we are told that the days were shortened for the elect's sake. This could very well be what this fourth trumpet is all about. Notice these two verses in Matthew and consider the interpretation that I have suggested in regards to the blowing of the fourth trumpet. *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”*

To me these verses seem to describe this fourth trumpet. This trumpet does not seem to emphasize further judgment, but instead an event of mercy for the saved that are going through tribulation. Certainly, the scientists will have great difficulty explaining what is happening in the skies during this time. What may be a blessing for the elect, may be a curse to all else. It certainly will have a frustrating and pronounced effect upon the growth of the food and the

vegetation.

When I think of the chaos that will characterize the entire world, I think of how the Antichrist most likely will attempt to assemble his most intelligent and respected scientists to explain what is going on up in the sky, when all that it would take is some Daniel-like personality to simply share with them what God's Word has to say about what is going on. If someone picks up this commentary after I have been raptured out, just take time to read the text under study. I know by God's Word what is going on! You may know also...

### **A. This Judgment Changed The World. (V. 12)**

It can clearly be stated that this fourth trumpet reveals what may be a blessing to the elect and a curse to the wicked lost souls who are in league with Satan and the Antichrist. The world will definitely be impacted by what is taking place and the skies will also signal the three awful woes which will be revealed with the blowing of the last three trumpets. The word "woe" is a very strong word that carries the thought of distress, agony, pain, etc. You have heard the expression, "Woe is me!" This will be woe upon all who are under the judgment of the Lamb.

Just reducing the amount of time for a day's time cycle will change the world in a horrendous way. It will affect the sleep patterns of mankind. It will affect transportation. It will affect the economy, reducing the amount of time that people can work in the work force. People who in any way depend upon solar energy will be deprived of that energy source. The average temperatures will probably drop by at least a third. It is true that I am only suggesting what may happen as a result of this judgment, but thanks be unto God, I will not have to personally experience it.

### **B. The Judgments Coming Caused Woe. (V. 13)**

The word "woe" is associated with terrible calamity. The

three woes denote the severe intensity of the coming calamities. These warnings indicate that the worst was yet to come. The thirteenth verse tells us that an angel is heard flying through the midst of Heaven (the first heaven is where the birds fly and sing, the second heaven is where the sun shines, and the third Heaven is where the Son sits). The heaven mentioned here is just off the ground, up in the sky and this angel crying with a loud voice is warning the people of the earth that *terrible woe* is coming. The angel is crying loud enough to be heard by all that God wants to hear.

The eighth chapter ends with the warning that four trumpets have sounded and the worst is yet to come. “Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth.” Each of the trumpets will be describing such woe. The blowing trumpets have made us more aware of the judgments that will characterize the Great Tribulation. The last three and half years will grow more and more intense. The judgment of God shows the anger of God in regards to sin. The Lord will never, in any dispensation, have a relaxed attitude towards sin and the sinner...

## Chapter Seventeen

### TRUMPET JUDGMENTS: PART TWO

#### Text: Revelation 9

*1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*

*2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.*

*3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*

*4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*

*5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.*

*6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*

*7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.*

*8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.*

*9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.*

*10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.*

*11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.*

*12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.*

*13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

*14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.*

*15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.*

*16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.*

17 *And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.*

18 *By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.*

19 *For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.*

20 *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:*

21 *Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

Lehman Strauss describes the last three judgments as “Hell on earth.” We know as awful as it will be on earth during this described time that it will be nothing to compare to what Hell will *really* be like. However, there is some reason to believe that there will be Hell on earth. The first four seals and the first four trumpets had as its emphasis the ecological system. The earth, the sea, the trees, and the skies were greatly affected by these mentioned judgments. The last three seals related to Heaven with the cry of the martyrs, the cosmic activities and the prelude to the blowing of the trumpets. The last three trumpets focus upon Hell and the demonic. The earth is certainly going to get a taste of what Hell is like. It is becoming the opinion of a number of theologians in these last days, that approaching the coming of the Lord and the tribulation that the demonic activity will greatly increase. As we live in these days, I must concur with their assessment of what they say is taking place. May we as Lehman Strauss describes it, look at *Hell on earth?*

### **III. THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS UPON THE EARTH. (Vv. 1-21).**

The blowing of the first trumpet is also the signaling of the first woe. This verse begins thusly, “And the fifth angel

sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth...” This fifth trumpet must have had a very screeching, cutting sound, with all that is about to be described. The angel blowing it must have had some comprehension of what this fifth trumpet was announcing. Immediately, as the trumpet sounded this must have been an excruciating moment as the star fell from Heaven unto the earth. It was to this individual that the key to the bottomless pit was given. Strauss says that this personage must have been Lucifer and that the tense of the verb fall seems to indicate a past event. He uses the Revised Version’s word *fallen* to sustain his argument. I have great respect for the insight that Dr. Lehman Strauss had in regards to his Revelation study, but reject his quoting from other translations to derive a proof text or word. I can simply say that there is no strong indication as to whom this *star* is, but it is clear that it is a *living being* who is being referred to in the masculine gender.

Whether this personage is Satan or some angelical being, it is very clear that this person received the *key to the bottomless pit*. In Revelation 1:18 we remind ourselves that Christ said, “*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*” We must remember that everything that transpires does so under the government of God. The permitted opening of the bottomless pit was under the authority of God Himself.

It would be of interest to give thought to the description that the Lord gives of this pit. There seems to be indication that this pit is located in the heart of the earth. No living person has been to the center of the earth to report his findings of what he saw there. I have a thought as to why this pit is called the bottomless pit. If the pit was indeed in the center of the earth and with gravity pulling towards the center of the earth, there seems to be a point that the pull from all directions will have a tendency to be neutralized or cancelled out. Such a phenomenon is seen in outer space for

a different reason. This is because once a person removes himself from the earth's gravity, that person enters a state of weightlessness. I have no backings from physics to absolutely say that there will be a canceling out effect, but it seems reasonable. And if the beings that are in the pit are in a state of weightlessness, they will have no conception of what is the bottom. From their vantage point everything will be in the direction of up to them...with no bottom. Without being overly dogmatic, this suggestion may at least be received as food for thought. It is from this pit that the great quantity of smoke, "as of a great furnace" is being released. The smoke is so intense that the smoke darkened the sun and the air. All could have witnessed this effect. The overwhelming effects of this smoke being everywhere could have very depressing psychological effects upon the people. It was a preview of what Hell is going to be like as a place of darkness. The difference being that Hell is a place of everlasting *outer* darkness with no escape. Some question, "How could this be so?" They reason that fire has a brilliant lightening effect. Some say that this fire will be so intense that it will be burning at a wavelength that the eye cannot perceive. I believe that Hell will be a very bright place, as a testimony against those who love darkness rather than light. The very light that they hated in a spiritual sense will be the light that will put their eyes out. My reasoning is in this manner. The light that is emitted from an arc welder or even the sun is so brilliant that if you focused upon it without protective eye gear, your eyes would be put out where you could never see again. You would be permanently blinded. God, who is omnipotent, could turn on His brilliance and blind every person in Hell. Moses could not look upon God and live. He looked upon the hinder parts and came back out of the mountain with his face aglow. In Heaven, there will be no need for the sun for the Lamb will be the light thereof. Yet those who inhabit Hell without having glorified bodies would immediately go blind if God turned on His brilliance.

The very Light that they hated would in this case put their eyes out. This very well could explain the outer darkness of Hell. There is no greater darkness than total blindness.

The smoke surrounding the wicked earth dwellers could have been a prelude to actually being cast into Hell. Now we notice the terrible monstrosities that are being released from the pit.

### **A. The Army Of Tormentors. (Vv. 1-12)**

These demonic beasts were in large number, having their own king, and the sound of their wings was “as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.” This must have been an alarming sound as the sound was piercing through the darkness. Having the smoke lifted and seeing these awful demonic creatures straight out of the pits of Hell must have gripped the souls of men, but not so much so that all would repent of their wickedness and evil deeds. For in spite of all that had been done to warn and judge mankind, the earth dwellers would continue to defy the living God that created them. The earth dwellers will be a much calloused people.

We have the technology to create on screen visually what I am describing that will be happening during the tribulation. The visual images that many theater goers see do nothing but further pollute the minds of those who are watching. This causes them to become more calloused to what they are seeing and also to what will be happening during the time of the Great Tribulation. The heart is truly deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. This should absolutely warn us not to put into our minds and into our thinking such contaminated programming.

#### **1. The monstrosities came from the pit. (Vv. 1-2)**

These locusts that are being released are not permitted to attack the vegetation, but instead will attack mankind as a horrible judgment. Their scorpion like sting will cause an

indescribable pain that will be painfully excruciating and last for an unbearable period of time. We must emphasize that these creatures came from the lowest of places. No matter how sophisticated one may think himself to be in his sinning, the wages of sin is still death. When the unbeliever dies he has his place reserved in the depths of Hell. This is the same origin from which these creatures come. They come from the place that the wicked sinners will ultimately go.

Word pictures can not be painted to adequately describe how grotesque these pit creatures will look when released. The Bible describes them up to a certain point. Just as there are limitations on how much can be said about heaven, there are also limitations on how much can be said about these slimy pit creatures.

## **2. The monstrosities came with power. (V. 3)**

Satan's power is a power to be reckoned with. It is dangerous to think that Satan is not capable of bringing hurt, for he is. It is for this reason that we put on the whole armor of God. It is for this reason that Satan is referred to as a "roaring lion." Evil is also a power to be recognized as being a very destructive power and force. These creatures that are being released from the pit are in some ways clones of Satan. They will come out with Satan's replicated fury to inflict pain and hurt on its victims. Do not be deceived by thinking that just because Satan can transform himself into a very beautiful, seductive lady or at least take control of such, that he is not a terrible wicked being. Satan, to achieve his diabolical purposes, would even transform into an angel of light. These creatures coming from the pit will portray the true character of Satan. These devilish monstrosities will be Satan driven to bring about his powerful destruction and inflicted pain. We also should remember that this is permitted as a judgment by the Lamb to pour out His wrath upon the sin cursed earth.

### **3. These monstrosities came to persecute. (Vv. 4-12)**

As mentioned, these beasts are driven by Satan but controlled by God. The Lamb would not let them hurt the trees, the grass, or any green thing, nor the 144,000 Jews who had been sealed. Notice how the Scriptures describe these creatures. They came out of the smoke as locusts and had the power “as the scorpions” (V. 3). The torment of the sting would last for five months. This sting was located in their tails (V. 10). “The shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle” (V. 7). On their heads “were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men” (V. 7). They had hair as the hair of women and teeth like lions. Any of these descriptions if attached to what they represent would be normal, but the way these features appear as a singular composite of evil is sickening. It personifies the devil, who is the author of confusion. These beings represent creation that is out of control, just as it is becoming so in these perilous days. One day God is going to absolutely take back control. The piercing of the body in hideous and grotesque ways and the marking of the body with vulgar tattoos is against nature and also against God. The body was created in the image of God. When people do that which is against nature as just described, it is a loud testimony to the confusion introduced by Satan. He most definitely is the author of confusion. At present Satan has such a dominating influence upon creation, but at the close of the Great Tribulation, the Lord is going to take control with that control being forever.

### **B. The Army Of Terror. (Vv. 13-21)**

Verse 21 indicates that the earth dwellers could have repented of all of their evils, but did not do so. These verses indicate the blowing of the sixth trumpet and the pronouncing of the second woe, for the first woe is past. The second woe will not actually be announced as complete for

several chapters yet. This next section is going to be introducing the terrible judgments that will be a part of the awful second woe. The army of terror will be comprised of two hundred million demonic or supernatural creatures. These will destroy a third part of men.

These judgments will show that as excruciating and painful as these torments are, the wicked will still fail to repent. Men are not much different even now in their disposition towards God. I have seen the wicked stare death in the face while breathing their last breath and still refuse the Gospel. I have seen sinners face terrible heartbreak, sickness, and tragedy only to become more calloused in their sensitivity to the things of God. As Matthew says, only the desperate are saved, when it tells us, “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). The word violent means those who are desperate. It takes Holy Ghost conviction to bring one to a state of desperation which then leads to conversion. It takes Holy Ghost conviction to bring about this kind of desperation. Christ must be lifted up so that men will be drawn to the Father. When Holy Ghost conviction gets on you, you must come to Him.

**1. The army of terror was universal in its effort. (Vv. 13-15)**

A voice is coming from “the four horns of the golden altar which is before God.” This tells us that the trumpet that is being blown still has its origin in Heaven. The mention of four gives hint to the universality of this judgment. Remember, that four is the number for creation or the earth number. This judgment is different than the previous judgment in that it will involve more than just torture. It will involve the putting to death of possibly as many as two billion people. One cannot imagine the death and the carnage associated with God’s judgment against sin as this second woe will take place. At this time during the Great

Tribulation, the judgments will become more and more intense. Yet, sadly, people will still be rejecting Christ. This attitude will prevail right up until they are cast into the Lake of Fire.

The wicked fallen angels are being released from the great river Euphrates. This river has Biblical historical significance. It was at the location of this river, by name at least, the first sin took place (Genesis 2:10-14), the first murder (Genesis 4:16), the first organized revolt against God (Genesis 11:1-9), the first war confederation (Genesis 14:1), and the first dictatorship (Genesis 10:8-10) (Guzik).

As sin related to this river from the very beginning sin, it is also being related to in the final period of judgment. This indicates to me that God does not forget the activity of sin. Each of us must remind ourselves that sin unforgiven will exact its awful toll. “The wages of sin is death.”

## **2. The army of terror and death was relentless in its effect. (Vv. 16-19)**

Except for the two thirds that will not be killed by this demonic army, the rest of the population will be savagely butchered. These wicked creatures are described in these several verses. John saw the horses in a vision. Notice this seventeenth verse in our text, *“And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.”* We must agree that the description that the Lord gives of this army is *nightmarish* in every way, except there will be no waking up to find that it was only a bad dream.

The power of these creatures is given in verse 18 and 19. *“By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads,*

*and with them they do hurt.*” These beastly creatures are committed to only bringing about destruction to the human race. Capture a glimpse from the Holy Writ of God’s Word and then may you be moved to repentance lest you be left behind when the rapture takes place. You then must face the awful *Hell on earth*. Reading the events of what is being described in our text ought to be a sober warning to those who are lost. It describes the fury of God being released for the purpose of bringing about His perfect vengeance against sin. God is a just, holy and a righteous God who *must* punish sin.

### **3. The army of terror and death was unmoving in its effect. (Vv. 20-21)**

As mentioned already, the wicked are unmovable in their desire to discontinue their wicked debauchery. Romans 1:32 describes the spirit of the wicked in these last days, “*Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*” I believe that the last days will have more and more people who are unmoved by the Truth of the Gospel. I have had the privilege of being associated with men of God who preach the Gospel for over fifty years and can see how distant and unmovable people are becoming to the Gospel message being preached. If I am permitted to live and preach the same amount of time that I already have, I fear what is to come. It is my sincere desire that the Lord come and gather us all home. “Even so, come quickly!”

It is my desire that these studies will allow us all to see Christ more clearly. We have seen that God is a God of grace and mercy and we are now seeing that “our God is a consuming fire.” These woes that have been pronounced upon the world are directed by God to bring sure and final judgment. May we be warned that we should be ready for that day?

## Chapter Eighteen

### THE MIGHTY ANGEL AND THE MAGNIFICENT SCROLL

#### Text: Revelation 10

*1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:*

*2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,*

*3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.*

*4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.*

*5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,*

*6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:*

*7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*

*8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.*

*9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.*

*10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.*

*11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

The seventh trumpet will not sound until Revelation 11:15. Just as there was an interlude between the sixth and the seventh seal, there is also an interlude between the sixth and the seventh trumpet. During this section a mighty angel

will appear and have in His hand the little book that is opened. This Christ Angel is the Lamb who was worthy to open the book.

We will examine evidence that makes this statement true, but first, I want to say something about the chronology of what is happening. The seals and the trumpets seem to overlap as we have already indicated. As you read straight through the book of Revelation you will see that there seems to be a repeating of the events that are taking place. Rather than the events actually being repeated, there is a restating of these events as they are being observed from different perspectives. This brings about reinforced learning. The true student of the Scriptures will benefit from God's way of teaching. If it seems confusing at times, it is because God wants us to very carefully sort out what is taking place as a stern warning against not being aware of this Great Tribulation judgment that will impound the earth with violent force.

There are clues that seem to indicate this interlude as taking place midway the tribulation with about three and one half years to follow. We will look at this in further detail. We will also explain as best as we can what was meant when John ate of the *little book*.

## **I. THE MIGHTY ANGEL'S APPEARANCE. (Vv. 1-4)**

To me this is a very exciting and dynamic portion of the Revelation study. It is our intent to show Christ more clearly in this study. Let us observe what John saw. John describes what he saw in this fashion, "*And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.*"

Some would have difficulty believing this personality to be the Christ because He is being referred to as an angel. It is certainly not uncommon for Christ to be referred to in this

manner. In Revelation 8:3, we have already observed Christ as being the priestly angel of intercession as He took the golden censer and offered “much incense” with the prayers of all of the saints. As further proof within close proximity of our text, we may also note in Revelation 11:3 the same angel that is here referred to is seen giving power unto His two witnesses which He referred to as “my two witnesses.” A created angel could not have referred to these witnesses as being His witnesses except by virtue of Him being the Creator God. They are His by right of creation. For the same reason, Christ was able to give these two witnesses power to perform His purposes for “a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth” (Revelation 11:3).

What this angel is clothed in will give indication to who He is. We will now notice how He appears by the way He is clothed.

#### **A. As He Appears Notice His Clothing. (V. 1a)**

We observe that this mentioned angel came “down from heaven, clothed with a cloud.” We will comment first about the origin of this angel. He came down from Heaven. There is a wonderful contrast in the way that this angel is described as compared to the way the other angels in chapter four were described. “Clothed with a cloud” speaks of majesty in other parts of the Bible. In Exodus 13:21, we read that a cloud went before the people of Israel by day in the wilderness. Again, in Exodus 24:15 we are told that God descended in a cloud on Mount Sinai. In Exodus 40:34, God is said to have dwelt in a *cloud*, both in the temple and the tabernacle.

In the New Testament, in Luke 9:34, Christ was overshadowed by a *cloud* on the Mount of Transfiguration. In Acts 1:9-12, we are told by Luke that Christ ascended to heaven in a *cloud*. In each of these examples, God is set apart by the cloud to signify His special purposes and His majesty. Certainly, the cloud signifies no less than that as Christ comes down from Heaven.

The cloud is a symbol of God's awesome presence, power, and wisdom (Psalm 135:6-7; 147:8; Proverbs 8:28, etc.). The rainbow was also seen in this first verse. When the rainbow and the cloud are seen together, it speaks of mercy in the midst of judgment. If this symbol is to be interpreted in the manner that I have just described, I believe that the mercy will be a promise to the tribulation saints. I do not believe that the earth dwellers will receive any mercy apart from believing the *Everlasting Gospel*. The earth dwellers will continue to receive the intense judgment of God upon them. God is going to take His stand against sin and completely do away with it as the righteous Judge, Warrior, and Conqueror.

### **B. As He Appears Notice His Countenance. (Vv. 1b-2)**

There is another indication that this Angel being described is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The second part of this first verse tells us that "his face was as it were the sun." This gives indication that this is the Christ in all of His righteousness. We are told that in Heaven there will be no need for the sun or the moon because "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Revelation 21:23). We may remind ourselves that Revelation 1:16 says, "his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." On the Mount of Transfiguration, we are told that "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). These verses seem to be indicators of Truth regarding Christ as being the Angel that is mentioned here.

Another clue that is given to us in our text is that the angel has "feet as pillars of fire." A similar comparison goes back also to the first chapter where it says in Revelation 1:15 that "his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace" is the same thing as *feet as pillars of fire*. These very descriptive pictures of this angel are given for the purpose of showing that this is no ordinary angel. This angel

is an angel or messenger of *judgment*. Everything about Him gives that impression. His majesty and splendor is indicated by both His *appearance* and His *actions*. We need to remember as we describe the Lord as being the Mighty Angel it is only in the sense of the word *angel* being used as a messenger. In this case, He is THE Messenger. Angels are created beings as we mentioned earlier.

After the Lord has revealed Himself as the messenger or the angel with His message, we discover in verse two that the Lord has the message in the form of a *little book*. Because He was the One who was worthy to open the book (Revelation 5:5), He has it in an open position. He stands with the book which we believe to be also the title deed to that which had been lost to sin. In the manner that He was revealed in verse one, He is going to publicly declare His right to take back that which had been lost at the original sin by placing His right foot upon the sea and His left foot upon the earth. This will be a most impressive sight unlike any that has been seen before, when He stands for all to see. Some say that this will be an invisible appearing, but I find that difficult to comprehend after the Holy Spirit inspired John to write in detail what he saw. The only way that this could be so would be for John to have been the only one privileged to see that which had been described regarding the angel that came down from Heaven.

### **C. As He Appears Notice His Cry. (Vv. 3-4)**

The loud voice is likened unto a roaring lion. This speaks of the majestic, sovereign power of Christ being exercised in tribulation judgment. Lehman Strauss gives reason to believe from the Word of God, that the Lord here will be both seen and heard. Listen to what Strauss had to say in reference to the Scriptures that he quoted from the Old Testament. "He cried as when a lion roars. Here is the mighty voice of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5, cf. Hebrews 7:14). He is asserting himself prior to the

exercise of judgment. Elsewhere in Scripture the lion's roar was a symbol of imminent judgment. Hosea prophesied, "They shall walk after the LORD: He shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west (Hosea 11:10). Joel added his prophecy, "The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel" (Joel 3:16). Amos said, "The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither" (Amos 1:2). "Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it" (Isaiah 5:29). The lion roars when he is about to make his last leap upon his victim. In a loud voice to be heard over all the earth Christ asserts His right to rule and His intention of accomplishing it." (Strauss)

The seven thunders uttered their voices and John heard in preview what these voices said, but was not permitted to repeat the meaning of it because God told John to seal what he had heard and "write them not." What John heard will remain secret until the actual time sequence during the tribulation when the Lord chooses these seven voices to be uttered. Any comment regarding what was said would only be pure speculation. I have no intention of even suggesting what will be uttered. As far as I am concerned, this is sacred ground not to be messed with; otherwise, the Lord would have told us.

## **II. THE MIGHTY ANGEL'S AUTHORITY. (Vv. 5-11)**

This interlude is a time for the Lord to universally establish His intentions. I believe that what we read here is a public declaration of His purpose to both undo what had been done in regards to the creation having gone underneath

the curse and to gain the attention of mankind that the Lamb has come to the earth to bring judgment known as Great Tribulation. May we keep in mind that there are some parts of this tribulation that are initiated by Satan for the purpose of him establishing his government, but the judgment part comes from the Lamb. The Lamb has the authority and the right to claim the earth and the sea by right of ownership and by right of redemption. We now will look at the Mighty Angel's authority as shown by His sovereign ownership.

#### **A. As Shown By The Sovereign Ownership. (V. 5)**

The Angel is making a pledge to conclude the tribulation as prophesized in Daniel 12:7. Daniel saw Him with both His right and left hands up. The Holy Spirit gave emphasis in Revelation 10:5 to the one hand being lifted up as such when a pledge is made. Yet, with that difference being made, Daniel seems to be prophesying this same event. The promise is that the tribulation will not go beyond "a time, times, and an half." This means that it will not exceed three and one half years. The word "time" speaks of one year; "times" speaks of two years and "half" speaks of a half year.

As the Angel stands upon the sea and upon the earth, He is swearing by no one greater than Himself. He is publicly establishing His sovereign right to reclaim that which is His. He, the sovereign One, is still in control. That is an important aspect of sovereignty. A sovereign one may permit different things to transpire under his rulership, but a true sovereign is always in control. In the case of God Almighty, He is absolutely in control. By the Lamb standing in location on the sea and on the earth, He is showing that He is in control. Satan has had times that he appeared to be in charge, but his charge was not absolute; it was only permitted by the One who is eternally sovereign. One of the clearest indications of this truth is given in the book of Job where Satan had to obtain permission to exercise his testing of Job. Even with the curse of sin upon the human race, the

Lord is still in control. At this midpoint of the tribulation, as Great Tribulation begins, the Lord is defining His *presence*, *purpose*, *power* and the *period* of His judgment.

### **B. As Shown By The Sworn Oath. (Vv. 6-8)**

This section seems to be a section devoted to comforting the heart of John, by letting him know that the judgment of God, as fierce as it was going to be, would soon be over. John during the time of his vision had seen things that no mere mortal had ever been called upon to see. This interlude does not communicate to mankind that God is taking a less requiring position to man and his sin. It is an interlude to encourage the heart of John. As John was to eat of the book, he was going to find that there is sweetness and bitterness in judgment that we will address briefly. Before doing so, we want to establish the integrity of the oath.

This oath was God's Word. It was a promise given by the One who never lies. Just as this oath made by the strong Angel could be depended upon, so can the King James Bible. It is the Oath or the Word of God. Every promise that God made to us can be believed. I find it necessary to say that because man will let you down, but God will not. God is true to His Word. His Word is true. Were this not true, then I would have no right to stand in the pulpit and offer hope when there may or may not be any. My absolute confidence in the Word of God allows me the courage to stand up with conviction, that the Bible I have in my hand is absolutely the Word of God. It is for this reason that I continue to embrace only the King James Bible as the Word of God to the English speaking people. As I was told many years ago, "How can two books be the same if they are different?" Realizing that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God," I *must* not take any chances.

### **C. As Shown By The Sacred Operation. (Vv. 9-11)**

The “eating” of the book was a living parable to convey the two emotions that accompany judgment. There is the emotion of joy in being delivered and the emotion of sorrow upon realizing the extreme judgment that was required to bring about that deliverance. In the life of an individual there are many contrasts to be experienced. There is *strength* and *beauty*; *grace* and *truth*; and there is *good* and *evil* as examples. John was given an object lesson for the purpose of personally observing the contrasting elements of judgment. No one likes the harsher side of judgment, except when there is such a desire for vengeance as in the case of the tribulation saints. The tribulation saints will prefer vengeance because of their own sufferings, whereas those such as John will see a sweet side and a bitter side to the judging of sin.

Upon John putting these experiences in proper perspective, he is made able to “prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (V. 11). This he certainly did to the advantage of the Christian world and to all those who love His coming. *Even so, come quickly!*

As we conclude this chapter we must recognize that we are coming closer to the third woe. This woe is a very difficult time for the world to face. It is yet future, yet the stage is set for most of what we read about to take place in a time of unparalleled judgment, unlike this world has ever seen, with the exception of the Noahic deluge. Even that will not have the ultimate magnitude that the Great Tribulation will have. The tribulation will be a time when the Lamb takes or regains control and brings about redemption to all that had been lost to sin. The merits of this redemption taking place are the precious shed blood being offered.

## Chapter Nineteen

### THE TWO WITNESSES

#### Text: Revelation 11:1-14

*1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.*

*2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

*3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

*4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*

*5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.*

*6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.*

*7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.*

*8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

*9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.*

*10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.*

*11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.*

*12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*

*13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

14 *The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.*

This chapter should prove to be an exciting chapter as we introduce it with the rebuilding of the temple. For a brief lesson on the temple as given to us in the Scriptures, we begin with the tabernacle in the wilderness which was a prototype of Solomon's Temple. The tabernacle in the wilderness was of God's design. The wilderness tabernacle did not have the splendor of Solomon's Temple, but it did point to Christ and His redemption. It was given by God's design with great lessons in type. Many of the lessons by its design were given in some way to portray to the unbelieving Jew some aspect of redemption. Everything about the tabernacle in the wilderness had something to say either about Christ or redemption. The colors of the materials, the number of objects, the ingredients and the components of the tabernacle, and everything about the arrangement said something about Christ and His redemption.

The tabernacle in the wilderness was portable because the nation of Israel was wandering in the wilderness en-route to the Promised Land. They were unable to drive their stakes very deep into the ground because they were not permanent dwellers in the wilderness. When they settled in Canaan land, it was then that they desired a permanent temple. It was after they had settled in Palestine that David demonstrated his desire to build a temple to the glory of God. Because David was a man of war and bloodshed, he was not permitted to build the temple. He did, however raise much of the money that was used to build the temple. His son Solomon was given the honor of building the temple, and thus it was called Solomon's temple. God commanded that the temple be built in Jerusalem as a place of worship (Ps. 78:69; 87:1-3; 132:13-15). During the days of Solomon's Temple people began to worship the temple more than they worshiped the *God of*

*the temple.* Their attitude was that the temple was like a “good luck charm” to them and they refused to hear the warnings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, even after some of the people were taken into Babylonian captivity. It was for this reason that the Lord allowed the temple and the city of Jerusalem to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

It was seventy years later, under the rule and direction of Zerubbabel and Joshua, that the city of Jerusalem was rebuilt, being followed by the rebuilding of the temple. The Scriptures plainly indicate that this temple was greatly inferior to what was known as Solomon’s Temple (Ezra 3:10-13). It could be for this reason that the Lord gives implicit instructions on how the new temple was to be rebuilt during the tribulation. This temple served Israel until Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated it. Around forty years before Christ was born, Herod the Great destroyed and rebuilt the temple. It was then referred to as Herod’s Temple (John 2:20). This was the temple that Jesus predicted would be destroyed in Matthew 24:2. It was in 70 AD that Emperor Titus attacked Jerusalem and the temple was said to have been destroyed by the Jews rather than see it fall into Pagan hands.

In the place of the temple is now the Mosque of Omar or what is referred to as the Dome of the Rock. This mosque will have to be destroyed either by man or by God for the temple to be rebuilt. It has stood for over a thousand years, but in God’s timing it will come down. Then, the temple that is described beginning in Ezekiel chapter 40 and continuing through the rest of the book will be built according to God’s design.

Some may wonder with redemption having taken place when God offered His Son Jesus as a perfect sacrifice, why God permits temple worship to continue. We must remember that the Antichrist will set up a seven year covenant with the Jews promising them peace and safety according to Daniel 9:27. This covenant will be broken by the Antichrist when he

offers an unholy sacrifice and desecrates the temple just as Antiochus Epiphanes did with the second temple that was built. It could be that the Lord permitted this for the sake of the unbelieving Jews showing that the Temple was temporary and a perfect Temple (Christ) was going to be raised up signified by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews, once they see Him whom they have pierced will realize that the temple worship is an inferior form of worship when given the opportunity to worship the true and the living Christ. The hundred and forty-four thousand witnesses and the two supernatural witnesses will convey the Everlasting and also the Kingdom Gospel to the world population during the tribulation time. It will be during this special time that many will become tribulation saints.

The Antichrist at the beginning of the tribulation will try to bring in his government as he signs the covenant with Israel. The nation of Israel, under his leadership will be able to wrest control of the temple spot and build very quickly a new temple and begin worship there. They will be pleased in thinking that they have their own temple again. Millions of dollars will likely come in from every part of the world as the Jews team together for this great building program. Yet their dreams and aspirations will be shattered when the Antichrist reveals himself for the devil that he is. According to our text this will happen midway during the tribulation. With this rather lengthy introduction, may we continue our study and learn about these two great witnesses.

## **I. THE PROPHECY OF THE TWO WITNESSES.** **(Vv. 1-4)**

These two witnesses will have a very prominent purpose within God's economy. We will consider their purpose primarily as it applies to the benefit of the unbelieving Jews. There will be supernatural events that will transpire during

the tribulation as was the case when the Church was in it's infancy. These two witnesses, along with the one hundred and forty-four thousand, will do miracles to authenticate who the true God is. This is all within the consideration that the Jews require a sign.

**A. The Temple Is Mentioned Before The Prophecy.  
(Vv. 1-2)**

This chapter begins with the temple being mentioned, immediately being followed by the mentioning of the two witnesses. There seems to be significance to this being so. I would suggest this is because God is going to show that the temple worship has been replaced by the actual worshipping of the Lamb. It will take some dramatic events for these lost Jews to get to the place that they will be willing to cast aside their religious system. The witnesses that come on the scene will contribute to them eventually rejecting the Temple worship in preference to worshipping Christ the Messiah.

In verse one it says, "*And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.*" It is like the measuring is taking place to see if both the temple and they that worship there measure up to God's standards. We know that His standards are absolutely perfect and the *reed like unto a rod* could picture the true standard, which is the Word of God. The word *reed* is the original word which the Septuagint uses for the Hebrew word *Kaneh*, from which comes our word "canon." That is the reason that the Old and the New Testaments are called *the canon* (or rule) of Scriptures.

The Lord will carefully define what His law is in respect to man's inability to keep it. The rules will be the same, "For all have sinned and come short..." The Jews will discover and be shown that they also do not measure up. In every dispensation, this has been the case. Some theologians believe that the worship setting for the Jewish Temple will

be “pure grace.” It will be safe to say that there is much we do not understand about the temple worship during the tribulation, except to say that as in every dispensation, they too, will come up short.

### **B. The Time Is Mentioned of the Prophecy. (V. 3)**

We are told in verse three that the two witnesses will be given power to prophesy “a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.” The Jewish calendar counts 360 days as a year. If you divide 360 into the figure given in our text, you will discover that it is three and one half years. It is thought that the two witnesses will serve during the first half of the tribulation. They and the 144,000 will likely be taken out before the Great Tribulation begins, before God pours out His fury. I cannot be overly dogmatic on this, but this seems to be the case. The way the Scriptures repeat different aspects of the tribulation, we have difficulty with the exact chronology of events. I am sure that God had a reason for this being the case. It does not mean that the presentation of end time Truth is in any way flawed. It may be God’s way of causing us to be more intense in our studies.

### **C. The Two Are Mentioned As Being The Prophets. (V. 4)**

Verse four says, “*These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*” If we refer back to the Old Testament prophet Zechariah in Zechariah 4:12 and 14, we will see a clue as to what is meant in our immediate text. “*And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?*” and verse 14, “*Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.*” Notice what Ryrie has to say about these two anointed ones. “*the two anointed ones: Lit., the two sons of oil, namely, Joshua and Zerubbabel. The point of the vision is that of light bearing, or*

witness. Israel is God's witness; Joshua and Zerubbabel witnessed to His power in seeing to the completion of the Temple; and in the tribulation days two mighty witnesses will yet arise (Rev. 11:4). All true witness must be done in the power of the Spirit."

The reference to *olive oil and candlesticks* has very common symbolism as noted when one studies the Bible. The olive oil pictures the *Holy Spirit* and the candlesticks picture *witness*. Such seems to be the case in our text. They certainly will have the power of God upon themselves and will be serving the purpose of being witnesses during the tribulation

## **II. THE POWER OF THE TWO WITNESSES. (Vv. 5-6; CF. V. 3)**

These two witnesses had power given them to *prophesy*; they were given power to *perform* and also the power of *protection*. The Lamb gave them that which they needed to do their work. The Antichrist must have readily recognized these witnesses as being an affront to his diabolical plan.

### **A. A Charge Is Given To Them. (V. 5)**

The witnesses were charged to kill those who attempted to hurt them. John said, "fire proceedeth out of their mouth." These two witnesses were empowered by the Lord to do His biddings without being stopped. It seems that their commission involved them countering the work of the Antichrist. The two witnesses may have ministered primarily to the unbelieving Jews who require a sign and the 144,000 may have been involved with ministering to the entire world, which included the Gentiles.

In each dispensation, the Lord has seen fit to have a voice of hope. We are privileged in the Church Age to have many voices. May the people hear!

## **B. A Clue Is Given Of Them. (V. 6)**

As we consider these two witnesses, we may recognize that they were given special abilities that were similar to two men who previously lived upon the earth. Without entertaining all of the possible suggestions as to who they might be, we will consider two of the most likely candidates. Remember, we will not overly emphasize who they might be because the Scriptures do not tell us. With that being said, Elijah and Moses seem to be the witnesses that will come back to earth and serve God again. Notice this about them. In the book of Malachi, chapter 4: 5, 6 we observe that Elijah would come before “*the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*” We also must remember that it was Elijah that called down fire from Heaven. What is indicated here makes me believe that these two witnesses will have completed their responsibility before the Great Tribulation takes place.

Now, concerning the other witness, there seems to be credible evidence pointing to Moses as being the other empowered witness. There are three reasons that this might be so. In Matthew 17:1-5 at the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared in the presence of Peter, James, and John. The Lord had a special reason for this to happen. The second reason is because Moses demonstrated supernatural power while appealing to Pharaoh asking him to release the nation of Israel from servitude and bondage. Moses was able to bring plagues upon the earth and to turn the water into blood. The third consideration is that Moses is identified with the giving of the law, just as Elijah was more connected with the prophets. The law and the prophets have great significance to the Jewish people. These two personalities mentioned would meet such requirements.

## **III. THE PERSECUTION OF THE TWO WITNESSES.**

( Vv. 7-10).

These two witnesses will be allowed to continue their work and be allowed to complete their work. The seventh verse tells us, “And when they shall have finished their testimony...” Every servant and minister in the economy of God has a time appointed to do the work of the Lord. The same is true of us and we need to be acutely aware of it. There are examples of this truth given to us in the Scriptures. This was true regarding Christ. When He finished His work of grace, He was able to say from the cross that it was finished. He “gave up the ghost” on *His* schedule. The same can be said about the Apostle Paul. He was stoned, and left outside of the city as dead, but God was not through with him.

These witnesses worked for 42 months, which is three and one half years, and then their job was over. We may ask the question, “Why did the witnesses have to suffer?” I would like to consider the following as reasons.

**A. The Persecution Was Allowed To Produce A False Hope Among The Unbeliever. (Vv. 7-8)**

Chronologically, these verses seem to be describing the midpoint of the tribulation. The two witnesses are only serving 42 months during which time the Antichrist is trying to take over the government of the world. The two witnesses have spoken on behalf of the Lamb and His government against the government of Satan. I am sure that these witnesses have brought much frustration to the goals that the Antichrist wanted to accomplish. In these verses, we are told that the beast, which is the Antichrist, will make war against the witnesses, overcoming them and killing them. There have always been those who feel that Satan is prevailing and that there will be no hope of recovery. Thankfully, that is not the case at all. There will be an absolute recovery, as Satan will be conquered along

with the beast, the false prophet, and the Antichrist.

Within the mystery of God's working, Satan only *seems* to be prevailing. That is the feeling that the people will have upon seeing the two witnesses' bodies lying in the streets. There will be such jubilation, but we must keep in mind that the Lamb is not through. This could be the Lamb's way of focusing the world's attention upon the streets, which are called spiritually "Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." We know that this is describing Jerusalem.

### **B. The Persecution Was Effective In Producing A False Hope Among The Unbelievers. (Vv. 9-10)**

The earth dweller's hopes of being the conqueror over the Lamb will be short lived. As they are celebrating, God is soon going to spoil the party. What will be tragedy for the earth dwellers will be triumph for the believers. The earth dwellers are rejoicing because they feel that the torment they experienced from the two witnesses is over. They are in for a surprise!

Likewise, there are many earth dwellers today which have their ambitions, passions, recognition and wealth that feel they are in control and have no concern about the future. It is a sobering tragedy that so many have been duped by the devil. Judgment will fall like a burning hammer upon them if they do not turn to the true and living God.

During the time that the earth dwellers will be celebrating the death of the two witnesses, they will have no decency to even attempt to bury the two witnesses. They are having their parties thinking that the Antichrist will now be able to set up his own government. They do not know that in three and one half days life is going to come back into the two witnesses. When this happens, the earth dwellers will be overwhelmed with fear.

## **IV. THE PREVAILING OF THE TWO WITNESSES. (Vv. 11-14)**

## **A. They Prevailed By Being Resurrected. (V. 11)**

The Word of God tells us “after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.” Can you imagine what it was like to see the corpse of the two witnesses come back to life? The Life came from the Lord. Every spiritually dead person can only find life through the Spirit of life that comes from God. In the case of these two witnesses, the word Spirit is capitalized. This means that the Life was from God and the Life was God.

Just as it was with Lazarus and with anyone who is given life, that life must come from the Lamb of God. In John’s Gospel we are told where true life originates. Notice these verses of Truth. In John 11:25-26 it says this, “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeth thou this?” Then, we read in John 14:6, “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Both physical and eternal life has its only origin in Christ Jesus. In regards to life, He is the creation God and He is also the salvation God.

## **B. They Prevailed By Being Removed. (Vv. 12-14)**

As the second woe ends, the Spirit of life from God enters who I believe to be Moses and Elijah. After they stand upon their feet, fear grips the people as a great voice cries, “Come up hither.” These two witnesses were raptured from the earth and there is reason to believe that the 144,000 were also raptured before the Great Tribulation started. If this were true, the Lord will spare these from going through Great Tribulation just as He spared the Church from having to go through the tribulation portion of

the seventieth week of Daniel.

After the rapture of the two witnesses, “there was a great earthquake and a tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand.” At this point the second woe is past and the third woe will quickly come.

In our next study we will have the third woe and the blowing of the seventh trumpet. It will be a terrible time unlike anytime that the world has ever witnessed. It is my belief that this end time Truth is given to us so we will be prepared and the lost will see the need to be saved. Are you ready?

## Chapter Twenty

### THE BLOWING OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

#### Text: Revelation 11:15-19

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

*16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,*

*17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

*18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth.*

*19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.*

It should be with great excitement that we begin this study; for King Jesus is preparing to regain control of all that had been lost to sin. Someone noted that this period being described compares to a candidate who is about to take office after being elected. There is much jubilation at such an event. When one is elected, the party begins with great anticipation knowing soon that their candidate will be serving in the office to which he was elected. Verse 15 begins with a greater anticipation than can be imagined with only an earthly event taking place. The Lord is going to regain control of that which had so long been lost to sin. The entire family of the redeemed will be celebrating.

This event reminds me of one of the beloved Psalms that describes the enemy nations being in derision. While the redeemed are celebrating, the heathen nations will be very angry. Psalm two is the Psalm that I refer to. Notice these verses.

*“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psalm 2).*

The nations upon the earth who have long had their own governments will reluctantly go under the government of King Jesus. What a day that will be! This will be a time when the redeemed of the earth will worship God willingly, but all of the heathen will be doing it out of much anger. King Jesus will firmly rule with a “rod of iron” during the millennium and will bring total destruction to the enemy (v.18).

In the first part of this chapter, we learned about the two witnesses and now we will look at the blowing of the seventh trumpet and see what will immediately take place.

## **I. THE PERIOD AFTER THE TWO WITNESSES. (Vv. 15-19; CF. 10:1-11)**

It would be helpful for one to carefully study and review chapter 10:1-11 to gain a proper understanding of how the

“kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ...” Because of the original sin, Satan had gained control of the governments. For this reason, wickedness was everywhere and still is. Lehman Strauss in his commentary explains as well as anyone the setting at the time when the seventh trumpet blows. Consider what he has to say:

“No sooner do the voices in Heaven announce the coming kingdom than the elders fall on their faces to worship God and give thanks that the Almighty has at last assumed His sovereign right in the earth. Presently the kingdoms of this world are in Satan’s control (Matthew 4:8-9). Our Lord never said that they were not. On the contrary He called Satan “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and admitted that the world was his kingdom (Matthew 12:26). But the hour will come when God shall resume His power, and the Angel Gabriel’s words to Mark shall be fulfilled (Luke 1:31-33). There are many details about the coming kingdom which we cannot now take time and space for. But I must remind all who cannot accept the fact that God is capable of anger and vengeance, to believe the inspired writings. Do not be deceived because God’s wrath has been postponed for so long a time. God gave the sovereignty of the earth to His Son, and though men will not acknowledge Him now, the time will come when they will be forced to do so. The world kingdom that has been in Satan’s hands must come to an end.” (Lehman Strauss; REVELATION, pages 222-223).

When the seventh seal was opened, there was a quietness that gripped the creation. This was because of the awful judgments and persecution that was soon to follow. With the blowing of the seventh trumpet, however, there is great jubilation like never before experienced, because it signaled that Christ Jesus would soon be in control of that which had been previously permitted to be under the control of Satan. The blowing of the seventh trumpet results in the

establishing of the millennial kingdom and also signals the ending of the Great Tribulation.

### **A. The Mighty Angel's Authority Recognized. (V. 15).**

The seventh angel announced the duration of the kingdom and who the Ruler of the kingdom was to be. Notice verse 15: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

This is an announcement that has been long awaited. Even as we live today as Christians, there is an ongoing desire to see the Lord take control of that which Satan has so long had dominion over. Satan's kingdom, though lengthy, will come to its end. In contrast to that, the Lord's kingdom will have no ending.

Also, it might be noted that the Lord's kingdom will only have one ruler. There will never be a transfer of power. No one will ever again challenge His throne. A feeble attempt by an impotent devil will be made to take over the kingdom of God at the end of the Millennium during what is known as the final phase of Gog and Magog. During this event Satan and his army will be immediately put down and he then will be cast into the Lake of Fire to suffer eternally for all of the wickedness that he caused.

In chapter ten, the Lord Jesus Christ is seen standing on the land and on the sea, reclaiming that which had been lost. This act demonstrates that He alone has the right and the authority to seize that which had been lost by sin. For there to be a strong sovereignty, there must also be a strong sovereign and Christ Jesus is that strong Sovereign. During the time that preceded His coming to the earth and even before the earth was created, He exercised His sovereign power and control when He spoke the worlds into existence. When the nation of Israel was under attack by its enemies, the Lord would show Himself strong by miraculously

defeating its enemies. He gave strength and courage to David when he went up against Goliath. It was this act of David, with the help of the Lord, that established his earthly kingdom. The same sovereign power that was providentially at work then is still at work.

The King's power and authority are being recognized by the entire family of the redeemed.

### **1. Recognition came at the seventh trumpet. (V. 15a)**

The number seven is the number of finality, completion, and perfection. The seventh trumpet is being blown by the seventh angel to make this most important announcement. The trumpet has been long used to signal a great happening. Certainly there is none greater than this. The Lord is bringing His judgment to an end as signaled by the trumpet blast. Trumpets were used in the Scriptures for different reasons. They were blown to signal the beginning of a war or battle and they were also blown to signal "Happy Birthday" to a new kingdom.

Both would be the case here for the Lord is going to intensify His war efforts against the enemy, concluding the war effort with the Battle of Armageddon. After that battle, Satan will be bound and cast into Hell for a thousand years while King Jesus rules on the earth.

### **2. Recognition came as the Sovereign triumphs. (V. 15b).**

The recognition was certainly in the form of jubilation realizing how long the world had waited for this event to take place. Psalm 47:1-9 shows prophetically the great excitement and the anticipation of the coming King. *"O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high [is] terrible; [he is] a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with*

*the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God [is] the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, [even] the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth [belong] unto God: he is greatly exalted” (Psalm 47:1-9).*

The Psalmist, as he was writing this Psalm had no way of knowing the full significance of what he was writing about. The Apostle John was given the wonderful honor and privilege of receiving the full prophecy of the Lord concerning the initiating of His kingdom. The Sovereign is triumphing as the Kinsman Redeemer as He redeems His own to Himself. Isaiah 27:12-13 also gives prophetic insight to this great event. *“And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (Isaiah 27:12-13).*

## **B. The Mighty Angel’s Authority Respected. (Vv. 16-17)**

*“And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.”*

Believing the twenty-four elders to be a representative type of the family of the redeemed, I believe that this verse is indicating that all of the saved are seen bowing before the Lord in adoration and worship. They are respecting *their* Sovereign King in this manner. When they fell on their faces they were covering their faces so that the only

recognizable person there would be King Jesus. With their faces covered, their identity is also concealed. All glory and honor will at that time be going to just one worthy Person... To God be the glory!

**1. He was respected by right of His Person. (Vv. 16-17a)**

They were worshiping Him as the *Lord God Almighty*. This is the way the Lord is being addressed. The name Lord speaks of His majestic sovereign ownership. The name God speaks of Him in a way that is unique only to Him. There is none like Him or superior to Him. He is the preexistent One who is above and beyond all others. The word almighty as used here in the Scriptures according to Strong's means:

- 1) he who holds sway over all things
- 2) the ruler of all
- 3) mighty: God.

That which will take place after the blowing of the seventh trumpet will demonstrate clearly who God really is. There are those now who challenge or even question His existence, who then will see Him for who He is. A strong leader must be able to exercise his force and strength to accomplish his purposes. The Lord God Almighty will certainly do that. The title and expression, Lord God Almighty, is only used in this order in the Book of Revelation. It is used five times in Revelation. Each time that His name is used this way, it is for the purpose of emphasizing how powerful He really is.

**2. He was respected by right of His power. (V. 17b).**

I was told many years ago that one would follow strength to Hell before they would follow weakness to Heaven. The powerful God and Saviour will certainly be one to be respected and admired because of His strength. When the seventh trumpet is blown, the Lord will be demonstrating or using His power both by reason of authority and also by might. When considering His authority, all authority is under Him according to Romans 13. All power originates

from the throne room. Even Satan's power must be placed under His. When Satan sinned against God, he was sinning against God's authority. Every kind of rebellion is a sin against God's authority and power. He will destroy the enemy and bring His government into force as He rules with a rod of iron. This will result in anger on the part of the nations and their government. This is due to the fact that these nations are being forced to relinquish their own governments and way of living. The word of God says that , "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 24:1).

### **C. The Mighty Angel's Authority Recovered. (V. 18-19; cf. v. 17)**

The seventh trumpet is being blown as a general announcement showing that the Lord God will regain control of creation. No detail is given as to how this will be accomplished. When we read chapter 16, we will see that the seven vial judgments will show the particulars. We do, however, determine that the Lord will anger the rulers upon the earth along with their nations. Notice this verse as a proof text: *"And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth"* (V. 18).

This announcement includes the fact of judgment for the wicked dead. (If you are reading or hearing this and you continue not to be a friend of Jesus, what better time than now to be born again?) Satan will certainly feed the attitude of anger to all nations, because of his own anger of losing control.

**1. With His authority recovered there will be a great vindication. (V. 18).**

The Lord God Almighty will reward the faithful. Those who are prophets, saints, and them that fear the name of the Lord will be included. “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord” and the Lord will vindicate those who were enemies to the faith by destroying “them which destroy the earth.” Satan and his system have been bringing about destruction to the earth and because of the sin curse of Satan, the entire Heaven and earth will be destroyed and it will be charged to Satan’s account. We will look at this in greater detail when we get to chapter number twenty.

**2. With His authority recovered there will be a great victory. (V. 19)**

*“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” (V. 19).*

For there to be good government there must also be good worship. The temple scene announces that the Lord will be the One from this time on to be worshiped. With the “lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail,” there was an awareness of the Lord God Almighty taking charge both on the earth and also in Heaven. This scene also assures the Jew that the covenant promises made to them would be kept.

The entire eleventh chapter has been very rich in regards to end time truth. As we enter the into the last half of this Revelation study, may we see Him even more clearly!

## Chapter Twenty-One

### CONFLICT INVOLVING SATAN

#### Text: Revelation 12

*1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:*

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

*3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.*

*4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

*5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.*

*6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

*7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,*

*8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

*9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

*10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*

*11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

*12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

*13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

*14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*

15 *And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.*

16 *And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

17 *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Conflict involving Satan has been going on at least since he originally appeared as a serpent in the Garden of Eden. His relentless evil has been going on without mercy for all of that time. There are no kind ways to refer to such a beastly dragon as he. When you study about Satan in the Scriptures, you will notice that the existence of Satan is taught in seven Old Testament books and in all of the New Testament books. The greatest authority on the existence of Satan is that which Jesus, Himself, taught about Satan (Matthew 13:39; Luke 10:18).

His name, Satan, means *adversary*; Devil means *slanderer*. Lucifer means *son of the morning* according to Isaiah 14:12. He also carries the name, Beelzebub and Belial. As you can see, none of these names are very attractive.

Satan was cast out of his original position in Heaven according to Ezekiel 28:13-15:

*“Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone [was] thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou [art] the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee [so]: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.”*

Satan will be cast out of Heaven midway the tribulation period when he fights against Michael the archangel. This is

what our lesson will involve as we study Revelation chapter 12. This chapter will begin with the study of a *great wonder* involving a woman *clothed with the sun*. There are four representative women found in the Revelation. The first mentioned is Jezebel who represents false religion (Revelation 2:20) and the woman here mentioned pictures Israel. The third woman mentioned, the scarlet woman, represents the apostate church (Revelation 17:1). The final woman mentioned is the Lamb's wife, who represents the true church.

There are several clues given that indicate this woman represents Israel. In Genesis 37:9-11, we find that Joseph had an unusual dream. In that dream, he dreamed that the sun was a type of Jacob. He dreamed that the moon pictured his mother, Rachel and that the eleven stars were his brothers (the tribes of Israel) which bowed down and worshiped Joseph.

In several places in the Scriptures, Israel is referred to as a woman (Isaiah 54:1-6; Jeremiah 3:20; Ezekiel 16:8-14; Hosea 2:19-20). With this brief background study, may we now consider the *Conflict Involving Satan*.

## **I. THE SATANIC WAR COMMENCED. (Vv. 1-12).**

This scene opens with one of the seven wonders of Revelation. The first wonder is called a *great wonder*. In verse three, we read of another wonder that is in great contrast to the first wonder. One being Israel, and the other being Satan. The last chapter ended with the temple of God being opened in Heaven with the ark of the testament being seen. This Ark of the Covenant is identified straight back to Israel and the promises that God made to Israel. It is not surprising that the first great wonder is that of Israel in such close association with the mentioning of the ark. All of the activities that surrounded the revealing of the ark such as the thundering, lightning, earthquake, voices and great hail were

there to signal attention to the fact that God was going to show His faithfulness to Israel, even though Satan was and still continued to be an enemy to Israel. Notice how Israel and Satan are referred to as *wonders* in our study.

### **A. The Great Wonders in Heaven. (Vv. 1-6)**

As mentioned already, two of the seven *wonders* are mentioned in this chapter. The two are mentioned, one as the protagonist and the other as the antagonist. I say that in the sense that Israel, who gives birth to Jesus through Mary is the principle player and Satan as the true adversary that he is, is the antagonist. He has always been an enemy to God since he rebelled against God at the original fall. From that time on, he has been playing his diabolical part very well. As crafty as Satan may be, he still loses.

#### **1. Note the great wonder of the woman. (Vv. 1-2)**

God so elected the woman, as indicated by this *great wonder*, to be the means whereby God's redemptive plan would be carried out. In her prominent regal manner, as indicated by her being clothed with the sun, and the moon under feet she assumes this role. This role was not of her choosing, but the electing or choosing of God. It is within God's sovereign purpose that the nation of Israel was chosen as the vehicle for delivering the Christ-child. The woman is clothed with strength as indicated by the sun description. Just as the sun has a fixed orb and purpose, so does the woman Israel mentioned here. Just as the sun faithfully shines within its design, along with having its cloudy days, it still continues to shine. The woman Israel has always had its enemies who seemed to *cloud* its purpose, yet she continues to shine. Her prominence allows the moon to rest under her feet. In nature the moon does not receive the prominence of the sun; it only has its reflected glory. The nation of Israel has a sovereign purpose as ordained by God which does not diminish. Its glory is reflected in all that she touches. The

nation of Israel has carried strong influence all along the way. There is not a Gentile people group that has not been touched by her sunlight. Even in Israel's darkest hour her sovereign purpose continues to shine. From her came the Christ-child and Satan has fought this all of the way. There is also a crowning glory that involves all of the sons of Jacob. When you think of Israel, you cannot do so without being reminded of how Israel was put together. Israel began with the twelve sons of Jacob. Whether it is the mentioned twelve stars here or the twelve stones on the high priest's breastplate, it all points to Israel. This is all included in the *great wonder* of the woman.

**a. Note the way that she was clothed. (V. 1a)**

We have already given a description of how the woman was clothed. Now, may we look more closely at her as we look at our text?

*“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” (Revelation 12:1).*

We must remind ourselves that the word *wonder* as used here means sign. It is described as a great sign. This means that this wonder carries great significance. Signs are not always easy to read. Sometimes a sign is not easily read because of the distance one is from the sign. The closer you get to the sign, the easier it is to read.

If you read after some of the great commentators of the past, you will find that they all seemed to have either difficulty in interpreting, or very little to say concerning the signs of the Revelation prophecy. Matthew Henry, as an example, thought that this woman represented the New Testament church. He thought that the twelve stars represented the twelve apostles. A major problem with this interpretation is that you would have the church giving birth

to the Messiah instead of Israel giving birth by the virgin Mary. Christ gave birth to the Church rather than the Church giving birth to Christ.

The old Puritan writer Gill had very little to say about this particular great sign. Again, the reason being is that these great students of the Word were standing a long way from the sign. We now are closer to the Lord's coming than ever before. The sign is almost in front of our noses. This is not to say that there is no difficulty in interpreting all that is to be said, for there will always be a measure of difficulty as God challenges us to a deeper study of His Word.

The woman clothed with the sun is Israel and it was through the seed of Abraham that the rays of spiritual sunlight shone so brightly. The prophets of old had insight as they predicted the coming of the Messiah. Even during the days of Old Testament apostasy, Isaiah shone as a bright light when he gave all of the prophecy concerning the promised seed. Even before Israel came there was prophecy concerning her arrival. There had to be a woman who would give birth to the Messiah. That prophetic Truth was uttered before we would even read of Abraham. It goes back to the Garden of Eden where the original sin on earth took place. In Genesis 3:14-15 we have this ray of sunlight shining brightly in a sin-cursed darkened world.

*“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou [art] cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*

This is where the story of the woman in Revelation 12 has its beginnings. There must be this bridge of Truth kept intact throughout the Scriptures. There must be the scarlet

thread that weaves ever so true throughout the Scriptures. God has always had a plan and a people to connect with His purposes. God's sovereign design has always been. The woman clothed with the sun is lit by God's sovereign purpose. Her clothing is *her* given right and privilege, after being appointed by God to deliver the Christ-child.

**b. Note the way that she was crowned. (V. 1b)**

Before we consider the crowning, may we look at the moon being under her feet? As we considered already, the woman is the symbol of reflected glory. We alluded to this as being the glory of influence. Though the nation of Israel continues to be a rather small nation, it does wield a powerful influence. All religions may in some manner bridge back to the teachings and the influence of Israel. Most that is found in religion has been corrupted, but there is still the influence that has been made by Israel into those religions.

The glory of Israel has left its mark or influence on science, entertainment, literature, religion and certainly on government and politics. Yet, the outstanding contribution that Israel has given is the Messiah through the virgin Mary.

**c. Note the way that she was with child. (V. 2)**

Verse 2 says, "And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."

The world waited for such a long time after having received the promise that said there was going to be the birth of God into the human race. This period was marked by great persecution and anticipation as the world awaited the coming of the Messiah. The persecution could be attributed to Satan and his influence. Romans 8:22-23 picture very well this time beginning with the fall of man into sin.

*"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only [they], but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit,*

*even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, [to wit], the redemption of our body.”*

King Herod had a hatred for the Christ-child and issued an edict that all children under two years of age be killed. We will look at verses three through six and note how the second *wonder* mentioned was involved in eliminating the Christ-child.

## **2. Note The Great Wonder of the Wicked. (Vv. 3-6)**

Please remember that the word wonder means sign. Notice the way the word is used in our text and the vivid description that is given of the red dragon.

*“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born” (Vv. 3-4).*

This wonder is identified as Satan in verse nine. Even if the Scriptures did not identify Satan, it would be very obvious by the way he is described. This monstrous evil creature is described in such a manner as being a red dragon. The color red is the color of blood and identifies him as a murderer. Jesus called him such as he was speaking to the Pharisees in John 8:44.

*“Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”*

Satan is a murderer and a liar with that reputation starting in the Garden of Eden and continuing until the end of the ages. He will be cast into the Lake of Fire as such.

**a. Note that the dragon was wicked in his appearance.**

**(V. 3)**

The way Satan is described shows him to be a powerful force with evil authority and also having a kingdom. He is seen with “seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.” This does nothing but show him to be a powerful ruling force that is an awful enemy to God and anything that pertains to Him. The seven heads and the seven crowns most likely picture his ruling force to be complete and universal. We recognize this as we count the number seven as symbolizing completeness. His evil activities are highly organized and he has a network that is greatly controlled to carry out his evil intentions.

The government that he controls has on its agenda ways of networking into the monetary, political, ecological, sociological, and religious systems of the world. He has an insatiable appetite for control and power. All the symbols listed in our text that describe him show this to be true.

**b. Note that the dragon was wicked in his anger. (V. 4)**

This verse shows how beastly Satan the dragon is. Can you see the picture that is being described in this verse of the dragon? I see this creature standing with his dangling seven heads attached to his dragon body with the color red dripping with blood. Even the crowns that I see are splattered with blood. His wickedness is so pronounced that his teeth are showing as he opens his mouth wide to devour the child of the woman as soon as it is delivered. That is the way that I would paint this horrible picture if I were the painter. I would also include eyes that are blazing with anger as though they were on fire. I do not see a pretty picture when I read the text that is before us.

The wonderful part of all of this is that Satan's time is nearly expired. He will soon be conquered, at which time his power will be no more. Praise be unto God!

**c. Note that the dragon was wicked in his appetite. (Vv. 4a-6)**

This picture of Satan absolutely conveys to the reader of the Revelation prophecy the attitude and the hatred the dragon had towards the Christ-child. Here, the woman Israel gives birth to Jesus and then Jesus is caught up to God. This is a compressed or abbreviated version of what took place when considering the major events of the prophecy pertaining to Christ. Obviously, the emphasis is on Christ going back to Heaven at the ascension and then on what happens to the woman afterwards.

The next scene shifts in chronology to the last three and one half years of the Great Tribulation. Chronologically, verse six occurs after verses 7-12, and is equivalent to verse 14.

**B. The great war in Heaven. (Vv. 7-12)**

With the swooping tail of Satan, he drew the third part of the stars of Heaven and did cast them to the earth. This is probably the fallen angels who lined up with Satan. This war that will take place in Heaven, as described in verses 7-10, will involve Michael and his angels. Satan, who is an enemy to the Jews as indicated in our text, will have to face Michael the archangel. The Lord will have him to engage in this battle to forever disallow Satan and his fallen angels from going into Heaven. Verse 8 indicates this truth when it says, "neither was their place found any more in heaven."

**1. It was a war involving authority. (Vv. 7-9)**

Satan is slowly losing his power. Though he has been permitted horrendous privileges from the time of his original fall, it will all come to an end. Verse 12 tells us that Satan

knows that he has but a short time before he will forever be doomed. He will be bound for one thousand years in hell and then be released for a short period of time. After that period of time, known as the Battle of Gog and Magog, Satan will forever be finished in the Lake of Fire.

It is a mystery when you think that Satan was even permitted to go into Heaven after his fall. The reason that God permitted it will one day be revealed and it would do us no good to speculate. I just thank God that one day the Mystery of Iniquity will be over (2 Thess. 2:7).

## **2. It was a war against the accuser. (Vv. 10-11)**

Way back in the book of Job, we discover that Satan was known as the accuser of the brethren (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7). The passage in Job shows the way that Satan would access Heaven with his presence and would accuse the brethren day and night. As I am writing this, I am wondering what level of spirituality that it would take for us to be accused before the Father. He may have a sophisticated way of doing it so that he is able to accuse more than one at a time. Again, this is all a mystery as to how he does it, but regardless, one day he will be through...

The way the dragon will be overcome is by “the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” There is and there will be power in the blood. The way that we overcome Satan now is by the power of the Blood. Though the literal blood of Christ is not applied, it is the literal blood that pays for and washes away our sin. As the song says and demands, “Nothing but the blood of the Lamb!”

## **3. It was a war of anger. (V. 12)**

With Satan knowing that he only has but a short time, the third and the final “Woe” is given. *“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”* This last three and one half years will be a

terrible time of tribulation and trouble on the earth (cf. Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; Zeph. 1:15; Matt. 24:15-22).

*“Alas! for that day [is] great, so that none [is] like it: it [is] even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:7).*

*“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” (Dan. 9:27).*

*“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Dan. 12:1).*

*“That day [is] a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zeph. 1:15).*

(See also Matthew 24:15-22)

Satan will proceed to finish out his “reign of terror” with an anger that has never before been witnessed. The next section will focus on Satan going after Israel, the woman which brought forth the man child.

## **II. SATANIC WAR CONTINUES. (Vv. 13-17)**

There is a continual and relentless effort on the part of

the dragon to annihilate the nation of Israel in an attempt to keep the Lord from setting up His kingdom. To do so would make null and void the promises that God made to David and Abraham.

### **A. The War Continues Against Israel. (Vv. 13-16)**

The last three and one half years has been called the time of Jacob's troubles, because of the intense persecution that Israel will go through. *"Alas! for that day [is] great, so that none [is] like it: it [is] even **the time of Jacob's trouble**; but he shall be saved out of it"* (Jeremiah 30:7).

As intense as the Great Tribulation will be for the nation of Israel, they will be saved out of it. These people who are elected as a nation will be able to endure until the end and will hide under the wings of God's sovereign purpose and mercy till their souls find deliverance. I do not speak of each soul individually as much as I am referring to the entire nation. The nation of Israel endured long enough to produce out of it the Christ-child and will come through the tribulation so that the Kingdom of God will be established upon the earth. The Kingdom Gospel and the Everlasting Gospel will be preached so that each individual, as well as the entire nation can look forward to that great day. There will be many precious souls saved during the tribulation.

#### **1. She was persecuted. (V. 13)**

*"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man [child]."*

Though Satan knows that he has just a little time left, he still continues to do that which he is most known for. He is on the rampage going against anything that is of God. He knows that the nation of Israel is the "apple of his eye".

*"For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that*

*toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (Zech. 2:8).*

## **2. She was protected. (Vv. 14-16)**

*“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.”*

Even as the wicked dragon is making every effort to destroy Israel, the Lord God Almighty is watching over them supernaturally. For those who are loyal to God as believers, He is providing deliverance from the immediate presence of Satan and is taking care of Israel with nourishment. It is possible that there will be saved Gentiles in all parts of the world contributing to her watch care.

In addition to God taking the church away so it will not have to experience the tribulation, God is going to shield as many of the Nation of Israel who will be loyal to Him, from the Great Tribulation. Satan will pursue after the woman only to find that the earth is helping the woman. This is where I feel that the saved people groups of the earth will contribute to the help of Israel. This is probably what is meant when the Scriptures tell us that “the earth helped the woman.”

When we are told that the “earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth,” this could be a way of describing how Satan’s propaganda efforts were countered by those who were sympathetic to the plight of Israel.

## **B. The War Continued With Great Intensity. (V. 17)**

*“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to*

*make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

After Satan lost his battle with Michael the archangel, he turned his anger against the woman and made war with what was left of her seed. This could be the 144,000 witnesses that were introduced in chapter number seven. In their case, they will survive the attacks upon them, having been sealed and protected to do the Lord's work. (Revelation 7:2-4)

As we recognize the end approaching, we should be more conscious of the Lord's return and the need to be ready for His coming. The Lord will bring Satan down and sin will be no more. This also means that the pressures and the sorrows of life, which are in association with sin, will be no more. I am beginning to very much look forward to that day when the Lord returns.

## Chapter Twenty-Two

### THE BEAST

#### Text: Revelation 13:1-10

*1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.*

*2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

*3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.*

*4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*

*5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*

*6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*

*7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*

*8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

*9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.*

*10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

From the time that Satan originally rebelled even until this present hour, he has been attempting to establish his own kingdom. Even though he has his own government, he still is not able to develop it into the kingdom that he envisioned. There has always been an ongoing frustration that he experiences because God will not permit him to totally take over.

The dynamic Christian influence of God's elect has

always served as a barricade in keeping Satan from realizing his wicked goals. The two beasts that appear in this chapter are for the same purpose of him defeating the program of God and then establishing his own kingdom. As aggressive as he will be in using these miserable, diabolical puppets to bring about his own agenda, he will fail. His failures and frustrations will only make him more angry and aggressive. I could call this “Satan’s last stand” and it would be just that if it were not for God letting Satan loose after the millennial reign for just a season before he is forever cast into the lake of fire.

This section will be for the purpose of considering the way Satan concludes his reign by the wicked activity of the two beasts. May we now consider the first beast?

## **I. THE BEAST COMES TO POWER. (Vv.1-6)**

We have a desire in our studies to neatly define who these beasts are and can become so convinced as we do so that we convince others also. Yet, it is not as simple as that. We will consider some of the well known possibilities of who these beasts are in this study, but will also admit that it is not easy to be settled exactly as to who these beast are. Many think that this is the Antichrist that 1 John 2:18 describes. Yet we must remind ourselves that the word antichrist does not even appear in the book of Revelation. With that being said, it may be more accurate to use the descriptive terminology that the Bible gives us in our immediate text and not to emphasize it in any other way.

We can say, however, that this beast is definitely an *antichrist* in that he is against Christ. John told us that there are many antichrists. We do know from our text that this beast is empowered by Satan the dragon. Satan is a spirit and must work through human instrumentality just as he did through Judas Iscariot. The beast is seen rising up out of the sea. The book of Revelation contains much in the way of

symbolic language and such is the case here.

The sea has always been a place of mystery and a place that causes fear, especially to the ancients. I call your attention to the way the beast is introduced in our text: *“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy”* (V.1). In symbolic language, the sea refers to the many nations of people. This beast is rising up out of the world population to begin his world rule. The sea can be a churning and very angry place. Such is the world at the time this beast appears.

When examining the description of this beast, one will discover that it has seven heads. These heads likely speak of the intelligence of this ruling person. He may come across as being a very wise leader who has the answer to the world’s problems. The number seven tries to suggest that this person “has it all.” The number ten speaks of government. His ruling will be majestic and powerful as indicated by the twelve crowns. Upon his head, we are told that there is seen “the name of blasphemy” which is a further indication that his rulership and government is in rebellion to God’s government.

Notice the three animals that are being described in our text:

**1. Leopard: The leopard pictures the previous Grecian empire with its cultures and swiftness of conquest.**

This beast appears to be a corrupt political leader who reminds all world powers of all previous world powers. It is almost like he has something in the way of leadership for everyone. This is much like some of our politicians today who promise the world and deliver only your bank account. When you look at him you will see that he is like a leopard. If you refer back to Daniel 7 and study ancient history, you will find that the leopard has been a symbol of the Greek

empire with Alexander the Great as its leader. The Greek empire after the death of Alexander went under four leaders and all of this was predicted by Daniel.

## **2. Bear: The bear pictures the previous Medo-Persian Empire with its crushing power.**

In Daniel 2:32-33, Daniel is seen interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. *“This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.”* These four metals represented four major world empires in the order in which they appeared. The first and also the strongest was the Babylonian as indicated by the gold (Daniel 2:8). The second was a divided and a weaker empire, the Medo-Persian pictured by the silver (Daniel 5:30-31). The third was the Greek that was pictured by the brass (Daniel 8:20-21). The fourth was an iron and clay mixture picturing Rome (Daniel 9:26).

The order of appearance according to John is in reverse to Daniel. Daniel began with Babylon and mentioned Greece as the third. John, the writer in Revelation, is looking back to the empires closest to him in its historical chronology. He looked back and saw first the most recent as being the Greek Empire, followed by the Medo-Persian and then the Babylonian Empire. The main aspect of these descriptions is it was a government coming into effect that had the fragmented remnants of all governments in one composite. The same will be said about the ecumenical religious system that will be established as represented by the second beast mentioned in this chapter.

## **3. Lion: A reference to the Babylonian empire with its majestic, autocratic dominance.**

Each of the major governments leading up to the Roman government, with all of its fragmented parts, is brought to remembrance when this slimy beast exposes

himself as he comes out of the sea. The Babylonian, Grecian, and the Medo-Persian Empires are clearly pictured being all merged together, but we must remember also the ten horns which allude to the loosely confederated governments left over from the Roman Empire. We may now recognize a full picture of all Gentile governments under the rule of this beast.

#### **A. Note the Beast's Awesome Authority. (Vv. 2b-6)**

Satan, the dragon, gave the beast his awesome power, his seat, and his great authority. He will be giving the beast authority over the kingdoms of the world. This beast will be completely controlled by Satan. Satan will attempt to structure his government after the pattern of God's government. If this beast proves to be what we commonly refer to as the Antichrist, he will have unusual charisma and a very dynamic personality with which he will rule and influence all who will follow him. His description indicates that he will have a very sophisticated form of government and with it different rulers who make up his cabinet. When he is described as having seven heads and ten horns, I see a disproportionate number of horns to heads. What I am thinking when I see this is that if each head pictures a different leader, then one has more power than the others. Some see this singular beast as the Antichrist or they see the beast as a picture of the reviving of the Roman Empire. If this beast pictures the total government of the Antichrist, then as the Antichrist swiftly sets up his government, its leader who would be the Antichrist suffers a mortal wound and then dies or at least appears to be dead.

The reviving of the Roman Empire is hinted at when the ten horns are mentioned. The number ten corresponds to the ten toes of the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw which pictured the ten confederated nations of the Roman Empire. It may be from these nations that the Antichrist selects his presidential cabinet.

The government that this beast establishes will be so very appealing to the masses of people. They will be tricked into following him.

When the primary leader (Antichrist) is wounded to death and then his deadly wound is healed, it will cause great wonder by the world. The world will marvel at what they are witnessing. This will result in even more people worshipping the dragon and the people will worship the beast, saying, “Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” This indicates both a fear and a respect for the beast. There will be an acknowledgment of the beast’s ability and his power. Yet even with all of these impressive tricks by Satan, he still will lose his objective of taking over. With his knowledge of this he will become even more intent in frustrating the program and the plan of God. His frustration will turn into defeat. The last three and one half years of the tribulation will prove this to be so.

## **II. THE BEAST COMING TO PERSECUTE. (Vv. 7-10)**

*“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (V. 13:7).*

This chapter carries some difficulty as to the proper interpretation. I will tell you what I believe is taking place and readily admit that my interpretation is subject to scrutiny. One of the challenges while doing a study like this and writing a commentary is making sure we arrive at a proper interpretation.

So here goes. The Antichrist reveals himself early on at the beginning of the tribulation as a very charismatic personality who leads with diplomacy and gains the favor of many followers (Daniel 8:25). When he is shown symbolically coming out of the sea, “having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads

the name of blasphemy,” this is giving emphasis to the way that he will be governing as a great political leader. This section also shows that his leadership is going to take a drastic change as indicated by verses four through seven. The Antichrist will desecrate the temple as a form of blasphemy as verse six tells us: “*And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*”

I believe that this refers to the abomination of desolation as recorded in Daniel and Matthew as we have already referred to. I also believe that when this event happens midway the tribulation that the Antichrist’s personality will change from a charismatic, hero personality to a very aggressive, beastly personality. He will be admired by many and also hated by many. When his way of governing changes, he will continue to establish his government until the end of the Great Tribulation at which time King Jesus will bring his kingdom to an end.

This will be a time of great deception on the part of the Antichrist as he performs his satanic miracles. Satan will have power to perform miracles of deception, and also will be able to bring the Antichrist back to life after he receives his wound unto death. The Scriptures tell us that John saw one of its heads “*as it were wounded to death.*” This could mean that he only appeared to be dead as indicated by the word “as.” In either case, his deadly wound was healed, “and all the world wondered after the beast.” This singular event certainly caused fear and admiration on the part of the world population.

If my interpretation is correct this chapter signals the last half of the tribulation, and the way that the Antichrist along with the false prophet and the dragon will conclude their reign.

## **A. The War of the Beast. (V.7)**

The saints mentioned in our text are the tribulation saints. We know that a portion of the tribulation saints will receive protection as our previous chapter indicates, but according to Zechariah 13:7-9 two thirds of the Israelites will die first if this passage does indeed refer to the tribulation period. In the thirteenth chapter the tribulation saints will also include Gentiles who are converted and called saints.

The false covenant that the Antichrist made with the Jews will be broken at the middle point of the tribulation according to Daniel 9:27. The peace that was promised the Jews proves to be a false peace and the Antichrist turns against the Jewish people while clearly revealing to them that he is not the Messiah. It is after this time that many of the Jews will recognize they have been deceived and will turn to the true Messiah. This will be a time of great persecution, but also a time of great evangelism. The 144,000 witnesses will be preaching the Kingdom Gospel, telling the converted Jews that the Lord Jesus Christ will set up His kingdom.

## **B. The Worshipping of the Beast. (V. 8)**

Those whose names are not written in the book of life will worship the beast. They will be deceived in believing that the beast is a god according to 2 Thessalonians 2:4, 11.

*“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (V. 4). “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie”(V.11).*

Satan is no different at his ending than he was at his beginning. He wants the world to be his own, with the entire creation worshipping him. Even with this being the case, the

redemptive plan of God is still in effect as indicated by the last part of verse eight, “of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Even though Satan continues to carry out his wicked plan of destruction, it will not affect God’s plan that man everywhere be saved.

Beginning in verse 11, the second beast will be introduced and this second beast, who is the false prophet, will team up with the first beast under the leadership of the dragon to further strengthen his false religious system. As they team together, it will be for the purpose of making both the political and the religious systems entirely satanic, with Satan being worshipped during this time.

### **C. The Warning Of The Beast. (Vv. 9-10)**

This is a very difficult time upon the earth as Satan is doing all that he can to exterminate the Christians and those who refuse to receive a mark either in their right hand or their forehead (Revelation 13:18). The writer John wants the reader to understand that the dragon and the beasts will not get away with their awfulness. The wickedness of this satanic trio will be dealt with by King Jesus. The saint is to walk with faith that God’s Word is true and that justice will be served.

Beginning in verse 11, we will be introducing the second beast and show how this beast, that is known as the false prophet, will operate. This is where we will continue our study in the next chapter.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

### THE SECOND BEAST

**Text: Revelation 13:11-18**

*11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*

*12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*

*13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,*

*14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.*

*15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*

*16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:*

*17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*

*18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

The first beast has the primary role of serving as the political leader, whereas this second beast is the False Prophet. He is the very deceptive counterpart of the first beast. All that he does is in support of the first beast for the purpose of doing the will of Satan. He has a very deceptive description, but his true nature is revealed when he opens his mouth. There is nothing about him other than his looks that are lamb-like. This beast is further described in the following verses:

*“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs [come] out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and*

*out of the mouth of the false prophet” (Revelation 16:13).*

*“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20).*

*“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [are], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10).*

These verses above tell us the fate of the two beasts along with what is going to happen to Satan. I wish to remind each of us as we study that Satan and his entire league are to be doomed. In the meanwhile, we will continue to expose what he and his followers will be doing up until the very last.

### **III. THE FINAL BEAST COMES TO POWER. (Vv. 11-18).**

John the writer, saw another beast “coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.” The description of this second beast is given showing him coming up out of the earth. I do not know the significance of this beast coming up out of the earth versus the first beast coming up out of the sea. We do have an understanding of the mystery pertaining to the first beast because of an explanation that is given to us in the seventeenth chapter. Chapter seventeen also gives further indication of what the seven heads represent.

We must keep in mind that the introduction of this second beast is just another way that Satan has for trying to bring creation under his control. We will consider how this false prophet is nothing more than a powerful imitator.

## **A. This Beast, Who Is The False Prophet, Serves As A Powerful Imitator. (Vv. 11-12)**

Gathering as much as we can from our text, we find first of all that the beasts are similar in that they both are referred to as beasts, which means “wild animal.” Anything pertaining to Satan, no matter how tame it may appear as he disguises himself, will still have all of the attributes of Satan. This creature presents himself as a docile lamb, but when he speaks he is identified as the dreadful dragon. In symbolic language, this beast, as we have already stated, is a great pretender or imitator. There are so many who have become victim to his pretending ways. He will possess and influence people and cause them to become great pretenders like himself. The hypocrites in Jesus’ day were no different. They, as the word implies, were “play actors.” This is the reason that Jesus told the hypocritical, Pharisee Jews that they were of their father the devil in John 8:44.

With this beast being described this way, it gives indication that he will suddenly appear on the scene for the purpose of causing the world population to accept the first beast. Everything that this beast does will be done in support of the first beast and he will position himself under the authority of the first beast to accomplish this purpose. This beast’s charming ways will have a charismatic impact on those who will be inclined to worship the beast or the Antichrist. With this beast having the appearance of a lamb is only another way that he is attempting to impersonate the true Lamb of God.

To resonate with the Jewish people upon the earth, this beast is probably a Jew. As such, he is working in close proximity with the first beast to initiate all of the political and religious programs that the first beast is demanding. This is done so that the first beast will receive the worship that he so much desires.

*“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed”* (V. 12).

This twelfth verse shows us the job description of the second beast as well as his ability to exercise the same power as the first beast. Satan, the dragon, is constantly pulling together his team to carry out his wickedness. Every capability this second beast has is for the purpose of Satan gaining control of the creation. He continues his miserable rebellion to the very end.

**B. This Beast, Who Is The False Prophet, Is Particularly Impressive. (Vv. 13-14)**

*“And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by [the means of] those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live”* (Vv. 13-14).

These two verses tell us how the second beast will be performing satanic miracles, making fire come down from Heaven, to bring about his deception. The fire coming down from heaven does not mean that it originated from God. We remind ourselves that the Bible speaks of three heavens. The first is where the birds sing; the second is where the stars shine and the third is where the Son sits. The fire fell from the sky, thus giving the illusion that it had come down from Heaven. The beast will do all that he can to *mess with the minds* of the people. Satan is now doing all he can do to mess with our minds. As Paul told the church at Philippi, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 2:5). If we keep the mind of Christ, we will not

have the mind of Satan. We develop the mind of Christ by letting the Word of Christ dwell within us *richly*.

Not only does the false prophet perform miracles to deceive the earth dwellers, he also requires them to make an image for the purpose of worship. Much that goes on today is preparatory to what will be happening during the tribulation. There is much technology already in place to accomplish what Satan wants done. When we read about the mark of the beast and the way the mark will be on the right hand or the forehead, we must admit that we already have the technology for this to happen. We already are using a similar technology in our monetary system and could very easily switch over to an implant or some other internally placed energy chip that can store programmable information to respond to a machine scan.

We already have the technology to produce a humanoid or a robot with very human-like features that can be instructed to simulate many life-like qualities. What used to be a “Twilight Zone” idea is now a reality. Within a very few short years the technology will progress at a quantum rate allowing Satan to have many unusual devices at his disposal. You might say that he will have his technologically sophisticated bag of tricks to use on whomever he pleases.

The image that is described in our text could be nothing more than a machine that is being given life-like qualities or a life that is demonic. I do not believe that this image will enjoy created life that comes from God. Can you imagine Satan producing a form of life that is entirely demonic? Can you fathom the wickedness of this kind of life quality? Can you reckon the wicked, destructive nature of a demonic creation? Even today, it is frightening how wicked someone can be who is only possessed by Satan. Imagine, how awful it would be if someone could be created by Satan.

On December 26, 2002 a cult group, named **Raelian**, made news. They claimed to have cloned a female named *Eve*. Their group believes that the earth population came

from neither evolution nor creation by God. They claim that aliens from a distant stellar system came to planet earth and cloned the original Adam and Eve. They claim to have five other such cloned beings. Notice a portion of what this cult group teaches that comes from their corrupt doctrines.

“The messages dictated to Rael (on December 13, 1973 from a space visitor from another planet) explains that life on Earth is not the result of random evolution, nor the work of a supernatural 'God'. It is a deliberate creation, using DNA, by a scientifically advanced people who made human beings literally "in their image" -- what one can call "scientific creationism." References to these scientists and their work, as well as to their symbol of infinity, can be found in the ancient texts of many cultures. For example, in Genesis, the Biblical account of Creation, the word "Elohim" has been mistranslated as the singular word "God," but it is actually a plural word which means "those who came from the sky," and the singular is "Eloha" (also known as "Allah"). Indigenous cultures all over the world remember these "gods" who came from the sky, including natives of Africa (Dogon, Twa, etc.), America, Asia, Australia, and Europe.” (Raelian web site).

I do not know how far to take this in relationship to our text, but it shows Satan already has a group like this in place to prepare the minds of people on earth for a Satanic takeover.

I also admit that I do not have an understanding of all that is being said about this image having life. I can only speculate as others, but enough is said that I can be thankful that I will not have to experience an incarnation of Satan! Surely the last phase of the tribulation will reveal many satanic monstrosities that can now only be imagined. The Lord had a reason for giving us some of the information pertaining to the events of the tribulation, but also a reason for excluding parts. There will be a further revealing of

what we read about in time and eternity, I am sure.

### **C. The Beast, Who Is The False Prophet, Is Also A Powerful Influencer. (V. 15)**

*“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”*

The influence that the beast will have on mankind may be attributed to that which causes fear and also that which causes admiration. When men fear God, it is a reverential fear. When men fear Satan it is a diabolical fear. Satan can not cause men to have the quality of fear for himself that men have for the Lord. That is one of the failures of his counterfeiting. He can only imitate a portion of what he sees. This should remind us that we cannot imitate Christ by virtue of our own abilities and worth, but must depend upon Christ living within us. Religion apart from Godly worship attempts to do just that. Religion of this kind is constantly replicating the religion of Cain. Cain tried to please God by offering what he himself wanted to offer rather than what God wanted him to offer. He violated God’s commandment by doing as we would say, “his own thing.” Our spirit of worship should be, “not my will, but thy will be done.”

This beast will be causing great fear to sweep over creation as he performs his wicked miracles. There will also be those who will not be afraid of such, but will be admirers of such, just as there are those who become engrossed in a movie making the villain their hero, rather than the crusader for justice and good, their hero.

As you might determine by our text, the worship of the beast will be a forced worship to many who are under threat of being killed.

#### **D. The Beast, Who Is The False Prophet, Is Particularly Intimidating. (Vv. 16-18)**

As we have already indicated, the Scriptures are not very clear on which of these beasts would be the Antichrist. There seems to be more evidence to support the first as being the Antichrist, because the second is both worshiping and causing others to worship the first beast. An argument against the first beast being the Antichrist is that he seems to be rising up out of the sea, which pictures Gentile nations. The Jew would not accept the Gentile as being the Messiah. In either case these beasts are Satan's puppets who will be very intimidating.

*“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number [is] Six hundred threescore [and] six” (Revelation 13:16-18).*

For common purchases to be made whether it be a loaf of bread, tank of gas, a visit to the doctor or anywhere that money is to be spent for goods or services, there must be the mark of the beast. For anything to be sold or exchanged there must be the mark. Many will receive the mark during the tribulation and surrender all of their rights to Satan and his beasts so that they may continue to do their business. When they receive the mark they will have a temporary relief that comes from being able to buy and sell. Places like Wal-Mart at that time will be very appreciative that their customers were willing to receive the mark. If you think that I am singling out a particular place of business, all businesses will be required to sell on the basis of their

customers having the mark. When you rent a house or pay your mortgage, it will all be the same. No exchange of money can take place without the mark...

YET, there will be those who will refuse the mark even if it means that they will have their heads cut off or starve to death. The tribulation saints will suffer all kinds of persecution rather than receive the mark. People will either be marked by the Lamb or they will be marked by Satan.

There is really no difference today as God sees it; you are either marked by the Lamb or marked by Satan. Which is it? The Scriptures tell us, in “*Wherefore by their **fruits** ye shall know them*” (Matthew 7:20).

## Chapter Twenty-Four

### THE LORD GOD TRIUMPHANT: PART ONE

#### Text: Revelation 14:1-8

*1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*

*2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:*

*3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

*4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.*

*5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

*6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,*

*7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

*8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

This is a chapter that very much is in contrast to chapter 13. In chapter 13 the emphasis is on what Satan is doing to bring about his wicked program of evil. It is a wonderful breath of fresh air to step from chapter 13 to chapter 14. In chapter thirteen, as the number 13 implies, we see Satan at the height of his rebellion with his unholy circus. In chapter fourteen we see seven recorded visions that show the Lord in control. This is not to say that the Lord has not been in control, it just shows that his control is being greatly

emphasized in this chapter. We need the constant reminders that come from God's Holy Writ to keep us encouraged in the Lord. Chapter fourteen gives us this kind of encouragement.

A study of this chapter will reveal that this chapter does not follow a strict chronology. This does not in any way imply or suggest that John, the writer, was unsure of what was taking place as he wrote or when it took place. We know better. It appears that the writer is not trying to emphasize chronology but instead is detailing that which the Lord wants us to see by way of importance or significance. This chapter is answering any concern involving the totality of Satan's attack on the tribulation saints and what will ultimately happen to the beast and to his followers.

## **I. THE GATHERING OF THE WITNESSES AFTER THE TRIBULATION. (Vv. 1-5)**

It has been said that this chapter is like an index of those things which are to follow. In these several verses there are capsule descriptions, or summary statements, of the different events that will be transpiring. It is almost like this is a word of prophecy located within the greater Book of Prophecy. The first thing mentioned in this chapter is that of the Lamb of God standing on the mount called Sion. There are 144,000 sealed male virgin Jews who are seen standing with the Lamb. The time that this is taking place brings *no little concern* as Luke would probably put it. Where it is taking place is also of great concern. If it takes place upon the earth at any time other than the conclusion of the tribulation that would mean that the Lord would be coming to the earth before the tribulation ends. There is no clear indication that this will happen. Most all of the Scripture makes clear His coming to the earth is at the very end of the tribulation. If this scene describes the Lord standing upon the earth, He very likely is doing so at Jerusalem and it is taking place at

the end of the tribulation showing that the 144,000 survived the tribulation. It was back in chapter seven that we noted that the 144,000 were being sealed for service.

Therefore, it must be understood that this is a prophetic glimpse into the future, where the victorious witnesses are seen standing, giving glory to the Lord before they enter into the millennium. It is as though the Lord is giving *visions of victory* to bring increased faith to the tribulation saints. The tribulation saints will have the Bible and will find faith and encouragement as they read it, even as we do now.

### **A. The Witnesses Were Standing In The Presence Of The Lamb. (V. 1)**

*“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty [and] four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads” (V. 1).*

These witnesses were standing in God's presence. How thrilling this must be for the Lord to be seen standing among those whom He had sealed. The counterfeiter in chapter 13 required his followers to be marked. This again shows the lengths that Satan will go to achieve his wickedness at being nothing more than what we would call a “copy cat.” His followers, just as he, can only be pretenders. Pretenders of the worst kind are they. They and their leader, Satan, will come to an utter end. God's witnesses, however, will survive and be met victoriously by the Savior. He will stand with them.

The Lord will stand with the 144,000 witnesses and He also stands with us who are now the redeemed. When the three Hebrew children were cast alive into the fiery furnace, they were seen in the flame unharmed, but we also know that there was another who was there with them. We know from God's Word that the other person was the Lord. The Lord is always there at the right time. Or should we say that the Lord is there *all of the time*.

## **B. The Witnesses Were Singing In The Presence Of The Lamb. (Vv. 2-3)**

Singing is a way of expressing joy and victory. Such will be the case at this gathering. There will be the sounds coming from the harps along with the singing. This noble assembly will be singing a triumphant song just as they did in Moses' day. Notice this Old Testament passage as it illustrates the same.

*“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this **song** unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will **sing** unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” (Exodus 15:1).*

Those who are gathered will have all the reason to sing just as they did when Moses and the children of Israel witnessed the overthrow of Egypt at the Red Sea. We also may take seriously our singing, for our Mighty Conqueror has made the payment of redemption, which allows us to sit victoriously in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6) in Christ Jesus. The nation of Israel will forever relate to the song of Moses. In Revelation chapter 15 the song will be referred to as a great symbol of victory.

*“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous [are] thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true [are] thy ways, thou King of saints” (Revelation 15:3).*

The singing in the presence of the Lamb is a way that the believers of all ages are tied together by the common thread of faith. It will be very obvious that their faith is in the Lord God Almighty. When they sing the song of Moses, it is the mighty assembly declaring in song that the Lord was with them at the Red Sea and the Lord is still with them at the end of the tribulation.

### C. The Witnesses Were Spotless In The Presence Of The Lamb. (Vv. 4-5)

Holiness is a virtue that has marked those who identify with the Lamb. In the Old Testament, the Lord told us that holiness requires making a difference. I might add that it is a prescribed difference according to God's Standard, which is the Word of God. Notice this verse, "*To **make a difference** between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten*" (Lev. 11:47). Also notice this next verse, "*And that ye may put difference between **holy** and unholy, and between unclean and clean*" (Lev. 11:47).

When people are living differently according to God's Word, they will stand out as being different. This is the hallmark of holy living. These witnesses are said to be witnesses that have not defiled themselves with women. I believe this referred to their sanctity in living. They did not in any way fornicate. There has been a time in bygone history that fornication would not have been at all prevalent. But according to statistics in our modern world, most single people have had an out of marriage relationship, which has never been pleasing to God. God wants you to retain your purity right up until marriage. He does not want men to defile themselves with women, nor does he want women to defile themselves with men. If you are guilty of sexual fornication, you should confess it to the Lord God Almighty and go on and live a holy life. Do not put yourself in a compromising situation where you will be tempted to do wrong. If you are lost in your sins, you should cry out to God for saving mercy.

These 144,000 male virgin Jews kept themselves pure to serve out God's holy purpose. Verse five tells us that there was no guile or deceit found in their mouths. The reference to their mouth's having no guile shows that the way a person speaks is very important to the Lord and gives indication to

ones spirituality. They were also said to be without fault before the throne of God. This is a very wonderful complement to their ministry. It would have been so easy during the tribulation to give in to all of the temptations. Just as it was said of these witnesses that no fault was found in them, may we be challenged that the same can be said of us.

## **II. THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD DURING THE TRIBULATION. (Vv. 6-8)**

The word gospel means good news. The Gospel of the grace of God is currently being preached during our dispensation. This is the necessary Gospel that must be preached for conversion. It is good news that the Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross to bleed, die, be buried and then raised from the dead for our justification. During the tribulation there will be another good news Gospel for the Jews. The Gospel will be the *Everlasting Gospel* that will be preached unto them that dwell upon the earth. This Gospel will be preached by an angel. It will contain the good news that the Lord is bringing judgment to the enemies of Christ while encouraging the world inhabitants to worship Him that made the heaven and the earth.

### **A. The Everlasting Gospel Told of God's Vindicating. (Vv. 6-7)**

*“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19).*

This great encouraging verse in Romans tells the way that God will bring vengeance against those who went up against His kingdom. There is no power that can overcome the kingdom of God. His kingdom is protected by His own power. If it seems that the enemy is making advances against His kingdom, it is only an illusion, for He will bring strong

judgment against the enemy. The dragon, the Antichrist, the false prophet, and all those who are His enemies during the tribulation will be destroyed.

In our dispensation of grace, there will be times when you are being attacked by the enemy and really know that you have no strength to protect or defend yourself. It is wonderful to know that you have someone who will vindicate you. That Someone is the same One that this angel is referring to as he flies through the heavens “Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

### **1. The gospel consisted of a warning. (Vv. 6-7a)**

The warning was given so that men might fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of judgment which would be coming. This should also be a warning for us today. Men who are lost need to fear the judgment that will come from Him if they fail to repent. Also, there needs to be a reverential fear on the part of every believer realizing that God is a loving, compassionate God, but He is also a serious God who wants us to take our lives here upon the earth more seriously. God does not want us to have an *epicurean* life attitude. We can become obsessed with the idea of eating, drinking, and being merry to our spiritual ruin. Such seems to be the case in our world today. May we instead have the heart of a pilgrim with our eyes fixed upon our heavenly home.

### **2. The Gospel called for worshipping. (V. 7b.)**

There is much debate in the world as to the way we should define our existence. This should not be the case for believers, however. For we accept the written Word's definition of our existence. We believe that God, in the beginning, created us. When Charles Darwin wrote his “The Origin of the Species” in 1859, he said that his work needed

much more study. Yet, those who were looking for a departure from the clear teachings of the Bible, pertaining to their existence, swallowed up his teachings and have done so ever since.

In the last couple of decades scientists in greater number are beginning to accept that life came from intelligent design versus the previously accepted Copernicus theory of existence which stated that all matter is in an eternal state and that the sun is the center of the universe. Those who hold to the idea that matter is in an eternal state do so to discount God as the Creator. They say that matter is constantly reorganizing itself for adapted needs. Thus, evolution is just a means whereby matter organizes and adapts to fit a particular need. Then there are those who say that due to some strange phenomena that matter just suddenly came into existence. They describe it relative to the “Big Bang theory.”

I could accept a big bang taking place for sake of only the noise of God’s creation, except for the fact that for six days there was no one to hear it. In physics we are taught that sound does not occur unless there is someone to hear it. My purpose in saying this is that Bible doubters constantly must come up with some mechanism to describe and debate their disbelief. Because of the great mathematical difficulties in proving that life came into existence on it’s own, there are a greater number of scientists now who are accepting the theory of intelligent design, even if they are reluctant to believe that God did it. The Bible, God’s Word, is reminding us in this last book of the Bible, as He does throughout the Scriptures, that He is the Creator. For this reason, we should worship Him and believe that He is.

This angel mentioned in verse six and seven will be calling on mankind to worship God as the powerful Creator God. Just as mankind is reluctant to worship Him now as the Creator God, they will be so then.

## **B. The Everlasting Gospel Told of God's Victory. (V. 8)**

The actual fall of Babylon is recorded in chapters 17 and 18. The fall of the religious, commercial, and the political systems of Satan is anticipated here. This is part of the prophecy that shows that the Lamb will be victorious over the entire system of Satan. This is a great chapter to consider in this eventful study as we find encouragement in this terrible tribulation period.

## Chapter Twenty-Five

### THE LORD GOD TRIUMPHANT: PART TWO

#### Text: Revelation 14:9-20

9 *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,*

10 *The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:*

11 *And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

12 *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

13 *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

14 *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*

15 *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.*

16 *And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.*

17 *And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.*

18 *And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.*

19 *And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*

20 *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*

This continuation of chapter fourteen, beginning in

verse nine lets us know that God deals with sin and He does so in a very firm manner. During the tribulation, the Lord God Almighty will bring His powerful anger against those who “worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand.” This begins with a very strong warning from the third angel.

### **III. THE GRAVITY OF THE WARNING MIDST THE TRIBULATION. (Vv.9-13)**

It is an awesome thing to have to endure the judgment of God when it does not have to be so. The book of Hebrews shows how the judgment of God being predicted should cause men to be warned. The warning given in Hebrews tells us that we should not refuse Him that is speaking. Notice what Hebrews 12:25-29 says about judgment.

*“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more [shall not] we [escape], if we turn away from him that [speaketh] from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this [word], Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God [is] a consuming fire.”*

These verses certainly indicate to us the severity of God’s judgment. We are told by the writer of Hebrews that God keeps His Word. It was true when he originally “shook the earth.” The writer of Hebrews is warning the reader not to refuse “him that speaketh.” Just as the One “that speaketh” had previously brought judgment, He will also

bring judgment again. In this Revelation study, we learn that the Lord is fulfilling that which was previously predicted.

A warning is compassionately given many times in the Scripture for the purpose of turning people from their paths that lead to destruction. Even as we live in the economy of grace, this grace dispensation is being tempered by the fact of God's impending judgment. Men cannot sin willfully continuously against God and not expect to face the judgment. This is one of the reasons that the Lord gives us the warnings in the Revelation prophecy.

### **A. Not Heeding the Warning Against Beast Worship Meant Death. (Vv. 9-11)**

Our text tells us that *“If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:”*

This is the way that the Scriptures express the intensity of the punishment. He refers to their punishment as drinking of the wine of God's wrath. His anger is not diluted; it is full strength. The unbeliever will be cast into the place of everlasting torment and will remain there forever. There will be no hope of annihilation or release from the awful torment. The same will also be true for every Christ-rejecting soul today who goes out into eternity without being saved. Today is the day of salvation.

### **B. Heeding The Warning Against the Beast Worship Meant Delight. (Vv. 12-13)**

There is such a great and notable contrast that is seen in the saints as recorded in our text. For the unbeliever there is an ongoing, never ending torment. For the believer there is everlasting rest. What a difference, yet man is so determined

to refuse the hope of God's eternal blessings in exchange for just a few moments of a self-willed life. It may all be factored into one word, "unbelief."

### **1. The saints were promised rest. (Vv. 12-13a)**

*"Here is the patience of the saints: here [are] they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed [are] the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."*

This voice from Heaven will be such an encouragement to the tribulation saints knowing that they will be able to rest from their labours and that they will be rewarded for their good works as well.

Faith has always produced spiritual rest. Even in the Old Testament, those who were unbelievers could not enjoy God's rest. Notice that the unbelievers in Moses' day "entered not in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:6). A lack of faith or belief has always caused a lack of spiritual rest. There is a faith rest that can only come from belief in the Lord resulting in obedience. Hebrews 4:11 says, *"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."*

When the Scriptures say, *"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest"* it is describing what should always characterize the believer. The believer should be doing the work of faith. This is our practical Christianity. This is the reason that the book of James tells us, *"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone"* (James 2:17). It is also in the book of James that Abraham is given to us as a great example of how faith really works.

Notice the way Abraham is described when he did a work of faith. *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works*

*was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:21-23).*

The concept of spiritual rest is not a new concept to the tribulation saints, it is a continuation of the way that God has always worked going all the way back to the time that Abel made his offering in the book of Genesis. His offering was accepted, whereas Cain’s was not because it was not an offering based upon faith and obedience.

## **2. The saints were promised rewards. (V. 13b)**

Our text tells us that *“their works do follow them”*. This is a clear indication that the Lord will remember their works of faith and will reward them accordingly. The same is true for us today. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of doing the work of faith. So many who are saved will fail to receive rewards because they did not exercise that faith. They are too occupied with so many things that distract them from doing that which really counts.

There are five crowns that the believer may be able to receive. They are as follows:

Crown of Life  *For Endurance*

*“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12).*

## Crown of Rejoicing A Witness



*For Being*

*“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy. (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20).*

*“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8).*

## Crown Incorruptible



*For Those  
Who Successfully Run The Race*

*“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).*

## Crown of Glory



*For Those  
Who Faithfully Minister The Word*

*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not*

*by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:1-4).*

**Crown of Righteousness**



*Fight of the Faith*

*For the*

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7).*

#### **IV. THE GATHERING FOR THE WINEPRESS ENDING THE TRIBULATION. (VV. 14-20).**

This is another glimpse of how the judgment of God is going to be pronounced upon the enemy during the tribulation. It is being described as a reaper taking the fruit of the vine and crushing it for the purpose of yielding its fruit. Just as the grape is at the mercy of the winepress, so are all at the mercy of the Lord when He treads the winepress in His fury.

The great counterfeiter, Satan, has his own vine which is a corrupt vine. Jesus is the True, while Satan is the false vine. The Lord is going to destroy this corrupt vine with its intoxicating wicked fruit. Even before this happens, the Lord is still sending out warnings, yet so many will refuse the warnings just as people do today. It would be far better for someone to immediately be put to death during the tribulation than to receive the mark and suffer for eternity in Hell. But this is exactly what will happen to the unbeliever.

If there has ever been a time that we ought to be sensitive to this truth, it is today!

**A. There Was The Reaping For The Winepress. (Vv. 14-19)**

Reaping signals the end of the harvest. Reaping here signals the end of a wicked harvest that began when the first seeds of sin were deposited into the human race at the Garden of Eden. The wicked sin vine has been growing through the ages while producing its contaminated fruit. There have not been a people, nation, or a cultural group that has escaped tasting its forbidden fruit. Yes, the Lord is going to do His reaping and will completely gather and destroy the fruit of sin. With this being said, all will be cast into the “winepress of the wrath of God.”

**B. There Was The Wrath Of The Winepress. (V. 20)**

Verse 20 is apparently a reference to the Battle of Armageddon (16:16; cf. 9:17-19) at which time the blood will flow 185 miles up to the horses bridle (14:20). No battle has ever been of such magnitude. This will be the Supper of the Great God, when all of the fowl will gather to eat the carnage. Please be warned, if you have not before it is too late...

## Chapter Twenty-Six

### THE LAST JUDGMENTS INTRODUCED

#### Text: Revelation 15

*1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.*

*2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*

*3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

*4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*

*5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:*

*6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.*

*7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.*

*8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.*

We are reading and studying the shortest chapter in the book of Revelation. This chapter certainly is no accident in both its size and in its content. The importance of the Gettysburg Address was not minimized by its shortness. When Abraham Lincoln penned it, he absolutely got to the heart of the message and very eloquently stated his message and by doing so, in a very brief manner, he left an impression that will never be forgotten. It was because he had something important to say.

In this fifteenth chapter the writer, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had something very important to say and it was thusly said in just a very few words. Chapter fifteen is

the prelude to the vial (bowl) judgments and emphasizes the importance of what is about to happen. Chapter fourteen gave a brief panoramic view of what was going to take place right up unto the end, whereas this chapter takes the larger generic view and brings it to the more refined fuller view. The details of judgment are about to be spelled out and enlarged upon.

"As is the plan of the prophet, he reviews, he recapitulates, he enlarges upon the scene he has already sketched" (Erdman).

The full wrath of God is going to be vividly put on display as He pours out the cup of His wrath. It will be the burning fury of His anger that is being poured out. The meaning of the word wrath will indicate this truth later in our study.

## **I. THE SIGN BEFORE THE LAST JUDGMENTS. (V. 1)**

It was with great wonder that the writer saw that God was going to bring to an end the sinful, worldly system as He meted out His wrath in hot holy anger. The word wrath as used here is the same that we identified in chapter 14 as being a boiling or flaming anger. The Greek word *thymos* (a volatile, passionate anger) is used here instead of the more common word *orge*, which carries the meaning of having anger from a settled disposition. *Orge* is the more common word for God's anger in the New Testament; *thymos* is used only 11 times, and 10 of the 11 are in Revelation. The anger of God is being described as being poured from a vial. According to word studies the vials have a flattened out design, much like that of a saucer, which will allow the contents to be released quickly. This again agrees with the defining of God's judgment as being poured out very

quickly. The first verse tells us that, “in them is filled up the wrath of God”. It is an overflowing anger that shows God’s disposition towards sin.

## **II. THE SINGING DURING THE LAST JUDGMENTS (Vv. 2-4)**

The tribulation saints were rejoicing in their victory, being mindful that the same God who brought the Israelites victory under Moses also had brought them victory. They knew Christ the Lamb as being marvelous and great in His works, and as King they knew Him to be just and true in all His ways.

In verse two those who had gotten their victory over the beast were standing on what appeared as a sea of glass mingled with fire. The word *as* indicates to us that they are not standing on a literal sea of glass that is mingled with fire. It is really easy to find many suggestions as to what this means, but I cannot honestly put down what I believe it is, nor can I absolutely suggest what it symbolizes. The Scriptures let us enjoy having a mental picture of what it looked like to see these witnesses standing as having “gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name” standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. However, there is no definitive explanation from Scripture as to the meaning of the sea of glass mingled with fire description.

May I, with that being said, make some comments regarding the description that we have been given. Considering the reflective qualities of glass and even the way glass is referenced to in the Scriptures as having mirror like qualities, I believe that this is a way that the writer is describing the very large number of people who have been resurrected and have been given glorified bodies. They are standing there with the great glory of God all over them, just like Moses of old, when his face did shine after being with

the Lord.

These people, being victorious over death, have lost their earthly qualities and have taken on their heavenly qualities. These who are said to be standing on the glass could have a uniquely prepared place to stand as their faces did shine as fire. Whatever is fully meant, we must agree that it will be a very impressive sight. I must admit that I have done more speculating than I prefer when it comes to the Scriptures. Maybe we can say this is food for thought.

We noticed this large company standing, now may we look at their singing. They are said to be singing the song of Moses and also the song of the Lamb. Songs are often sung to show identification. For example, when we as Americans hear the National Anthem being sung we stand out of respect and because we are Americans. There are three ethnic groups mentioned in the Bible. There is the Church, the Jew, and the Gentile. The Church will not be on the earth during the Tribulation, but the Jew and the Gentile will be. The Song of Moses definitely refers to the Jewish Israelites, while the Song of the Lamb could very appropriately refer to the Gentile converts who were victorious over the beasts. Another consideration involving the songs is that one song is in association with Old Testament Law and the other is in association with New Testament Grace. Here, we have a blend of the two. We have both law and grace or grace and truth. True Spiritual victory will involve the two. Even today, we must acknowledge and respect the law of God and appreciate the grace of God.

The large gathering of people at this time described are standing in the spirit of Galatians 3:28, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*"

Their singing is attended by the playing of harps. The harps have always had a heavenly significance in the Scriptures. As this great number is assembled, they are giving glory to the Lord as being the means for their victory

and also as being the One who will *manifest* the judgment against the enemy.

### **III. THE STAGE PRECEEDING THE LAST JUDGMENTS. (Vv. 5-6)**

The stage for the following drama is set showing forth the truth that God's Holiness demands that God's wrath be on display. The very basis for God's judgment is God's holiness. God hates sin.

This judgment scene is depicted in a very similar manner to the way that God revealed His holiness in the Old Testament. Isaiah chapter six specifically comes to my mind prompting me to say that. Notice the wording of this great chapter as it begins:

*“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:1-5).*

Isaiah experiences the holiness of God to such a degree that he said, “Woe is me!” Here, as the Lord is preparing to manifest His holiness, John says that he saw the temple of Heaven being revealed. He then saw the way the seven angels came out of the temple, “having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.” Everything about this scene

emphasizes the holiness of God. As these angels are presenting themselves with the vial plagues, there certainly is impressiveness about all that is going on. This is the beginning of the end of Satan's wicked run.

#### **IV. THE SEQUEL PRIOR TO THE LAST JUDGMENTS. (Vv. 7, 8)**

The holy tension is mounting as God is soon to release the final seven plagues upon the wicked population of the earth. The earth is soon to recognize the powerful Lord God Almighty in all of His glory and power.

As the vials are being given to the angels, smoke begins to fill the temple from the glory of God. The powerful presence of God is being experienced just as it was in Isaiah's day as the smoke fills the temple. It was the glory of God that caused him to say, "Woe is me!" We should also sense the presence of God as the glory of God begins to fill our places of worship.

God's holiness and glory certainly go together. This is true in an individual and also in a church sense. For one to experience the greater glory of God, there must be a practicing of holiness. When wickedness replaces holiness, then will judgment follow. This chapter serves as an introduction to the most intense time of the tribulation. It will certainly be a time of Jacob's trouble. If you are reading this and have never made your call and election sure, why not today?

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

### THE POURING OUT OF THE SEVEN VIALS

#### Text: Revelation 16

*1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*

*2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.*

*3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.*

*4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.*

*5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.*

*6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

*7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.*

*8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.*

*9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.*

*10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,*

*11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.*

*12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.*

*13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.*

*14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

*15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

*16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew*

tongue Armageddon.

17 *And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.*

18 *And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*

19 *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*

20 *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

21 *And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*

The climatic ending of the Revelation is taking place with God quickly dispensing His judgment and wrath on the Godless portion of a fallen creation. All wickedness and those who have been involved in sin are being punished. Notice that I said, “punished.” There will be no further opportunity for repentance. God is dealing now with His enemy, not as the *Lord Jesus Christ*, as He was referred to in the grace and Church age, but as the *Lord God Almighty*. The swift judgment of God will be immediately poured out by the angels, one vial at a time. The commission to do such will come from the Lord God Almighty.

We will carefully analyze the way that each of these vials were dispensed and with the results of each being given. The pouring out of these vials also corresponds to the *third* woe as described in 11:14.

## **I. THE POURING OF THE FIRST VIAL RESULTED IN SORES. (Vv. 1-2)**

There is a comparison to be made while these plagues are taking place, to the plagues that happened in Egypt when Moses was asking Pharaoh to release the Israelites. During this time, God also inflicted plagues of boils (Exodus 9:8-12), waters turning to blood (Exodus 7:14-25), and darkness

(Exodus 10:21-29).

Notice how the judgment of the boils fell upon the Egyptians in Exodus 9:8-12:

*“And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth [with] blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt. And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth [with] blains upon man, and upon beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.”*

This was certainly a very grievous time in Egypt, but it was a time that eventually brought about a release of the Israelites. These plagues in Revelation, resulting from the pouring out of the seven vials, will not serve a similar purpose of bringing forth repentance as it did in Egypt, but will be only for the purpose of punishment.

### **A. The Judgment Came Suddenly Upon the Beast Worshipers. (Vv. 1-2a)**

The Scriptures tell us that the angel “poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell...” It does not take much imagination to realize how quickly this must have taken place. The description of the vial being flattened out like a saucer indicates how quickly the wrath of God will be poured out.

Just as the Lord has the reputation of being patient and longsuffering in regards to providing us with grace, He will have the reputation of suddenly releasing His judgment upon His enemy. The world has the delusion of fabricating its own

god as being a feminine, weak, and emaciated seventy pound creature. Such is not the case and will not be the case when He judges the earth during the Great Tribulation. This is also the way that many artists portray Christ on the cross. When Christ was on the earth during His incarnation, inside an earthly body, He undoubtedly was a fine specimen of the human frame. I believe that His body was very manly developed while growing up as a carpenter. As He carried His own cross, He demonstrated the stamina that He had to endure the cross. The Lord God Almighty will be a “consuming fire.”

## **B. The Judgment Caused Suffering to the Beast Worshipers. (V. 2b)**

Had man not sinned there would be no suffering upon the earth or the need for the lost sinner to spend eternity in Hell. Sin changed all of that. The excruciating pain that we feel today when facing some serious physical malady had its awful beginnings in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. The pouring out of the first vial will result in terrible suffering. We must not forget that this suffering is deserved because of man refusing God’s grace. I must call attention to this, because there is the likelihood that someone will either hear or read what is being said in regards to tribulation that needs to be saved.

This vial that affects its victims with painful sores comes upon all of the followers of the beast. This parallels to the boils that were involved in the sixth plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:9-11).

## **II. THE POURING OF THE SECOND VIAL REACHED THE SEA. (V. 3)**

The sea has for centuries upon centuries been a vital source of food and has been necessary for travel, thus providing a means for worldwide commerce. The human

race is very much dependent upon the oceans of the world. The oceans or seas are necessary for a proper ecological balance. The ocean has just enough water spaced out with the right chemistry to provide for oxidation, for environmental cleansing and for a proper mineral balance. There have been studies made to determine whether our world could survive as it is now without the proper ocean to land ratio and it could not.

When the waters of the ocean become *as a dead man*, it will be apparent that the world chemistry involving the oceans has been drastically changed. With this being so, the first thing that will be affected is the death of the marine life. Once this happens, there will be a terrible stench that will cover the earth. The diseases from this will be overwhelming and the natural biological processes will go into a state of confusion. The air chemistry and the land chemistry will immediately begin to change.

We must realize and also acknowledge, as honest scientists do, that the eco system of this world is God ordained. It is no accident that the land to water ratio is as it is with the proper chemistry of the ocean being as it is. All of this will immediately change when the second vial is poured out.

### **III. THE POURING OF THE THIRD VIAL REVENGED THE SAINTS. (Vv. 4-7)**

The next vial involves the turning of the rivers and the streams of water into blood, with nothing but blood to drink. Every water supply will be filled with blood. Every water fountain will pour out its blood and every bath will require showering and bathing in blood. The water puddles will be blood puddles.

If one would think for a moment that these judgments are unwarranted or too harsh, take a while and read from *Fox's Book of Martyrs*. If you have any feelings at all, your soul

will be gripped by what you read. It will bring tears to your eyes as you read of the faithful witnesses who suffered in so many despicable ways. They were burned at the stake, buried up to the neck with only the head exposed; they were boiled in cauldrons of oil, and stretched on the rack until their tendons, sinews and skin tore. They had their skin stripped from their bodies and they were fed to the lions. They were run over by horses and chariots and trampled by angry beasts to the delight of the over-filled coliseums. The intensity of our NFL football games is already paving the way for having such a mindset for a reoccurrence of such an atmosphere. If you think that this statement is too strong, I saw a television newscast that showed soldiers just arriving from Iraq who were taken out into the streets and stomped in the face and on the body while calloused, cold-hearted witnesses cheered them on.

Our text indicates that there was righteous justification for the blood to be given to the wicked to drink because of all the blood that was shed by the martyrs. Verse seven says, *And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.*”

#### **IV. THE POURING OF THE FOURTH VIAL RESULTED IN SCORCHING. (Vv. 8-9)**

Men were being scorched with fire, but they still refused to repent. They blasphemed the name of God and refused to repent giving God the glory. In the days of Noah, the door of grace remained open with a “Whosoever will may come” message, but no one came. Finally the door of opportunity was closed and the earth inhabitants had no further opportunity to come to the Lord. When the door of the ark was slammed shut, and the judgment rains fell, there was total destruction. The earth population perished in a short matter of time. Today, the great door of salvation is wide open with a “Whosoever will” message, but in a relative

sense few are coming. The tribulation at the time being described here will have those who are under the direct effects of the plagues still refusing to come.

We do not learn lessons well. By association, one would think that upon being scorched by the heat and feeling the pain, that there would be a countless number crying for deliverance and peace, lest they go to the awful Lake of Fire, but they will not! Just as Pharaoh's heart was hardened (Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35), so will theirs be.

## **V. THE POURING OF THE FIFTH VIAL REVEALED MORE SUFFERING. (Vv. 10-11)**

The satanic kingdom of the beast is ushered into darkness as the wicked gnaw their tongues in pain. The darkness will be an additional plague that will be added to the already hurting world population. They will be surrounded by darkness with no ability to communicate their hurt to anyone who could do anything to help them; their mental anguish will be unbearable as they gnaw their tongues in pain. The darkness will bring about a total state of confusion, simply because people have all become so *light* dependant. When the world is thrust into darkness, it very well could mean that there will be no heat being felt during that time from the sun. The sun is always shining upon the earth somewhere which is absolutely necessary to maintain a proper thermal balance. If the total earth is darkened for an extended period, everything immediately is thrown out of balance. This should impress upon the unbelieving world that God, who is the perfect God of order, put everything in precise balance. The seasons are totally dependant upon a proper light-to-darkness ratio. In our earlier studies, we commented on the effect of imbalance to our life growing needs. Proper photosynthesis in the plant world can only occur with the proper amounts of sunlight. Try laying a piece of plywood on the grass for several days while blocking the sunlight and

watch the grass lose its chlorophyll and its rich green color. Then continue to let the plywood lay there and the grass will eventually die. If darkness overtakes the earth, the vegetation will soon die and without proper photosynthesis going on, there will be no oxygen being emitted and without oxygen mankind is incapable of maintaining its own metabolism. The plant and animal kingdom, including the human family, are totally interdependent upon each other.

In this darkened state, mankind will no longer be able to properly communicate and carry on normal life activities. In addition to the inconveniences of having no light, the oxygen level will begin to drastically drop causing people who have moderate breathing or heart problems to immediately go into cardiac arrest and into respiratory failure. Those who are robust and strong will struggle and gasp for air. It will be a very painfully depressing world in which to live, but the wicked will still refuse to repent and bring glory to God.

So much of our present technology requires light to operate. Machines like this, which are light dependent, will become only worthless pieces of junk. I can imagine with you the problems that will continue as the plagues are being poured out, but will simply say that it will be an unprecedented awful time like this world has never before seen.

## **VI. THE POURING OF THE SIXTH VIAL ROUSED UP SATAN. (Vv. 12-16)**

This next section of Scripture mentions the name Armageddon as it appears only one time in the Bible. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia defines Armageddon in this manner: "This name is found only in Revelation 16:16. It is described as the rallying-place of the kings of the whole world who, led by the unclean spirits issuing from the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, assemble here for 'the war of the great day of God,

the Almighty.’ Various explanations have been suggested; but, as Nestle says (HDB, s.v), "Upon the whole, to find an allusion here to Megiddo is still the most probable explanation." In the history of Israel it had been the scene of never-to-be-forgotten battles. Here took place the fatal struggle between Josiah and Pharaoh-necoh (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:22). Long before, the hosts of Israel had won glory here, in the splendid victory over Sisera and his host (Judges 5:19). These low hills around Megiddo, with their outlook over the plain of Esdraelon, have witnessed perhaps a greater number of bloody encounters than have ever stained a like area of the world's surface. There was, therefore, a peculiar appropriateness in the choice of this as the arena of the last mighty struggle between the powers of good and evil."

The sixth vial is poured out and then miraculously the great river Euphrates dries up permitting the armies from the east to march towards the land of Israel. Verse 13 and 14 tells how *froglike* unclean spirits come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet to perform their satanic miracles for the purpose of luring them into a climatic battle on that "great day of God Almighty."

The reference to *frogs* is very appropriate when one understands the symbolism of the frog. To the Jew, the frog is despicable and very repulsive. To the Egyptians, they revere the frog and have a frog goddess. I cannot imagine why anyone would want to give worship to the ugly frog. Yet, this indicates just how low sin can take a person. These spirits coming from the unholy trinity are making a last effort attempt to further deceive the world and by doing so they are organizing for the great Battle of Armageddon. This battle will prove to be the *battle of the ages*.

## **VII. THE POURING OF THE SEVENTH VIAL REELED THE SURFACE. (Vv. 17-21)**

With the pouring of the seventh vial a voice comes from the throne in Heaven saying, “It is done.” With that statement being made, the judgment pertaining to the Great Tribulation will be over. This announcement will come with “voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”

Then, “the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” When Babylon is brought to remembrance, it will be a reminder of the way that man began to establish his own government in preference to God’s government. The more wicked that government became, the more like Babylon it was in turning from God. The religious, economic and governmental system that will be in effect at the time of the pouring out of the seventh vial will be totally governed by Satan’s unholy trinity. God will completely destroy both him and his system. Chapter 17 will detail how this will be accomplished.

Another indication of how severe the judgment will be is indicated by the fact that “every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” One can only imagine how intense this judgment will be upon the entire earth. Also, the weather patterns will be entirely different including supernatural hail that weighs 60 to 100 pounds. Men all over the earth will be crushed by the hail, even as they continue to blaspheme God. The Bible describes this final plague as being “exceeding great.”

Dear reader, I trust that if you have never repented and trusted the Lord as your Savior that you will before it is eternally too late. May God bless!

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

### THE HARLOT OF REVELATION 17

#### Text: Revelation 17

1 *And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:*

2 *With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*

3 *So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

4 *And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:*

5 *And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

6 *And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

7 *And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.*

8 *The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

9 *And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.*

10 *And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.*

11 *And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*

12 *And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.*

13 *These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.*

*14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

*15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*

*16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*

*17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

*18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

The great religious harlot is about to be destroyed, along with its political and economic counterparts. This and the next chapter shows how God judges a system that had its beginnings way before the New Testament Church was even formed. This system is a wicked counterfeit system that is both economic and religious in nature. With it being a system that involves both the religious and the economic, it also merged with the political systems upon the earth. This system had its beginnings when Nimrod started building his empire at the Tower of Bab-El (which means Gate of God). As the people of Nimrod's day attempted to reach Heaven by building a tower, God came down and destroyed their efforts by confusing their languages. Nimrod's grandfather was Ham and Ham, if you remember, was associated with the curse that involved Noah's drunkenness. This curse came in response to Ham's wicked behavior of uncovering his father's nakedness. By this family association, you can recognize that Nimrod did not have a very honorable start.

The counterfeit attempt to establish a religious empire was the beginning of the spirit of Babylon. This same spirit showed up when Nebuchadnezzar built an image of himself, trying to forcefully bring together everyone to worship him (Daniel 3). Once again, God did not permit him to achieve his wicked goals. God had a trio of Hebrews, and another by

the name of Daniel, who faithfully challenged the Babylonian system. It was at this time that the three Hebrew children were cast into the fiery furnace and because they would not bow, they also would not burn.

This wicked system has its own wicked enduring qualities that have permitted it to survive for several thousand years. This chapter shows how God will finally deal with this system that has long deceived worshipers upon the earth. This system has often looked very Christian while involving both apostate Catholic and apostate Protestant groups. This religious system appeared this way only because of its counterfeit qualities. At the time of this judgment, all of the religions upon the earth will be connected together as the one-world church and called the “great whore that sitteth upon many waters.” We now will consider the predicted fall of this religious harlot.

## **I. THE INTRODUCTION CHARACTERIZING THE RELIGIOUS HARLOT. (Vv. 1-6)**

Before advancing this study any further we need to define some terms as they are being used in our text. The first being the words *great whore*. When this religious system is described as a great whore, it is in respect to its unfaithfulness. The counterfeit religion that is to be destroyed has its very seductive elements at work and has had since Satan invaded the human race. He influenced the mind of Cain, making Cain think that he was doing well by giving offerings of his own design. But God did not have respect for his offering. This was the first incident of satanic worship. Satan mimics that which is true by mixing Truth with error. He does it by putting it in a very attractive package.

Just as a woman can have seductiveness about her for the purpose of captivating a man, so does the counterfeit religious systems of the world. As we continue as believers

to embrace the true fundamentals of the faith, we will receive criticism for being too “straight-laced” or “hellfire and brimstone” in our preaching. We may be criticized for not using a contemporary music program with the heavy beat and rock sound that is so characteristic of the world’s music. Satan bridges the world and the church as closely as he can. He uses music as one of the means of accomplishing this. Counterfeit translations of the Bible is another way that he accomplishes this. By him using these and other similar devices, there is a wedding of the Church to the world. To God this is spiritual fornication; for the Lord wants a chaste bride, a glorious Church, without *spot or wrinkle*. The subtleness of these counterfeit movements takes its ongoing toll on the true Church.

This system is also called the MOTHER OF HARLOTS, which is another inference to unfaithfulness. The true Church is a called-out assembly that is to be separated from the world according to scriptures such as Acts 15:14; Romans 12:2; 1 John 2:15; and James 4:4. This does not mean that the true Church should be isolated, but it should be separated.

### **A. The Religious Harlot Is Described. (Vv. 1-4a)**

John had an invitation by one of the seven angels to witness the “judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.” John was able to give a very graphic description of this religious system as he likened her to a whore whose unfaithfulness has affected many people groups across the world and across time. This may seem to be a very caustic way of describing the religious system of Satan in such manner, but we must remind ourselves of the wickedness and the hurt that she has caused under her very seductive religious pretense.

Much persecution has taken place in the name of religion. Think carefully with me, as I describe the way that the Roman Catholic Church involved itself in such

persecution. This persecution was so intense and so widespread that today's Catholics do not even enjoy being reminded of it. Consider this page from Church history:

*"We should never forget that some of the most vicious persecution conducted against true Christians has been done in the name of the church; in the days when the Roman Catholic Queen Mary ruled England (known as "Bloody Mary" for good reason), some 288 Christians were burnt at the stake for their stand for Christian truth between 1555 and 1558. The first of these martyrs was a man named John Rogers, who, as he stood chained to a stake, and the fire rose around him, up to his legs and shoulders, he rubbed his hands in the flames as if he were washing his hands in cold water; then he lifted his hands to the heavens and held them high until he was completely consumed by fire. This barbarity was committed in the name of religion, in the name of the church. But Rogers went to the stake with such calm and dignity that the French Ambassador wrote that he went to his death "as if he was walking to his wedding." His courage was so evident that the huge crowd burst into applause when they saw him walking to the stake."* (Guzik).

### **1. Her relationship was described. (Vv. 1-2)**

The false Church had a relationship that involved the political leaders of the world. This is what is meant when our text tells us that, "the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." This is just a very graphic way of impressing upon the mind of the reader how wicked it is in God's eyes for the so called Church to be yoked up with the world and its leadership. It shows that in this intoxicating relationship that the religious and the political have a common bed to sleep in. It is appropriate for the true Church to be respected by the politics and even

influenced, but what is being described here is an unholy union that involves an *apostate religious system* uniting with a *corrupt political system*.

## **2. Her riches were described. (Vv. 3-4a)**

Everything that is being said about this harlot shows her miserable greed while maintaining her relationship to the evil world. The allusion to the seven heads and the ten horns is a reference to the ten confederated kingdoms of the revived Roman Empire that will be governed under the leadership of the beast and Satan. The attire of the harlot is very suggestive of the way that a whore presents herself to accomplish her miserable intent. This religious harlot will do what it takes to court the kings and the leaders of the world.

## **B. The Religious Harlot Is Defiled. (Vv. 4b-5)**

There is nothing in our text that gives indication that this false Church has any scriptural virtue. This is the reason the Lord chose to describe her in such an apparently identifiable way. Presently, when a Christian views the world in a very discerning way, it is very easy for the Christian to detect the counterfeit or the false Church. There are many distinguishing marks that identify the true Church. The Church Epistles give us a blueprint of how the true Church should be characterized. The Word of God must be our only pattern for identifying ourselves. The Word of God serves to bring about purification rather than defilement. Defilement takes place when the Word of God is displaced with philosophy, current events, and worldly wisdom, etc. The wisdom of this world is foolishness to the plans and purposes of God. Her defilement was apparent by both her fornications and her abominations.

## **C. The Religious Harlot Is Drunken. (V.6)**

For one to become drunk, that person must consume a large amount of intoxicating beverages. The parallel to this

wretched harlot being drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, means that it was a large number of deaths to her account. To be drunk with blood means that there were many who died in the name of religion. What a terrible wicked tragedy and there will be even greater tragedy during the tribulation because of the awful bloodshed of those who trusted in the Lamb of God. As the harlot becomes intoxicated with the blood of the saints, she also will be absolutely held accountable by God.

## **II. THE INTERPRETATION CONCERNING THE RELIGIOUS HARLOT. (Vv 7-8)**

Babylon is mentioned in the Scriptures 287 times, second to Jerusalem and has always symbolized an organized hatred against God. Notice what Tenney had to say about this name and place found in the Scriptures. "Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates River; right after the flood, Babylon was the seat of the civilization that expressed organized hostility to God. Babylon was later the capitol of the empire which cruelly conquered Judah: Babylon, to them (the Jews), was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God's people, and the lasting type of sin, carnality, lust and greed." (Tenney) [Genesis 11:1-10].

Even in Christ's day the Spirit of Babylon was apparent and seen in Rome. "In John's day Rome epitomized all the antagonism and opposition to the Christian faith" (Mounce); in some ways, the city of Rome was the clearest fulfillment of the "Babylon" attitude. If we had to pick one city today that most exemplifies the world system, perhaps we would say that Los Angeles is the "Babylon" of today! (Guzik).

During the tribulation or the Seventh Week of Daniel the prevailing world spirit will be that of Babylon.

### **A. The Residence Of The Harlot Is Given. (Vv. 7-9)**

The harlot sits on many waters. This speaks of her having

a worldwide influence. To better understand her religious government you need to remember that there were four major empires that this government was identified with. It was revealed by God to Daniel and to Nebuchadnezzar that these four empires would begin with Babylon followed by the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and then the Roman Empire. The last of these four, the Roman Empire, came to power during the middle of the eighth century B.C. and was overthrown in A.D. 476.

The spirit of the Roman Empire has been kept alive for fifteen centuries due to the influence of pagan Rome. Babylon is clearly identified. "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" (17:9). "History knows of only one city which is so designated. It is Rome, called 'the lofty city of seven peaks.' The first signification of the 'seven heads' then is geographical, or territorial. They are identified with the woman, pointing her out clearly to be Rome. The names of the seven hills are Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal. Students of ancient coins remind us that the coin of Vespasian represents Rome seated on seven hills. The Roman Catholic Church itself, in the Confraternity Edition of the New Testament (new edition, New York, 1963, page 337), claims that Rome is Babylon." (Strauss).

It may be clearly recognized that pagan Rome is but a forerunner of papal Rome. The Lord permits the ecumenical church to develop to the point that the entire world will be under its influence. The Roman Catholic Church, several decades ago, had an isolated position and would not involve itself with other faiths as it now does. That is no longer so. I recall being told over thirty years ago that the Catholic Church was going to reach out and become more involved in the community and also be more involved with other religious institutions and do this for the purpose of becoming more common and more accepted by other groups, both religious and social. This is a necessary movement by false

religions to set the stage for both a *one world government* and for one *world worship*. The last religion will be a world religion. It will involve all false religions upon the earth after the true Church is removed.

During the lifetime of Pope John Paul II much headway was made for bringing about the ecumenical movement. Notice with me these quotes concerning this:

“In addressing a prayer gathering of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and others, Pope John Paul II told participants that their efforts were "unleashing profound spiritual energies in the world and bringing about a new climate of peace"; the Pope pledged that "the Catholic Church intends to 'share in and promote' such ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation. The *Catholic Review* commented on this and said, "The unity of religion promoted by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II and approved by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is not a goal to be achieved immediately, but a day may come when the love and compassion which both Buddha and Christ preached so eloquently will unite the world in a common effort to save humanity from senseless destruction, and leading to toward the light in which we all believe." (Guzik).

This illustrates how Christian some of their activities may appear on the surface, but when examined scripturally their efforts are still counterfeit.

## **B. The Realm Of The Harlot Is Given. (Vv. 10-14)**

The harlot was using the political system that was led by the beast (Antichrist), to further her design and purpose, She, the rider of the beast, had tremendous influence over the beast for a period of time. Therefore, his realm was her realm. This shows how powerful this system was during the Tribulation and it has had its satanic power for centuries, as well. The Revelation prophecy clearly identifies this corrupt religious system with its Roman base.

The political system is also identified in the last days

with the different kings being referred to. The seven kings are difficult to identify exactly, but the eighth is in reference to the Antichrist. Many theologians believe that when John received his vision, five of the kings had fallen. If that was indeed what he was referring to, there would be first Julius Caesar, who was followed by Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. The angel then said to John, “and one is,” which probably refers to Domitian, the last of the Caesars who would have been alive when John wrote the Revelation prophecy.

*“And the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space” (17:10).*

The next head that arises as head of the revived Roman Empire is the Antichrist who would qualify as being the one who was alive, is now dead, but who comes to life again (17:8, 11; cf. 13:3). As the rule of Antichrist concludes with the Lord bringing about total destruction, the final rule by the Antichrist will prove to be just for a short while. Thank God, the shorter the better!

### **C. The Rebellion Against The Harlot Is Given (Vv. 15-18)**

The ten horns or nations will turn against the whore and make war against her, because the Lord will put it into their hearts to do His will. This shows how confused and how much turmoil the world will be in towards the end of the tribulation. They will be fighting themselves. Even as I write this, it is being suggested that Iraq will likely go into civil war and further weaken themselves. This is very similar to what I see that will take place while everything is winding down; except the Lord will cause them to despise their own wicked program and help them bring about their own destruction.

Notice how appropriate the prophet Jeremiah was when he spoke the words of the Lord in Jeremiah 51:6-9 several thousand years ago:

*“Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man*

*his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this [is] the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence. Babylon [hath been] a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up [even] to the skies.”*

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

### COMMERCIAL BABYLON UNDER FIRE

#### Text: Revelation 18

1 *And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*

2 *And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

3 *For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

4 *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

5 *For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

6 *Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.*

7 *How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*

8 *Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*

9 *And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,*

10 *Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.*

11 *And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:*

12 *The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,*

13 *And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and*

*horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.*

*14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.*

*15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,*

*16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!*

*17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,*

*18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!*

*19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.*

*20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*

*21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*

*22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;*

*23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.*

*24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*

The last chapter shows the awful ending of the satanic religious system that we refer to as “The Great Harlot.” Now we will be observing the fall of the same system, but in a different facet. The political, the commercial, and the religious are so very tightly intertwined that they must be dissected individually. The tentacles of each are wrapping each other so tightly that they seem as one. The political and the religious have long been recognized as being together,

but not as closely recognized, as being together, are the religious and the commercial. This chapter will show how devastating it will be to the world when the commercial program of Satan is completely destroyed and it will be. That is what this chapter is about.

## **I. THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON IS DECLARED. (Vv. 1-8)**

A very impressive announcement is about to be made concerning the fall of Babylon the great. The heavens will be brightened by the angel's glory. The glory of God is being transferred by the mighty angel to the earth. This brightness will be seen upon the earth. This is to be such an impressive event that it will be attended to in a most impressive way. The glory of God rested upon Moses as he came out of the mount with the tables of the law still in his hand. This same glory of God is apparently what is being described here when the angel makes the announcement concerning the fall of Babylon. With this announcement we will learn in greater detail concerning her wickedness.

### **A. She Was Wicked. (Vv. 1-3)**

There is nowhere in the Scriptures that you can recognize the presence of Satan any more than when Babylon the great had fallen. Notice how this brief portion of Scripture describes the wicked environment immediately after Babylon's fall, "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*" In my mind's eye, I can see how the traumatic force of God's judgment has left its indelible mark on commercial Babylon. Can you smell with me the ruin of such a total judgment; do you smell the awful smell of sulfur and the more awful smell of death as the buzzard-like birds are perched on the shredded carnage that remains? The green misty vapor

settles like a damp fog with the glimmer and the glitter of such a proud city forever gone. Her bright lights, along with her tensile flickering thoroughfares will be seen no more; for judgment has fallen! Only the smell of death remains and that smell can be only described as a suffocating smell unlike any smelled before.

No matter how impressive the interchanging of ideas may have been when the business entrepreneurs would gather in their closed coffers; it will no longer be so. The *Wall Street* mentality is forever gone... For the proud business owners who may have survived, they now see only the shredded remains of their empire lying in the smoldering ruins with only a charred sign to remind them of what was once a part of commercial Babylon. Countless souls will be seen sobbing and weeping knowing that all of their dreams were flawed. They had been deceived by the Great Harlot into thinking that they were invincible and that their empires would last forever. They now can only see failure. Instead of seeing a beautiful enticing harlot, as she once appeared, they see her as the burnt out, despicable creature she always was. Her perfume now is repulsive; her breath is to be avoided, for she has the foul smell of death all about her. For Babylon the great has been judged.

## **B. Saints Were Warned. (Vv. 4-8)**

It is very easy for me to become confused with the chronology of all that is happening in Revelation, but one thing that I am not confused about is that the Lord is constantly doing all that He can to warn the wicked to come out of their wicked system. God is giving such warning in regards to this Babylonian system. For those of us who now live, we may rest assured that as believers we will not be called upon to go through the Great Tribulation of sorrow. We may also know that the lost person has a present day opportunity of coming to the Lord to avoid any chance of having to go through tribulation.

The Lord is mercifully warning us that the sins of this wicked system called commercial Babylon has reached up to heaven. I personally think that there is more to this than a statement of His omniscience. I believe that it is referring to those who died and went to Heaven that were under the oppression and the martyrdom of this system. The greed and the murder that she was capable of caused many a poor soul to die prematurely. This is a passage that says God not only knows about the persecution that fell upon the believers for refusing to take the mark, but He is also going to do something about it. In verse six, we are told, *“Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.”*

It may be clearly noted from this passage that the Lord is going to double the punishment according to the crime that was committed against His followers. Those who are partakers of commercial Babylon’s deeds will be punished with her.

## **II. THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON IS DESCRIBED. (Vv. 9-19)**

These next verses will spell out the horrendous effects of the judgment that will befall the awful harlot. Do not even begin to pity the harlot. She deserves everything that will happen to her. The Scriptures personalize the harlot to the extent that we begin thinking of her as though she was a real singular person. This is not so, but for us to understand this system we need to relate to it. God saw fit to personify this monster system. When the people begin to weep over her fall, they are actually weeping over the fall of this system. When we see this system being described as a city, it is much more than just a city. When this commercial Babylonian city is burning, it is more than just a city burning; it is the destruction of a system. In these chapters the Lord described

this system by using both the symbolism of a harlot and that of a city so that we can even see the wretched smile upon her face. We can also see the smoldering ruins of the city.

It is very possible that an *actual city* is involved that is to serve as the seat of the beast. He obviously will have a seat to espouse his government. Thus, the term stands for both a city and a system.

### **A. Her Peril During The Judgment Is Described. (Vv. 9-11)**

Those observing the destruction of commercial Babylon are overwhelmed by the suddenness of what is happening. They are “*Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.*” The Word of God talks about the kings of the earth who have lived deliciously with her and now they are seeing her destruction. There is a very strong, practical lesson that can be gained from this study. *Anything* that is not of God that you put your trust in will one day go up in smoke. Only the eternal will last. Some who will either hear this message or read the words that I speak, who have been greatly blessed, at least by the world’s definition of what constitutes blessings, will invest much time and much effort to be successful and finally wake up one day realizing that they missed out on the true values of life. They will realize that they left God out of their plans, or at least they put Him “in the backseat” of their plans. I read of successful engineers and doctors who leave their practices and go into the ministry. It is not that what they were doing was not important; they just realized there is a much higher calling.

While the destruction is going on, the spectators are both sorrowfully watching and sadly weeping during her destruction. It will be a most emotional time during the fall of the system. It likewise will be very distressing times when those who have made materialism their god see all of their

worldly investments go up in smoke. The peril of such an awful event is unparalleled. There never has been a time like the time being described here. The entire economic system will go into total collapse. We can but fathom in our minds such an event. Hurricane Katrina that struck New Orleans in 2005, is only a “drop in a bucket” compared to what will take place during the time described in Revelation 18.

## **B. Her Poverty From Judgment Is Described. (Vv. 12-17)**

The Word of God lists many valuable commodities that will be destroyed in just a moment of time. Everything that commercial Babylon was capable of producing and selling will no longer be available. Her end has come. There are religious organizations today that are heavily involved in commerce. The Catholic Church is such a church. The Catholic Church has its own post office and the Vatican has its own government. Its government is ecclesiastical with the Pope being its governmental head and the cardinals working within the framework of that government. It is called a city-state. The Catholic Church has its own winery and owns properties all over the world. Its wealth is staggering. Here is a lengthy quote showing just how the Catholic Church can very well be the commercial Babylon that is described in our text:

“The Vatican has large investments with the Rothschild’s of Britain, France and America, with the Hambros Bank, with the Credit Suisse in London and Zurich. In the United States it has large investments with the Morgan Bank, the Chase-Manhattan Bank, the First National Bank of New York, the Bankers Trust Company, and others. The Vatican has billions of shares in the most powerful international corporations such as Gulf Oil, Shell, General Motors, Bethlehem Steel, General Electric, International Business Machines, T.W.A., etc. At a conservative estimate, these

amount to more than 500 million dollars in the U.S.A. alone.”

“In a statement published in connection with a bond prospectus, the Boston archdiocese listed its assets at Six Hundred and Thirty-five Million (\$635,891,004), which is 9.9 times its liabilities. This leaves a net worth of Five Hundred and Seventy-one million dollars (\$571,704,953). It is not difficult to discover the truly astonishing wealth of the Church, once we add the riches of the twenty-eight archdioceses and 122 dioceses of the U.S.A., some of which are even wealthier than that of Boston.”

"Some idea of the real estate and other forms of wealth controlled by the Catholic Church may be gathered by the remark of a member of the New York Catholic Conference, namely 'that his church probably ranks second only to the United States Government in total annual purchase.' Another statement, made by a nationally syndicated Catholic priest, perhaps is even more telling. 'The Catholic church,' he said, 'must be the biggest corporation in the United States. We have a branch office in every neighborhood. Our assets and real estate holdings must exceed those of Standard Oil, A.T.&T., and U.S. Steel combined. And our roster of dues-paying members must be second only to the tax rolls of the United States Government.”

"The Catholic church, once all her assets have been put together, is the most formidable stockbroker in the world. The Vatican, independently of each successive pope, has been increasingly orientated towards the U.S. The Wall Street Journal said that the Vatican's financial deals in the U.S. alone were so big that very often it sold or bought gold in lots of a million or more dollars at one time.”

"The Vatican's treasure of solid gold has been estimated by

the United Nations World Magazine to amount to several billion dollars. A large bulk of this is stored in gold ingots with the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank, while banks in England and Switzerland hold the rest. But this is just a small portion of the wealth of the Vatican, which in the U.S. alone, is greater than that of the five wealthiest giant corporations of the country. When to that is added all the real estate, property, stocks and shares abroad, then the staggering accumulation of the wealth of the Catholic Church becomes so formidable as to defy any rational assessment.”

"The Catholic church is the biggest financial power, wealth accumulator and property owner in existence. She is a greater possessor of material riches than any other single institution, corporation, bank, giant trust, government or state of the whole globe. The pope, as the visible ruler of this immense amassment of wealth, is consequently the richest individual of the twentieth century. No one can realistically assess how much he is worth in terms of billions of dollars." (The Vatican Billions by Avro Manhattan)

### **C. Her Predicament After Judgment Is Described. (Vv. 18-19)**

The dejected business people of the world view what is taking place as an unprecedented depressing sight. It is so much so that the merchants are lamenting their awful plight by casting dust on their heads. During the depression, I recall reading how people upon learning that their great fortunes had been wiped out would commit suicide rather than having to deal with their loss. The depression during this time will be many times greater. They will witness this great loss taking place not in the period of months, but within an hour. They will see that their ships are destroyed and everything else that was connected with the interchange of their commerce being suddenly destroyed. While the godless tears are being shed upon the earth, there will be great rejoicing up

in Heaven.

### **III. THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON IS DELIGHTFUL. (Vv. 20-24)**

Yes, there is going to be rejoicing in Heaven and rightfully so. God promised that He would bring vengeance against all that had wronged His servants. It will be a total vindication. He will not only put their lights out, but will also shut down their music. Music is such an identifiable part of the world today ever since the curse was pronounced upon the earth. There has been since that time both godly and ungodly music. Music carries a message and teaches that message to the listener. Satan very well knows this to be true and for that reason he will get to you by the music that you listen to. Do not think that it is an accident that the music goes in such a satanic direction. Much of the music is either sending an awful vulgar message or a message of violence. We must be very selective in the music that we listen to.

#### **A. To Those Who Suffered By Her. (Vv. 20-23)**

Upon the earth all activity is ceasing because of the judgment that has fallen upon the earth. The music has ceased; the lights have gone out and the factories are no longer in operation. While all these difficulties are upon the earth, there is rejoicing in Heaven because of this same judgment. In verse 21, we are told that an angel took a great stone like a millstone and cast it down and used that as a parallel to the casting down of Babylon. The heavens were rejoicing because of this taking place.

#### **B. To Those Who Were Slain By her. (V. 24)**

The last verse in our study indicates that there were saints and prophets and others whose blood was shed that was found in the ruins of Babylon. The events that are taking place here are taking place just before the Lord comes back

to fight the Battle of Armageddon. The Battle of Armageddon will take place just before the Lord sets up His kingdom. What a glorious day that will be! These studies should cause us to be very much prepared for the coming of the Lord. We should be mindful every time that we read or hear the Revelation prophecy that there is a warning for the lost and an encouragement for the believer.

## Chapter Thirty

### THE SUPPER OF THE GREAT GOD AND THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

#### Text: Revelation 19

1 *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:*

2 *For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*

3 *And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

4 *And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*

5 *And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.*

6 *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

7 *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

8 *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

9 *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

11 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

12 *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

13 *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

14 *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

15 *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should*

*smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

*16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

*17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;*

*18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.*

*19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.*

*20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

*21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

This chapter could very well have three different titles. I gave you the first two, but it could also be entitled, “The Four Hallelujahs.” This is a very intense chapter with much that is going on. It is the wind down chapter of the great book of Revelation. This chapter is one of the most encouraging to me. I very well remember, as a student at Tabernacle, hearing Dr. Harold Sightler preach a message entitled “The Four Hallelujahs.” It was a very uplifting and a very stirring message on the mighty power of God at work in judging the whore and how “the Lord hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.” Before the message was over, nearly everyone in attendance was shouting and praising the Lord.

This chapter is also great in that it tells about the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is going to be a great day for the redeemed Church as we sit at the table as a “glorious church without spot or wrinkle.” It will be a time of great reunion of all the brothers and sisters in Christ. Another

supper that is given in our text involves the Battle of Armageddon that is called the supper of the great God. Certainly, for the believer this is a very great chapter of encouragement.

## **I. HEAVEN'S PRAISE BEFORE THE SECOND COMING. (Vv. 1-10)**

Much praise will be taking place just prior to the return of the Lord in glory. This is so because the Lord God Almighty has judged the Great Harlot and is preparing for the last battle before the Lord sets up His earthly kingdom. This is the reason that John heard much people saying, "Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God."

### **A. The First Alleluias Mentioned. (Vv. 1-3)**

The word Alleluia is the Greek form of the word Halleluiah and is not a compound word as some think, but is a single word that means "Praise the Lord." It is also a universal word meaning that it is found in most languages of the world. In Easton's dictionary, you will find this definition of how the word is used in the Scriptures: *Praise ye Jehovah, frequently rendered "Praise ye the LORD," stands at the beginning of ten of the psalms (106,111-113,135,146-150), hence called "hallelujah psalms." From its frequent occurrence it grew into a formula of praise. The Greek form of the word (alleluia) is found in Revelation 19:1, 3-4, 6.*

#### **1. The Alleluia of Victory. (V. 1)**

The great number of people in Heaven began to praise the Lord because of the righteous punishment of the great whore. The song is praising the Lord for being so merciful in vindicating those who suffered because of her. There are at least four stanzas in the way that this praise song is being

sung. There is first the praise involving salvation. Moses even knew that salvation was of the Lord. Jonah knew that “Salvation is of the Lord.” (Jonah 2:9). Throughout the Scriptures, the theme is the same, “Salvation is of the Lord.” David said when he went up against Goliath that the battle was of the Lord. The three Hebrew children recognized that the Lord was able to deliver them; He was their Salvation.

Next, there is the praise involving the glory that is His. No one is deserving of the glory that belongs to Him. Strong’s definition of glory is: *The kingly majesty which belongs to him as supreme ruler, majesty in the sense of the absolute perfection of the deity.* This is certainly a definition that fits in describing the work of the Lord during the Great Tribulation. In contrast to the Lord’s work involving the Trinity, we have the work of Satan. His unholy trinity is flawed in so many ways. Every attempt that Satan made to mimic the Holy One came up pitifully short. Therefore Satan is worthy of no glory-only shame, whereas the Lord is deserving of and will receive the glory that is due His name.

Then there is the honor that is spoken of in the Scriptures and in our text. The Lord is certainly deserving of the glory and the honor of that glory. It becomes Him, for He is the altogether lovely One. He is the Fairest of ten thousand and the Bright and Morning Star. Every sermon that is preached, every song that is sung, and every miracle that is performed should be done so in His honor.

He is also the powerful One. His power has been demonstrated from the creation on. Every salvation experience is a direct result of His power. His power is without limit. The alleluias that are being sung here are attributing all of the above mentioned qualities to Him and to Him alone. He has the power to implement His program and to enforce it.

## **2. The Alleluia of Vengeance. (Vv. 2-3)**

It should be very clear to all who read these verses, that the praise is in response to the vindication that came against the great whore: “*For true and righteous [are] his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*” It will be a punishment that is everlasting. Each person that was slain by her will rejoice along with a great number of others in knowing that her days are over. They will rejoice in knowing that her smoke will rise up forever. This means that she will never be reestablished to bring about her religious wickedness. Her punishment is absolute and final.

## **B. The Following Alleluias Mentioned. (Vv. 4-10)**

Our wonderful text indicates that there is nothing anemic about the quality or the volume of praise that will be taking place when the four alleluiahs are being sung. In the Scriptures, alleluiah only appears four times in the New Testament. The four times is as described in this nineteenth chapter. It is a word that carries great respect. It is almost a sacred word in the sense that it should be reserved for only describing the Heavenly. “Anselm of Canterbury considers it an angelic word, which cannot be fully reproduced in any language of man, and concurs with Augustine that the feeling and saying of it embodies all the blessedness of heaven.” (Seiss) Though we should not be afraid to use this wonderful word, we should respectfully use it.

The four and twenty elders again refer to the entire family of the redeemed. This is the last mention of them. Together, they sing their praises unto the Lord. Everything that the Lord is doing as the tribulation winds down is to be praised. While the praise is taking place, the family of the redeemed is sitting in the heavenly arena looking down upon

the earth observing the mighty work of the Lord God Almighty as He quickly dismantles everything that pertains to Satan. The worship in praise that is being described here should serve as both an example and a challenge causing us to more fervently praise God while we yet live. We should do this out of appreciation for the redemption work that He did for us on the Cross, granting us an opportunity to enjoy all the many benefits of salvation.

### **1. The Alleluia of Worship. (Vv. 4-5)**

The worship of the Lord God Almighty should always be a very important reason for saying “Halleluiah!” The worshiping of the Lord is simply a means for praising Him. We should never praise the Lord in a half-hearted way. There should be much excitement as we worship the Lord. Our Spirit-led churches should let the praising of the Lord come forth in every song that is being sung and every sermon that is being preached. Christ Jesus should be lifted up in praise and we should not need to wait until we get to Heaven to begin praising Him.

### **2. The Alleluia of the Wedding. (Vv. 6-10)**

This is the event that the book of Ephesians describes as the Church being presented as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. *“That he might present it to himself a **glorious church**, not having **spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and **without blemish**”*** (Ephesians 5:27). The Lord uses an event that we are familiar with within the human family. I am speaking of marriage. Those who have the character to make the right choice will feel strongly about having a virtuous mate. It is God’s plan and desire that we keep ourselves pure before marriage so we can bring that purity into marriage. The Lord desires that we be pure and stay pure for that day when we will be presented to Him as His bride. The sanctifying of the Word of God will bring about such purity and also the cleansing by His Holy

Spirit. It is in this way that the bride makes herself ready. This shows us the practical significance of the applied Word of God. For those who neglect to be changed by the Word of God, they will find that many of the marriage benefits that could be enjoyed will be forever forfeited. This does not imply that works are necessary for salvation, but works are necessary for rewards. There is no way to understand, while here upon this earth, what all of that means.

Just as the Lord allows man to exercise his personal will in regards to salvation, such is also the case in respect to rewards. The mystery of this should cause us to be diligent in making ourselves ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. I do not wish to deemphasize God's part in this, but I also do not wish to deemphasize man's part either. To be ready requires a personal discipline as well as having a benefit of God's grace. The mysterious aspect of this is not very easily understood. There will be a loss of rewards to those who do not strive lawfully. We should be very mindful of this. I am very concerned in the way that we plan and live our lives without respect to His purpose and His desires for us. We should be constantly mindful that there is going to be a day of examination just as the Hebrew would examine His wife before and during the marriage. The Jewish marriage would involve a year of betrothal to determine the purity of the bride. There were also the tokens of the virginity to determine marriage fidelity as the marriage event was taking place. These verses indicate the severity of not being pure before the Lord: *"But if this thing be true, [and the tokens of] virginity be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you"* (Deuteronomy 22: 20-21).

These are Old Testament passages that show the importance of marital purity as God views it. Never think that God lightly regards marriage fidelity. With His personal work, He will receive us as a chaste bride and such will be the cause for shouting the Alleluia that pertains to the wedding.

## **II. HEAVEN'S PRESENTATION AT THE SECOND COMING. (Vv. 11-16)**

*“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him [was] called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” (v. 11).*

This has been one of my favorite passages that is found in the entire Word of God since I was just a very small boy. When I was very young, my mother had to go to the hospital and stay for a while and while she was gone I remember my dad reading this passage to me for the very first time. Even as a very small child, this passage spoke to my heart. I must have been greatly thrilled by seeing that the Lord would be riding on a white horse. I am still thrilled nearly fifty years later. Praise be unto the Lord God Almighty. Think how magnificent this description is of the One who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

### **A. The Almighty Warrior. (Vv. 11-13)**

There is no greater name for the moment than the name Faithful and True, for He is the faithful and the true One. The entire Word of God is the Truth Book and it is inspired by the One who has proven Himself to always be faithful and to always be true. Those two qualities are becoming rarer with the passing of time. The Lord told Thomas that He was The Way, The Truth, and The Life and He, with that description, is coming as the Almighty Warrior to totally conquer Satan. He is going to make war and judge in righteousness. He is going to faithfully accomplish this just

as He declared that He would.

### **1. Notice the Countenance of the Warrior. (Vv. 11-12a)**

His “eyes were as a flame of fire.” This shows the sterling, piercing qualities of this mighty conquering Warrior. He is coming as the righteous Judge to make war and destroy the forces of Satan.

### **2. Notice the Many Crowns of the Warrior. (V. 12b)**

He comes not as the counterfeit ruler and king, but as the true and faithful King. The Antichrist could only come as a great pretender. This he did, but not so with the true Warrior. He comes as the faithful and true One to take His Kingdom to Himself.

### **3. Notice the Majestic Clothing of the Warrior. (V. 13)**

He is crowned with many crowns and “he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.” So says the Scriptures and it is entirely so. There is much about Him that only He knows, because He is the all-knowing God. We read in verse number 13 that He is also clothed with a vesture that was dipped in blood. Can you imagine how impressive this sight will be when King Jesus comes and appears to initiate the Battle of Armageddon? It will be a horrendous time that is unparalleled in all time and history. It will be a total battle with no one being able to stand. His outfit will be so telling of whom He is and what He did. The blood that so many hated will make up His uniform. To those of us who make up the family of the redeemed, His blood will be very precious. His blood is His signature.

### **B. The Armies of War. (Vv. 14-16)**

*“And the armies [which were] in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean”* (V. 14). As I write this, I am thinking ahead in time,

to the event that is being described here, knowing that I am writing about myself and those of you who are in the faith that are either listening to or reading this. What a thrilling prospect, just knowing that we are in this together. We shall all be counted together as He leads us against the enemy. The war will soon be over. Almost as soon as it starts, it will be fought and won. We will be on white horses dressed in or clothed in fine linen, white and clean. We shall be like Him.

### **1. They Followed the Warrior in Purity. (V. 14)**

This is certainly one of the many benefits of being washed in the blood. We shall be washed white and clean. May we call this army the army of the redeemed? Redemption blood purifies. This will be the only army of purity that the world has ever known. Wars have plagued this earth for many millenniums, even though many were fought with very pure motives and purposes; they yet lacked the purity as this army will have. It will be a battle that is fought in absolute holiness. It certainly will be the only true Holy war that has ever been fought. It will be a war that will be fought to purify the effects of sin on a sin cursed world. It will be fought for the purpose of the Lord bringing in His kingdom. The only One who will be fighting is the Lord God Almighty. The total purification process will be completed at the Battle of Gog and Magog. We will say more about that later...

### **2. They Followed the Warrior in Power. (Vv. 15-16)**

The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords will be the powerful warrior. There will be none who can stand up against Him. They should not even pretend to do so. The Lord God Almighty, who is also the Creator who created all that there is with His Almighty power will use that same power to destroy the wicked warriors that will rise up and try to defend themselves. Our text describes the war involving the Word of His power. This is indicated by the expression,

*“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”* The sword speaks of the cutting effect of His Word. He can do with His words the same in war as He did in creation. All He needs to do is speak and the battle is won.

The ruling with a rod of iron refers to the way that He will govern those that find themselves going into the millennial reign. His government will be that of a shepherding autocrat. He will rule with unlimited and undisputed power. There has never been a rulership as this. Men may have pretended to rule in this fashion, but even they found themselves with personal limitations. The treading of the winepress is a word picture that describes the way that God shows His wrath and anger against all wickedness. When the Lord is fighting the battle of the ages, He is recognized by the name written on His vesture, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (V. 16). For truly this is He!

### **III. HEAVEN’S PROCLAMATION AFTER THE SECOND COMING. (Vv. 17-21)**

The final war of the Great Tribulation is about to start and the final war will soon be ending. This slaughter will produce more carnage than the world has ever seen. The millions killed will beckon the invitation of every carnivorous bird in the world. This is the supper of the great God that is being described. What a victory that is going to be enjoyed by the people of faith and also the army of the redeemed as they witness King Jesus, the mighty Conqueror, when He destroys the enemy.

#### **A. The Angel Proclaimed A Great Meal. (V. 17)**

This supper will be so great for the fowls of the air

resulting from the slaughter in the war of Armageddon that an angel will call together the fowls of the heaven to eat the flesh of those who fall in battle. The describing of the “angel standing in the sun” is a way of expressing how visible and worldwide this call will be. Everywhere that the sun is to be seen, the angel will be seen issuing the supernatural call to all of the fowls of the air. Just as birds have a homing instinct, such will be their response to the angel that beckons them. They will surely come.

**1. They will eat the flesh of the strong man. (Vv. 17-18a)**

**2. They will eat the flesh of the small man. (V. 18b)**

These verses show that God is no respecter of persons. All of the military geniuses of the world will be called on to make war with King Jesus, only to be slaughtered. It is their flesh that the vultures will be eating.

**B. The Angel Proclaimed A Great Massacre. (Vv. 19-21)**

**1. This massacre satisfied God’s anger. (Vv. 19-20)**

**2. This massacre satisfied the fowl’s appetite. (V. 21)**

The sword coming from the Lord’s mouth was the Word of God. The Lord has the power of His omnipotence in His words. It still is and forever will be His powerful words that are being spoken... Are we listening?

## Chapter Thirty-One

### THE PERIL AND THE PUNISHMENT OF THE LAST DAYS

#### Text: Revelation 20

*1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*

*2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,*

*3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

*4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

*5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

*6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

*7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,*

*8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*

*9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*

*10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

*11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

*12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

*13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

*14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

*15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

This chapter begins with very much welcomed news. Satan is going to be arrested. The emphasis of this arrest is not on the strength and the size of the arrestor, for that one mentioned is listed as only “an angel.” We know Satan to be so diabolical and cunning, so wicked and wounding, so ruthless and so vulgar that he must be as powerful as the Lord God Almighty. Nothing could be further from the truth. He is a sleazy wimpy “has-been” when this angel gets hold of him.

In this chapter we will show the arrest of Satan, and the resurrection of the saints and the sinners. We will show the Great White Throne Judgment and the casting of Satan and the sinners into the Lake of Fire. This is a chapter of both triumph and a chapter of tragedy.

## **I. THE PERIL OF THE LAST DAYS (Vv.1-9)**

Before the Millennium begins, Satan must be contained or restrained. This is not the final punishment of Satan that is being described here. That will come after the Millennium when Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire. The peril that is being described here is only in regards to Satan being cast and bound in the bottomless pit. It is during this time that the Lord is going to set up His government and rule without the hindrances of Satan. Even though the Lord, Himself, will be ruling, there will be those during the Millennium who are only serving reluctantly, having been born during the thousand years but never coming to the Lord in belief.

## **A. Satan Is Arrested During This Time. (Vv. 1-3)**

It is as though the Word of God is stressing who Satan is by referring to him with four of his names so that there will be no mistake as to whom the angel is arresting with the great chain. He is called “the dragon”, “that old serpent,” “the devil,” and “Satan.” His name Satan means adversary and his name Devil means accuser. The angel that is commissioned to capture him is not mentioned. This indicates that there was absolutely no effort on the part of God to arrest Satan. Satan is a loser and it is so pathetic that many of the human family still worship him as their hero. Every time you pin up one of his rock star puppets, you are in effect worshiping Satan. Every time you view vulgar video you are viewing Satan.

Much, if not all, of the back masking messages that are coded into satanic music is of his design. After all, he originally was the choir leader in Heaven until his rebellion. He knows much about music and knows how to deliver his satanic messages to those defiled and also those who are being defiled by his wicked music. When was the last time that you heard the typical rock star give a genuine testimony of how much he loves the Lord and the things of God? You haven't, because the rock star is only a puppet of Satan. It is Satan that he truly worships.

### **1. Satan is Arrested by a Messenger That is Strong (Vv. 1-2)**

The Lord could have taken his weakest angel to arrest Satan. The weakest angel would have been stronger than Satan. His strength is being diminished. He will be bound and held for a thousand years for the purpose of the Lord setting up His kingdom. The great chain shows God's attitude towards Satan; he is a criminal of the worst order. He is being arrested.

## **2. Satan is Arrested for a Millennium and Sealed . (V. 3)**

When Satan is sealed, much will take place upon the earth that will be very different from that which the world had previously experienced. Not only will Satan be captured and sealed for a thousand years, but there will also be, more importantly, the rule of King Jesus. According to Isaiah 2:1-4, all nations will flow unto the Lord's house. *"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."*

During the time of the Millennium, the people will acknowledge and submit themselves to the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ. The animals will lose their ferocity and even the reptiles will no longer be feared. There will be no more war and if there is any conflict between people and nations, it will be quickly resolved by King Jesus.

The Millennium has great significance in that it will reveal that man has a sin nature and a rebellious nature that cannot be tamed by only having a perfect environment in which to live. This truth is witnessed today when those who are raised up in a Christian home reject their Godly teachings and elect to worship Satan and pursue the lures of the world. The wickedness of the human heart in regards to those born in the Kingdom who refuse the King will be exposed when

Satan is released at the time of Gog and Magog.

### **B. Saints Are Resurrected During This Time. (Vv. 4-6)**

The fourth verse mentions those who were seated on the thrones. Who they were, we are not told. We are told that they will be given the opportunity to rule or bring judgment during the Millennium. Just as they are not clearly identified, we also are not told how the judgment will be given unto them. However, it seems from the context to be the family of the redeemed, as a whole.

In this same verse, the tribulation saints are going to have the honor and the privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ during the thousand year reign. Christ will certainly vindicate those who suffered for Him.

Verse six is a very important verse telling of those who will have part in the first resurrection as being holy and blessed and will not be affected by the second death. Those who make up the first resurrection begins with Christ (I Corinthians 15:23) and includes those who are Christ's when he comes in the rapture (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). The two witnesses whose bodies will lie in the streets as recorded in Revelation 11:11 and the tribulation saints will be included as part of this first resurrection. The first resurrection may be simply defined in that it includes Christ and all who are His, even though the believers will be raised at different times with the common identity being that they are all redeemed.

### **C. Sinners Are Rebelling During This Time. (Vv. 7-9)**

During the Millennium, there will be a large population of people born during the thousand years who never put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. They will only be serving because King Jesus will be ruling with a rod of iron. They have the outward expressions of loyalty and worship to their King, but in their hearts they are in rebellion.

Satan will be loosed out of his prison and will, as this passage tells us, "*go out to deceive the nations which are in*

*the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them” (Revelation 20:8-9).*

This will be such a pitifully awful time knowing that every rebel there had the high honor of serving under King Jesus and entering into eternal bliss with Him, but chose to serve Satan instead. This only shows how wicked the heart is and goes on to show why people today refuse Him who liveth and abideth forever...

The reference to Gog and Magog should not be confused with the Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39. There, Magog is a land to the north of Israel which is ruled by Gog. The spirit of the world is described by the name of Gog and Magog in our text here.

## **II. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE LAST DAYS. (VV. 10-15).**

### **A. Satan Met His Judgment. (V. 10)**

The devil will meet his eternal abode when he is cast into the lake of fire with the beast and the false prophet and will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. This is the way of describing the everlasting aspect of eternity that Satan will have to suffer. Just as Satan will be required to suffer forever, so will all those who refuse to come to the Lord Jesus Christ in believing faith. Just as Satan's program is terminated, so is his place to be eternal torment. This means that he will never be available to espouse his wickedness. He will never deceive one more person. He will never be the cause of one more broken heart. So much that we endure today is because of sin and Satan.

## **B. Sinners Mightily Judged. (Vv. 11-15)**

The Great Tribulation is over; the battle of Gog and Magog is over and the heavens and the earth have been destroyed by fire. Now, it is time for the last judgment to take place that will decide the penalty to be paid for having sinned and having rejected the Son of God. This will be the judgment of the wicked dead. The evidence against each sinner will be presented at this judgment as the books are opened. The setting of this judgment is at the great white throne. Where exactly this is we are not told. We know from the context that the old heavens and the old earth have been destroyed as the Lord makes all things new. In the New Testament, 2 Peter 3:9-13 clearly reveals this to be so. *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”*

The argument from this passage is to insure that if God is going to have such a total and a pronounced judgment upon the heavens and upon the earth, He will also bring sure and sudden judgment upon the wicked unbeliever. Everything in creation has been horrendously defiled by Satan and sin. The purging that God is going to bring to creation will not be partial, but total. This is because Lucifer rose up in rebellion against the Lord and defiled Heaven as he did. He

contaminated the very presence of God and has been doing the same to every aspect of creation. The judgment of God brings purification. The great white throne judgment will also serve that same purpose in regards to sinful humanity.

### **1. Notice the Power on the Throne. (V. 11)**

The throne is referred to as being a great white throne. The significance of this is that the word “great” is an adjective that describes the significance of this judgment. It will be a proceeding unlike any earthly judgment that has ever transpired. There will be no plea bargaining, no reduction of punishment, no delaying of the trial, no misrepresentation of the facts, no hung jury, no mistrial, no crooked lawyers and judges, no prejudice in judgment, and no sentencing of the wrong man. This will be a perfect rendering of the facts and a perfect execution of judgment. God will be the Judge...

The thing that makes this judgment so exceedingly great is who the Judge is. It is the Lamb of God. He will judge flawlessly with perfect knowledge, strength and presence. These are attributes that can only be attributed to Him. He will be the prosecuting attorney, the jury, and the judge all in one. He will need no one but Himself. It will be an awesome and awful experience to stand before Him. No one at all can escape this judgment.

The color white reminds us of the purity of God and the purity of this judgment. It will be a pure judgment to bring about absolute truth. There will be nothing unclean or impure issuing forth from the mouth of the judge.

### **2. Notice the People About the Throne. (Vv. 12-13)**

The “dead, small and great” refers to all who lived who rejected Christ or failed to trust in God in a saving faith whether it be the Old Testament or the New Testament sinners. The *small and great* is a reference to people of all ethnic, social, political, economic, and creedal dispositions.

All will be there; none will escape this judgment. The dead will be resurrected in their sinfully corrupted bodies. To what extent the corruption will be, God only knows. I do believe that it will be a most vivid testimony to the folly of sin. As these wicked, pitiful, corrupted creatures of the prior human race stand there, it will be a gaping testimony to the horrors of dying in sin. The socially elite will be no more prestigious than the drunken pauper. They will all be miserably draped over the judgment bar to receive their due, just rewards. Keep in mind, all of us who are saved would be standing there just as condemned if it were not for the marvelous grace of God.

Just as the saints will receive glorified bodies, the wicked dead will receive bodies that are far removed from glory. Their bodies will be a morbid picture of eternal weakness resulting from their earthly wickedness. Their blatant refusal to receive the Lord on earth, positions them before Him in eternity. Their judgment will be based on what is found in the books. There are two groups of books mentioned with part of the set being listed as singular and the other part of the set being listed as plural. The singular book will contain the record of all humans born with those who rejected Christ as Savior as having their names blotted out. The books that are plural contain the record or the evidence of the wicked that lived. Every event of their life will be recorded in detail. The degree of their punishment will be according to the evidence. Some will be beaten with few stripes and some will be beaten with many stripes.

The souls of these men will come from Hell, while their bodies will be reconstituted and gathered from the waters and the lands of the earth. The Lord will have the ability to extract from the earth all of the displaced molecules and reassemble them as a testimony to the fact that He is genuinely the God of creation. Those who instructed that their bodies be cremated and their ashes scattered to the seven seas, thinking that God could not put them back

together again, will be amazed and angered at God's ability to put them together again.

### **3. Notice the Peril After the Throne. (Vv. 14-15)**

Verses 14 and 15 describe the second death. This is God's way of describing the eternal state of the wicked dead. They were called on to die once because of the original sin of Adam. Now they will enter into an eternal state of death. Remember that physical death is when the soul and the spirit are separated from the body. Spiritual death is when Adam sinned and was separated from God, as are all who are born into the human race until they are born again. Eternal death is the second death that is being described here. It is the death that results in one being cast into the Lake of Fire. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life will be in the lake of fire forever. The only way to escape this judgment and this death is by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, believing on the Son of God and having your sins washed away by His precious blood. As this study is being completed, I trust that you have already made your call and election sure. If not, will you quickly come to Him today?

## Chapter Thirty-Two

### ALL ABOUT THE NEW JERUSALEM

#### Text: Revelation 21

*1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

*2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

*4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

*5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

*6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

*7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

*8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

*9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*

*10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

*11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;*

*12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:*

*13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.*

*14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

*15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city,*

*and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.*

*16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*

*17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.*

*18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.*

*19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;*

*20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.*

*21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

*22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

*23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

*24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.*

*25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*

*26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.*

*27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

This is such an encouraging chapter, especially since all of the judgment and the heartache of the Revelation prophecy has ended. Judgment is now over and a new page is being turned. Things will be different than ever before. This chapter is describing the new holy city or the new Heaven. Some would have you to believe that this is the Heaven where the departed dead are now. It is not, for this is the New Jerusalem that is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. This chapter describes the New Jerusalem or Heaven as it will be when the old Heaven and the old earth

are destroyed. Realizing that everything, including heaven, has been defiled by Satan and sin, God is making all things new. The curse of sin will be removed and also that which has been cursed by sin.

Please remember that with God all things are possible and that with Him there is no effort. It is no effort at all for Him to make a new Heaven and a new earth. With this being so, The Lord said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

## **I. THE HOLY CITY IS A PREPARED PLACE. (Vv. 1-2).**

There is no better way of describing what this Holy City will be like beyond the description that is given to us in our text. Yet, it certainly is wonderful just to imagine what it must be like. There obviously will be no way that mortal lips could describe the magnificent splendor and the opulent glory of such a wonderful place. Words cannot be articulated to speak what Heaven is really like. Paul found great difficulty in describing the paradise or Heaven that he was caught up into. He said that the words which he heard were “unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” The words could not be described, (II Corinthians 12:4) nor could the paradise surroundings be described. Only when we arrive in Heaven, will we be able to describe it. We can only speculate and accept what God has chosen to reveal to us by the Scriptures.

To illustrate what I am talking about, I recall when my wife and I were preparing to go to London, England over thirty years ago and how excited we were after reading about the place and talking to people about it. Irregardless of what we had read and people had told us, it was only after we arrived there that we were able to say, “The half had not been told.” London was far greater than we had been told or even imagined. Many times more so will it be true when we arrive in Heaven. I can only talk now of

Heaven; I will soon experience it!

### **A. A New City Presented. (V. 1)**

The New Jerusalem is called the holy city, and that it surely is. This is the holy city with no potential for defilement. The next several verses will greatly describe the wonderful blessings of Heaven. There is not a better expression than that which our text gives us describing Heaven as being likened to “a bride adorned for her husband.”

John uses this most striking word imagery to describe this new city. When the word *new* is used when describing this City, it does not mean restored or remade; it means entirely new. Its description is that of something spectacularly new. When a bride walks down the aisle in her new wedding gown there is so much being spoken without even so much as a word being said. The imagery of the bride dressed in white speaks of purity and fidelity. This used to be true so much more than it is now in our modern, perilous, sex crazed world. The white wedding gown once was a very strong symbol of chastity. This is what is being alluded to when the description of New Jerusalem is given.

### **B. A New City Prepared. (V.2)**

Heaven has been called a country in respect to its large size. It has been referred to as a city because of its orderly arrangement. It has been called a kingdom because of its government and has been called a paradise for its intrinsic beauty. These are some of the wonderful ways of describing this wonderful place that has been prepared by the Lord Jesus Christ. The same God that created the heavens and the earth in six days (and could have done it in no time at all) *is still working on Heaven*. At least this is the way that we think about it. No matter how little or how much time He spends on it will make any difference, for He is God! It will be just right...

## **II. THE HOLY CITY IS A PERFECT PLACE. (Vv. 3-6)**

When we think of this Holy City, may we think of the way that the Lord will be setting up His tabernacle with His people. There will also be the complete restoration of that which was lost in the “fall.” “I do not think the glory of Eden lay in its grassy walks, or in the boughs bending with luscious fruit-but its glory lay in this, that the ‘Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day.’ Here was Adam’s highest privilege, that he had companionship with the Most High.” (Spurgeon)

The greatness of the New Jerusalem will be more apparent when the Lord wipes away all of the tears and also promises that there will be “no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” May we look forward to the day when there will be no more cemeteries and funeral homes. Our Holy City will have no need of such.

### **A. The Lord Removes The Imperfect. (Vv. 3-4)**

When sin was first committed, the curse fell upon the earth and ever since then the earth has been under the curse’s crushing weight. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22).

When the believer thinks of Heaven, it should be with great hope and with great expectancy. This hope should help keep one from becoming discouraged or troubled. This hope was the basis of the Lord encouraging the disciples in John 14. The Lord gave the disciples several strong arguments as to why they should not have troubled hearts. One was that He was going to prepare a place for them. It will be a place with many mansions. I certainly like the King James Bible’s description of Heaven as having mansions rather than just having rooms as many translations would tell you. The hope of having a mansion certainly encouraged my dad and

mother while they were upon this earth when nearing the time that they would be going on to be with the Lord. Yet, if you had asked them, they would have told you that the greatest prospect of heaven was their looking forward to seeing Jesus.

When we arrive at the New Jerusalem, we may all be assured that it will be a place that is completely perfect. This place we call Heaven required no inspectors or building codes. It neither required engineers or builders. Plumbers, electricians, nor masons were needed. Christ did it all.

### **B. The Lord Reveals The Perfect. (Vv. 5-6)**

In this life, we may only strive for perfection, but the story is still the same. The sin curse has left its indelible mark on all that is, with no exception. That is the reason that the Lord said, “Behold, I make all things new.” We can depend upon this to be true, because the Lord says, “Write: for these words are true and faithful” (V. 5).

### **III. THE HOLY CITY IS A PROTECTED PLACE. (Vv. 7-8)**

It could be said that heaven is protected because of who is there and also because of who is not there. The Lord is there and anyone who is of evil *is not there*. The Scriptures are very plain on this. The overcomer will inherit all of the good things of God. The unbeliever will have his part in the burning Lake of Fire. Our text tells us that “the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

This Heavenly City is certainly a place of great contrasts. Throughout this chapter, there is an illustration of this given as a contrasting warning. It is given in this way to

impart hope to the believer and fear to the unbeliever.

### **A. Heaven Is A Protected Place Because Of Who Is There. (V. 7)**

The conflict and the tragedy, that this world experiences, is caused by both the sin and the sinner. Neither of these will be in Heaven. Heaven will be a protected place without the need for burglar or fire alarms.

The great protection comes from the sin curse being removed and the Lord God Almighty being in complete control. Understanding that there will be no thieves in Heaven explains why no locks will be needed on the doors and there will be no jails and prisons for criminals to escape. The people of Heaven, in their glorified state, will never have the potential for doing evil. One will be incapable of even thinking evil thoughts. There will be no one there that will commit a sex crime and no one there to take a persons life. There will be no gossip, rumor, slander or evil speaking. There will also be a total absence of pride, which means that the people there will give all glory to the Lord.

### **B. Heaven Is A Protected Place Because Of Who Is Not There. (V. 8)**

Let us notice those groups that will absolutely not be there. The Holy Spirit may have given us these group names to encourage the saved and to warn the lost. Notice first:

- 1. The Fearful:** As I look at this word, the word pride comes to my mind. There are so many who will either not come to the Lord or not serve the Lord because of pride. They are very afraid of what people think of them. Did you notice the word *afraid*? Pride generates this kind of fear and God

hates pride. Some will not worship old time religion because of the social reproach of being identified with a church that preaches against “social drinking,” attending movies, dressing immodest, King James Bible only, faithful church attendance and separation from the world. This may be the kind of fear that is being referred to here.

2. **The Unbelieving:** The unbelieving would be anyone who fails to believe God’s word experientially or by personal experience. The Word of God is just that; it is really God’s Word. I cringe when I talk to people who relegate the Word of God to just one of the many books that are out there on the book shelves. When one questions whether the Word of God is accurate or says that it contains errors, I see a flag going up that says, “UNBELIEF.”
3. **The Abominable:** These are the polluted, those who have allowed themselves to become stained and contaminated with the filthy evils of this world. If only men would realize that when they debase themselves with the uncleanness and abominations of this present evil world, they are heaping upon themselves a fiery judgment for eternity. Let each reader pause here and examine carefully Romans 1:14-32 and Genesis 19. (Strauss).
4. **The Murderers:** Ever since the first murder took place (Genesis 4:8) when Cain killed his own flesh and blood there has been a blatant disregard for human life. We must understand that God created man in His own image and to take life is to show the highest form of dishonor and disregard to God’s creation. The murderer needs to know that unless

there is repentance and a turning to God in saving faith, that the penalty for murder will be added to the many stripes that the unrepentant will face in the eternal flames of Hell.

**5. The Whoremongers:** Sexual impurity is such a lightly regarded sin to the present day human family. This alarms me. The sanctity of life is very precious to God, but the sanctity of marriage is also precious to God. For people to cheapen themselves to the extent of fornication is a sad illustration of how low sin will take you. The word *whoremonger* shows the attitude that man has to God's law of sexual purity. In Exodus 20:14, God's law says and it still stands, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and the New Testament reiterates this same truth when it says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

**6. The Sorcerers:** There is a recognized need for worship on the part of the degenerated human being because of the emptiness caused by the original sin. Man was created for worship. Yet when the fall took place, man was no longer capable of worshipping God. Sin had brought forth spiritual death. There was an immediate separation from God. It was demonstrated by Adam and Eve when they attempted to hide themselves from God.

Man in his sinful state will often turn to an alternative form of worship rather than submitting to Christ. They will choose to serve the creature rather than the Creator. Witchcraft and spiritism in its different forms is on the increase. Those who practice such will find themselves in the Lake of Fire.

7. **The Idolaters:** In Exodus 20:1-5, the Lord prohibits the worship of idols. Anything can become an idol and can keep you from going to Heaven or coming to the Lord in worshiping faith. In the holy city, there will only be those who worship the Lord.
  
8. **The Liars:** This warning needs to be given constantly, because people constantly lie and love to make a lie. Lying in its different forms costs the world billions upon billions of dollars, not to mention the hurt that a lie causes.

#### **IV. HEAVEN IS A PRECIOUS PLACE. (Vv. 9-21)**

John was taken up to a great and high mountain and was to be shown the bride, the Lamb's wife, and then immediately the emphasis switched to the holy city Jerusalem as it was descending out of heaven from God.

##### **A. As A City Of Great Wonder. (Vv. 9-11)**

One only needs to read a few lines before seeing how extremely beautiful Heaven is. Its splendor and glory is unimaginable. There is no way to humanly comprehend the great beauty and the great worth of this heavenly city. Some of the most precious metals and minerals upon the earth are being referred to in this glorified state. Remember that the elements are being described with the curse removed. This means that even though terms are used that are familiar to us here upon the earth, the way they appear in heaven will be indescribable.

In noticing the design of the heavenly city, twelve and three are predominate numbers appearing in this chapter. The number twelve is the number for governmental perfection and the number three stands for the Trinity. As a result of the presence and the work of the triune God, there will be

perfect government in Heaven and there will be visual representatives of this being so, being constantly revealed throughout eternity. Such is expressed in the architecture and the buildings that are described in our immediate text.

## **B. As A City Of Great Worth. (Vv. 12-21)**

Already the great worth of Heaven has been referred to. The precious stones, the valuable gems, the street of gold all show how wonderful Heaven will be. These are some of the ways that we describe value here upon the earth, yet these mentioned will be so much more valuable up in the holy city. The most precious and the greatest of worth of all will be the Lord Himself.

## **V. THE HOLY CITY IS A PRAISING PLACE. (Vv. 23-27)**

### **A. The Light There Is Supernal. (Vv. 23-25).**

The heavenly light will never dim in this holy city. The eternal focus will not be on things, but upon Him. There will be no need for anything that will distract, for He will have all of the radiant beauty that one could imagine. The Lake of Fire on the other hand will be a place of everlasting darkness. John 3 tells us that the sinner will not come to the light because his deeds are evil. Men love darkness rather than light, so John tells us. A sad ongoing object lesson to every sinner that winds up in Hell is that he will experience outer darkness for all eternity. This is such a miserable reality. You could be reading this commentary today hearing that your only hope in not going to an eternal Hell is in trusting Jesus. Will you trust Him?

**B. The Life There Is Eternal. (Vv. 26-27).**

All who have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life will praise the Lamb as eternity rolls. For one to live forever in Heaven is such a glorious prospect... For some the journey may be both sure and soon. I am so glad that the Lord put this great chapter in the Word of God to both warn and encourage us to be ready.

## Chapter Thirty-Three

### THE LAST CHAPTER

#### Text: Revelation 22

1 *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

2 *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

3 *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:*

4 *And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.*

5 *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

6 *And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.*

7 *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

8 *And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.*

9 *Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*

10 *And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*

11 *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

12 *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

13 *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*

14 *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

15 *For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

16 *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the*

*churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

*17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

*18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:*

*19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

*20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

*21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

The Revelation prophecy has now been given and is concluded in such a way that lets the believer know the great benefits and blessings that are his to enjoy and appreciate for all eternity. John is being shown a pure river that is proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is such a refreshing way to end the entire Word of God as well as the prophecy of Revelation. It is as though a symbol is given to us as the river is being alluded to. The clear crystal water flowing continually from the throne symbolizes or pictures the Word of God as having for its source the One who sits upon the throne. It also pictures the Spirit of God. Still water has always pictured the Word of God, while moving water pictures the Spirit of God. This river in Heaven pictures the life that comes from having both the Spirit of God and the Word of God flowing from the throne of God. There is much about this chapter that is revealing and could take a volume the size of this Revelation study just to explore the full depths thereof. I must admit that I am not capable to word everything that I either wonder about or want to know about that is found in this chapter. My prayer is that I will carefully render that which will be most pleasing to the Lord.

## **I. THE RIVER OF THE SAVED. (Vv. 1-9)**

We can certainly say that those who are populating around this river are the redeemed only. The late theologian A.T. Pierson summarizes verses 3-5 in this manner, as he described Heaven as being a perfect place:

1. “And there shall be no more curse,” perfect sinlessness
2. “but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it,”  
perfect government
3. “and His servants shall serve Him,” perfect service
4. “They shall see His face,” perfect communion
5. “and His name shall be on their foreheads,”  
perfect resemblance
6. “And there shall be no night there,”  
perfect blessedness
7. “And they shall reign forever and ever,” perfect glory

### **A. The Purity Of The River. (V. 1a)**

We are told that this is “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.” It is more than obvious to us all that we are living in a contaminated world that is anything but pure. The ecologists will constantly remind us of pollution and different kinds of water contamination. We are told that many of our streams and rivers have been turned into nuclear waste dumps. This has become a constant warning as we are told to limit the amount of fish that we eat out of our fresh streams, which are not really that fresh, lest we pick up some kind of disease. We are warned of mercury poisoning. I am convinced that the closer we come to the return of the Lord,

the more we will hear of such warnings because of living in such a polluted, sin cursed world. Praise God the river that is being described here is clear as crystal, being pure and having no chance of defilement at all.

The emphasis of these several verses is upon the word *life* and the *quality* of that life. We are presently in a dying mode but will truly begin to live once we get to heaven. This fountain mentioned here that flows as a river will certainly be a fountain of youth. Heaven is that land and that city where we shall never grow old...

### **B. The Place Of The River. (V. 1b)**

Its point of origin is the throne room and the throne of God is its source. This river is teeming with life. Today as we are converted into the family of God, that conversion also issues forth from the throne room. It has always been that way, but when we get to Heaven it will be more graphically recognized, for we are seeing through a glass darkly now (I Corinthians 13:12), but one day the haze and darkness will be removed and we will see all things clearly.

### **C. The Peace Around The River. (Vv. 2-9)**

When Ezekiel saw healing waters coming from the altar in the temple it was the place of *sacrifice* (Ezekiel 47:1), but in the new economy and the new order the river proceeds from the throne, the place of *sovereignty* (Strauss). The believers will be able to enjoy all of the life-giving qualities of Heaven, forever. The river will flow down the middle of the street with the tree of life on either side which yielded twelve kinds of fruit every month. There has never been a growing season such as this upon the earth since the curse took place in the Garden of Eden. This illustrates to the human family the fecundity of Heaven's vegetation. The fruitfulness of Heaven, without the curse, will be an added blessing to those having eternal life. The second

verse is a very difficult verse to interpret, as it pertains to the “healing of the nations.” There have been many opportunities for me to discuss this verse with different Bible students and I could certainly entertain some “food for thought” even in our studies now. Yet, I prefer not to speculate on that which I am not at least reasonably sure of. This may prove to be one of those passages that I will let John himself explain when I get to Heaven.

We will be forever identified in Heaven and also be found without the curse that was associated with sin. There will be no night there nor need for a candle or the sun, “for the Lord God giveth them light.” Verses 6-9 have John closing out the prophecy by falling down and worshiping the angel that had shown him these wonderful things. The angel immediately instructed John not to worship him, a *fellow servant*, but to “worship God” instead.

## **II. THE REWARDING OF THE SAINTS. (Vv. 10-17)**

The final warning of the Revelation prophecy indicates that the time will come when “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (V. 11). This parallels the day when the door was shut to the ark. When the door was shut, there was no further grace opportunity left. The floods came destroying and demolishing everything of the first world order. Now the same is going to happen on an eternal scale. The consequences of both belief and unbelief will be forever settled. There will be no ability to change one’s position even after a trillion years. Those in Heaven will never want to and those in the Lake of Fire could not do so if they wanted to...

### **A. The Presenting Of The Rewards. (Vv. 10-11; cf. V. 12)**

The state of the righteous and the unrighteous will be fixed forever. The righteous will be rewarded according to their works. The economy of man, when it is working the best, is patterned after the economy of God. Men are rewarded or paid according to their labors. At least this is the way that it should be done in a good business system or in a healthy economy. If workers are paid for *not* working, then the system has been weakened. For an economic system to be strong and vibrant, its workers need to be strong and hard working.

The Lord will present rewards according to the believers' works, not for the purpose of salvation, but for future rewards. For a church economy to be strong in our present dispensation there needs to be hard work now going on, remembering that we should work "for the night cometh when no man can work". The day of opportunity will soon be forever past.

### **B. The Person To Be Rewarding. (V. 12a)**

The Alpha and the Omega will be making the rewards, who is also the First and the Last. Spurgeon had a good grasp of this truth in regards to how the Lord must fit in our very existence, when he said, "Preach orthodoxy, or any form of doxy; if you have left out Christ, there is no manna from heaven, no water from the rock, no refuge from the storm, no healing for the sick, no life for the dead. If you leave out Christ, you have left the sun out of the day, and the moon out of the night, you have left the waters out of the sea, and the floods out of the river, you have left the harvest out of the year, the soul out of the body, you have left joy out of heaven, yea, you have robbed all of its all, there is no gospel worth thinking of, much less worth proclaiming in Jehovah's name, if Jesus be forgotten" (Spurgeon).

### **C. The People To Be Rewarded. (Vv. 12b -17)**

The people will simply be everyone who makes up the redeemed who are being awarded according to their work. How important is the work of the Lord? It can not be calculated in human terms. Yet, we will see how important that it is to do His work at the day of reckoning.

The Scriptures close with a blessing to those who do His commandments. This has always been the path to God's blessings. Even in the Old Testament when the Palestinian Covenant was given and the "if-but" principle was given, it was based upon obedience. *If* the people obeyed they were blessed, *but* if they did not they were cursed.

Jesus once again states who will not be in Heaven and then restates His credibility as being "the root and the offspring of David and the bright and morning star." Once He does this, He closes out the Prophecy with a final invitation, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (V. 17).

### **III. THE REVERENCING OF THE SCRIPTURES. (Vv. 18-21)**

The precious Word of God is to be treated with holy reverence if one is to have God's blessings rather than His judgment. The warning that is given here regarding the tampering with the "words of the prophecy" is specifically for this particular book. Yet, warning pertaining to the entire Bible is given throughout the Scriptures. God had said, "*Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you*" (Deuteronomy 4:2). "*Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a*

liar.” (Proverbs 30:5-6). *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8-9).

Modern translations which are based upon corrupt manuscripts are becoming the most widely read and the most widely accepted Bible versions today. The accumulated mistakes and errors that make up these versions invite the wrath of God. It is not to be lightly regarded when such versions are being accepted. How can two be the same if they are different? Using this simple logic causes me to stay with the King James Bible with complete trust and admiration. I believe with conviction that it is the Word of God.

#### **A. Protection Against Tampering With The Scriptures. (V. 18)**

There is the warning that God adds to anyone tampering with the Word of God that should serve as a strong protection. *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”* (Vv. 18-19).

To me, this is a very solemn warning that should be given the utmost consideration and respect. It is my opinion that you can gauge how one feels about the Lord and the things of God, by determining his attitude towards the Word of God. If one has a compromised view of God’s Word, then invariably, one will have a compromised view of God.

## **B. Penalty For Tampering With The Scriptures. (Vv. 19-21)**

In addition to the penalty that we have already considered, we must be reminded that the Word of God is the foundation for our faith and that, “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). With this being so, we never should desire to compromise the strength of our faith, knowing that it can affect us for all eternity. Therefore, we should not “mess with God’s Word.”

### **FINAL CONCLUDING REMARKS**

It has been my sincere desire to do this study with the purpose of presenting Christ in such a way that *we can see Him more clearly*. If this has been accomplished, then I am most grateful to the Lord for allowing me the opportunity of achieving this purpose. To God be the Glory!

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