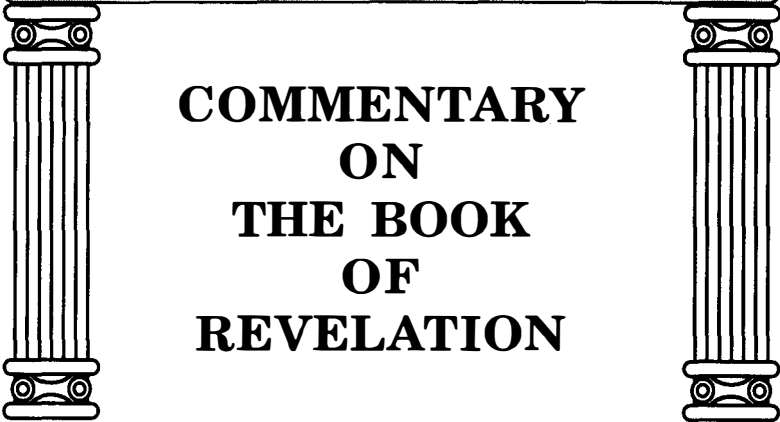


GOD'S MESSAGES BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES

VOLUME 10

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8).



COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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Table Of Contents

Introduction	5
Revelation 1	31
Revelation 2	55
Revelation 3	93
Revelation 4	123
Revelation 5	137
Revelation 6	155
Revelation 7	171
Revelation 8	183
Revelation 9	195
Revelation 10	213
Revelation 11	223
Revelation 12	249
Revelation 13	273
Revelation 14	301
Revelation 15	323
Revelation 16	331
Revelation 17	351
Revelation 18	371
Revelation 19	391
Revelation 20	413
Revelation 21	449
Revelation 22	487
Afterword	511

Dedication

This volume of the Bible Messages Commentaries
is dedicated

To:

The authors of books and commentary sets
which have aided in preparing the
God's Messages Commentary Set.

There are three sets of commentaries
which have been extremely useful.

A three volume set on the entire Bible
written by E.M. Zerr.

A six volume set on the entire Bible
written by George W. Dehoff.

A thirty-seven volume set on the entire Bible
written by Burton W. Coffman.

Many thoughts have also been taken from:

The six volume-set by Adam Clarke
The five volume set by J. Vernon McGee
The two volume set by Warren Weirsbe.

None of the above are cited as unquestionable in
everything they have written.

Nor would I expect that they would agree with
everything I have have written.

Commentaries, including the ones I have produced,
must be sifted for the help they can give,
and ignored when they miss the mark.

~ Leon Stancliff

Introduction

Solomon once said, "Where there is no vision the people perish". The world is perishing today. This is certainly not because vision has been withheld. In both of the finest senses of the word vision has been provided through the last book of the Bible. Revelation was presented through a series of visions. But beyond that, it peers into the future. It looks through the muddied spiritual waters which men have stirred up in their efforts to direct their own steps to a time when all such opponents of God shall have been vanquished and the true light of Jesus Christ shall shine forth without hindrance. If men perish it is of their own free will, and not because God has failed to provide insight.

It is a most saddening thing to realize that there are some who have dismissed Revelation lightly with such comments as, "I don't think it was really meant to be understood", or "It probably meant something to the Christians of Asia Minor, but I doubt if it has much for us today."

The book is loaded with spiritual truth and blessings for the present day student. However, the treasures will require most diligent and honest effort to gain access to them. The greater the maturity of the reader, the more multitudinous will be the blessings obtained. This commentator once sat in a Bible class in which the teacher related how his children enjoyed the reading of Revelation more than any other book in the scriptures. The reason for their making this choice was the inclusion of

mysterious dragons, beasts, and streets of gold. Do you say, “This is a child’s view?” You are quite right. Yet, when the child becomes an adult, some of the mysteries become understandable, while others arise to become even more fascinating. As time passes the eager student of Revelation comes to realize the placement of the Revelation at the climax of the book of God is entirely appropriate.

Your author once argued for the inspiration of the book with an individual who believed it to be spurious and uninspired. The point was made that it would be inexcusable to study the rest of the Bible and then neglect this great finale. It would be like watching a lengthy display of fireworks on the Fourth of July, and then leaving just before the final extravaganza which lights up the entire sky with varicolored lights and streamers, etc. The feeling of deprivation should be much greater when God’s conclusion is not studied with the rest of his Word.

This leads us directly into another very important point. One of the reasons that people have difficulty with this great book is a lack of grasp for God’s entire scheme of salvation. Revelation constantly makes reference to materials found in other books of the Bible without actually calling these other books by name. Often these references are to Old Testament persons or events. Revelation is best appreciated after one has developed a deep appreciation for the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles.

The truth of the above does not warrant waiting until there is perfect understanding of the rest of

the Bible before studying this book. If such were true, Revelation should wait forever. What is implied is the need for what might be called cyclical study of the Word of God. Using this method one brings whatever knowledge of all the other books of the Bible, incomplete as that knowledge may be, to bear on the examination of the book at hand. Then with the increased understanding of that book the student may move on to apply the entire new body of spiritual understanding to still other portions of Holy scripture.

Such will be our purpose in the present study. We shall attempt to bring to bear upon the book of Revelation whatever knowledge we may have of all the other books of the Bible. Though imperfect, it will allow us to manage a greater grasp of the meaning of this one book. Then, with these new understandings of Revelation, still imperfect, we will have a better preparation for the study of the rest of the Bible. Let us then proceed!

Who Wrote The Revelation?

At first glance the answer to the above question seems self evident. The book is declared to have been sent from JOHN to the seven churches of Asia (1-4). Little problem would exist if the writer had added the words “the apostle” as Paul often did in his letters. Since he did not do this, and since the name John has been common throughout the centuries, we find ourselves faced with a decision as to the identity of the particular John who was the penman.

Although a number of suggestions have been made, most of them have little basis for acceptance. We shall, therefore, limit our considerations to two possibilities. The first of these possibilities is that the writer was simply a well known elder who had served somewhere in the churches of Asia Minor. This view would deny that he was an apostle of the Lord. The second possibility is that the writer was actually the apostle John, and one of the twelve who walked with Jesus.

Those who believe the penman was not the apostle make the following arguments. First, the author calls himself simply John. If he were an apostle, it seems likely he would have indicated his apostleship. Second, he refers to the apostles in 21:14 as though he is speaking of others rather than of a group of which he is a member. Third, the style of the Greek in Revelation is sharply different from that of the gospel of John, and the short epistles of John. Finally, the entire tone of the Revelation differs from that of the known works of John the apostle. In the gospel and the epistles there is a heavy emphasis on love. Contrariwise, the Revelation emphasizes God's wrath and punishment visited upon the enemies of righteousness.

Your present commentator believes that there are adequate answers to each of the objections presented above. It is of no major significance that John speaks of the apostles as he does in 21:14. A schoolteacher might well speak of schoolteachers in general, though included in the profession himself. As far as the change of style is concerned, it might

be expected. The gospel of John is, in a sense, a biographical work. It is a recounting of visions seen by the author. The epistles are in the form of personal communications. But the Revelation is prophetic and predictive in nature. It was written under very special circumstances which would have dictated a style of writing fitted to them. The change of style from emphasis on love to emphasis on wrath is also easily understood. At the time the Gospel of John was written Christ was being presented to the world in order that men might have the opportunity to make a choice between following or rejecting him as God's beloved son, offered for man's sins. The point is made that we should love him and keep his commandments because he first loved us. The description of God's wrath in Revelation is given after man has had every opportunity and has rejected God's mercy. Such a change in emphasis is not at all surprising. In fact, it should be expected.

It is our contention then that the evidence supporting the apostle John as the author of Revelation outweighs that against such a stand. We shall first consider a line of evidence outside the Bible. Then we shall turn to evidence from the New Testament.

There is general agreement that the apostle John spent many of the latter years of his life serving the church at Ephesus. Upon visiting the site of ancient Ephesus today, one is shown the splendid remains of the basilica which was erected in his memory. Also on view is the location claimed to be the site of the house where John is supposed to have

cared for Mary, the mother of Jesus. In addition, tradition claims that John was exiled to the isle of Patmos at the proper time to have written the book.

From external sources there is also the testimony of a number of early writers who credit the apostle with having penned the book. Among these are Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, all of whom lived before the year A.D. 200. One hundred years hardly seems enough time for this much consensus of opinion to develop on the side of a false author.

Turning to the internal evidence of the New Testament, we find there are a number of terms and phrases which link the gospel of John and the epistles of John with the Revelation. The first of these is "Lamb of God." The gospel of John records Jesus as having been announced by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." The same phrase is used more than twenty times in Revelation. Another phrase common to both the gospel of John and the Revelation is "Word of God" as applied to the Christ. Other than Revelation, this phrase is used in this manner only in John's gospel and the first epistle of John.

Because of the weight of the above evidence, your present author takes the position that John the apostle was the writer. Admittedly, the issue is not beyond doubt. But one thing is clear. The author of the book had a grand insight into the movement of God's eternal plan which stamps him as inspired with a wisdom beyond that of a mere man.

When Was The Revelation Written?

All seem to be agreed that the date of writing falls between the years A.D. 64 and A.D. 96. Again there are numerous suggestions, but only two which are considered significant enough to deserve time and space here. One group of scholars believes the date of writing was just before the destruction of Jerusalem in about the year A.D. 68. The other believes it to have been just before the end of the first century about A.D. 96.

It is clear from the entire context of the book that it was written to give hope and encouragement to Christians who were about to be enveloped in terrible persecution. Severe persecution was a part of the Christian life during the entire first three centuries of its existence. However, there are two periods which stand out as particularly vicious. One of these was during the time of Nero who reigned in the last few years of the apostle Paul's life. The other was under Domitian who reigned when the apostle John was a very old man.

Let us begin with the arguments in favor of the A.D. 68 date in the time of Nero. Those who support this date call attention to the statement in Revelation 11:1-2 where John was given a reed and told to measure the temple. The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, and so they reason this measurement must refer to a date previous to A.D. 70.

Among the supporters of the earlier date there is also strong feeling that Nero is referred to in 17:9-

11. These kings are interpreted to mean emperors of the Roman empire, and they claim there is no way by which Domitian may be considered the sixth emperor, whereas Nero could be. Also the number 666 can be calculated by applying a numerical system to Nero's name.

Nero was a most despicable and hated ruler. The people of the empire had begun to realize his utterly corrupt nature, and were beginning to criticize him. At this time a terrible fire broke out, completely burning one half the city of Rome and leaving another one fourth of the city in piteous condition. This provided Nero with a possible scapegoat upon which the ire of the people could be vented. He decided to accuse the Christians of setting the fire, turning the anger of the people away from himself. Particularly in the city of Rome itself the suffering of the followers of Jesus became excruciating as they were smeared with tar and used as torches to light Nero's gardens, or were placed in the arena with hungry and ferocious animals.

One last argument which might be presented in favor of the early date is linked with the statement in 21:2 describing the descent of the New Jerusalem out of heaven. If the New Jerusalem here comes **DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN** rather than being heaven itself, it seems there is the possibility it might be identical with the church. Though the church began on Pentacost and is considered to be the new spiritual temple of God, the Jews continued to observe the ceremonies of the law of Moses in the earthly temple

of Jerusalem until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. The book of Revelation might then be discussing the replacement of the earthly temple with the spiritual temple of God, the church.

There are objections to the above. When John was told to go and measure the temple, he was on the island of Patmos. As a prisoner there, many miles from land, he could not literally get to the temple in Jerusalem without supernatural intervention. Such intervention is not indicated in the text. Thus, it would seem the temple which was to be measured here was necessarily symbolic or spiritual in nature, and had nothing to do with whether or not the temple in Jerusalem was still standing..

The kings mentioned in 17:9-11 are not necessarily emperors of Rome. They could just as well be representatives of major world empires such as Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, etc. The ease of placing Nero as the sixth of the emperors of Rome is also exaggerated. Many students are not convinced he was the sixth. The calculations using the letters of Nero's name which supposedly total 666 as in Revelation 13:18 are also open to question. It is done by ignoring certain letters. Similar schemes may also be demonstrated by which the names of both HITLER, and former secretary of state KISSINGER will total 666.

No one doubts that Christians suffered terribly at the hands of Nero in the vicinity of the city of Rome itself. However, there is reason to believe this persecution was concentrated around the capitol city

and did not extend into the provinces of the empire to any considerable extent. It seems to have been more a personal matter designed to reduce the antagonism of the local citizenry toward Nero himself. Nero is not noted for using exile as a means of persecution. He was far more apt to eliminate his enemies by murdering them.

The replacement of the earthly temple with the church as a spiritual temple is clearly taught in the New Testament. But the church as a spiritual temple arrived on the scene with the events of Pentacost which leaves one somewhat uncomfortable in assigning a date of A.D. 70, or even A.D. 64 for that matter.

Was the Revelation letter written during the reign of Domitian? Although emperor worship had been introduced in a minor way during the reign of Nero, some time passed by before it reached full bloom. Under Domitian's rule Christians were forced to sacrifice to the emperor and declare that "Caesar is lord." If they refused they were tortured, fired from their employment, murdered, or often exiled from their homes and friends.

If the Revelation was written before A.D. 70 during the latter part of the 60s, the time would be identical with the last years of the apostle Paul. It is revealing to note that Paul did not hesitate to appeal to the Roman judicial system to relieve the pressure the Jews were placing upon him. This indicates Roman persecution lagged behind that of the Jews, even to the time of Paul's death. By the time of Domitian Paul would have hardly dared to

entrust his life to Roman courts.

The conditions described in the early chapters of Revelation suggest a considerable amount of time having passed since the introduction of the gospel in Asia Minor. The earlier date of writing would not allow such a period of time. It would seem that it was primarily the preaching of Paul which established the churches described in Revelation. This preaching occurred in the fifties and the sixties. Yet Ephesus has left its first love, and the Nicolaitanes have made decided inroads into both Ephesus and Pergamos.

Irenaeus, who lived from A.D. 120 to A.D. 202, speaking of John's visions declares, "For that was seen not very long since, but almost in our own day, toward the end of Domitian's reign". From the time of Irenaeus through four centuries there is massive agreement that Revelation was written by the apostle John on Patmos while in exile on that island during the time of Domitian. It was not until the sixth century that support begins to arise for the time of Nero.

Once again it must be admitted the evidence for either date is inconclusive. Our position in this commentary will be that the book was written during the reign of Domitian, about A.D. 95, with some lapse of time occurring since the last contact with Paul and the establishment of the churches there.

The establishment of the true date does become a matter of major concern because if the book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem much of what it portrays could be applied to the upheaval

which took place as Judaism was eclipsed by Christianity. The book would then speak primarily of the victory of Jesus over the unbelieving Jews and the pagan Romans. In this case only the very last portion of the Revelation would apply to the final judgment, reward and punishment, and almost no attention would be paid to the time between A.D. 315 and the second coming of the Lord.

If the book was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, much that would otherwise be applied to the removal of Jewish influence would then be applied to the entire Christian age and might be scattered more evenly over the entire period of time from Christ's first coming to his reappearance. Your commentator finds the latter position to be the most comfortable and believes it to be the correct one.

From Where Was The Revelation Written?

This time there are no doubts. John states clearly and plainly he was on the island of Patmos for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Some have tried to say the visions were seen on the island, but that he did not write the book until after being allowed to leave the island and make his home in Ephesus. This claim is incorrect since he was told in 1:11 to send the book to Ephesus as well as the other six churches of Asia Minor.

Present day Patmos is a small island several hours journey by fifty foot motorized tourist boat from the coastline of Turkey. It is a rugged island with pyramid shaped rocks jutting out of the Aegean

Sea to a height of several hundred feet. The island is about ten miles long and six miles wide. It is somewhat crescent shaped. On approaching the harbor one is pleasantly surprised by the sight of a beautiful little village known as Skala. Many of the buildings of the village as well as those on the slopes of the hillsides are whitewashed, or surfaced in white in some other manner. This gives the entire area a clean and very fresh look. Much terracing has been done and some of the finest roses may be seen blooming at the proper season. At the very highest peak of the island there is a large Greek Orthodox monastery. A winding road leads up to it.

This is in stark contrast to what would have been found in John's day. The island was then used as a place to isolate those who were considered capable of causing any disturbance to the orderly processes of Roman government. Mines were operated, giving the prisoners work to do. With many miles of open sea between them and the nearest land there was little danger of their escape.

It was to this bleak and barren place that John had been sent when God chose him to be the instrument through whom the final victory of the forces of righteousness over the forces of evil would be revealed. This is quite in line with God's normal operating pattern. This was not the first time, nor would it be the last, that Jehovah would allow an individual to prove himself by enduring persecution, and then reward that person by giving opportunity for service with great glory. God delights in demonstrating his own strength and wisdom in the

midst of human weakness. “My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

To Whom Was The Revelation Written?

The book is addressed to the seven churches which are in Asia. The Asia of that day is the Turkey of today, or at least portions of present day Turkey. It was a thriving province of the Roman empire. The people were in the habit of worshipping idols, but were somewhat disillusioned with the effectiveness of such worship. Rome was in its glory and demanded that its subjects worship the emperor. If the people chose to worship other gods in addition to the emperor, it was permissible; but bowing before the emperor was commanded.

Christianity had been introduced by Paul and his associates. Many who had decided idol worship was vain and useless saw the importance of turning to the one true and living God. Many of these individuals also realized that Jehovah is a jealous God who will have no others as his equal. Consequently, these persons would not and could not bow before the emperor as divine.

And so a terrible war raged with the Roman emperors determined to bring Christians to their knees, and with the Christians just as determined to remain true to the one they knew to be more powerful than all the emperors of Rome combined. It would be a struggle to the death. Christianity and emperor worship could not exist side by side without each attempting to eliminate the other. One would

do it by force; the other would do it by teaching and by example.

It was to these Christians the Revelation was sent. These battle scarred soldiers of the Lord must have warmly welcomed the encouragement provided by the message contained in the Revelation. They would be victorious through Jesus Christ.

Why Was The Revelation Written?

In the time of Daniel haughty king Nebuchadnezzar finally came to himself and realized that God rules in the affairs of men. He had to be driven out into the open fields to live like a wild beast before the lesson was learned. Probably the first and foremost lesson in Revelation is the one learned by Nebuchadnezzar. Men may seem to successfully oppose the Supreme Ruler of the universe, but this is only an illusion resulting from man's inability to see all of the consequences of his actions.

Also those Christians of Asia Minor were about to be subjected to greater suffering for the Lord's cause than even they had undergone before. It would be as if the entire universe were being shaken and brought into chaos. They must know what their weaknesses and strong points were. By being warned of the impending disturbances they would be far better prepared to meet the trials and tribulations which would face them.

It is always helpful to see the rainbow through the storm. The brightness of a new day beyond gives hope and vigor in the time of darkness. There is no

greater example in all of history dealing with a vision of a finer hour. By way of illustration of the point we shall notice a few verses scattered throughout the book.

A. *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (7:17).*

B. *“And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” (8:4).*

C. *“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them” (14:13).*

D. *“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast and his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand upon the sea of glass, having their harps of God” (15:2).*

E. *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he shall be my son” (21:7).*

Such comforting scriptures must have given great inspiration to God’s servants in their time of trouble. “Neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come” would be able to demolish their faith. If they truly believed and followed the

directions of Revelation, they would become “more than conquerors” through him that loved them (Romans 8:37-39).

The Nature Of The Revelation:

Some of the great philosophers who had found a truth which they felt they must teach, but which they knew would offend the authorities who had the power of life and death, would write a novel or a dialogue which cleverly presented the truth while protecting their own safety. God was in no such need of protection personally. Yet those who were his servants needed certain truths which if written in the same manner as in Paul’s epistles might well have brought increased suffering upon them.

One of the important characteristics of the entire Bible seems to be its tremendous depth of wisdom and truth as seen by those who hunger for it, and its seeming foolishness to those who are wise in the ways of the world. The preaching of the gospel is truly foolishness to the Greek and a stumbling block to the Jew, but to the Christian it is the power of God unto salvation. The meaning of Revelation was clear to him who knew God’s Word, and was engaged on God’s side in the “Battle of the Ages”. To the enemies of God it was as hidden as if it had never been written.

We are convinced the same is still true today. The great spiritual conflict is still raging. For him who is on the side of the Lord, the understanding of the Bible will grow deeper and finer. This is

especially true of the book which proclaims the final “Victory in Jesus.” To those who oppose God, the Bible will appear as mythological nonsense.

The book is sometimes called the “Apocalypse.” However, it is not the only apocalyptic book in the Bible. The Old Testament books of Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah are also apocalyptic in nature. Apocalypses reveal the future in the form of visions. They are written in a time of burden and look forward to a time when the present evil will have run its course and judgment will have been visited upon those who grieve the righteous. The outline of the books is a three point outline. First, there is a description of the present day evil. There follows a day of judgment. After the day of judgment which destroys the wicked, there appears a brighter and better day in which the righteous are rewarded.

The apocalyptic books which are included in the holy scriptures are not the only ones of their type. There are others which fit the characteristics. Some of them bear the names of important Biblical characters as their authors. And many of them appeared during times of trial and stress. In general it is evident that they are poor imitations of the inspired books they copy.

In addition to being apocalyptic, the Revelation is highly prophetic. The Old Testament contains twelve books of those called the minor prophets, and five books listed under the major prophets. The New Testament contains only this one. The Old Testament prophets look forward to the FIRST coming of Jesus Christ, and speak of the “Day of the Lord” when

Jesus and humanity shall come face to face, and men shall have to react to him with either acceptance or rejection. The only book of the New Testament prophecy looks forward to the SECOND coming of Jesus when the “Day of the Lord” shall culminate in one great hour of judgment followed by eternal destruction or reward.

Because Revelation is prophetic in nature there are many links with not only the apocalyptic books of the Old Testament, but with the other prophetic books as well. Constant references occur to events and things discussed by the prophets of Israel. Babylon, the beasts of Daniel, the horses of Zechariah and dozens of other Old Testament entities are alluded to. As our study progresses, both Revelation and the Old Testament prophets will take on added meaning as we become aware of the interlocking relationships between the two.

The use of symbolic language and numbers plays a large role in the teaching plan here. Just as an artist can accomplish things which are beyond the power of verbal language, so the symbols presented in Revelation heighten the drama of the conflict and emphasize its importance more than non symbolic language would be capable of doing.

The symbols come from every facet of life and non life. There are horses, a dragon, a serpent, a lamb, and beasts from the animal world. From the natural world outside the animal and vegetable kingdoms are found rivers, winds, rainbows, hail, sun, moon, stars, day and night. Virgins, harlots, lovers and armies represent the human domain. In

case after case the symbol is used to stand for something which is made meaningful only by noting the way in which the scriptures have encountered these objects before. Great care must be exercised in determining the lessons associated with each object. Very certainly those who would weave themselves a scheme of man made interpretation may entangle themselves in a web of symbolism.

It is quite possible the symbols used were, at least in some cases, clearer to the Christians of the seven churches of Asia Minor than they are to the reader of the twentieth century. Still, diligent and honest study of the rest of the Bible uncovers connections which are not seen otherwise. No less mind than that of Isaac Newton spent many hours studying the relationship of the temple as described in the latter part of Ezekiel to both the temple of Revelation and the spiritual temple of the Church.

Numbers are used throughout the book in a different manner than is true in other parts of the scriptures. Most of the time numbers are used to designate literal quantities such as the number of persons going into Egypt, or the number of precious stones to be used in the breastplate of the high priest. On occasion they are used in a slightly symbolic manner, as exemplified by the statement of Jesus that it is necessary to forgive seventy times seven times, which of course means to forgive without counting. In the book of Revelation the symbolism of numbers is much more complete. We may have to wait until we have come into the presence of our Maker to find out all of the secrets of the numbers here.

Among the numbers which occur repeatedly are three, four, seven, twelve, one thousand, and one hundred forty-four. Interestingly these are all evenly divided into the largest or the one hundred forty-four. All of these numbers must be watched closely lest they be taken too literally. In the course of the comments we will dwell more fully on the possible meanings associated with them. We shall find the study more fascinating with these numbers than it would have been without them.

Without going into a great deal of specific detail we wish to present a general outline of Revelation. There are a host of outlines to examine. And they vary from very simple to very complex. Rather than overwhelming ourselves at this time let us be brief. The following outline will be sufficient.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A. CHRIST WALKS AMONG THE
CANDLESTICKS.**
- B. CHRIST OPENS THE SEALED BOOK.**
- C. CHRIST WARNS OF THE DANGER OF
OF DISOBEDIENCE.**
- D. CHRIST IS PERSECUTED BY THE
DRAGON.**
- E. CHRIST'S ANGELS POUR OUT SEVEN
VIALS OF THE WRATH OF GOD.**

F. CHRIST'S ENEMIES ARE DEFEATED.

G. CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE REIGN IN A NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH.

H. CONCLUSION.

Principles For The Study Of Revelation:

One encounters various systems which have been proposed for interpreting this great book. It is dangerous for the student to allow himself to be categorized in this way. He will, if not very careful, attempt to fit all symbolism around his chosen system rather than allowing the truth to emerge unhindered.

Basically there are three groups of scholars. The first believes the events recorded took place primarily during the destruction of Jerusalem and the initial establishment of Christianity in the face of Roman persecution. The second sees Revelation as a description of events during the whole of the Christian age and attempts to assign the symbols to specific historical events, persons, and places throughout the centuries. The third group applies the vast majority of the material in the book to a period of great tribulation which it believes will occur shortly before the return of Jesus.

Since the author sees grave danger in binding himself to any one of these systems, he will make intensive effort to simply let the Bible lead us where it will.

There are a few principles which must be heeded. They are listed below. It is hoped the reader will find them useful in his or her own study.

FIRST PRINCIPLE: Revelation was written to be read, understood, and used as a guide for men's actions (Revelation 1:3).

SECOND PRINCIPLE: Though written directly to the seven churches of Asia Minor, Revelation has a vital message for us today. Otherwise, it would not have been preserved through the ages as a part of the book of God.

THIRD PRINCIPLE: The Bible is its own best interpreter and thus symbolic and figurative language must find its best explanation in other Biblical usage of the same term.

FOURTH PRINCIPLE: God's truth in both the material and the spiritual realms is best understood through an honest hunger for the truth, through hard labor, and through earnest prayer.

FIFTH PRINCIPLE: No man has ever completely mastered the unsearchable riches of God's Word, and so after one has studied, worked and prayed, he must still keep a receptive mind, a clear eye, and an open ear.

Our introduction is concluded. We are ready to investigate the text itself. May God grant us wisdom, courage and energy. The glory belongs to Him!



**The Book Of
Revelation**



Chapter 1

REV 1:1 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:

REV 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

The greek word APOKALUPSIS, which is translated into our English word REVELATION, indicates that something previously hidden is about to be made observable. Just as a painter might remove the cover from a painting which is to be shown to the public, God is about to remove the seals from something which has been long hidden.

Long ago the prophet Daniel was commanded to “Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Daniel 12:9). The mystery of God had been hidden for many long centuries before God decided to reveal it through his Son and our Saviour. Thus, what once was hidden is now made manifest. See Eph. 2:9-10; 3:3 and Col. 1:26.

In Revelation 10:2 and 10:7 we find that a book has been opened and that the MYSTERY OF GOD is declared finished. That which Daniel was commanded to seal up has now been made manifest. This present book of Revelation is the climax of that process.

We must note that it is not the revelation of

John, as many of our Bibles have it labeled. These labels are the additions of men. And in this case the label is misleading. The first verse tells us this book is the revelation of God, which passed through Jesus Christ, also through an angel, and finally through the mind and pen of John.

It has worried some that this order seems to place Jesus in a subservient position to Jehovah. The objection is groundless. God, the Word, and the Holy Spirit were all present and instrumental in the original creation. They are all instrumental in the sustenance and the redemption of the creation. Though they play different roles, each of them is absolutely vital to the overall accomplishments of the Godhead.

It should not be unexpected that angels play a part in the presentation. They have constantly been involved in the instruction of men. Angels were utilized in the instruction of the patriarchs. Later they were involved in the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. In our own dispensation angels are said to rejoice when sinners are led to repentance. At one point Michael and his angels are said to fight against Satan and his angels. It is then quite in order that the wonders of this book be signified by an angel. Nor should we be surprised that God used John as a link in the revelation. He first used the patriarchs. Then Moses and the prophets acted as spokesmen. In these last days he sent his own Son in the form of a man. When it became necessary for Jesus to leave the earth, he was replaced by his apostles and other righteous men who were guided by the Holy

Spirit unto all truth. Truly, God likes to speak to men through men.

The Revelation concerned things which should **SHORTLY** come to pass. This phrase has led to much anxiety among the commentators. Some have contended that the vast majority of the events recorded in the book must have transpired within a few years of the time the book was written. These commentators usually reluctantly admit that the last couple of chapters must lie outside that time frame.

Other writers suppose the phrase means only that the events must have begun to happen shortly. The grammar is not abused in understanding it through the second view. Surely we must accept the fact that neither the judgment, the bliss of heaven, the torments of hell, nor even the return of Christ can be said to have been **COMPLETED** shortly.

Since the Revelation is addressed specifically to the seven churches of Asia Minor, we are safe in expecting that the events described were related in some manner to the difficulties these churches faced or would face. However, there are references to the events of the very end time in several places. These include not only chapters twenty-one and twenty-two, but also the last four verses of chapter six and the last part of chapter eleven. In fact, almost the same words are used in the very last chapter of the book. After talking about the judgment and heaven, God says, *“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”* (Rev. 22:6).

To say that these things must **SHORTLY COME TO PASS** was God's way of telling those suffering Christians of the seven churches that things were moving toward a climax, which was foreseen and carefully watched by Jehovah's loving eye. They would not have to wait endless generations for God's providential hand to intervene in their behalf.

It is agreed that the triumph of Christianity over the persecuting power of Rome was a major victory for the saints. Still, it was only the beginning of the story presented in this magnificent book. The things which would shortly come to pass would continue to come to pass until Satan and his allies were confined in the lake of fire and until the servants of the Lord would be glorified to live with Him in the New and Heavenly Jerusalem.

The Word of God, and the testimony of which John bore record, is the Revelation itself. It had been given to John. He would be faithful in recording it that it might be transmitted to others to lend encouragement through all the ages.

REV 1:3 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.

A blessing is pronounced upon he that **READS** and they that **HEAR** and **KEEP** the words of the prophecy. The Bible has much to say about those who hear God's commandments but do not keep them. After presenting the sermon on the mount in Matthew chapters five, six, and seven, Jesus

discussed those who hear without doing as having built their houses on the sand. There are two levels at which the reader may stumble. He may read without perceiving, and he may perceive the understanding, without putting the truth into action. This blessing is only pronounced upon those who do all three. They must read, understand, and obey.

This is proof positive the book of Revelation was not intended to be so mysterious Christians could not understand it. God does not command us to keep words we can not understand. To neglect the study of the book of Revelation is just as serious as to neglect the study of any other part of God's Word. The book has a message for us, and we must seek it out.

Again, in verse three, the emphasis is laid upon the nearness of the sequence of events. Unlike the case of Daniel, where the information was to be sealed up for many days, the time is said to be "AT HAND". They must be prepared and ready. The action is about to begin!!

REV 1:4 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:

REV 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from 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,

REV 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The seven churches selected as recipients of the Revelation were arranged in a circle in the land we now call Turkey. They were some twenty to thirty miles apart, near the western coast of the country. They varied sharply in the importance of the cities in which they were located. Ephesus and Pergamos were among the most influential cities around the Mediterranean Sea, while Thyatira and Philadelphia were relatively insignificant.

It is not likely these were the only congregations of the church, even if the early date for the writing of Revelation is correct. There were congregations at Colosse, Heiropolis, and Troas as early as the latter sixties.

These seven churches seem to have been chosen as representatives because they had certain strengths and weaknesses which have been found in congregations throughout the centuries. We shall have more to say about each of them as we consider the message addressed to each.

As in many other of the New Testament epistles, the blessings of grace and peace are pronounced upon the readers at the very beginning. Grace is favor bestowed beyond that which is earned or deserved. Peace, as used here, means far more than the absence of violence. It carries the idea of spiritual well being and harmony with God.

This grace and peace is to issue from each of the members of the Godhead. The one who was and

is and is to come is God the Father. He is described in other places as the I AM, or he who is from everlasting unto everlasting. The seven Spirits appear to be symbolic of the perfection of the Holy Spirit. If these seven Spirits were not sandwiched, as they are, between the names of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, we would be more apt to pay attention to their plurality. Since they do occupy such a position, we feel safe in equating them with the Holy Spirit.

Verse five indicates something of the way in which grace and peace have come to Christianity through Jesus. He is providing the Revelation of God's mystery, as it comes to these churches. Men need not fear for its accuracy, for he is dependable and will reveal only the truth. He is not a common witness. He is the one who first conquered the grave. He has proven himself greater than any king who ever lived. Yet he loved us enough to allow his blood to be poured out at the foot of the cross that sinners might be washed and made clean of soul.

Not only did Jesus blaze the way for his disciples. He has, even while they live, allowed them to reign like kings over themselves, over sin, and over Satan. As Christians, they extend the rule of the New Testament of God to all of the earth. All who disdain their rulership and the law of liberty which they teach will ultimately face the judge of all the earth. Christians are priests because they are allowed, through the blood of Christ, to approach the throne of the Almighty and present themselves as living sacrifices. The offering of sacrifices is the

task of a priest, and Christians are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).

Because of the tremendous outpouring of grace and peace through the Son of God, he is to be recognized as worthy of the highest praise Christians can offer. He is also deserving of the highest position of leadership conceived by man or God. He has been raised from the very depths of the grave to a position above every principality and power, both in heaven and on earth. And his power and dominion shall last until every enemy admits to his divine nature and rightful rulership. AMEN—Be it so!

REV 1:7 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.

REV 1:8 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.

Those who are deluded into thinking Jesus Christ has departed from the scene are in for a shocking surprise. The disciples who watched him depart into heaven in the clouds were told he would return in like manner (Acts 1:11). Matthew 24:27 declares that his returning shall be like the lightning which lights up the entire sky from the east to the west. The attention of the entire earth shall be commanded. Every eye shall see Him. Those who may be concerned over the difficulties of eyes on one

side of the earth seeing him if he arrives on the other side will find God has his own ways of surmounting physical trifles.

There will be highly mixed emotions at his return. Those who have been faithful and have anxiously awaited their crown of righteousness will then realize their reward is at hand. Those who have crucified him at the cross and who have failed to repent will be forced to bend the knee. And they will have company. Those who have crucified him afresh by impudently trampling in his blood through the Christian age shall also kneel before him in much weeping and tears. Their forced confession will be too late! The weeping and grief of persons all over the earth will be worse than that of the flood and of Egypt at the loss of their firstborn.

Just as alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, even so, Jehovah is from before the beginning of time until after the end of time. The authority of God is expected to be recognized in every book of the New Testament because of the signatures of apostles, or the elevated nature of the material. However, the urgency of the message of this book is emphasized by the express declaration of God that HE is its source. Again we pause to wonder how men can study the first sixty-six books of the Word of God and ignore this last book. God says "I PERSONALLY SEND YOU THIS INFORMATION."

REV 1:9 I John, who am also 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.

REV 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

REV 1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to 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.

John, who is to act as the channel through which the revelation will be delivered, now tells how he was enlisted for this task. As many of his brethren were undergoing persecution and tribulation for their commitment to the cause of the Lord, he too had joined them in suffering. As a citizen of God's kingdom he was now having his patience tried by having been sent to the island of Patmos. Such punishment had been meted out to him because he had preached the Word of God in the name of the Lord Jesus.

On the island of Patmos he would have an opportunity to work in the mines where other exiled prisoners also labored. Perhaps, in this way, the Roman officials could teach him to say, "Caesar is lord." Or at least such a hope was entertained by his captors. How little understanding the men of rank on earth often have of the care God visits upon

those who love him. Just when the sky seems the darkest, as it must have seemed to John there on the island, God steps in and allows one to see the rainbow of his glory. John, the prisoner, is now to become John, the glorious vessel of God's revelation. In this capacity he will shine far beyond the borders of Patmos, and for as long as time lasts. God does not forget his own.

When John says he was "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day, it is not likely that he was talking about the same thing as does the verse which encourages Christians to sing "with the spirit and the understanding." Every worshipper should manifest an energetic, enthusiastic, and well thought out sacrifice of the fruit of his lips, to the Lord. However, John's spiritual state was probably much more like that of Ezekiel in Ezekiel 11:1 and 11:24, where he was allowed to see Jerusalem through the Spirit of the Lord and to report on its condition to the people in the captivity of Chaldea. John was in the Spirit in a very special sense.

The voice John heard behind him was of such nature as not to be ignored. It was like the piercing notes of a trumpet, calling soldiers into battle or heralding announcements of extreme importance. The sound of the divine voice has shattered the nerves of multitudes in the past. At Sinai the Israelites pled with Moses that the voice which spoke as a trumpet should be heard by them no more (Heb. 12:19).

For the third time the announcement is made that the one who stands outside the limitations of

time is the one giving John directions. John's responsibilities are now to be made absolutely clear. He is to write a book. That book will describe the special experiences he is having while in the Spirit. After having observed all that God is about to present to him and having written it down faithfully, he is to send it to seven congregations of the church in the province of Asia.

The message which John will send to these churches will provide solace and encouragement while they carry the cross before the ominous power of the Roman Empire. This will be no light burden. Without the providential aid of Jehovah they would be crushed to powder. They could hardly know that the same message they read would be read by millions of Christians through all the ages, until Jesus makes his appearance in the clouds. Long after their faith had succeeded in crushing Rome, God's faithful would be using those same encouraging words to bear their own crosses.

There is often, in the case of Biblical prophecy, a dual application. This is not always true, but it happens repeatedly. While the prophet speaks to his own people he speaks also of a later time. Isaiah is a good example of such dual application. Certainly, much Isaiah had to say bore a direct relationship to the people among whom he lived and whom he taught. But Isaiah was also speaking to the Jews of the first century, telling them of the wonderful Messiah who would appear in the world. And thirdly, he wrote to all men who shall ever live, until the day of judgment, telling them of the servant king

who would usher in a “new heaven and a new earth.” Note the similarity between Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1.

The lessons which these seven churches needed to be taught in order to overcome their tribulations are similar to the lessons which we will need to overcome our problems. The punishments which they needed to avoid are the same eternal punishments which we need to avoid. And the hope of Christ’s coming, and of a new creation, which were held up before them, are the same visions which we must grasp if we are to be successful in our own labors. Both they, and we, are engaged in the same battle. They fought earlier in time than we, but we fight battles in the same spiritual war. It is the battle of the ages, between Jesus with His forces of righteousness, and Satan with his forces of darkness.

Let us read carefully. Let us stand side by side with those who overcame in Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, etc. The faithful shall overcome together with the blood of the slain Lamb of God.

REV 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

REV 1:13 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 with a golden girdle.

REV 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire.

REV 1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

REV 1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

John had heard the voice which told him to write that which he saw. He had not previously seen the speaker. Now he turned since the voice had come from behind him. Although it is not absolutely certain the voice he heard was that of the Christ who walked among the candlesticks, an examination of the entire context will support that view strongly. It seems likely from verses seventeen and eighteen that the speaker there is the same as the one who first called his attention. In that case it would be the Lord Jesus.

After he had turned, John saw seven golden candlesticks. This was not a single seven branched candlestick as one sees so often in pictures of the furniture used in the temple and the tabernacle. One could not walk in the midst of a single candlestick. This vision is of seven individual candlesticks.

Here we begin to move into the symbolism which is so prevalent throughout this book. What do the seven golden candlesticks represent? This time we have no need to wonder, for the Bible is its own best interpreter. Verse twenty tells us the candlesticks which John saw are the seven churches. Candlesticks

are supposed to radiate light. Therefore, when Jesus walked among the candlesticks, he would expect to find them sending forth the glory of God, which is the light of the world.

The one whom John saw walking among the candlesticks was like unto the Son of man. Jesus took pleasure in referring to himself as the Son of man. Philippians 2:6-8 speaks of Jesus, who was once in the form of God, having taken upon himself the likeness of man, and being found in the fashion of a man. The Christ was a perfect mediator between God and man because he was at the same time both Son of God and Son of man. Here he is seen as the raised and glorified Son of man walking among his precious churches.

We can cite other examples of the Biblical use of the term “Son of man.” It is used over and over in the book of Ezekiel, as God addresses the prophet. The same phrase is used in the book of Daniel. When the king looked into the fiery furnace where Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego had been thrown, the king saw a fourth figure which was “like unto the Son of man.” In the case of the figure walking among the golden candlesticks there is no uncertainty as to the identity of the person. It is Jesus, who was dead and is alive forevermore. See verse 18.

The garments in which he is clothed are said to be those of dignitaries in the eastern countries. Jesus is both our high priest and our king. The garments could be an indication of either his priesthood, his kingship, or both. Certainly his long

robe and the golden girdle tell us he is of most honorable stature, and deserves the utmost respect. The hair is as white as snow, or as wool. If only the hair were white we would be inclined to ascribe this to his great age, since he is from everlasting to everlasting. But the passage tells us not only his hair, but his face was white also. We see two characteristics of the Lord referred to. The whiteness of his hair emphasizes his experience and the wisdom which comes with age. The whiteness of the rest of his head presents a picture of sinless purity which he established while living among us and being tempted in all points like as we (Heb. 4:15).

This description of Jesus sounds very much like that found in Daniel 7:9-10. In the latter reference Daniel is describing the Ancient of Days, whom he saw sitting upon the throne of judgment, with books opened and tens of thousands gathered around to be judged. In verse fourteen of Daniel chapter seven, one like unto the Son of man is brought before the Ancient of Days to receive an everlasting kingdom, or dominion, which was never to be destroyed. In Revelation it seems Jesus has taken on the appearance of the one from whom he received the kingdom as related in Daniel.

As ruling king of the universe, Jesus is seen walking among the candlesticks, which are the churches. There with his flaming eyes He will see all that is to be seen, and He will give advice to them in order that they may stand in his kingdom, overcoming Satan, self, and sin. Nothing will escape his penetrating gaze. He is there to help them correct

their weakness and to offer his strength to combine with their own, as they face the tribulation to come. The feet like unto fine brass must be actually glowing. The text does not say they were smooth and polished like brass which has already come out of the furnace. It says they were even then as if they were brass being burned. The present tense is used, not the past. In other words they are as radiant as brass which is glowing with the heat of the furnace.

A passage which comes to mind is Romans 10:15. *“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace.”* Feet can serve a number of purposes. They can carry one from place to place in the accomplishment of various tasks. They can also be used to stamp out the juice of the grapes in the winepress, or to rest on the neck of a defeated enemy. The feet of Christ are said to do each of these things at different times. Since the text does not make any connection between the feet here and their purpose, we may simply be expected to accept them as a part of the general glory of the Divine. In Ezekiel 1:7 the cherubim, or spiritual beings close to God, have feet of brass similar to these.

The voice introduced in verse ten sounded like a trumpet. The voice of Jesus as he walks among the candlesticks sounds like the roar of water falling over a waterfall, or rolling on the seashore. As God spoke in Ezekiel 43:2, his voice sounded just as Jesus voice does here. There are some persons who have commanding voices. Others have great difficulty getting people to pay any attention to them. The physical voice of Jesus is not described in the Gospel

record. However, after his death and resurrection his voice has rung out over the world and through the centuries. This voice of many waters has reached wherever the Gospel story has been told. There will be no excuse for disobedience when the Lord returns. We must hear what he has said to the seven churches of Asia, and also what he has said to US!

In the right hand of Jesus there are seven stars. Once again we need not speculate on the meaning of the symbol. Verse twenty tells us the stars are the angels of the seven churches. We shall spend more time in discussion of the meaning of the word “angel” when we reach the twentieth verse. Stars and angels have certain common characteristics. They are both sources of light. Jesus holds their glory within his power. As a match can shed no light until it is struck by the user, no congregation, whether it be one of those of Asia Minor or one of the twentieth century, can shed any true spiritual illumination unless it proceeds first from the Christ, who is the true light (John 1:9).

Out of the mouth of the Lord proceeded a sharp two-edged sword. One is reminded of the sword swallows in the circus who inject a flaming sword into their mouth and down their throat. This sword comes out of the mouth rather than going into it. If we were to take this picture literally, it would be quite comical. The vision is symbolic in nature. John is being presented a series of visionary messages. This is one of those visions. The same sword is mentioned again in Revelation 19:15. At that time Jesus is shown as the Word of God, riding out to

claim victory over his many foes. He uses the sharp sword which proceeds out of his mouth to smite all the nations and then casts all of the slain to the scavenger birds.

This sword is not one made of steel. It is the Word of God. Ephesians 6:17 includes the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, in the various pieces of Christian armor. Hebrews 4:12 tells us the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing into the soul and spirit. This is the weapon with which Christians are to crucify the old man of sin, that he may be replaced with the new man in Jesus Christ.

The countenance of the Lord, as seen in the vision, is shining as the sun at the middle of the day. Later in the Revelation an angel is described as outshining the sun in its brightness. The vision which John saw took place after the ascension of Jesus, following his resurrection. We are told in 1 John 3:2 that *“It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”* In 1 Corinthians 15, and speaking of the body which will be resurrected at Christ’s coming, we are told this present body shall be replaced by one as much more glorious than this one in which we now live, as the sun is more glorious than the moon and stars. When Jesus appeared, along with Moses and Elijah, upon the mount of transfiguration, he had a luminous appearance.

All of the above combine to lead us to think the Son of man who walked in the midst of the

candlesticks had already received the glory he has promised we shall receive at our resurrection. He had departed from that glory upon coming to earth. Now he has reassumed it. The entire picture must have been a most amazing scene, unfurled before John's wondering eye.

REV 1:17 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:

REV 1:18 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.

REV 1:19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

REV 1:20 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 reaction which John had when faced with such immediate presence of the Divine Son in all of his glory is similar to that of others under similar circumstances. In the first chapter of Ezekiel the prophet was allowed to see a vision of God's throne. When he saw the glory of the rainbow round God's throne, Ezekiel also fell upon his face and had to be

told to stand upon his feet. In Isaiah chapter six, Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord sitting upon his throne. He cried out, “*Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.*” John even fell prostrate before an angel later in the Revelation and had to be told to rise. In our mortal state, and in our physical bodies, men are in an uneasy condition when allowed to approach this close to God’s glory, even in a vision.

The same right hand which had held the seven stars is now extended and laid upon John. He is told to, “*Fear not.*” This was most appropriate in the case of John. Here was an apostle suffering on behalf of his Lord. He could rest assured the flaming eyes, the glowing feet, the sharp sword, and the shining countenance were all to be employed in his support, and not against him. Perfect love casteth out fear (1 John 4:18).

At an earlier time the apostles had heard these same words from their Lord. The storm was raging on the Sea of Galilee, and they were fearful of drowning. Jesus appeared to them, telling them to “*Fear not.*” Just so, the faithful servants of Christ today need have no fear of the coming of Jesus and his angels to judge the world. Only those who have ignored, or resisted and fought against the kingdom of God need fear the sword of the Lord.

Yes, Jesus is the first and the last. He is the one who was buried, only to break through the gates of hell and the grave after three days. But this awesome power is made available on the side of the Christian, to comfort, sustain, and guide him, that

he may be able to join his Lord in mansions which are prepared for him, and in a glorified body, somewhat like that of his Lord. Fear is for the devil and his angels, not for God's children.

John is now reminded of the command given to him previously, before he had turned to see the voice which spake with him. He is to write everything which is revealed to him. This includes what he has already seen; that is the Christ walking among the candlesticks. He is to write about what is now happening to him as the Lord speaks to him. And he is to write the things which he shall see in the visions to come.

The past, the present, and the future tense, as used here do not imply that the book John is to write covers all time from the creation to the end of the present world. It deals with the VISIONS John has already seen, is seeing at the moment, and is to see in the future. Some of the visions will refer to things of the past, and some to things of the future; but the three tenses refer to the visions only. Some he has seen. Some he is seeing. Some he will see.

Jesus now gives an explanation of the candlesticks and the seven stars. We are aware of a number of comments made concerning the "angels" the Lord said were represented by the seven stars. We think there is no great difficulty here. An angel is a messenger who brings illuminating truth. A star is a source of light. Rather than being a person, as suggested by many, the angel or star, of each of the seven churches, is the illuminating truth which

may be shed abroad from that church when Jesus is preached. Jesus walks among the candlesticks, which are the seven churches, and he is ready to light each candlestick. As long as each church draws spiritual energy from the Christ, that church's candlestick will continue to burn brightly. Its star will be seen, and its messenger, or angel, will go out from it. If that church ceases to draw spiritual energy from Jesus, who is the true light, its candlestick will be removed. Just so will Ephesus be warned (Rev. 2:5). Jesus holds the stars in his right hand. No church's star will shine, nor will its angel go forth, unless Jesus lights it's candlestick.



Chapter 2

REV 2:1 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;

REV 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labor, 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.

REV 2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my names sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Comment has already been made concerning the nature of the angels of each of the churches. There is no need for repetition. Although the message of verses one through seven of this chapter are addressed specifically to the church at Ephesus, it was almost certainly read in each of the other six, just as it has been read in countless congregations from then until the present. That which God commended in the Ephesus church will still be commendable today. That which God condemned in Ephesus will continue to be condemned throughout history.

As Jesus walks among the candlesticks and focuses his eyes like flaming fire upon the church in that great city of Asia Minor, he will point out both its weakness and its strong points. Much tribulation is to follow, and they must be able to

stand in the time of stress which is to come. We also have stress and tribulation. The weaknesses of the church at Ephesus must be avoided. The strengths must become our own. Let us pay careful attention. Ephesus was one of the most noble cities of the Mediterranean world during the first century. When Paul launched Christianity into the Gentile community, he did so from two very great cities. They were Ephesus and Rome.

For a time span of about three years the apostle taught from the household of Tyrannus, converting large numbers of idolatrous Gentiles. In fact, his success was so great the silversmiths of the area became enraged and fearful that the sales of their idols would collapse. This was the reason for the great uproar which arose at the theatre at the time Paul left the area. He had boldly placed the teachings of Jesus beside that of the human wisdom of the day. The result was that Jesus was growing rapidly, while idolatry was found to be insufficient. After Paul's stay of three years, the Ephesians had fastened their hearts upon Jesus as strongly as a young maiden fastens her affections upon her first love.

Here we find one of the compelling reasons for believing the Revelation was written some years after A.D. 59 when Paul was there. At the time of this writing they are said to have lost their first love. When Paul was there, the Christian's hearts were ablaze for their Lord. Less than ten years hardly seems enough time for such a drastic cooling of love for the gospel.

What did the Lord see in the church at Ephesus? First, he informs them he is the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand. This is consistent with the pattern presented in each of the letters to the seven churches. One or more characteristics of Christ are presented as the letter is begun. Usually one can see a distinct connection between the description of Christ and some characteristic of that particular church. In this case there was a danger the candlestick of the church would go out, and Jesus is the one who can keep it alight through the stars, which are the angels of the churches.

Over and over in this series of messages to the churches Jesus makes it crystal clear that he knows what is happening among them. He knew then, and he knows now, exactly what men do and fail to do. Be careful dear friends, for the Christ walks among his people.

The Christians at Ephesus are commended for their patience. Patience is one of the Christian virtues. No man who fails to practice it is acceptable to the Lord. God exercises patience and longsuffering toward us when we constantly test him. We must also show the same virtue when men aggravate and irritate us. Whether it be Christians at Ephesus, or Christians today, service during tribulation requires a full measure of patience.

The Ephesians manifested a proper attitude toward evil workers. Sometimes newly converted persons have difficulty in tearing themselves away from their former companions who walk in wicked ways. The Ephesians had succeeded in separating

themselves from such evil ones; they even had a strong distaste for those evil actions. This was exactly as it should have been.

False teachers had come among them with claims of apostleship. For several years the Ephesians had enjoyed close contact with Paul, a true apostle. They had an excellent measuring stick for determining the truth or falsehood of such claims. John tells us in his short epistles to “try the spirits” to see whether they are of God.

When the Ephesians had held the false teachers under close examination, the teachers had fallen short. They had rejected them. Jesus was pleased at their discernment.

Again in verse three their patience is approved. It had not been easy to hold up the name of the Saviour in the face of ridicule. They had done so, and they were commended highly for it. As one teacher stated it, “They just kept on keeping on.”

REV 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

REV 2:5 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.

Not everything the Lord saw in Ephesus was commendable. It would not be a mark of love on his part to see weaknesses and fail to point them out

for possible correction. There are individuals who feel fellow Christians who love them should never say anything negative about them. If Jesus had agreed with that plan of action, he would not have made the statements of verses four through six in this letter to Ephesus.

These Ephesians had left their first love! The statement leaves us somewhat perplexed. How could he commend them for their patience and endurance, and then follow the commendation with a criticism that they had left him as their first love? The answer may be found by looking around us today. Immediately after baptism into Jesus, many diligently seek out his every desire. They make an effort to please him in every way. No command seems too grievous. Just as honeymooners find it perfect joy to please one another, so these new Christians love and serve the Christ. Sadly, there are those who lose this ardor over the years. They continue to endure and to serve. But now the service becomes a matter of obligation, and not of joy. The Christian life turns to formality and routine. Their **FIRST LOVE IS GONE!**

Verse five gives the remedy for those who have lost that first love. They are first to remember the condition as it once was when love burned brightly. And then, as the prodigal son who compared his sorry condition in the hogpen with the previous condition in the house of his father, the cold Christian should compare the present unhealthy situation with what it could be and return to his former enthusiasm. If this is not done the results are spelled out most

clearly. Jesus will not radiate his spiritual energy and illumination through them. Their candlestick will be removed. Their light will be snuffed out!

It would be pleasant to report to the reader that the warning here was heeded. It was not. And because it was not, the candlestick at Ephesus was put out. There is no church of the Lord in that place today. The followers of Jesus have been replaced by the disciples of the false prophet Mohammed. The interested Christian who tours there today searches in vain for any dim rays of the light of Christ shining through the Turkish people. There is nothing but darkness.

The disaster extends to the social life as well as the religious life of the city. In the time of Paul Ephesus was a magnificent harbor. The streets were laid with marble. The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Only the ruins are left. Silt from the Meander river has filled in the harbor. During this process the entire area became swampland and was plagued with malaria. The problem became so serious the people had to abandon the harbor. Just over a small mountain the traveler today comes upon a small village called Selcuk. This is all that remains of that great society. The temple of Diana is also abandoned. All that can be seen today is a hole in the ground where the archeologists have dug into the old foundation area.

It is said there were one hundred twenty-seven beautiful pillars, each given by a separate king. Today there is one pillar standing alone, upon the top of which a stork had built its nest. Obviously this one

pillar is a result of a feeble restoration attempt by the archeologists. For many centuries the site of the ancient temple was unknown. Only a gigantic search revealed its location.

The city is gone. The temple is gone. The church of Christ is gone. The light is gone. Let us beware fellow Christians. It is altogether possible that our own light could be put out because of lack of communication with our first love, Jesus Christ.

REV 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

REV 2:7 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.

After beginning with commendation and following that with words of warning God now adds another favorable comment. He finds that both he and the Ephesian Christians have a common hatred for the deeds of the Nicolaitanes.

Normally hatred is condemned in the Bible. But there are times when hatred and anger are appropriate. We are to abhor that which is evil (Romans 12:9). It might be well to note here the hatred is directed at the deeds, rather than the doer of the deeds. Ecclesiastes informs us there is a time to love and a time to hate. We are also told to hate evil and love the good. (Amos 5:15) One who makes

the mistake of reversing this to love evil while hating good stands condemned, according to Micah 3:2.

Who are these Nicolaitanes whose deeds God hates? They are mentioned in both this letter, and in the one to the church at Pergamos. Records outside the Bible tell us the Nicolaitanes were a division of the gnostics. The gnostics excused the most immoral behavior upon the grounds that the body was evil while the spirit was holy. Therefore, the spirit could be considered pure even while making its home in a body which participated in the depths of debauchery and lasciviousness. Though calling themselves by the name Christian, they believed in a sharing of wives. They considered fornication and adultery as insignificant. They destroyed weak brethren by eating meat sacrificed to idols. In addition they mixed pagan ceremonies with Christian worship. If these reports are true, it is little wonder Jesus hated such actions. If he became angry at the pollution of the earthly temple in Jerusalem, as it was brought about by the money changers of Matthew 21, think how aroused he must be at actions like this which profane the spiritual temple, the Church.

It is a wise decision to have God's friends for your friends, and God's enemies for your enemies. It would be difficult to find any clearer recipe for success. On the contrary, if one makes friends with God's enemies and opposes God's friends, he is on a sure road to calamity.

The message to Ephesus is closed in the same manner as each of the other six letters to the

churches. There is an exhortation to hear, and a promise to the one who is able to overcome in the “Battle of the Ages.” All men have physical ears if they do not suffer from deformity. But many who have flaps of gristle and flesh on the sides of their head and who have perfectly operating ear drums on the inside may be said to have no spiritual ears. How many thousands, or even millions of people, must have heard the gospel repeatedly without allowing the truth to penetrate and take root in the soil of their heart? The Lord is not at fault. He has trumpeted the call to the four corners of the earth. The fault is with the insensitive man who deliberately turns his ear away from the pleading of Jesus.

The promise to Ephesus is exquisitely beautiful. To every person who endures unto the end there will be access to the fruit of the tree of life in the garden, or Paradise of God. This is a reference to the same tree described in Revelation 22:2. It is found at the edge of the river of life in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of Heaven from God (Revelation 21:10). The fruits of this tree are for the healing of the nations. There shall come a time in which the Cherubim who were placed between man and the tree of life shall be removed. Then man may once more become immune to corruption and decay. Death will have found his master. Let us, along with the Ephesians, hear and overcome!

A pattern is repeated in the letters to the seven churches. First, there is an address to the angel of that church. This includes some characteristic of

the Lord Jesus Christ, as given in chapter one. Then a statement of Christ's knowledge of the works of that church is stated. This is followed by an analysis of the good and bad points of the church. An exhortation is given challenging toward higher behavior. There is a warning given about the possible consequences of evil works. An urgent plea is made with each church to open their spiritual ears and heed what has been said. At the conclusion of each letter stands a promise of wonderful things to come for those who stand victorious with Jesus when the battle is concluded.

REV 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.

REV 2:9 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 of the synagogue of Satan.

About forty miles north of Ephesus was the rival seaport of Smyrna. It did not match the importance of Ephesus in the first century times, but it was then, as it is now, a very important harbor city. Though very little remains in Smyrna, or Izmir as it is called presently, to remind the traveler of the days of Asian glory, there is a thriving city of over four hundred thousand people today. As was the case in Ephesus, one searches in vain for the faintest

trace of living New Testament Christianity. Alas, one is surrounded by the spires and mosques of Islam. We are told that there may be a few Christians in the city of Smyrna. However, persecution is so fierce these persons are driven into seclusion.

It seems the description of Jesus which is given to each of the churches has some peculiar significance for the problems of that particular congregation. In Ephesus Jesus was described as the one who holds the seven stars because Ephesus was in danger of having her candlestick removed. In Smyrna he is the one who was dead, and is alive again; the first and the last. Persecution even unto death was common in Smyrna. Such persecution must not be allowed to cause their faith to weaken. Jesus was also persecuted unto the death. Though nailed to the cross and buried in the earth, he rose after three days. Physical life is for the moment. Spiritual life is unity with him who was, who is, and who will be, without end.

As an example of the martyrdom which took place in Smyrna we have the record of the burning of Polycarp. Polycarp was a young man in the time of John. He became an elder in the church at Smyrna. At the age of eighty-six he was taken prisoner and threatened with burning at the stake unless he denied Jesus as his divine Lord. It is reported that he said, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" How many lesser names must have also suffered a similar fate before the heartless soldiers of the Roman emperor?

It was labor and patience which Jesus saw in Ephesus. In Smyrna he sees tribulation and poverty. Tribulation was to be the portion of all the seven churches. Since Smyrna is selected as the congregation where tribulation is an outstanding characteristic, we must assume it had more than its share. The Bible teaches that tribulation may be turned into growth of character. Tribulation works patience, and patience brings hope, but through the blood of Christ Christian hope brings escape from the most unbearable experience of all; that is the final wrath of God in judgment (Romans 5:3-5). *“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of glory”* (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Christ speaks of the poverty of the Christians at Smyrna. Poverty was common among the early followers of the Lord. By becoming a Christian one often separated himself from his means of livelihood, from his friends, and even from his own family. Christians were thought of as being atheists, since they would not worship either the emperor or the pagan gods. It was thought necessary to place pressure upon them to change their ways and return to the idolatry of the day.

Happily, God's view of poverty and that of man is totally different. God comforts them by saying, *“But thou art rich.”* The body may be starving. The children may be crying for a morsel of bread. Bitter cold may be seeping into the very marrow of the bones while at the same time the Christian is rich in the things which really matter. Clothed with white

robes of righteousness and fed with the bread of life which Jesus provides through his teachings, no Christian should ever be overcome. Those who may be able to cause suffering of the body are far less powerful than he who is able to cast both soul and body into hell. Poverty and tribulation are the weapons of Satan, but they will never defeat the man of God who is armed with the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith.

In addition to the above difficulties the faithful at Smyrna had to contend with the blasphemous conduct of some who claimed to be God's people (Jews), but who were not. One of the greatest handicaps to progress of the churches in the first century was the resistance of the Jews. Some who had supposedly taken the name Christian would not admit the passing of the Old Testament ordinances. They were still teaching circumcision, keeping of sabbaths, and various holy days. Both from the unconverted Jews who worshipped in the synagogues which were scattered throughout the Roman world, and from the half converted Jews who worshipping with the true Christians, there was much opposition to God's Kingdom.

The true Jew (chosen one of God) today is the descendant of Abraham by faith, rather than being a descendant through the flesh. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and the true circumcision is that which takes place when the heart is cut off from the desires of the flesh (Romans 2:29). Those Jews through the flesh, or earthly descendants of Abraham, who placed obstacles in the way of true worship in Christ were

described as belonging to the synagogue of Satan. Instead of worshipping God they were in actuality serving the purposes of the evil one. To claim to be a worshipper of God while serving Satan is to be a blasphemer, since such teaching denies the power of Jehovah.

REV 2:10 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.

REV 2:11 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.

Some of the people of God in Smyrna were to be thrown into prison for their faith. Prisons of the twentieth century give us little idea of what this meant to prisoners of that day. Today's prison affords a comfortable place to sleep, a warm shelter, and a sufficient supply of food. None of these could have been expected at that time. The suffering could well have been unto death. Still the Christian was to continue in hope. The tribulation would last only ten days. Even if death was the result, a prisoner could look beyond the gates of the prison to the glorious liberty of the resurrection. After all Jesus has the key to the gates of death, hell and the grave.

In the passage at hand we find another of the

interesting numbers scattered through this book. The tribulation will last only “ten days.” The early part of Revelation is less symbolic than the latter portion. The letters to the churches, as found in chapters two and three, only begin to introduce the dozens of symbolic and figurative lessons which come later. The ten days mentioned here is a prime example of the need to be cautious. Obviously each Christian who was cast into prison at Smyrna was not going to remain there for precisely ten days. The point being made is that the duration of the discomfort would be very short compared with the eternal glory to follow. It is probably wise now to compare the ten days of this passage with the “thousand years” the saints were to reign, as pictured in verse four of chapter twenty. In one case it is a very short time. In the other case it is a very long time. In neither was it a literal ten days or a literal thousand years.

If the poverty stricken and persecuted of Smyrna would maintain their faith in the face of every trial, death would simply be an escape route from the tears and sorrow, to the presence of God where they would all be wiped away by the Eternal Father. They would follow the footsteps of the crucified Saviour who had his crown of thorns replaced by an everlasting crown of life in glory.

There are some who have spiritual ears in all the churches of the Lord, and there are others who do not. Notice these letters are not addressed to persons outside the fold of Christ. It is apparent that some who have once heard the voice of the

Great Shepherd and have followed him have since stopped their ears and refused to follow his directions. Also note that each of the letters is to be heard by all of the churches, even though directed to one of them. It is “Let the one who has an ear hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES.”

The same encouragement which was given to the church at Smyrna is applicable to Christians who suffer from want and persecution, wherever they may be, and in whatever time they live. “*All who live Godly shall suffer persecution*” (2 Timothy 3:12). But the persecution shall be relatively short, and the reward for endurance will be eternal and precious.

This time the final promise must have been tremendously comforting to a people who had fear for their very lives. There is a condition far worse than physical death. Spiritual death is worse. It is to be separated from all that is good and righteous, including God himself, and to be cast into the lake of fire with everything which is evil and unholy. This is what the Bible calls the “second death” (Revelation 20:14-15). If a Christian were burned at the stake, as Polycarp was, he could look forward to immunity from the second death which would be far worse.

There is some discussion among the commentators as to whether the crown of life represents rulership or victory. Crowns were worn for both in that time. A ruling king wore his crown. So did a victorious runner in the athletic games. May we suggest a combination of both. The person who endures the type of persecution endured by

those of Smyrna, and who has done so in the face of physical martyrdom, has gained the greatest of victories. He deserves a crown in honor of that victory. But he also may be said to have become a ruler over the forces of evil which sought to destroy both him and the kingdom to which he belongs. He is most truly a victorious king. Through the power of the Lamb he has vanquished powers and principalities, life and death, things present and things to come (Romans 8). He shares a victor's crown, as well as a victor's throne, with his Lord Jesus Christ.

REV 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.

REV 2:13. 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.

When we left Ephesus and went to Smyrna, we moved about forty miles northward along the coast line of the Aegean Sea. It is now time for another forty mile trip to the north. This time we move slightly inland and find ourselves at the foot of a sizeable mountain. Here lies the city of Pergamos. The name of the village which remains there today is Bergama. It is not difficult to see the resemblance of the present day name to that of Biblical times. The village today is just a few thousand in

population. Many of the houses have pink tile roofs which gives a strange rose colored appearance to the entire area when seen from the elevation of the mountain nearby.

Pergamos was a great capitol in its heyday. Regional kingdoms were ruled over from this city. By cooperating with the Roman empire these potentates were able to avoid being replaced and were able to reign with great power. Pergamos was then familiar with rulership by the sword.

The Bible has much to say about idolatrous worship from “high places”. The mountain at Pergamos is a perfect example of such high places. On the top of the mountain were located temples and altars to Zeus, Athena, and a number of other false gods. Satan had made enormous inroads into the minds of this pagan people. The word “acropolis” means high city. The citizens of Pergamos, like the citizens of Athens, had their acropolis.

Also found at the city of Pergamos was the Aesclepium, a famous center of healing. The healing practices involved a mixture of the medical arts and religious deception. Gods of healing were worshipped. An altar may be seen there at the time of this writing with serpents entwined on its side. Patients were caused to run through a mysterious tunnel toward the temple of the healing god. A Christian in Pergamos would have found himself surrounded by false worship of every kind. In addition there would have been an attempt to intimidate him by the political force of the ruling kings.

The description of Jesus this time is that of one who has a sharp sword with two edges. These people

found demonstrations of physical power on every side. They needed to be reminded that the Son of God possesses power far greater than any earthly ruler. The sword of Jesus Christ comes from his mouth rather than being worn in a scabbard at his side. It is the Word of God, and it represents power greater than that of all the kings of all the ages. It is made available to the Christian through the teaching of the Redeemer. Not only does Jesus use this sword, he makes it a part of the Christian armor (Ephesians 6). No Christian need ever cower before the power of false gods or foolish kings while he has the two edged sword of the Spirit in his possession.

Again, Jesus is familiar with the works of this church. The dominant observation this time is the evil surroundings in which these Christians must live. It is as if Satan had his headquarters right in the midst of them. There may have been other reasons why Jesus called this “Satan’s seat.” But we cannot help making the connection between the multitude of false gods worshipped there, and it being Satan’s seat. There could be little more pleasing to Satan than to see multitudes of people bowing down before the creation instead of the Creator.

It is not at all unlikely that Antipas lost his life because he would not deny Jesus and bow down before Satan’s representatives, the false gods.

There is no name above that of Jesus. (Philipians 2:9) Neither kings nor false gods may supplant that name in the minds and affections of Christians. It was satisfying to Jesus to see the unwavering confession of his name on the part of his followers in Pergamos. Such steadfastness would

not have been easy before the powers opposing them. Jesus well knew of the difficulties, and so twice within a single verse he mentioned Satan's seat being among them. On this point they deserved the highest commendation, and they received it.

REV 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold to the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.

REV 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I also hate.

It is hard to understand why and how men of corrupt mind find it desirable to mingle with the pure in heart. It is almost as if they find some great satisfaction in infecting the body of Christ with their deadly, cancerous doctrines. The danger to the church is often more serious from those whom we call brethren than it is from the outright heathen.

There were those in the church at Pergamos who taught the same kind of things that Balaam had taught long centuries before. Numbers 25:1-2 and 31:16 tell the story of Balaam and Balac, who found it impossible to destroy the people of God through a curse, but who then diabolically decided to cause them to commit fornication and sacrifice to idols, thereby bringing God's wrath upon them. Jude, verse eleven, tells us it was the desire for material gain which motivated Balaam. Many of the converts

to Christ in Pergamos must have been accustomed to sacrificing to idols before they became Christians. This practice would have been nearly universal in the non-Christian population. The importance of severing oneself from the old life is pointed up most clearly in this case.

Meat which had been sacrificed to idols had a special significance to the pagan people. It had a considerable parallel to the Christian's eating of the Lord's supper. A portion of an animal was sacrificed to an idol. The spirit of the idol was then presumed to enter into the entire animal. If a worshipper consumed the remainder of the meat, he was supposedly endued with power from that god. In view of the similarity to the spiritual nourishment which Christians receive from the eating of the Lord's supper, we can see the need for separation from even appearing to approve of eating meat sacrificed to the false gods.

Jesus had previously stated his hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitanes in the letter to the church at Ephesus. They are no less offensive in the church at Pergamos. In God there is no turning. What he hates in one congregation he hates in all. He is no respecter of congregations or persons. The attitude of the church at Pergamos is apparently slightly different toward the deeds of the Nicolaitanes than was that of the Ephesians. Ephesus hated their deeds. The implication is that Pergamos was somewhat more willing to accept the Nicolaitanes into their company. This was a serious mistake. Jesus will not condone evil nor evil companions. No matter how much filth is found in our environment, we as

Christians must resist contamination. Jesus recognized the difficulty of living a pure life, where Satan made his seat. Nevertheless, his disciples were, and are, to remain pure, whatever the cost.

REV 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

REV 2:17 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 I will give to him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

In the face of coming tribulation no man or congregation needed to labor under the burden of sin. If the victory over Satan is to be won, the battle ought not to be fought with Satan's weight on our back.

Christ promises he will fight against the ones who hold to such doctrines and practices as those of the Nicolaitanes. His weapon will be the sword of his mouth. Such action is described in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation. The people of Pergamos were familiar with the power of the steel sword. Jesus would use one with much more power. His sword, the Word of God, would have keener edges and would be far more penetrating. It would cut through the soul rather than the flesh. The reader will recall that it was the Word of God that assisted in framing the worlds during creation.

The persons whom Jesus will oppose with his sword are those who would corrupt his flock. It must be particularly offensive to Christ to find individuals feeding off the flock which is attempting to follow him. No mercy can be expected from the Lord toward those who are so callous in serving themselves that they care nothing for God's children. Whether they be within or without the church, Christ will fight against them.

There is still time as the Revelation is penned for those who follow such lives to separate themselves from the agents of sin. If they persist in following the devil and representing his cause, they shall find themselves defending against Jesus and his Word. He will not hesitate to use that same power against them which brought all things into existence. The attack will be sudden, and the results will be sure.

Revelation, chapter nineteen, tells of a terrible massacre brought about by the King of kings and Lord of lords. The sword of the Spirit which proceeds out of his mouth will be used to cut down every enemy, leaving them for the scavenger birds, without even the decency of a funeral (Revelation 19:11-21). We must remove ourselves from the errors of Balaam and the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes before we come face to face with the avenging sword of the Lord. But for those who do turn away from the awful sins listed; those who hear the truth and obey it, there will be wonderful blessings. Three things are in store. There will be hidden manna from which to eat. There will be a white stone. And there will be a new name. Let us investigate each.

Those of Pergamos who ate meat sacrificed to

idols believed the strength of the god was obtained through eating of that meat. The promise of hidden manna is very likely a promise to the faithful that they have a source of divine nourishment in Jesus. It may be less visible than the meat of idols. Though less visible it is far more nourishing. The Bible tells of the manna which was provided for the Israelites as they wandered toward the promised land. It would have been utterly impossible for them to have endured the forty years in a barren land without manna from God. Later Jesus fed a multitude with five loaves and two small fish. He followed that miracle with one of his most powerful sermons. He said, *“Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.—I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever”* (John 6:49-51). Much later in his ministry, shortly before his crucifixion, he returned to this theme. As he instituted the Lord's supper, he said concerning the bread, *“This is my body.”* Of the fruit of the vine he added, *“This is my blood”* (Matthew 26:26-28). Digesting the teachings of our master and partaking of the Lord's supper provide the Christian with manna, or spiritual food, drawn directly from the life of the Lamb of God.

It is said many of the followers of the false gods of Pergamos carried relics on their persons. These relics were supposed to assure them the approval of their god. They felt they were then protected by his power. Jesus is the Rock of Ages. He is the foundation stone of the temple of God. We need no stone such as those carried by the citizens of Pergamos. We do need the approval and the protection of the Christ.

The white stone he gives us will not be visible, but it will keep us in the hollow of his hand.

Another use of the white stone in New Testament times was in court. The jurors were given a white stone and a black stone. When it came time to cast their vote, they chose one of the two stones to place in a container. If a black stone was placed in the container, the person was casting a “guilty” verdict. If a white stone was placed in the container, the person was casting a vote of “innocent.” The white stone given a Christian by the Lord could have indicated his innocence in the sight of God. With his sins washed away the Christian needs no relic. He rests on the pure white and sinless Rock of Ages. Neither Satan, nor any man may condemn him (Romans 8:1).

When one leaves one era of life and enters another, the Bible often associates a new name with that new life. Abram became Abraham upon entering his duties for the Lord. Sarai became Sarah. Jacob became Israel. Saul became Paul. The new name is apparently given by God to those who become his own to identify them in contrast with those who will not submit themselves to his will. In Revelation the new name is connected with two other names. These are the New Jerusalem and the name of Jesus. All three are said to be written upon the one who overcomes (Revelation 3:12). Later in Revelation 14:1 one hundred forty-four thousand stand on Mount Zion, secure with God, having the Father’s name written on their foreheads. The major point seems to be that those who cast their lot with the true and

living God will be listed in the heavenly places and branded as God's own.

Some believe the new name to be CHRISTIAN. Others believe it will be a completely new name given after the resurrection. In either case it is to be treasured. Those who fail to hear and heed the sayings of the Spirit unto the churches will never profit by it.

The worshippers of Zeus, Athena and Telesphorus, the god of healing, must have looked in wonder at the magnificence of their mountain acropolis with all its splendorous temples and altars. Christians could fasten their gaze upon a spiritual Mount Zion. On Mount Zion the hundred forty-four thousand, with God's name written on their foreheads, were able to ascend God's holy hill. *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation”* (Psalm 24:3-5).

REV 2:18 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 unto fine brass.

REV 2:19 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.

Thyatira lies about twenty miles from Pergamos eastward as one moves inland from the coast of the Aegean Sea. In Biblical times it was no rival of either Ephesus or Pergamos as a political center or a thriving seaport. It had no great acropolis on a mountain. It was just a simple village. It is the same today. The name is now Akishar. There is a town square much like that in many villages of the United States. A statue of Attaturk stands today in the center of the square to remind the Turks of their national hero. Surrounding the square are small shops, lawyer's offices, tobacco exchanges, and so forth. The population amounts to only a few thousand. The people are warm and friendly, especially the children. They love to try to converse with the strangers from America.

Thyatira is mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Acts as the home of Lydia, one of Paul's converts. Lydia was a seller of purple who had stopped at the river bank for prayer when Paul preached to her of the Christ, and her heart was opened.

This time Jesus describes himself as the Son of God. Each time he is described the characteristic chosen is in some way associated with a point which needs to be made regarding the church addressed. There was much false teaching in the church at Thyatira, and thus as the Son of God, Jesus is contrasted with such as the false prophetess Jezebel, who would lead men into disobedience rather than to obedience. As the Son Jesus said, "*I came to do the will of him that sent me.*" Christ would lead men to obedience before the Father.

The description includes his eyes that are like a flame of fire. Eyes like these would have power to penetrate into the deepest recesses of the human heart. They would perceive the good and the evil which reside there. Along with the penetrating eyes are feet like fine brass. Such feet would be capable of bringing under subjection every opponent of God's truth and his Kingdom.

Again he begins with commendation of the desirable things observed before proceeding to the undesirable. The word "works" is mentioned twice in one verse. Their latter works were greater than the former ones. This is no slight achievement. Many and many a Christian began his life in Christ with vim and vigor, only to see the years take their toll. Ten years after their birthday into the family of God one may have to look very carefully to see whether or not they are doing any work at all for the master. Would it not be wonderful if God were able to say of each of us, "His last works were greater than his first?"

A second commendation was that they manifested faith, love, and service. These three are interdependent. Faith in God will automatically move one toward love for both God and man. Love bears its fruit in service. Self is placed after both God and neighbor. A request was once made of Jesus that one of his disciples be allowed to sit on his left and the other on his right hand in the kingdom. His reply was that greatness in the kingdom is obtained through service. Faith, love, and service are essential adornments to the Christian life. We will make a

serious mistake if we take this commendation as humdrum.

REV 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which callest herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

After these positive remarks the Lord turns to some less pleasant comments. There is a terrible sore in the church. Even while showing love and service to one another, they have been willing to tolerate the teaching of a false prophetess named Jezebel. Jezebel is thought by many to be a symbol of the type of teaching discussed here. I see no compelling reason for thinking Jezebel is not a real person. It seems quite likely that she was an influential woman in the church at Thyatira. And what is more, she appears to have no respect at all for the purity of the life of Jesus.

All too often the manners and conduct of the society in which the church is located seep into the lives of the Christians. Rather than condemn the false teaching and impure lives, we tend to excuse them on the basis of love. Congregations that try to avoid offending a sinner among them because they “love him” too much to hurt him, do not have a full understanding of what love is. Throughout Asia Minor idol worship was the order of the day. Often this idol worship took the form of lewd dancing, along with fornication and eating meat which had

been offered to the idols. Jezebel found those who had not completely turned their back on the world to be easy prey for the corrupt behavior she promoted.

REV 2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not.

REV 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

REV 2:23 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.

The longsuffering of God is almost beyond belief. He suffered the evil of Noah's day for one hundred twenty years as Noah preached to his people. He allowed his only begotten Son to be crucified at the hands of ungrateful men after thousands of years of preparation. One would think this would exhaust his patience, yet God continued to forbear. Now he informs us he gave Jezebel an opportunity to repent of her hideous actions. She would have no part of repentance. Like so many of those who fight against God she rushed heedlessly on toward destruction.

Obviously when God says he is going to cast Jezebel and her companions in fornication into a bed, he is talking about more than a literal bed. This is one of the reasons some believe Jezebel herself is but a symbol for all who act in the ways described. If the bed be symbolic, perhaps she is also. This

writer believes Jezebel was real, but that the bed is symbolic. It is not Jezebel alone who is to suffer in the bed of tribulation. It is all who participate in her sins.

There are certain spiritual laws which held true in the days of the people in Thyatira, and which also hold true as long as time shall last. Fornication both then and now leads to tragic consequences. Among these consequences are disease, violence, jealousy, murder, and the guilt of sin upon the soul. Again the reader's attention is called to the three words "except they repent." At this point there was still time. Later an angel will cry out, "*And time shall be no longer.*" We must turn from all of our sins before we hear that curtain call for time itself.

Often it is not just the adult who suffers from the fornication. It extends to the children. They may be beaten, neglected, or even killed because of parental foolishness. In the case of Jezebel, the death which comes to her children is likely the punishment which comes upon those who obey her teaching as a child does its parent. When it becomes apparent that such actions will be punished and that God is not mocked, not only the sinners of Thyatira but those of the other churches will be made to understand that God both knows our works and rewards and punishes accordingly.

The reins and hearts of verse twenty-three are the seat of thought and emotion. We use the heart today to speak of our feelings. The reins, or kidneys, were spoken of in the same way then. We speak of "gut reactions". To search the hearts and the reins

was to perceive the innermost thoughts of the persons involved.

REV 2:24 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.

REV 2:25 But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.

REV 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works until the end, to him will I give power over the nations.

He begins to speak to those who have remained free of the doctrines taught by Jezebel. They are pictured as not knowing the depths of Satan. We sometimes speak of having an “in depth” knowledge of some topic. Those who followed Jezebel talked of having an in depth knowledge of Satan’s pleasures.

There is no condition more dangerous. Is it even possible these persons were arguing as members of the church at Thyatira that in having experienced the filth of fornication, etc., they could more appreciate God’s holiness? We do not know the answer to our query. We do know there are those today who seem almost boastful about the sinful experiences in their past. We must use the mistakes of the past to improve our present course of action. But we should do so with shame over the fact that those mistakes took place. The pure people of Thyatira had enough of a burden just remaining holy in the midst of a perverse church. God would

not place any added further burden of punishment upon them.

The load which they then carried is all they might be expected to handle. But they must be strong and hold fast to that load, in order that God's work might be concluded. *"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:30).

Verse twenty-six is a very interesting verse. It appears the keeping of God's works until the end refers back to the previous verse in which he speaks of holding fast until he comes. The coming of Christ and the end are the same. If the end of which he speaks is the end of the world when the heavens shall pass away and the elements melt with a fervent heat, how can there be any nations existing to rule over with a rod of iron? Let us look at the next verse before drawing any final conclusions.

REV 2-27 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.

REV 2-28 And I will give him the morning star.

REV 2-29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Every man faces the end when Jesus comes. In all likelihood most of us will face the end of our physical lives before his appearance. Each of us must fight the battle of faith until the end, whichever end comes first. The power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron is promised to Christians of

Thyatira who have been long dead. Clearly their rule over the nations did not take place during their lifetimes. The context shows that the rule will take place only after they have endured steadfast until the end. When Jesus comes they shall be given their power to rule.

Yet, when Jesus comes the scriptures teach this present world will come to an end. How can these Christians who have been dead for centuries rule over nations when the nations have disappeared and the heaven and earth have fled away? Only one answer seems to satisfy all of the conditions. That is that the rule over the nations shall take place in the judgment. At that time the books will be opened and all nations shall be judged by the Word of God. That Word is a rod of iron because it will not be stretched or bent. The saints who have endured until the end will apply the rod of iron because they have lived according to it and proven that it was a possible and practical way of life.

They do not rule separately from Jesus Christ. Their rulership is an outgrowth of his rulership. In chapter twelve when the man-child was ready to be born into the world he was described as one who was to rule with a rod of iron. Of course, Jesus is ruling now. But the text here obviously speaks of a rulership which is manifested when he returns at the end of time. When Christ sits on the judgment seat, every faithful Christian will sit with him. Men may laugh and mock today. They will neither be laughing nor mocking then. The rod of iron, which is the Word of God, will break them to shivers like a potter's vessel.

The second Psalm promises the Son of God the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession and the heathen for an inheritance. He would break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Just as God has promised his Son this power to destroy those who take counsel against him, the Son now promises those who are faithful until he comes the same rod of iron shall be theirs. Daniel 2:44 tells us God would one day set up a kingdom which should not be left to other people, but it would break in pieces and consume all the other kingdoms spoken of in the chapter. This conquering kingdom would last forever. In the seventh chapter of Daniel it is repeatedly emphasized that God's saints would come into possession of a kingdom. In verse twenty-three of that chapter a kingdom is described which would devour the whole earth and break it into pieces. This latter kingdom of verse twenty-three is not the kingdom of the saints. In fact it makes war against the saints. The ruler of this kingdom wears out the saints until a judgment takes place. After this judgment occurs, the offending kingdom is punished by the Most High and his saints. Following the punishment all dominions serve and obey the Lord.

Our victory in Jesus is certain for the faithful. The first taste of victory comes when we repent of our sins and are baptized into Christ. We begin our rulership over the forces of evil then. Our death marks a major milestone in our part of the war against Satan. Being faithful unto death insures us a crown of life. Even though dead we continue to rule through the Word of God by the lasting influence

of our life. Chapter nineteen of Revelation pictures an intensification of the rule of the rod of iron. In that chapter Jesus rides out with a host from heaven. He has many crowns on his head and a sword which is the Word of God proceeding from his mouth. The beast and the false prophet are vanquished, and opposers of the Lord are left on the field of battle for the scavenger birds, without even the dignity of a funeral. This is not the judgment. The devil is still not thrown into the lake of fire.

After certain other events occur, which we will discuss in more detail as we reach chapter nineteen and twenty, the judgment takes place. The wicked are then cast into the lake of fire. Satan is completely defeated and also cast into the lake of fire. Death, which is the last enemy of God's kingdom, also finds its place with Satan in the lake. The victory in Jesus does not come instantly. It comes in degrees. But it will come. In the meantime we must rejoice with the saints of Thyatira that the promise is sure, and the victory certain.

Another beautiful promise is given. The one who endures until the end when Jesus comes will be given the morning star. We normally think of the morning star as the planet Venus, which is apparent in the sky about the time the sun rises in the morning. Jesus interprets the morning star in this passage for us. In Revelation 22:6 he says, "*I am the bright and morning star.*" Jesus is then saying, "I will give you myself." Is it possible that he can give us more of himself than he has already given? The answer must be yes!

Alexander Campbell, a great preacher of the

nineteenth century, was fond of speaking of three ages. The first was the starlight age. This was the time of the Patriarchs when only a few dim rays of spiritual light were being cast by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. Second, there was the moonlight age. That was the period of the law of Moses. During that time God's chosen people grew into a nation. Both the law and the prophets provided an increase in the spiritual order and brightness. The glory of the true light which was to come through Jesus Christ was just beginning to be introduced in the form of types and prophecies.

Finally, the Sun of Righteousness himself arose with healing in his wings (Malachi 4:2). He was the morning star, or the star which really brings the morning of a new day. As he broke across the horizon, the dawn came. There is still much spiritual fog. The night continues to close in around us from time to time as it did at the cross. We believe that the promise of Jesus to Thyatira is that it shall not always be so. The time is coming when the faithful shall bask in the unshaded light of the Morning Star, Jesus himself. Someday there shall be no more night.

Remember that Jesus has also promised himself to us in a great wedding. At present we are only in the engagement period. Later on in the Revelation, after the great harlot has been burned, we are told the bride has made herself ready, and the marriage feast is at hand. The Lord will return to claim his bride. When that happens the union which we now enjoy with him shall be completed. Our appreciation

for the Morning Star shall then deepen as does that of a husband for his new bride.

Verse twenty-eight is a perfect example of how much God can pack into only a few words of his Holy Scriptures. We can only wonder as to how much still lies beyond us.

How often the promises given to Christians today are partially realized in our present lives. Today we rule in part, tomorrow in full. Today we are engaged to the Morning Star. Tomorrow we will consummate the marriage. Today we taste of the heavenly gift. Tomorrow we feast upon the entire banquet. Are not these the "*days of heaven upon the earth*" (Deuteronomy 11:21)? These are the latter days. We fight the battle of the ages. The kingdom of God is here now. It remains for it to be victorious over every foe, including Satan, death, hell, and the grave. But we reach for the Morning Star, and we shall walk with him in glory.

At least we shall if we open our spiritual ears to what the Spirit saith unto the churches. If we do not we shall ourselves be broken with the rod of iron.

Chapter 3

REV 3:1 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.

REV 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy work perfect before God.

Approximately twenty-five miles southeast of the present village of Akhishar, which was once ancient Thyatira, the traveler comes upon another village known today as Sart. The present village shows signs of serious poverty. A dirty looking public well provides water for ragged children to carry in buckets to their homes. The homes cry out of the wants of those who live in them.

This is in stark contrast to the glorious city of Sardis which once stood nearby, and whose remains still speak of enormous riches and prestige. This city was the capital city of the province of Lydia. At that time it was a political center for Asia Minor. King Croesus reigned from this city. Croesus' name became nearly synonymous with wealth. It was here during the time of Croesus that gold and silver were first made into coins.

There were two major points of interest in the ancient city. There was the seemingly impregnable fortress surrounded by steep cliffs of hundreds of feet in height. So secure was the fortress that the

occupants were lulled into a false sense of security and were besieged and conquered twice by clever and alert foes.

Then there was the temple of Artemis, or Diana, lying on the plain below the cliffs. The power of the goddess would supposedly protect the citizens against any foolhardy invaders.

With her great material riches, her geographical advantages, and her goddess Diana, Sardis developed a mood which saw no need for the power of the true and living God, Jehovah.

The major theme of the letter to the church at Sardis concentrates upon life and death. There is no true life outside of Christ. All which appears to be so abundantly alive is a temporary delusion. This is why the salutation describes Jesus as the one who has the Seven Spirits. The Seven Spirits symbolize the completeness of the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit which brooded over the face of the deep in the beginning when God's creation began. There would be no life, animal, vegetable, or human without the Holy Spirit. But even more important, the Holy Spirit is the source of eternal life. When the old man of sin is put off and the new man in Christ is born, the Holy Spirit is the vitalizing power of that new life. Without Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit there would be no true life, only a spark which would glow for a moment.

The seven stars were previously discussed and were said to be related to the message which goes forth from each church providing spiritual illumination to the surrounding area. One need not struggle long to find the connection here between a

spiritually dead church and the one which needed its star lit (Ephesus).

Much is said by the commentators about the command to the church at Sardis to be watchful. The emphasis is entirely proper. Here was a people who had had opportunity to see what happens when an unjustified sense of confidence settles upon them. King Croesus had been conquered by the army of Cyrus the Persian. Cyrus, it is said, offered a reward to any soldier who could suggest a way of scaling the cliffs to the fortress. One alert soldier noticed a Lydian as he came down the cliff to retrieve a helmet which had fallen. He reasoned that if the Lydian could come down and go up, the Persian army could do likewise. And so they did! The people of the church in Sardis could well understand that lack of alertness could lead to disaster.

But what were they to be watchful about? They were to cherish and encourage what little life remained among them. On the outside they had a name or reputation for activity and life. Yet, Jesus, who walked among the candlesticks knew differently. He knew their name for life was undeserved and that their spiritual energies were barely existent. Ephesus had lost their first love. Sardis was much farther along the pathway of decline. For all practical purposes they could be pronounced dead. If they were ever to burst into flame for the Lord again, the tiny spark which was left must be nourished carefully. They must be watchful that it not go out completely.

It is probably an understatement to say Jesus had not found their works perfect. As the word perfect

is used in the New Testament it means completely unrolled or developed unto the end. By this time rather than having only a remnant of life they should have been a roaring fire of light and warmth for the Master. Clearly they were not!

REV 3:3 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.

In verse three there is another informative comparison with the church at Ephesus. Ephesus was to watch lest its candlestick be removed. Sardis is to watch lest her house be broken into. Sardis should have realized more deeply the value of the riches which are found in Christ and which had been theirs in the Lord. To have received blessings from God and to have treated those blessings with indifference was to invite Jesus to take them away again. They would awake most suddenly from their slumber to find their spiritual house empty, as though a thief had emptied it during their snoring.

Although Jesus will come back in the day of resurrection and judgment, it is also true that he comes in other ways and takes away that which is not used in his service. Unused talents waste away. Death comes all too suddenly. All too often it comes when men expect it least. The call rings out to every Christian to make full use of the spiritual life and blessings which have been entrusted to him by his

Lord. To do less is to invite the Lord to remove them.

REV 3:4 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.

REV 3:5 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.

REV 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Throughout the writings of the Old Testament prophets, God caused them to speak of his “remnant.” It is sad that only a minority of human beings have ever listened to God. An even sadder thing is that even among God’s people themselves, that is, among those who take the name Christian upon them, there are so many with soiled spiritual garments. Jesus is saying here the majority of those in Sardis, perhaps within even the church itself, would never be able to walk side by side with him in the streets of gold in heaven. They are not properly dressed. He can not confess them as his own, for he is ashamed of them.

White robes are mentioned numerous times in the scriptures as the garments of the saints. In Revelation 6:11 the martyrs were told to wait in their white robes until the number which should become fellow martyrs was completed. In Revelation

7:11 a tremendous multitude, clothed in white robes and washed in the blood of the Lamb, sing praises of gratitude for their redemption. The church is waiting in its engagement period today, and it is expected to prepare itself as a bride who adorns herself in beautiful white wedding garments to walk the streets of the New Jerusalem to the mansions which Jesus, the bridegroom, has prepared for the final consummation of the eternal marriage. Those who have unwashed garments will not be accepted as his bride. The new name bestowed upon his bride will never be worn by the unclean.

Long ago Daniel spoke of books being opened. (Daniel 7:10) While the Ancient of Days sat upon his throne ten thousand times ten thousand were brought before him as the books were unfolded and the masses were examined. In Revelation 20:12 the book of life is opened as death, hell, and the sea give up the dead for their appearance at God's throne. All who are not found written in the book of life are then cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

There are two books in which God has written his records. One is the book of life in which the names of those who have overcome through the blood of the Lamb are found. Another is the record of the sins which men have committed. If we have a record in one, we have none in the other. If our name is written in the book of life, our sins must have been blotted out. If our sins have not been blotted out, we will look in vain for our name in the book of life.

The matter of confessing names is a serious one. Romans 10:10 tells us "With the mouth

confession is made unto salvation.” Matthew 10:32-33 declares Jesus’ displeasure at those who refuse to confess his name before men. He goes so far as to say those who refuse to confess him before men need not expect him to confess them before his Father which is in heaven.

Now if Jesus fails to confess our name before the Father, we shall wish he had. Satan, as the great accuser, is ever ready to claim us as his own. But both he and his are destined for the lake of fire. If Satan claims us in the day of judgment and Jesus denies us, there can only be one result. We will hear those awful words, *“Depart from me ye workers of iniquity. I never knew you.”*

At the time of the end every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess. Let us, along with those of Sardis, confess before men now. Let us arise and be baptized and wash away our sins. Let us put on our white robes which will prepare us to hear him confess our name and invite us to *“enter into the joy of the Lord.”*

To turn a deaf ear to what the Spirit was saying to the church at Sardis would have been to invite the loss of all they had already obtained through Christ. This would have included the loss of spiritual life in the second death, which is final and eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. The second death is true death.

To hear and heed what the Spirit was saying unto the church at Sardis was to fan the spark of life which they still possessed. It was to overcome the power of Satan, to blot out every sin, and to walk in white as the bride of the Lamb of God.

While separation from God is true death, this walk with Christ is true life.

There is no location in the world of the twentieth century where the advice given to the church at Sardis is more relevant than in the United States of America. America wears the name of Christianity. At the same time much which goes by the name of spiritual life is in truth dead. Listen America! *“Remember therefore how thou has received and heard, and hold fast and repent.”—If therefore thou shalt not watch I will come upon thee as a thief.*”

REV 3:7 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;

REV 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou has a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

We began our journey through the seven churches on the Aegean coast of what is now called Turkey, but what in Biblical times was known as Asia. We moved from Ephesus northward to Smyrna, and then again northward to Pergamos. Then we turned inland toward the east to visit Thyatira and turned southeastward from there, to arrive at Sardis. Our next stop will be almost directly west, with only a slight drop southward, as we take the trip of about

thirty miles to the present village of Alasehir. This was once ancient Philadelphia.

Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven sites of the churches. The name is a combination of two root words. The first word gives rise to our word brother, the other to our English word love. Thus Philadelphia was labeled as the city of brotherly love.

There were important factors in the life of the citizens of Philadelphia which seem to have been related to the lessons taught in the letter to this church. Philadelphia was located in what was then, and still is, an earthquake prone region. It was also a major gateway of trade. We shall see that the Lord used each of these characteristics of Philadelphia to teach impressive lessons they needed to learn.

As this letter begins, the self description of Jesus describes him as absolutely true and holy. The passover lamb sacrificed in Egypt was to be without blemish. From that time onward God had pointed toward the sacrifice of the sinless Christ as an atonement for the sins of mankind. During his stay on earth Jesus lived without sin. It was precisely because he did so that he could be presented as the unblemished Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. His victorious life over the forces of Satan had been an encouragement to the Philadelphian Christians. No negative thing is said about this congregation. It is the only one of the seven churches which received no condemnation. Jesus is pure and holy. The Christians at Philadelphia were relatively pure. The comparison is pleasing to any student who loves truth.

But Jesus informs the church there he has the key of David and has the power to open and shut, to lock and to unlock doors. He declared that he had opened a door to the church in Philadelphia, and no man could shut it. What was that door? Perhaps it was the door of opportunity.

Certainly the Bible teaches that a holy life leads to opportunities of service. If a man is faithful over a few things, he stands ready to be made ruler of many. If talents are wasted, they are taken away. However, if talents are wisely used, they may be strengthened and added to. Here was a relatively pure and holy group of people. They are the kind to which God sees fit to open his doors. They are the kind who will make use of those doors to the advantage of his kingdom.

Why is the key to this particular door called the key of David? Does this aid us in determining what lay behind the door which this key fits? Yes, it is likely that it does. The key of David is mentioned in Isaiah 22:22. The context in that place tells us the reason for its inclusion in the description here. In the twenty-second chapter of Isaiah Jerusalem was in extreme difficulty. God therefore selected Eliakim as a ruler who would provide strong leadership for his people. Eliakim was given the governmental keys of the kingdom of Israel, and when he spoke doors would be opened and shut for various activities. No one would be able to challenge his leadership.

It is just so with Jesus Christ. In a time of need for leadership God sent Jesus with all authority in heaven and on earth. That which Jesus bound on

earth is bound in heaven. That which Jesus permitted on earth is acceptable in heaven. Jesus told Peter and the other apostles they had come into possession of the keys of the kingdom. They could make use of those keys to bind and loose. Jesus, however, maintains his place of supreme authority. In the hands of any other person the authority represented by those keys is delegated authority. There is none other name in heaven or on earth with the clear and original right to use the key of David. When Jesus speaks all men must listen. No one may successfully challenge Him!

The Philadelphians are told they had exerted a little strength in remaining holy, even as Jesus was holy, and they had by reason of this strength kept his word. They had not denied his authority. They had glorified his name through obedience to his commands. The strength they had exerted had allowed them to demonstrate stability in the midst of quaking and unstable surroundings. Jesus made it undeniably clear that he was aware of this fact.

Again, the lesson holds today. Although we may not live in a land of physical earthquakes, we do live in a land where serious upheavals occur on the spiritual and moral levels. We have been promised the strength of the Holy Spirit in meeting every temptation. Each time we exert ourselves in the use of the small strength we already possess God will open doors of service which would never be ours otherwise. God through Christ opens those doors. It is then our privilege to pass through and perform the tasks which are found on the other side.

REV 3:9 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.

REV 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

REV 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

The synagogue of Satan was mentioned in a similar manner in the letter to Smyrna. Jews who refused to accept the authority of Jesus as the keeper of the key of David were worshipping in error. By their opposition to Christ they were actually serving the cause of Satan. When they placed pressure on the true Christians to turn back to the keeping of the law of Moses, they were placing their own importance and prestige above that of the Lord. To do that is to worship at the shrine of the prince of darkness.

Ultimately, those who attempt to challenge the authority of Christ will find themselves in recognition of the power of his name and of those who carry his name. Over and over again in the Revelation we see the promise of "VICTORY IN JESUS." This time the seemingly insignificant strength of the persecuted Christians is seen to grow until the apparently powerful and influential Jews who plagued them

are viewed bowing before them. Every man will some day bow the knee and confess with the tongue before Jesus and those who unite themselves with him. If they do not do it before the judgment, they will do so then. Jesus is the true king of the spiritual Jews. He has the key of David.

There is a special relationship between Christ and those who are his own. Numerous places in the scriptures speak of God rejecting those who reject him. At the same time he explains that he is prepared to accept those who will serve him. In his own words, *“I shall be their God, and they shall be my people.”* The false gods of the heathen can do nothing for them. The God who created all things can do anything constructive for those who follow him. In the end when history has been fully unrolled, it will be evident that the Father loved his children. Their inheritance will be the envy of those who chose to worship in the synagogue of Satan.

The past faithfulness and patience of the church at Philadelphia would stand them in good stead during the perilous times which lay ahead. Jesus once told those who asked him how to pray to request God to lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. He told the church here that past lives in Christ will assure his assistance in answering such prayers. It would seem the hour of temptation which is to come upon all the world mentioned in verse ten was one which would come upon those to whom the letter was written in their day. The primary reference, as far as they were concerned, likely dealt with first century persecution. However, the lesson is most certainly applicable to all in every century.

There are many hours of temptation which come to all men of every age.

The individual who has proven patient in the Lord up to the hour of temptation will find strength to overcome in that hour. He is assured, "*There will be no temptation come upon you, but such as ye are able to overcome.*" With every temptation there will be made a way of escape. Make no mistake, this can not be done alone. We are no match for Satan with our own strength. We shall need both the little strength which we now have plus the mighty power of the God of heaven, the Son who survived the temptation of the wilderness, and the Holy Spirit who is appointed as our comforter.

In that great and final hour of judgment when Jesus comes to take vengeance on the wicked, we must have continued in patience that we may be ready to welcome Him.

Verse eleven warns of the loss of our crown. What crown? Is it the crown of righteousness? Perhaps so. In chapter one Jesus is said to have made Christians priests and kings. This is said to have already been done. A king wears a crown. Philadelphians, as well as all Christians must be constantly alert to the danger of losing that crown, for there are many who would take great delight in seeing it topple. Whether it be those of the synagogue of Satan in Philadelphia who called themselves God's people, but were not, or whether it be those who serve in the synagogue of Satan two thousand years later, they would still take our crown away. They do not care to wear it themselves, but they despise those who do wear it. The crown is ours to keep. We

have the strength of God to keep it from falling. Let us wear it both firmly and proudly. If then, we are successful in wearing it through the hour of temptation which comes upon the world, God will give us also a crown of eternal life.

REV 3:12 He 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 the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

REV 3:13 Let him that hath an ear hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The twelfth verse is absolutely packed with meaning. We shall certainly not exhaust it. We shall dig as far as we are able at this time. Temples rose and fell in the cities of Asia Minor. There were temples to Zeus, to Athena, to Diana, to Telephorus, and on and on. When they were erected they appeared nearly indestructable. For example, the temple of Diana in Ephesus is said to have had one hundred twenty-seven giant pillars, each donated by a different king in honor of the goddess. But the earthquakes took their toll in this land which lies on a major fault line under the earth. Centuries later every pillar of the temple of Diana was either removed or fallen to the ground. Excavators had to search for years just to find the foundation remains which lie buried. As one of the seven wonders of the

ancient world it lay hidden under the rubble of the earthquakes.

It was not to be so with the invisible temple of the living God. It would be an indestructible place of worship for Christians. The giant pillars of God's temple are the Christians themselves. No earthquake has power enough to destroy it. Though God shake the heaven and the earth the church will stand. It did not come from men. Its chief architect is Jehovah himself. It descended out of heaven to be with men today. And it will survive when the mountains have been melted and the heavens rolled up as a scroll. It will be forever glorified when the saints are resurrected and given their final reward.

There are those who declare the permanence of the pillars to be support for the doctrine of "once saved, always saved." It does not support that doctrine. It is he that has overcome that is promised he will not go out from being a pillar. One has not completely overcome until this life is finalized. If one has been true until the end, he need have no fear. He shall then be an everlasting pillar in the glorified temple.

There is more! If the reader will turn to I Kings 7:18-21, the writing on the pillars will take on additional meaning. There were two particularly important pillars in Solomon's temple of old. These great pillars were placed on the porch of the temple. Each of them had a name written upon it. The name on the pillar at the right was "Jachin." The name on the pillar at the left was "Boaz." The name Jachin is a Hebrew word which means, "He shall establish." The meaning of the word Boaz is "In it is strength."

The church is supported by pillars established by God. They are so strong they will never be removed, even in the most perilous and earthshaking times, provided the Christian continues faithful.

If the names of Jachin and Boaz were written on the pillars of the temple of God in Jerusalem, what is written on the pillars of his spiritual temple today? Each Christian is a pillar. On him is written three things. First, there is God's name. Second, there is the name of God's city, the New Jerusalem. And third, there is Jesus new name. Let us consider each briefly. Your present writer believes God's name written upon the Christian is similar to the writing of one's name in a book which he has purchased. The name so used indicates ownership. It is not the name of the book. It is the name of the owner of the book. God is proud to call each Christian who overcomes the world his own. The seal of God's ownership is stamped upon that person, and no one has the power to take it from him.

The name of the New Jerusalem is the citizenship claim of the Christian. Just as one who lives in the city of Nashville is called a Nashvillian, the citizen of the New Jerusalem has his place in the roll book, or census list of God's heavenly city. Since the New Jerusalem is an eternal city, he who overcomes will forever bear the name of that city. His citizenship is forever.

Those who overcame at Pergamos were assured they would receive a new name. The new name written on the pillars, or Christians, at Philadelphia seems to be the same name. It is Jesus' new name because it is Jesus who confers it upon his victorious

followers. It is possible it is the name Christian. It may however be a completely new name suitable for the new state of the Christian after the resurrection and glorification at the end of this present world. We do know the Jew was particularly haughty over being called a Jew. The promise of the new name here may be an answer to those who were of Satan's synagogue and called themselves Jews when they were not. God has a name to be given to his faithful which was greater than the fleshly name "Jew." If that new name is our precious name "Christian", let us glorify God in it. If it is another name to be received in glory, let us reach out for it.

We must join hands with the Christians of old Philadelphia as we listen to what the Spirit says unto the churches, not only to that one church but to every church. By maintaining patience in the face of a shifting and changing world, we will be able to receive God's promise of becoming pillars in his everlasting temple.

REV 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; these things saith the Amen, the true and faithful witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

REV 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot.

REV 3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

From the site of Philadelphia our journey now takes us some thirty miles southeast, bringing us to

the farthest point from the Aegean coast which we have reached. Here we find the present day resort villages of Hieropolis and Pamukkale. It was in this area that the Biblical city of Laodicea was found. Only a few of the remains of the old city still remain. There is an old stadium where athletic games were held. And there are old foundation stones from buildings which our guides inform us were similar to our own city halls. Otherwise, the city of Laodicea is nearly non-existent.

In the times of the apostle Paul there were three churches quite close together. They were Laodicea, Hieropolis, and Colosse. Paul urged the Colossians at the end of his letter to them that they allow the Christians at both Hieropolis and Laodicea to read it. Though Colosse was only a few miles from Laodicea, travellers are not even taken to its site since there is absolutely nothing to see there. Laodicea is, even as it was in Paul's day, a luxury resort area. Warm springs bubble up from the ground, furnishing pools and baths for wealthy dignitaries. Once Roman emperors came to seek their pleasures there. The reputation of Laodicea in the first century would have been similar to the gambling and pleasure city of Las Vegas, Nevada today. As is true so often and had been true of several of the other of the seven churches, the sins of the world had found their way into the lives of Christians. In addition to its reputation as a pleasure center Laodicea was known for the manufacture of various medicinal cures. It also was noted for the production of fine clothing.

The self description which Jesus provided for

the Laodiceans is related to their compromise with the world. It spoke to their effort to cling to the luxuries of materialism while having supposedly committed themselves to God. Jesus first says he is the Amen. This does not refer to him being the last, as one might conclude from the position of that word at the close of our prayers. The word amen means "be it so." Jesus is referring to his sincerity of speech and action. He is exactly what he claims to be. There is no compromise in him. He is not aye and nay (2 Corinthians 1:18-20). Neither his tongue nor his life is diluted with error.

To emphasize the point he repeated and elaborated by saying, "*I am the faithful and true witness.*" The gospels tell us he had no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth. He promised wonderful things in heaven and then said, "*If it were not so I would have told you.*" Considering the type of life the Laodiceans were living, they might have taken what Jesus and the Spirit were saying to the church lightly. They were warned not to let that happen.

Jesus then calls himself the beginning of the creation of God. One possible meaning of this phrase is that Jesus was present in the beginning of the original creation. Without him was not anything made that was made (John 1). Another possibility is that Jesus was the beginning of the new creation. There is a New Jerusalem, a new heaven, a new earth, and new men. If this is the true meaning of the text, Christ would be the beginning of the new creation in that he took upon himself the likeness

of man and was made in the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7).

Another related thought is that Jesus is the chief cornerstone in the temple of God. Thus, he is first in order of time and first in importance in the building of God's new and eternal way of life.

Although the above ideas are possibilities and are correct pictures of our Lord, it is likely that we can get even closer to the message of the text. It is probably related to the weakness evident in the church at Laodicea. We sometimes say an individual thinks he has the "world by the tail", or "He is sitting on top of the world." Such an attitude would have been that of many of the Laodiceans. The description of the Lord that he is the beginning of the creation of God may well be a way of telling these overconfident Christians their materialistic values have caused them to completely miss the real values of life. They have missed the importance of the spiritual creation. Therefore, they have missed the very essence of life.

The word translated "beginning" here is the same word "arche" from which we get our English word architect. Jesus is the architect of the new and eternal creation. The church in Laodicea should have shown him the utmost respect. Instead, in their mind's eye, they had raised the material creation to equal or greater value. There was a strong need for them to put "first things first."

Do you tire of hearing Jesus say, "I know thy works"? Surely not! It is so vitally important to our welfare for Jesus to know of our works, both of our

strengths, and of our weaknesses. Only in this way can he fully provide the exact guidance which we as Christians need. If we are lukewarm, it is necessary for him to be aware of it. If we have carried heavy loads for him, it is most comforting to realize he is ready to offer his divine aid. If we are as the Laodiceans were, we may not appreciate the rebuke offered, or the chastisement, which is laid upon us. Still, it is for our benefit and must be considered to be the gift of a loving God and a caring Saviour.

Has the reader ever taken warm salt water to induce vomiting? This is the picture presented concerning God's reaction toward the half hearted actions and thoughts of the church at Laodicea. God often takes men who are cold toward him, and by feeding them the bread of life turns them into vital and energetic servants. He surely rejoices in all who may be described as hot toward him and his kingdom. Those who are cold and indifferent to him are the most difficult to deal with. The person who is outside the church who knows the church exists, but who has made up his mind it just does not matter, is nearly impossible to convert. It is far easier to work with one who will enter into heated discussion, even if the position is opposed to the Kingdom of God, than it is to convert the lukewarm.

When the lukewarm are within the fold of the Lord, the condition is intolerable. If a man does not get along with a woman who lives on the other side of town, it may be merely a matter of some discomfort. But, if he does not get along with his own wife who lives in the same house with him, the

situation is far worse. If the woman in his own house reacts in opposition to him, it is bad enough. If she ignores him and could care less whether or not he exists, the condition becomes hideous.

The warm springs of Hieropolis and Pamukalle are not right in the location of the old city of Laodicea. They are close enough so the citizens of that city knew all about them. The mineral springs emerge from the ground at relatively high levels. As the water flows downward toward Laodicea, it leaves mineral deposits behind. Some of the deposits look like giant waterfalls with the bed of the falls nearly chalk white. It is a spectacular sight. When the water comes forth, it is precisely the temperature of the salt water one would take to promote vomiting. The water of these spring is loaded with mineral salts which, although not table salt, would produce the same results. The Laodiceans knew well what Jesus meant when he spoke of vomiting them forth because they were lukewarm.

The Laodiceans needed to be brought to a realization of the meaninglessness of the material creation, which they held so important. They needed to understand the infinite importance of the spiritual creation which Jesus held forth to them. They were quite convinced they had everything. The exact opposite was true.

REV 3:17 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:

REV 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, 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.

We believe the same John who penned the Revelation was the one who wrote the gospel of John. How very similar the thought of this passage is to that of the entire gospel of John. There is a finer, better plane of life than that upon which most men live. In the gospel of John, Jesus is presented as offering the “bread of life” and the “water of life.” His blood is drink, and his body is bread. He is the Great Shepherd, and we are his sheep. He is the Great Physician, and we are the sick who have need of his medicine. If men could only learn to open their eyes to that world and to die to that lukewarm world of the Laodiceans, how grand it would be.

The Laodiceans thought they were rich because they possessed a few material goods. God tells us the real treasures are not those which we hold in our hands, but those which are laid up in heaven. We are also informed of the unsearchable riches found in Christ Jesus. The materially rich of this world are very often the most miserable of all men. The materially poor are on occasion immensely rich toward God. The gold which Jesus offered to the Laodiceans was the kind of gold which paves the streets of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city. It was far too precious to be purchased with material goods. To buy it from Jesus was to invest one's life in his service and to enter the mansions over the

hilltop where thieves may never enter.

These misguided persons also thought because they wore the finest clothing of the day and because they could afford the most expensive of the physical medicines money could buy, they were in splendid condition. Jesus did not agree. He informed them they should have clothed themselves with him. They should have put off the old man and put on the new. They should have obtained the white robes of righteousness, which are the good deeds of the saints. Then they would have covered their spiritual nakedness which was quite apparent to Jesus, if not to them.

They should have opened their spiritual eyes through reading and listening to the Word of God. Instead they were suffering from a blindness far worse than that of the blind man in John 9 who could not see the light of the sun. The Laodiceans could not, or rather would not, see the true light of this world. They were living in a world of darkness with their physical eyes wide open.

One sometimes sees pictures of starving children whose knees and elbows are just bulges on arms and legs which have no meat. The stomachs of these malnourished unfortunates are bloated, and their eyes stare out of unseeing sockets. How our hearts reach out to them when we consider our own well fed bodies and our own warm houses. But, what if we were able to see the souls of men? Our attitude would certainly be far different than it is toward some. Our hearts would then bleed for those whose souls are wretched and poor and miserable.

But let us be careful that we do not become too self righteous in the matter. Perhaps a closer look at our own selves would reveal some unpleasant conditions. We must not be found blind, poor, wretched, or naked before our Lord. If we are found so, our haste cannot be too great in remedying the problem. There is no excuse. It is not as it is in the physical world. The clothing, the medicine, the food and the the hope are all there. It is harder for us to see ourselves spiritually, but we must. We cannot afford not to.

REV 3:19 As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

REV 3:20 Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

It is never easy to point out the faults of those whom we love. Too often the one we hope to help becomes angry at what is considered our self righteous attitude. We must remember that God does not derive pleasure from rebuking and correcting us. The Laodiceans are reminded God chastens us as a father chastens his own children. He loves us and does not wish to see us destroy ourselves in a world where Satan goes about seeking whom he may devour. The proper reaction to God's chastening is not to become angry. It is to be zealous and penitent. Lukewarm service must become a thing of the past. It must be replaced by flaming desire to obey his every command.

Those of the church in Sardis were told Jesus had a key which could lock doors which could not be opened and open doors which could not be locked. In view of that teaching we now find a strange sight pictured. Jesus is seen standing at a door which he seems powerless to open. It is the door of a man's heart. He will never break through that door. Anyone who desires to exclude him may do so. He never intrudes where he is not wanted. The door of a man's heart is always opened from the inside. It is said that God once opened Lydia's heart. However, it would never have been opened if Lydia had not desired it to be. If the Laodiceans had ever truly opened their hearts to Christ, they had later reversed their decision, for at the time of the writing of the Revelation he was standing outside. How sad to make Jesus a stranger!

They are told he would like to be their friend. He once said, "*Greater love than this hath no man, that he lay down his life for his friend.*" He has done just that. By offering his life on the cross he has shown his willingness to uphold his part of the dearest friendship men may ever know. Will we ignore him? He offers to come in and eat with us. How can one eat with Jesus? There is one sure way. That is in partaking of the Lord's supper. When Jesus was about to be crucified he initiated the supper. He told his disciples he would next eat it with them in his kingdom. We remember that where two or three are gathered together Jesus is there in the midst of them. Again he says, "*I will be with you unto the end of the world.*" Yes, he will be our friend if we will only open the door of our heart.

REV 3:21 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 on his throne.

REV 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The close friendship with Jesus in which he comes in to sup with us, and we with him, will culminate in sitting down with him on the throne of God. If we are able to fasten our hearts on things eternal rather than on the earthly and material, we may find ourselves sharing on the closest of terms with the ruler of heaven and earth. As Creator of all things he can offer us as Ephesians 3:20 puts it *“exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”* The author recalls a story about James A. Harding who was the co-founder of David Lipscomb College. It is said Harding went into a clothing store one time and admired a suit of clothes. The shopkeeper noticed and said to him, “Brother Harding, since you are a poor preacher I am going to give you that suit.” In spite of the generosity of the storekeeper the statement did not strike Bro. Harding just right. He is said to have drawn himself up to an erect posture and declared, “Sir, I will have you know I am not a poor preacher. I am the child of a King, and we shall sit on his throne if we overcome the world.”

Before the members of the church at Laodicea could expect to sit with Christ on the Father's throne, they must heed what the Spirit had to say to them.

And so must we! The wisdom of men is insufficient. We must depend upon the wisdom which cometh down from above. What kind of reason tells us that we should be invited to sit with him if we do not care to hear what he has to say to us?

We have now made our complete circuit of the seven churches of Asia. As Jesus walked among the candlesticks, he carefully observed both the strengths and the weaknesses of each of those churches. He complimented them on their strengths, and he warned them about their weaknesses. Not only did he warn them, he suggested remedies in each case. Then he offered each of them the most precious of promises if they were able to overcome the world and remain faithful unto the end.

It was absolutely essential that the churches attend to the advice given them by the Lord, as the Spirit spoke to them. Christianity had come into existence with the tremendous events of the day of Pentacost. But it had been injected into a world governed by the Roman empire, the greatest empire the world had yet seen. The emperor worship of the Romans was not compatible with Jehovah's command, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" Nor could the Christians call any man Lord. Christ was Lord. They could not fix that title to any other.

As the two forces met head on, the churches had to be prepared to hold fast to their strengths and eliminate their weaknesses. Otherwise they could not overcome. It is a matter of historical record that while the Roman empire crumbled with the

weight of its own corruption, the religion of Jesus Christ was being spread to every continent on earth. The power of the Spirit of God through the advice given the churches made this possible.

The same advice which was given them remains relevant today. We also struggle with false religion. We also fight against the beastly forces and the seductive pleasures of this world. If we are to overcome and sit with him we also must hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

Chapter 4

REV 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 a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

Man once lived with God and communed with him in a manner unknown to us today. This was in the Garden of Eden. Due to man's foolish rebellion it became necessary to remove him from that paradise and to place the cherubim in the way of his return. Normally all we can do is dream of what it might have been like.

We tend to grasp quickly at those few places in the scriptures where the curtain is withdrawn, even slightly, that we might peer into the throne room of the universe for just a brief moment. The fourth chapter of Revelation is one of those rare places. Through the vision of John we are privileged to behold a level of life above and beyond this material, fleshly realm. The lessons we will learn are some of the most fundamental we might ever find presented to us.

The fourth chapter of Revelation tells us the rightful ruler of the universe is Jehovah. It further declares that God has always been the supreme authority, that he is presently the supreme authority, and that he always will be the supreme authority. At times things may not appear to be under his control as we view it from our earthly standpoint.

However, that is either a warped view, or it is temporary disturbance, brought about by spiritual rebellion. God is on his heavenly throne. The proper order is for him to give the commands and for all creation to serve and glorify him.

We need to be reminded again that this is not the only time men have seen the throne of God, at least through the use of visions. Daniel saw the ancient of days present a kingdom to one like the Son of man from his position upon a throne (Daniel 7:14). Ezekiel saw a figure upon a throne surrounded by a rainbow and living creatures. This figure was said to have the likeness of the glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 1:26-28). Isaiah recorded a similar experience as he was given his prophetic duties (Isaiah 6:1). Finally, Stephen saw the Lord Jesus Christ at the throne of God as recorded in Acts 7:56.

The door of heaven is opened upon only the most momentous occasions. Other times when it was opened include the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism, (Mark 1:10) and the appearance of Christ in victory as described in Revelation 19:11. This must then be a matter of the utmost importance. The voice which John next heard is the same voice which captured his attention before he saw Jesus walking among the candlesticks. It is intelligible; yet it is so awesome it reminds one of a trumpet in its intensity. It may be the voice of God himself, or it may be the voice of Jesus. Since both are members of the Godhead, it makes little difference.

John was invited to pass through the open door and walk directly into heaven's throne room. There

he was to be allowed to see things which would take place in the future. In chapter one, verse nineteen, he was told to write that which he had already seen, also the things which now are, and the things which shall be hereafter. The things which “now are” were the observations which John saw as Jesus walked among the candlesticks and evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the churches. Now he is to see the things which would come hereafter. It was his obligation to write down these visions for posterity. The word “hereafter” refers to the fact that the visions were to follow the “now” scene of Christ and the candlesticks. It was not an indication the things hereafter were an outline of things unto the end of time. Still, the visions would refer to matters reaching to the very end of time. Even the staunchest of the writers who believe the events of Revelation occurred in the first century will admit that the last two chapters deal with end times.

As we have seen before, the book of Revelation was written directly to the seven churches of Asia and indirectly to Christians of all time. It follows the same pattern as the Corinthian letters, the Roman letter, or the letter to the Galatians. It speaks first to its own time, then to all time. Consequently, we shall find the majority of the material in the book to have immediate application to conditions in those churches during the Roman persecution. But it would be a fatal mistake not to see the secondary application available to every church and every Christian of every age. We do not treat the Corinthian letters as useful only to the Corinthians. Why do

some insist on treating Revelation as meaningful only to the seven churches?

REV 4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat upon the throne.

REV 4:3 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.

In chapter one, verse ten, John said he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. He clearly refers to the same condition once again. Through the power of the Spirit of God he is able to receive information which would not be available to him without this supernatural intervention. It would be a mistake for all Christians to look at the effects of God's Spirit upon any one individual at any one specific time and conclude the Spirit should act in that same manner upon them. God's Spirit provides assistance in the manner which God chooses and to the degree God chooses. It allowed John to see visions of the throne of God in order that he might write down that which he saw for men of many centuries. God promises to give his Spirit to Christians today. When received, that Spirit will allow us to do the tasks God has commanded us to do. Let us not misuse such assistance.

The student of Revelation should not miss the connection between the throne mentioned in verse two of this chapter and the promise made to the

Laodiceans at the close of chapter three. Jesus there promised those who overcame, a place on the throne of God, just as he himself had received a place on that throne in consequence of having overcome the world. Chapter five will depict his arrival in the throne room to receive that very high honor; but right now the scene shows God's throne room before Jesus makes his appearance.

In the long ago Nebuchadnezzar made a most drastic mistake in failing to realize God sits forever on his throne. It was only after Nebuchadnezzar lost his throne and wandered like a wild beast in the pastures for some time that he came to himself and confessed Jehovah as King of heaven and earth (Daniel 4:34-37). As the seven churches faced the future difficulties which were to come upon them, they must be confident that God rules upon his throne and that there is no danger whatsoever of his being dethroned by Rome or any other power, either heavenly or earthly.

Commentators all too often stretch out for scriptures to explain certain terms in Revelation when there is little reason for such straining. The present writer has hesitancy in that regard concerning the particulars of this throne room scene. The jasper stone, the sardine stone, and the emerald rainbow all combine to draw a picture of the glory of God. The colors involved are red, green, and the sparkling transparency of the diamond. These same stones are said to be found on the breastplate of the high priests of ancient Israel and in the foundation of the holy city. They are of great beauty, and thus

they aid in proclaiming the glory of the Creator. Ezekiel saw what was seemingly this same rainbow at the throne of God (Ezekiel 1:28). It is interesting to recall that God used the rainbow as a symbol of peace after the flood. That, however, is not the meaning of the rainbow at this juncture. It is a symbol of glory.

REV 4:4 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.

REV 4:5 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.

God is not alone in the throne room by any means. He is surrounded by spiritual dignitaries who admire him and stand ready to obey his every command. Very close to the throne John saw twenty-four seats of apparently very high spiritual rank. These seats were occupied by twenty-four elders. It is this commentator's belief that these twenty-four are the twelve princes of the tribes of Old Testament Israel and the twelve apostles, who would be the princes of the spiritual Israel of the New Testament. They are clothed in the white robes which are consistently promised to the faithful of God. And they wear crowns indicative of victorious conquest and rulership over sin.

There is a connection between a faithful life of service on earth and reward in the afterlife. These have distinguished themselves by superior service. They, therefore, receive special honor as elders with white robes and crowns. We owe the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles a tremendous debt of gratitude for their leadership. By placing them in such a position of dignity near his own throne, God has placed his stamp of approval upon them.

Out of God's throne proceed awesome sounds and lights. One clap of thunder is enough to strike fear into the hearts of the boldest of men. When the law was given on Mount Sinai, thunder accompanied the procedure. Over and over in the scripture thunder is closely associated with the power of God. The nature of the voices coming out of the throne is not clear. However, voices and thunder are used in other passages similar to this one. The impression received is that God is the ruler of the universe. He has every right to command both our respect and our obedience. The seven lamps of fire are the same as those mentioned in chapter one, verse four. As the Holy Spirit brooded over the face of the deep in the account in Genesis one, he awaited the command of the Father. The picture here is much the same, as the seven Spirits, which represent the completeness of the Holy Spirit, are ready to execute the wishes of the Father. God is in command.

REV 4:6 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.

REV 4:7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast was like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

The sea of glass before the throne of God presents considerable difficulty for the reader. There is not enough said about it that we may be dogmatic as to its symbolism. Writers vary much in their conclusions.

There was a molten sea found in the temple area of Solomon's time (1 Kings 7:23-37). This sea in the temple area held water for the purification of the priests before they offered sacrifices to God. There is then a faint possibility this sea before God's throne is a barrier indicating that anything which approaches the throne must be pure and undefiled. If this is the correct meaning, one could explain Revelation 21:1, where it is said, "And there was no more sea", as saying the passing of the old heaven and earth made way for a situation in which the saints of God enjoy direct fellowship with God. Their purity at that time would remove the necessity of such a barrier.

A stronger possibility is that this sea represents the vast multitude of people under God's domain during the existence of the present heaven and earth. The scriptures do repeatedly refer to people as seas or waters. Jude 13 speaks of false teachers as raging waves of the sea. Isaiah 57:20 says the wicked are

like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Revelation 17:15 declares the waters where Babylon sits are the peoples, and nations, and multitudes, and tongues. Revelation 7:9 tells of a great multitude from all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues which stand before God's throne.

In all there are twenty-six references to the word sea in the book of Revelation. Four of those references appear to differ from the others. In twenty-two of the references the sea is being used in conjunction with earth. The other four times it may well refer to the the nations and kindreds and people and tongues.

The four references are as follows. The first is Revelation 4:6. There, the sea is calm and crystal clear. The next is 13:1 where a beast arises out of the sea. Later in 15:2 a sea of glass is shown mingled with fire, and the victorious saints stand upon it singing a song of triumph. The last reference is 21:1 where it is said that there is no more sea. Your commentator believes there is a progression in the four scriptures above. Only enough will be said at this time to show the possible connection between the four. Details of the progression will be brought out as each is encountered in the course of the comments.

The reason the sea is calm and crystal clear in Revelation 4:6 is that this is a picture of conditions as they should be. God rules the universe. All is in complete harmony. His servants await his orders. All creation praises and glorifies him. The kindreds,

tongues, nations, and multitudes of the people are at peace.

The sea will later be disturbed by sin and its resulting confusion. Out of this troubled sea of peoples Satan will call forth the beast and Babylon. There will be bloodshed and much tribulation, but the faith of the saints will allow them to stand victorious over the heaving waves. Finally, the time will come when this heaven and earth will pass away. The sea shall be no more because the wicked shall have been cast into the lake of fire, and the righteous shall have entered into a new relationship with God. Further comments on each of the four references will be made when they are encountered in the course of our investigation.

Around God's throne four beasts are seen. The later translations refer to these beasts as "living creatures." The word beast carries the idea of violence and force. Since the creatures mentioned do not seem to have those characteristics, it is likely the term "living creature" is more appropriate. The word "beast" is better reserved for the beast from the sea and the beast of the earth which are met in chapter thirteen.

Ezekiel and Isaiah both describe similar creatures which they saw in the nearness of God (Ezekiel 1:10) and (Isaiah 6). Ezekiel calls these creatures "cherubim" which is the plural for cherub. There are slight differences between the descriptions in the three different locations, but the similarities are complete enough to convince us they all belong to the class of "cherubim."

Their many eyes surely have to do with a sense

of alertness and observation. This tells of something of the responsibilities of the creatures. We recall that when man was driven out of the garden of Eden, the cherubim were placed in positions where they could guard against man's reentry. Cherubim were also found in the temple of Solomon (I Kings 6:25). They were found on the curtain which separated the holy place from the most holy place (Exodus 26:31). They also spread their wings over the ark of the covenant from which God communicated with the priests of Israel (Exodus 25:18). Finally, they were found supporting and surrounding Jehovah (Psalm 99:1).

An analysis of the previous scriptures indicates a go-between relationship involving God and his providential care of mankind. The cherubim maintain the separation barrier between sinful man and the pure and holy God. Yet at the same time their multiple eyes make them perfectly aware of man's condition. They are then able to assist in God's supervision of human affairs.

But we have a question. Why do they have the faces of a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle? The suggestions have been many. After examining a host of them we believe the outstanding characteristics of the four listed are as follows:

The lion strength

The calf service

The man intelligence

The eagle swiftness

Thus, God has at his disposal representatives of every needful characteristic for accomplishing his will. We are reminded of the presently popular song “God has the Whole World in his Hands.” Amen!

REV 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

REV 4:9 And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne who liveth for ever and ever,

REV 4:10 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,

REV 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

The living creatures never close their eyes, and hence they fulfil their duties constantly. They are ever at God's beck and call, and they are ever conscious of the needs of men. God's wish is their command. Man's need is their concern. We shall see more of the nature of their activities as we reach the sixth chapter of Revelation.

The creatures, or cherubim, recognize the rightful position of Jehovah. He is deserving of their

thanksgiving and of any honor and glory they are capable of offering to him. Just as God was, and is, and will be, the cherubim have not rested, are not resting, and will not rest. Beyond the very limits of time they pour out their song of praise, “*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.*”

As the living creatures ring out their praise, the four and twenty elders fall down before the Master of all and cast their crowns before his throne. We shall see one occasion after another when this latter scene is repeated. Whenever a major victory has been won by God, or his followers, the elders cast their crowns before him. These elders hold very high religious position. But they are absolutely conscious of the source of their accomplishments. Their crowns are only worn because God allows it. Every time the Kingdom of God wins a victory their position is strengthened. They must not take the glory to themselves. It belongs to God. To God they will give it.

Verse eleven of this chapter is one of the great verses of the entire Bible. It speaks of the reason for our existence. God is worthy of praise and glory and honor and power, because he is the Creator of all things. We are a part of his creation. This relationship must never be forgotten. Keeping it in mind will bring about a fuller and more complete life, whether it be man, beast, or cherubim. All things, including you as a reader and myself as writer, were created FOR HIS PLEASURE. That is why everything was created, and that is why it is sustained. It was Solomon who said, “*Fear God, and*

keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Is there anything more pitiful than to see something never accomplish the purposes for which it was made? If a brand new automobile was to be rolled off the assembly line and out into a field; left there to rust into pieces without every having been driven a single mile, we would feel a sense of tragedy. How infinitely more serious it is for the thousands of men and women who never fulfil the purpose of their creation by glorifying God and serving him! In connection with this verse the student should also note Col. 1:15-16. *“All things were created by him, and for him, and by him do all things consist.”* Ephesians 3:21 says, *“Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end.”* Chapter four of Revelation presents Jehovah upon his universal and eternal throne. With Job we must place our hand upon our mouth. *“Let all the earth keep silence before him.”*

Chapter 5

REV 5:1 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.

REV 5:2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals?

John continues his description of the throne room of heaven. A very important development is now noted. There is a book, or a scroll, in the right hand of Jehovah. The book obviously contains a message of immense importance for God to be holding it in his personal possession. Our curiosity has already been stimulated. What does the book contain? It has been the right of kings throughout the ages to make their desires known through proclamations and written pronouncements. We sense that this book contains some information related to Jehovah's dealings with mankind.

The book is written on both sides. The message must be somewhat lengthy if it requires both sides of the scroll. It is clearly **not an afterthought** on the part of the Great King. It is a matter of vital concern.

Our enthusiasm is seriously dampened when we find that the book is securely fastened, and its contents cannot be investigated. It has been bound with seven seals. The number seven indicates absolute security. The book cannot be opened until God allows the seals to be broken. We are familiar

with seals somewhat similar to these today. When the electric company places a meter on the side of a house, they place a lead seal on it so they can tell if anyone has tampered with it. If the meter reader finds the seal has been broken, he knows mischief has taken place. Ancient scrolls were sealed by wrapping a piece of string around them, and then using wax to do the same thing as the lead seal of the electric meter. No one will reveal the contents of the book in God's right hand until he is ready for it to be unveiled.

Once more we find an important relationship between the Old Testament prophets and the book of Revelation. In the twelfth chapter of the book of Daniel there is a discussion of a book which was to be sealed until the time of the end. In the first and second verses of Daniel twelve, we are told that the book under discussion at that time had to do with the deliverance of God's people from a time of great trouble. It even tells of many of them arising from the grave or the dust of the earth. Some will rise to everlasting life. Others will rise to everlasting contempt. It is promised that those who are wise and turn many to righteousness will shine forever as the stars of the firmament.

Like many intensely interesting dramatic presentations, the scene of Daniel twelve is interrupted. The promise is made that it will be continued later. Daniel is told in verse four, *"Shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end."* Then in verse nine Daniel is told, in answer to his query about the continuation, *"Go thy way*

Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” The reader would do well to examine the entire last chapter of the book of Daniel in the context of Revelation chapter five. Your present writer sees little doubt that the book which Daniel sealed up contained the mystery of God’s deliverance of his people through Jesus Christ. Thus, only Jesus Christ could break the seals. And this must be done in the “end time”, which is the gospel dispensation.

Throughout the New Testament the preaching of the gospel is explained as the revealing of the “Mystery of God.” As an example consider Ephesians 3:1-9. Paul says a mystery was made known to him. He calls it the “mystery of Christ.” In verse nine the point is made very strongly. It is Paul’s task to make the things which have been hidden with God from the beginning of the world; that is the unsearchable riches of Christ, known to both Jew and Gentile. The mystery hidden in the book now held in God’s right hand is the plan of salvation, which could only be revealed in the fullness of time when all the preparations had been completed. The time has arrived as the scene of Revelation chapter five is presented.

It is no ordinary angel that flings out the cry for someone to appear who is worthy of opening the book. This angel is a “strong angel” whose loud voice is sufficient to reach out from the realms of the angelic hosts of heaven to the domain of the demons. It may be heard all the way from the throne of God to Hades and the grave. If there is **anyone**,

anywhere, he is invited to step forth and open the book. We wait with John anxiously to see if there will be any response to the plea of the angel.

REV 5:3 And no man in heaven, nor in the earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book and loose the seals thereof.

REV 5:4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

It seemed that surely there must be someone, somewhere, who was worthy. As we let our memories run back through the pages of time, we recall the spiritual giants of the ages. We are awed by the sacrifices they made and by the lives which seemed so pure. Perhaps, each of us would have our favorites to nominate for the privilege of opening the book. But wait! This is the throne of the perfectly righteous God. Moving into his presence will require perfect holiness. It will not be enough that the individual be pure enough to put some other sinful man to shame. And so no one comes forth.

John weeps copiously and we weep with him. He had been promised that he should write of the things which he had seen, the things which were happening as Jesus walked among the candlesticks, and the things which were to come. Now it appears the latter part of that trio cannot take place. The things which must be hereafter must remain undisclosed until one is found worthy. Since that requires perfect holiness, the picture is dim. There

is reason for weeping. The book contains the story of salvation and freedom from sin, death and Satan. It is excusable if grown men weep. Is there no hope?

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

REV 5:6 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.

Through his grief John discerns the voice of one of the twenty-four elders comforting him. His weeping must cease at once. The greatest of news is forthcoming. He is told to look upon the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The lion is the king of the beasts. At his roar the entire jungle becomes silent and trembles. Long ago when Jacob blessed his sons, he spoke to Judah as the father of a tribe from whom would come rulers that would come forth as a lion's whelp rises from his prey to rule the wilds. Judah was told the succession of rulers would go down through time until there be a gathering of people to Shiloh (Genesis 49:9-10). Jesus is of the tribe of Judah. It is he who now appears before the throne of God. His mighty roar should cause the universe

to tremble. His authority should be such that none dare defy his mighty power.

The elder is not finished with his description. The Lion of Judah is also the Root of David. Any doubts as to the identity of this personage to whom John's attention has been called rapidly melt away. This is the Messiah. This is the promised Ruler of God's new kingdom. Revelation 22:16 plainly says that Jesus is the Root of David. Let us pursue this matter. Acts 2:28-31 will shed some light. Peter, in speaking of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, reminded the audience that God had promised the Messiah would come through the fruit of David's loins. David had long been dead. His life had been cut off. Out of the dry ground a root had sprung forth from David, as God had promised. This root is both the ruling lion from the tribe of Judah, and the King to come from the line of David. Looking at it from the viewpoint of prophecy, Jesus is one who is worthy to open the book.

However, John is in for a giant surprise. When he turns to see the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he sees instead a sacrificed Lamb. How can such a meek and gentle Lamb also be called the Lion of Judah? There is an answer, a most beautiful one. Although Jesus has a name which is above all other names and has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, he assumed this place of dignity through the shedding of his blood. In his fifty-third chapter Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be led to the slaughter as a lamb, dumb before its shearers. The trail of blood sacrifices had pointed all

the way from the time of Cain and Abel, to the cross of Calvary. The passover lamb of the old covenant would now be replaced once and for all with the blood of the true Lamb of God, Jesus, our Lord and King. His gentle obedience to the wishes of God were so complete they can be pictured as they were in Philippians 2:5-8. There it is said he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It goes on to say because of that obedience God proceeded to exalt him until every knee shall bow before him, including all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. It is no coincidence that the language of the fifth chapter of Revelation asks for the appearance of one who is worthy from these three realms. Philippians says Jesus stands supreme in precisely those same three realms!

Along with the above scriptures we must take notice of Hebrews 12:2. There we are told we should look beyond the suffering of this world, just as Jesus endured the cross while looking toward the throne which lay beyond it. There is a common agreement among the apostles. Jesus not only matched the prophecies of the Old Testament by being of the proper lineage. He also lived a life of such purity, and concluded it with the voluntary offering of his blood for our sins, that he could be introduced as the *“Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world.”* John now sees a scene verifying God’s agreement with that fact.

In Revelation five we are allowed to see from the heavenly throne room what those wondering

disciples observed from the earthly viewpoint in Acts 1:9-11. As Jesus commanded his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, he ascended up into heaven where the clouds received him and covered him from their sight. In Acts 2:30-35 Peter said in his sermon on Pentacost, after he had received that power from on high, "*You have killed Jesus. God has raised him up. He is now seated at God's right hand.*" It was at this very point that the picture in Revelation picks up. The Lamb has been slain. He is ready to approach the throne of God to take his seat at God's right hand. From that seat he will rule over his Kingdom until every foe has been made his footstool.

There is much sound and fury over whether Jesus' kingdom came before Pentacost, at Pentacost, or may even still be coming. We see the ingredients being assembled before Pentacost. Jesus had a certain degree of power. He had numbers of disciples who wished to make him a king. The teaching of the New Testament is that Jesus was coronated as King of kings when he was raised up after his death and sacrifice for our sins. It was this sacrifice which qualified him for rulership. Because he has been anointed as king does not mean that all of his foes have been vanquished. The book of Revelation is the story of the battle which brings those foes into subjection or destruction. **Victory in Jesus** is the grand theme of the entire document.

A word must be said about the seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb. Horns are a symbol of power. Seven horns speak of complete power in

heaven and on earth. There will be temporary rebellion against the authority of Jesus. Such rebellion is outrageously stupid. Jesus and those who follow him will overcome all obstacles. All who oppose his Kingdom are doomed to fall.

The reference to the seven eyes as the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth is an unusual connection between the Holy Spirit and all creation. Eyes are the organs through which information is received. Usually the Holy Spirit is associated with the revealing of information to man from the Godhead. In this case the reverse is true. It seems clear that the seven Spirits are indeed the Holy Spirit. We do know that Jesus received the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34). In the second and third chapters of Revelation we are made aware of Jesus' ability to know the works of each of the churches. This ability was no doubt a result of his possession of the Holy Spirit in an infinite degree. There is a similar reference in Zechariah 4:10. There, a plummet is said to have eyes. They are seven in number and are said to run to and fro through the earth. A plummet is used for measuring during erection of walls and buildings in order that they may be straight and true. The present verse (5:6) tells of Jesus' power, as given through the Holy Spirit, to maintain vigilance about matters throughout the entire earth from the throne room of Jehovah.

REV 5:7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

REV 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the 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 the saints.

Notice the matchless boldness of the Lamb. No other dared entertain the thought of opening the book before this. There is absolutely no indication that John even remotely considered himself as a candidate for the task. It is not as though the Lamb timidly raised his hand from the rear of the throne room in some hesitant manner. He is seen in the very midst of the throne. He dares approach closer than either the twenty-four elders or the four living creatures. A seat is his at God's own right hand. It had been said that he counted it not robbery to be counted equal with God before he took upon himself the form of a man and became fashioned in the form of a servant. Now he reassumes that previous glory. The precious book is released to him for the revealing of its contents. The world is now to have access to the mystery of God which had formerly been hidden, but which will now be made manifest through the Spirit of Christ working through the apostles. Redemption through the blood of the Lamb is now to be available to all men, both Jew and Gentile, to the very uttermost parts of the earth. The story of salvation can now be told in full!

The Lamb's reception of the book for unrolling is the signal for the beginning of a mighty celebration

in the heavenly places. First the four and twenty elders fall down before the Lamb with offerings of sweet music and incense. The adoration which has previously been paid to God on his throne is now offered to his Son. This is only fitting and proper for he was truly Immanuel or “God with us.” His walk with us was simply a way to show us a path to the throne. He now invites us to share it with him by overcoming as he overcame (3:21).

It is made abundantly clear from this passage that the prayers of God’s people are precious to him. Here they are poured out before him by those who have earned the highest places of honor in his Kingdom. Jesus once said those who desire to become greatest in the Kingdom of heaven must become servant of all. That plan is in action. The twenty-four elders are not busy receiving praise to themselves. They occupy themselves in offering the sacrifices of others to God.

Harps are used here in the worship of God. At no place in the New Testament is there a mention of the use of musical instruments in the worship of God on earth. The use of instruments in heaven does not authorize their use on earth. If God provides us with harps in heaven and bids us play them, we will be happy to obey. Until then, while we are on earth he has been silent about their use. Until then, we shall sing and make melody in our hearts as he has commanded.

REV 5:9 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.

REV 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

No song of the past is sufficient for this time of rejoicing. It requires a new song to match the occasion. We are reminded of the song of deliverance sung by the people of Israel when they were released from the hands of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. The terrible bondage and slavery of some four hundred years had been broken. Miriam and others broke out in glorious praise of Jehovah for his power and greatness, as it had brought about their precious freedom.

The shackles of an even worse bondage have been broken by the sacrifice of the Lamb. No man ever need fear Satan, death, or suffering again. They may bring temporary anguish, but the sinless life, the perfect sacrifice, and the resurrection of Jesus have provided all men the opportunity to become the sons of God, over which Satan has no more dominion.

There is no way to exaggerate the joy of this song. The sentence of death lay upon all men everywhere. God's laws had been broken by all. A penalty must be paid, since the laws of God were instituted for the welfare of mankind. If man could break the laws of God with impunity, self destruction

would be the only possible end. Man must realize the enormity of transgression of God's directions. The most obvious conclusion is that since every man has sinned every man must die. In that case Satan would have won. God would have been defeated.

But God will not be defeated. He has an answer. That answer is in the sacrifice of his own Son. In allowing his Son to be sacrificed God was able to demonstrate to man the seriousness of sin. At the same time he could prove to Satan how futile it is to defy his purposes. Jesus' death and resurrection is the foremost victory in the true battle of the ages between Satan and his angels and the spiritual forces of God. It is the **Gospel**, the greatest news of all history. The song of exultation must ring through heaven, earth, and the grave.

It is not just the elders who sing the new song. The word "they" in verse nine refers to the saints whose prayers are presented at the throne. These prayers come from every race, every language, and every country. The Jew by flesh is no longer to be the sole beneficiary of the special blessings of God. The power of the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh. Masters and servants, rich and poor, all alike will share in the promise of eternal life.

Every man, woman, or child old enough to be accountable is invited to join the royal family. There will be no more need for a human priest to stand between each man and God. Each can approach the throne of God through Jesus who provided the complete and perfect sacrifice, once and for all. As Peter put it, God's people are "*a royal priesthood.*"

They do reign, and they shall reign upon the earth. The previous statement is not self contradictory. It fits very nicely with the general plan which has been developing in this grand book. The Christian in this present age has a taste of the fulness of the rewards to come. Just as Jesus himself reigns today over a disobedient and rebellious world, while he looks toward the later victory when every enemy is defeated, we also may look forward to sharing in that reign of Christ. Christians are participating in that conquering march today. The world does not yet recognize the reign of Christians. It will not be so forever. One day our crown will be more evident. Let us join heartily in the sweet redemption song. We, with Christ, reign upon the earth. And we follow the King of kings to his complete and final victory.

REV 5:11 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.

REV 5:12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

The new song of salvation now moves out through the vast reaches of both heaven and earth. Jesus has taken his place at the right hand of God. By his sacrifice as the Lamb of God he has proved himself worthy to be the highest of all kings, and

the replacement for the High Priest of old. He has returned to the glorious position he left when he emptied himself and came to live in the flesh with us. Starting at the throne where Jesus has ascended, a song of praise is voiced by the four living creatures, then by the four and twenty elders, then by millions of angels, until all in heaven sing that great hymn of honor and glory to the Lamb.

Ancient theologians debated the number of angels which could find their place on the head of a pin. The total number of the angels has been a matter of curiosity. We are not prepared to say just how many angels exist. One passage does speak of an innumerable quantity of angels. This present passage runs into the millions. Ten thousand times ten thousand is one hundred million. Not only are there one hundred million. There are, in addition to this, thousands of thousands. Every thousand thousand is a million, which adds millions more to the one hundred million. The two passages agree perfectly. The angels are innumerable. Did you ever try to count to a million? I tried it once and got to about twenty-five thousand!

At the close of chapter four the beasts and the elders were directing their praise to Jehovah upon his throne. Now the praise is shared equally by the Father and the Son. All the holy spiritual beings agree. Jesus, the Son of man, has now become Jesus, the King of the universe.

The song of praise includes seven forms. Ascribed to the Lamb are power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing. This does not

seem a matter of coincidence. Here is perfect praise. No less praise is adequate for the object of worship at hand. There are rulers who do not deserve their position. Jesus has qualified perfectly for his. We need never fear that Jesus will fall short in his administration. The finest form of rulership is a monarchy, **if that monarch is perfect**. Jesus is perfect!

REV 5:13 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 honor, and power, and glory, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

REV 5:14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth forever and ever.

John now hears earthly voices of praise joining those of heaven. Jesus name stands above all others. Verse thirteen is intended to include every possible realm of creation. It would be extremely unwise to accuse the writer of ignorance in speaking of the regions under the earth. The point is that from the throne of God to the utmost reaches of creation Jesus is to be recognized as God's appointed King. The angels, men, the living and the dead, are all subject unto him. The wise will recognize his dominion and will glorify both the Father and the Son.

There is a difficulty here. As we look out upon God's creation some two thousand years after the resurrection of Jesus, we do not see all creation joining in the redemption song or in praise of the Lamb. Many are not in subjection to the authority of the Christ. Satan has his followers who bristle at the very thought of bending their will to that of the King. Has John failed to hear those voices? We think not. The picture here is the scene as it should be, not as it is. This is the picture drawn in Ephesians 1:10. *"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."*

Dear reader, do you realize the enormous importance of the scene before us? Throughout all time since the fall of man in the garden of Eden, God has been guiding history toward this point. The law and the prophets were brought into existence as instruments in the preparation of the creation for the coming of it's King. The life of the Lord while on earth was simply a preparation period for his anointing. He has now taken his proper place. In the words of the second Psalm, *"Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion—. Be ye wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way—. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."*

One question yet remains. What is in the book which the Lamb has taken from the right hand of

Jehovah? The new King will be in perfect agreement with that which is written therein. All creation must listen intently. Every precaution must be taken to see that his proclamations are followed precisely. King Jesus will not abuse us to build his own ego. He has proved in the past that our welfare is important enough that He was willing to sacrifice his own life for us. It will be folly to ignore his pronouncements. All creation must cry out, "*Speak Lord, for thy servants heareth.*"

Chapter 6

REV 6:1 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.

REV 6:2 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.

The Lamb has now established, beyond any doubt, his worthiness to reveal the mystery of God which has been hidden since the foundation of the world. The revelation can finally begin. The world will now come face to face with the plan of God for salvation through Jesus Christ, his Son. The **Day of the Lord** is at hand!

The first of the seven seals has now been broken. The contents are ready for observation. The momentous nature of the occasion is indicated by the thunderous voice of one of the four living creatures. He invites John to "*Come and see.*" Along with John, we feel an atmosphere of tense excitement.

Upon looking to see what has been revealed by the breaking of the first seal, John observes a white horse and rider coming forth. The outstanding thing about this horse and rider is their purpose of conquest. They are clearly symbolic. But what do they represent?

It is extremely important that the identity of the horse and rider is correctly established. There

are two major views about the matter, and the choice of views will affect the entire understanding of the book from this point on. One view is that the horse and rider are symbolic of the Roman emperor's lust for conquest, as they reached out for more and more power. The other major view is that the horse and rider are symbolic of Jesus Christ, riding forth with the gospel to conquer the enemies of God. Let us look briefly at each view. Then we shall attempt to make a choice between them.

At one time this commentator held a variation of the first view. The book of Revelation was written when the Church was in its infancy and was trying to make headway against Rome. Clearly the emperors were greedy for power. Their lust for conquest was infamous. Careful examination of the three horses which follow this one reveals that each of them is a symbol of tragedy. If this horse and rider does represent a malicious movement of some type, we find all four horses fitting into the same pattern as harbingers of evil. This view is tempting. It is especially appealing if we extend the lust for conquest beyond the Romans and allow it to reach down through the ages to represent the spirit of greed and conquest through the Christian dispensation. After much study we have rejected the above view.

The entire context of the Revelation fits more carefully and precisely together if this horse and rider symbolize Jesus Christ and his gospel. The entire sixth chapter of Revelation is a preview of the book from this point onward. It tells of the

consequences of rejecting the Word of God. The emphasis upon conquest is not the malicious attempts at conquest by Rome. It is the conquest of the slain Lamb of God over all of the enemies of righteousness. The horse is white for two reasons. The cause is absolutely pure and sinless, and the complete victory of Jesus over his enemies is certain. Chapter five declared that Jesus had assumed his rulership over His Kingdom. His word is now to be proclaimed throughout the earth. There will be much opposition, but the task will be completed, and the enemies will finally be fed to the scavenger birds. In chapter nineteen we will find this same rider described as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There he will ride forth to finish the battle which is here begun. Then those who oppose him will understand the folly of their rebellion.

The crown and the bow which the Christ carries speak of his authority and his power. The bow in this picture will be replaced by a sword which proceeds out of his mouth in chapter nineteen. Whether it be a bow or a sword, Jesus has the weaponry necessary for victory. A wise world would pay homage to this conquering King. Peace and happiness demand subjection to his decrees.

REV 6:3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

REV 6:4 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.**

We must sadly admit that the world is not wise. No sooner does Christ ride out across the earth with the message of salvation than resistance rises to meet him. Satan has fought against the truth from the beginning. He is true to his colors now. A second horse is now announced by a second living creature. The living creature does not call the horse. He simply invites John to “Come and see.” This time the horse is red in color. Each time the color of the horse is quite significant. It was no coincidence the first horse was white. Nor is it accidental that this horse is red. It becomes clear as we read on that the red color is associated with war and bloodshed. The sword he carries is definitely not like the sword which comes out of the mouth of the Christ. This sword is representative of violence and murder.

The rejection of Christ and his gospel inevitably leads to friction among men. Refusal to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength and to love ones neighbor as oneself leaves a void within the soul. Malice fills that empty place resulting in disaster. Man is then pitted against man. Anger and hatred cover the land. Jesus is not called the “Prince of Peace” without good reason. The Lord once told his disciples, *“They that live by the sword shall die by the sword.”* The point he was making is precisely the point which is being made in this text. There are two diametrically opposed ways of life. The first is the way of Jesus. It involves self sacrifice, with love

and concern for others. The other is anti-Christian. It is self centered and feeds itself at the expense of others.

The pattern is then predictable. When the white horse, riding out with truth, is spurned, the red horse of war, violence, and murder will ride thundering across the land.

REV 6:5 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 upon him had a pair of balances in his hand.

REV 6:6 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 that thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

After the white horse, and the red horse, have ridden out, a third living creature calls for John to “Come and see.” This time the horse is black. There can be no mistaking the symbolism. Black is the color of grief. The rider has a pair of balances in his hand.

When men spend their energies in conflict with each other rather than in loving service, want and sorrow soon manifest themselves. Wars are fought by young men in the prime of life. When they die in battle, parents, wives, children, and loved ones, wear the black of mourning. Land which was once fruitful is made barren by the buffeting of the

instruments of warfare. Energies which should have been devoted to lifting the living standards of civilization, are spent in destruction. The black horse and rider with his balances tell of shortage and want.

A society which could have been well fed and happy now weeps with hunger and starvation. The cost of a penny for a measure of wheat and a penny for three measures of barley sounds ridiculously cheap to us. But this passage must be understood in the language of the persons addressed. The coin specified here was the equivalent of a full day's labor. It would buy only enough provisions to keep soul and body together!

The concern for the oil and the wine points out a contrast between those who live in luxury and those who suffer in squalor. Wheat and barley are necessities of life. Oil and wine were, to those addressed, luxuries of life. Here is a story of inequity and injustice. Some have the power to abuse and cheat others. While some of these self centered people revel in wealth and luxury, others become swallowed up in the most abject poverty. Ultimately, if the poor still have enough strength, they rise against the aristocracy with the most hideous actions of revenge.

REV 6:7 And when he had opened the fourth seal I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

REV 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat upon him

was death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Injustice and the sorrow which accompanies it are most certainly not the end of the matter. John is now invited to fasten his gaze upon yet another horse and rider, pointed out by the fourth living creature. This time the horse is pale in color. Note carefully the difference in color between this horse and the first. The first horse was sparkling white, the color of purity and cleanliness. This one is the color of a corpse. The terrible want described under the third horse has now led its victims to the very gates of death. In fact, the rider astride this pale horse is called death.

And so the seeds planted in the rejection of the gospel have brought forth an awesome harvest. Hades is the abode of the dead. That is the original word used here. Both physically and spiritually, the wages of sin is death. If we serve the devil, we shall earn our wages, whether we like it or not.

Not all of mankind feels the sting of the grave. Only twenty-five percent are swallowed up through the hadean gates. One can only be reminded of Europe's Bubonic Plague, along with various droughts and famines. And one can only wonder how much of this might have been avoided if men had worked together in love and self-sacrifice.

Let us summarize our previous comments about the meaning of the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

First, Christ rides out with the gospel, seeking to conquer the earth for his kingdom. Second, men spurn his way of unselfishness and love. Thus, the world is enfolded in friction, war, violence, and killing. Third, as men become engrossed in such destructive activities, there is insufficient time and energy to produce food and other necessities of life. The rich accumulate goods at the expense of the poor. Sorrow and mourning are found on every hand. Finally, conditions become so terrible a sizable fraction of mankind is swallowed up by death and the grave, as the grim reaper finds them weakened and gathers them to the Hadean world.

REV 6:9 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.

REV 6:10 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?

All too often the picture of the four horsemen is considered to be a complete story. This is not the case. As the fifth seal is opened, there is complete continuity with the events of the first four seals. The rebellious persons introduced by the second, third, and fourth horsemen have engulfed the world in misery, sorrow, and death because of their refusal to submit to the truth of the gospel. Such is to be expected. God has placed certain physical and

spiritual laws in existence. One does not jump off a high building because bones would be broken and physical death might well result. Neither does one defy God's spiritual laws. The consequences may not be as directly evident, but they are just as certain. Living in harmony with the truth brings blessing. Living in conflict with the truth brings devastation and destruction of much which could be enjoyed if it were not so.

Now John sees a very piteous sight. Many unfortunate people of God are seen under the altar. They have been caught up in the series of events triggered by the disobedient. It is not their fault that their lives have been lost. They are under the altar because they were willing to stand for the truth, even in the face of physical death. This scene is of a time previous to the resurrection and, therefore, their bodies are not seen. Their souls can only be seen because the scene is a vision rather than being dependent upon material reality.

A wicked world has brought them to this state of affairs because it was necessary that they live in it, even though they were not a part of it. They have been willing to present themselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). But now their lives have been cut off, and they have become martyrs for the gospel's sake. Later in chapter twenty we shall have reason to refer back to these martyrs. At that time they will not be seen under the altar. They will appear in a beautiful scene of triumph.

Even though these righteous persons have been cut off from their lives upon the earth, they have not

lost interest in the events going on there. They are quite aware that the same destructive activities continue to occur year after year. Their patience has grown thin. Why, they ask, does God not step into the situation and bring a halt to Satan's influence? How many living Christians have pondered that same question? The promise is repeatedly made in the scriptures that the meek shall inherit the earth. Why should they have to wait so long? In our more pessimistic moments the picture looks extremely dreary. We are sure of the fact that God exists. Yet, why does he permit evil men to prosper while they rape the earth?

One possible answer to this problem is found in Second Peter chapter three where we are told God is not slack concerning his promises, but that he appears to be slack only because of his longsuffering. He is waiting for sinners to come to repentance. He alone knows just when the proper action should be taken. If he were to bring the present age to an end immediately, even some of our own loved ones might lose the opportunity to repent. We must not measure God with our own finite yardstick.

This passage of scripture is one of several used to show the dead in Christ are conscious and know some things between the time of death and the judgment. These are martyrs who are already dead; yet they know the earth is still in existence and that destructive conditions continue. It is clear this scene is a part of the vision of the apostle John. However, the present author is convinced the passage teaches

the dead are conscious. It may be placed along with others such as Jesus's statement to the thief on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." If this is a correct position, both the living and the dead join in concern over the influence of the devil and his angels. Perhaps Jesus's declaration in Matthew that they who mourn shall be comforted has reference to this destruction of the earth, as well as other things.

REV 6:11 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 fellow servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled.

In chapter nineteen, verse eight, we are told the bride of Christ, which is the Church, is to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. Later in the chapter the armies which follow the Word of God are clothed in fine linen, white and clean. In Isaiah 61:10, Isaiah says, "*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*" There can be little doubt as to the meaning of the white robes assigned to the martyrs. They are to wait patiently, while dressed in their righteous deeds, looking forward to

the time of God's great victories and the following wedding of the Lamb.

Without having served God with all of our heart, we stand ashamed and naked spiritually. With the proper self sacrificing service we assure ourselves of being arrayed in splendor until God sees fit to bring down the curtain on evil in the earth.

There are those who talk of soul sleep. It is true that Daniel spoke of those who sleep in the dust of the earth (Daniel 12:2). Also Jesus, in speaking of Lazarus, said, "*He sleepeth.*" However, the sleep spoken of is the quietness of the body, as one who lies resting on his bed. The soul is obviously not asleep, as we can see from the present passage. These are told to rest for a little season. There is a difference between sleep and rest. The point is that the burdens which were carried through life and which finally culminated in the loss of their lives have now been laid down. Their labors on earth have ceased, and they are to await the conclusion of the meeting between mankind and the Word of God.

They are to rest until some fellow servants and brethren are to be killed as they were. This is said to be a fulfillment. This is strange language, in that a fulfillment points to some kind of a plan. Your author cannot but wonder if God has been enlarging a family to some size which he has purposed from the beginning. Until the family is complete the curtain is not to be drawn. Perhaps when the family is complete and it has been sufficiently demonstrated to Satan that God's will stands supreme, God will

take his vengeance, and judgment will descend. It may seem a very long time, when in fact it is only a little season compared to the endless joy ahead.

REV 6:12 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:

REV 6:13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken with a mighty wind.

REV 6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Verse twelve and the following continue to present a picture of the results of refusal to listen to the Word of God or to be led by its illumination. Now the entire creation shudders at the impact. The damage penetrates to its utmost reaches. Earth, sun, moon and stars reel. There is no portion of the universe which stands secure. God had indicated to the saints in verse eleven it was necessary for certain events to run their course. This is a part of that course. Before the present system is concluded, there is to be opportunity to see the terrifying end of the path which is followed when men seek to direct their own steps without the aid of the Great Shepherd.

Is this upheaval physical creation, or is it political in nature? It may well be both. During the Christian dispensation man is meeting his Maker. Jehovah often uses the darkening of the sun and moon to speak of the removal of the governing system existent at the time. Isaiah tells of similar events when describing the burden of Babylon. (See Isaiah 13:9-13) It appears in that place he is talking about the complete removal of that great world empire. In addition to the sun, moon, and stars being darkened, Isaiah says the heavens will be shaken and the earth removed out of her place. Joel speaks of like events which are to transpire before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

It is not likely that the events are restricted to the political scene. Romans 8:21-22 informs us the entire creation groans in the bondage of corruption. Peter tells us that the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. There is no doubt a strong connection between the sinfulness of man and the disharmony of the physical universe. It is to be expected that when God steps in to end this world and begin the next, both the physical and the political systems will be shaken and replaced.

REV 6:15 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:

REV 6:16 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.

REV 6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

All too often the minor catastrophes of earth affect only the poor and the weak. The mighty and the noble escape without a scratch. This time it is different. The list of those affected includes every level of prestige. From the kings to the slaves the cry comes ringing forth, "Save us from these horrors." But, it is too late. The wrath has come.

There are some things worse than death. The implication of the last three verses of this chapter are that men and women who see the end results of turning a deaf ear to the gospel will some day come to see this clearly. The saints have been asking whether evil men are to escape the consequences of their actions. The resounding answer is **NO!!** There will be no escape. It is simply a matter of time.

Whether it apply to the immediate times of the Christians of Asia Minor, or to the end of time and the judgment; whether it be physical or political, the lesson is there. God is not mocked. When men sow evil seed, they will reap a hideous harvest. To the readers of John's day there is a promise that their persecutors will ultimately bring horrors down upon their own heads. To every reader of every age until the last outpouring of the wrath of God, there is a like promise. Those who fight against the Lord

have nothing to gain. They have everything to lose. As Pharoah, Herod, Nebuchadnezzar, and various others have discovered, God's purposes will be fulfilled. Opposition is utter folly.

Chapter 7

REV 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.

REV 7:2 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,

REV 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

As we move into chapter seven, the visitation of God's wrath is interrupted for a short time. Most commentators refer to chapter seven as an interlude in the opening of the seven seals. Whether it be an interlude or an integral part of the seven seals, the message is perfectly clear. God will protect his own. He knows who they are, and he will brook no threat to their eternal welfare.

We need not fret over the mention of the four corners of the earth. The statement is not an indication of ignorance on the part of the inspired writer. It demonstrates the breadth of God's control over all things. The four corners of the earth simply include all of it. Of course, this does not harmonize with those interpretations of Revelation which limit the vast majority of the book to the area of Asia

Minor in the time of the first century! God's providential care extends to every part of the earth. Let us not shorten his arm.

Another matter of note here is that the impending destruction is not on men. It is on the **EARTH**, the **SEA**, and the **TREES**. Later it will be extended to mankind. Any effects upon mankind at this point will be indirect.

A seal is placed on something to prevent tampering. It is like a brand on livestock or like the lock on a trunk. Once it is put into place it serves as a warning to anyone who would steal from the owner. This time the seal is that of Jehovah. Not only would it be unwise to ignore the seal; it would be quite impossible. Once protected by the seal of the living God, we may rest assured neither height, nor depth, principality nor power, life nor death shall separate us from his love and protection, unless we decide to depart from his service (Romans 8).

The location of the imprinted seal is important. It is planted on the forehead of the servant. Later in chapter thirteen we will find the mark of the beast placed on both the forehead and the right hand of the beast's servants. This is no great mystery. The forehead is where the thinking is done. The right hand is where labor is performed. To be sealed as God's servant one must dedicate both one's thoughts and actions to the accomplishment of his purposes.

Another thought which is certainly related to the truth presented in this passage is the promise of the Holy Spirit. God's promise to his servants is

that they are to be led by his Holy Spirit if they are his children. They are to be provided comfort through the Spirit. And, they are not to grieve the Spirit by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). One can hardly fail to notice the connection between the mental commitment of God's servants and the sealing and leading of the Holy Spirit.

The ones to be sealed here are not in heaven. They are still living upon the earth and are in need of protection from the disasters which befall the evildoers. This author believes the servants who were to be sealed are Christians who go through the tribulation God brings upon the earth because of the rejection of the gospel. No coming tribulation, either in the first century, or any later time will be so severe that God will forget his servants who have been marked by commitment to his Word and to his Kingdom. He has sealed them, and they are his!

REV 7:4 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.

REV 7:5 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.

REV 7:6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

REV 7:7 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.

REV 7:8 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.

It is possible that the one hundred forty-four thousand, as detailed above, represents the total number of Christians who are to be converted from among the Jews, and is to be contrasted with the great multitude coming from all nations and tongues, which is described immediately afterward. God has had a very special place for the Jewish race in bringing salvation to all men. It may be that he still has special plans for the fleshly descendants of Abraham.

It seems much more likely that the twelve tribes of Israel represent the **spiritual** descendants of Abraham, those who have demonstrated their kinship to him through their response to the grace of God. Numerous times throughout the rest of the book of Revelation we find flashbacks to this one hundred forty-four thousand who stand safe on Mount Zion. Wave after wave of tribulation sweeps over the earth, and each time God interrupts the account to tell us the one hundred forty-four thousand still stand secure. It would seem strange if this protection were extended only to the fleshly

descendants of Abraham who embraced Christ. It is our understanding that these are the Jews pictured in Romans 2:28-29 who are circumcized of the heart, rather than of the flesh. These are the ones who are called the “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16.

The characteristics of the one hundred forty-four thousand are precisely the characteristics of members of the church. They are sealed with the Spirit. They are redeemed (Revelation 14:4). They are without blemish (Revelation 14:5).

It is also highly unlikely that exactly twelve thousand persons would be converted out of each of the twelve tribes mentioned. The number, one hundred forty-four thousand, is a combination of the number twelve, which is associated with spiritual leadership, and one thousand, which is used in Revelation to show contrast with numbers of lesser magnitude. The use of a number repeatedly in scriptural symbolism, such as the use of the number twelve twice here, serves to place special emphasis on it. God is thus going to seal those Christians who are alive upon the earth in order that they will be spiritually protected, even if they must die physically in the distresses which are to come.

REV 7:9 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;

REV 7:10 And cried with a loud voice,

saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Now John's vision is enlarged to include more than those on the earth who are God's servants and need his providential protection during the anticipated troubles. He is allowed to see a much larger multitude of God's servants who stand before the throne in heaven itself. They stand in white robes with palms in their hands, properly attired, and prepared to offer praise unto their King.

We have previously discussed the white robes the martyrs were told to put on for a little season, until their fellow martyrs were killed as they had been for the testimony of Jesus Christ. The palms here are reminiscent of those which were used at the triumphal entry of Christ into the city of Jerusalem just before his crucifixion.

One's first temptation is to see a contrast between the redeemed of Israel and the redeemed of all the other tongues, kindreds, peoples and nations. Careful study has convinced us the multitude before the throne contains Christians from among the fleshly descendants of Abraham along with Christians of many other nations, etc. Terrible troubles are to come upon the earth. John is being told of the condition of various servants of God, as related to these troubles. The martyrs who had been killed were shown to be secure and awaiting God's wrath upon the evil doers. The twelve tribes of Israel, that is the living Christians, were then declared sealed and counted. Now a third group is considered.

This third group is the vast multitude of mankind who have passed faithfully through the tribulations of the times in which they lived. They have been faithful unto death. They now praise God that they have been enabled to escape the devil's destiny, the sentence of the lake of fire.

God's wrath will come. As a promise of God this promise is sure. But, when the wrath comes, there will be no individual, living or dead, if faithful to him, who shall need fear anything other than temporary discomfort. They have claimed the Lord as their Shepherd. They need fear no evil.

The cry, "*Salvation is to our God, and unto the Lamb.*" is awkward to us since it seems to say God and the Lamb are to receive salvation. Of course, the opposite is the true meaning of the statement. The fountainheads of salvation are Christ and the Father. Both are due the highest praise possible. There is no greater gift to be given than the redeeming blood of Jesus. After having endured Satan's sharpest barbs, the multitude now rejoices in a crescendo of praise to their benefactors.

REV 7:11 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,

REV 7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

REV 7:13 And one of the elders

answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

REV 7:14 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.

The redemption of the vast multitude is the trigger for an outpouring of praise. We are told the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10). This is an occasion of immense joy. Not one, but a great throng of souls have been redeemed and washed from their sins. Because of the salvation brought about by Jehovah, all the other characteristics may be recognized as his. Blessing, honor, power, might, glory, etc. are the proper attributes of one who delivers others from everlasting destruction and opens the way to eternal life.

One of the twenty-four elders now presents a question to John to provoke conversation. The elder obviously knows the answer to the question, but he is interested in John, as well as ourselves, giving it due consideration. *“Who are these in the white robes, and from where do they come?”* John is well aware of the nature of the question, and so he allows the elder to answer his own question.

John is informed that these are the ones who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white. We are told the article **THE** is in the original

Greek. What is the great tribulation? Does this scene look ahead to a time of tribulation to come, or is the great tribulation already underway as John sees the vision? The latter is probably the case. Surely the book of Revelation speaks of sore tribulation which has extended throughout the ages. It is that great tribulation which exists because of man's separation from the presence of God through sin.

It has been a terrifying journey through the wilderness with the burdens of Satan weighing us down for thousands of years. Hunger, thirst, tears, and fear have stalked men from the garden of Eden until the present. Surely if anything can be described as great tribulation, this can. Every man finds himself in this great tribulation. Some men seek the way, the truth and the life. They finish the tribulation period by having washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb. Other men wallow in the sinful surroundings like hogs in the mire. They conclude the great tribulation stinking and filthy. The multitude presented in this passage are those who have abhorred the filth and made themselves clean by the application of the cleansing blood of Jesus.

Let us note that the blood of Christ was not confined in its cleansing power to the persons living at the time of his death. It reached backward in time to include those who lived in accordance with the truth as revealed to them from the time of Adam. And, it shall reach forward to all faithful men until time shall be no more. We are confident that Abraham and Moses stood among that multitude of redeemed John saw before the throne.

REV 7:15 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.

REV 7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

REV 7:17 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.

Now we arrive at the heart of the reason for John's being allowed to see this vision. The question is being answered as to whether those deceased faithful of all the ages have been defeated by sin and death or whether they have survived beyond the grave. The answer is that they have survived. Death and sin are temporary and surmountable. The faithful dead are truly alive, praising and serving God. Never again will they feel the effects of sin's curse. Thorns and thistles, tears and terror, have been shed, along with the earthly tabernacle of this body.

Here is evidence preparation should be made in this world for further service to God after death. The faithful beyond the grave are not idling away their existence. They serve continuously. It is then a mark of wisdom to serve well and diligently on earth, that we may be ready for our assignments round the throne of heaven.

There are three passages of scripture which are very similar. The present passage is repeated almost verbatim in Revelation 21:3-7, and also in Isaiah 49:10. In each case the picture is one of future security for the faithful. Revelation 21:3-7 may differ from this passage in that the resurrection has taken place and the service performed, along with the pleasures enjoyed, are in the new and glorified spiritual body, whereas this description is of conditions in the first century during which John lived.

It is proper for us to remind ourselves of one of the basic principles of prophecy. Prophecy normally speaks to its own day, as well as to the future. The passage in Isaiah points forward to the Christian age. The passage in Revelation was written specifically to brace Christians of the seven churches for the onslaught of Roman persecution to come. But, the promises of eternal security for the faithful are just as real and valid today as they were in the time of Isaiah and the apostle John.

Chapter 8

REV 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

REV 8:2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Since the questions regarding the security of God's faithful have now been answered, the visitations of God upon the wicked may be taken up in greater detail. The picture as given in the latter part of chapter six is probably only a short preview of that which is now to be described in full detail. Just as a newspaper begins a story by giving a quick overview and then moves on to the specifics, so the account in Revelation gives us a headline and then follows in chapters eight through eleven with a more complete picture.

We often speak of the "calm before the storm." A tremendous storm is going to be sent upon the earth. Heaven holds its breath in silent anticipation of the awesome scenes which are to unfold.

It is possible that there are seven angels which may be described as "archangels" standing higher in rank and closer to God's throne than the other angels. Verse two speaks of seven as though these seven were different. Michael seems to be appointed to very special tasks dealing with the providential care of God's people. Luke 1:19 speaks of Gabriel standing before the throne of God. The Bible gives us no other names of angels. The curiosity of man is so

intense that he has seen fit to manufacture names for seven of them. The apocryphal book of Tobit gives all seven. We certainly do not place equal value upon the book of Tobit. However, the reader may find it interesting to know where men have been going for such a list of names.

The seven angels mentioned in the text of Revelation are each given a trumpet. The Biblical use of the trumpet is as a call to attention. Trumpets often warn of impending danger, as when an opposing army is approaching or when one's own army is readying for attack. Each time a trumpet is blown by one of the seven angels we shall consider it as a further warning by God in order that men may prepare to protect themselves or rather seek protection from him.

REV 8:3 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.

REV 8:4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

REV 8:5 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.

After the seven angels are given their warning trumpets, another angel, not one of the seven, goes into action. He comes to stand at the altar with a special incense which is to be offered along with the prayers of the saints. Incense was used with sacrifices of the Old Testament to render them more pleasing to God. God gave special instructions with regard to the manufacture of such incense as was to accompany sacrifices.

The altar mentioned here is apparently the same as that mentioned in chapter six. There John saw the souls of the martyrs who had been slain because of their testimony of Jesus. This altar receives all of the sacrifices men offer to God, whether it be their lives, their bodies, or their prayers. The blowing of the seven trumpets will come about as a response on God's part to the sacrifices and prayers of the saints. The earth is being subjected to terrible destruction by the unrighteous servants of Satan, and God's people are calling upon him to hear their cry. God is pleased with such requests. He is prepared to respond.

Things now move in two directions. The prayers of the saints have been moving upward from earth to heaven. They have gone from the saints, to the altar, to the nostrils of Jehovah. The angel then takes the fire which would ordinarily burn the sacrifices on the altar and places some of it into the censor in which he had the incense. It is then hurled into the earth. Little children sometimes sing a song which says, "The prayers go up and the rains come down." This time it is not rain which comes down.

It is fire. Fire is often used in the Bible to convey the idea of purification of the righteous and destruction of the wicked. If God's purposes are achieved in this case, the fire will make the lives of the wicked so uncomfortable they will repent of their ways and come to him.

There appears to be a strong connection between this passage and one found in Numbers, chapter sixteen. In verse thirty-five of that chapter it is said that, *"There came out a fire from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense"*. Later when Moses led the people out of Egypt, he told Aaron to: *"Take a censor, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord."*

The plagues have begun! As each of the trumpets is blown, problems similar to the plagues of Egypt will be brought upon the earth. The voices, thunderings, lightnings, and earthquakes all harmonize in telling of the seriousness of the coming events. Sinai thundered at the giving of the law. When God spoke about the glorification of Jesus shortly before the crucifixion, the bystanders thought it had thundered. We must not just read over these words lightly. Imagine, if you will, a terrible thunderstorm. The lightning is flashing so brightly your whole house is lighted up as if it were the middle of the day. The crack of the thunder is so vicious it almost curdles the blood at each clap. Then in the midst of the thunder and lightning the earth

begins to tremble and quake so violently that men can not stand. All nature is in the hand of the Almighty. What will he visit upon her?

REV 8:6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

REV 8:7 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.

Until all of the seven trumpets have sounded, we are still under the unfolding of the seventh seal. The first six seals were opened in quick succession; but before the seventh seal was opened, God interjected the scenes of safety for his own. Now he is ready to disclose the last of the seals. This will not be completed until we reach the end of chapter eleven. At that point we will have seen the course of events which results when the gospel of Jesus Christ is presented to mankind and met with rejection or acceptance.

The warnings now begin. The symbolism here is very similar to that used in Ezekiel 38. There God is speaking to Gog of the land of Magog. Gog has seen fit to come upon the walled cities of Israel. He has come from the north and is convinced he can make Israel easy prey. Jehovah warns Gog that Israel is not as unprotected as he might believe. God will protect his people. Great hailstones, fire, and

brimstone will be cast down upon Gog and his followers. Thus many nations will be made aware of God's ability to protect that which is his.

The churches of Asia Minor were familiar with such scriptures as those of Ezekiel 38, and would recognize the context surrounding them. God was telling his faithful that no power, including that of Rome, could persecute Christians and remain unscathed. The persecutions would result in God's diminishing the welfare of the persecutors.

It is probably not too significant that the instrument God uses is hail, etc. This may simply be a means of drawing attention to the event in Ezekiel. More important is the fact that a portion of the creation, upon which man depends for his well being, is to be severely damaged. The trees and the green grass represent the vegetable kingdom which is so vital for man's food supply. Man is not injured directly yet, but with his food supply cut short he should begin to realize his actions are extremely inappropriate.

At this time only one third of the trees and grass are involved. Later the damage will be extended if repentance is not forthcoming. God is making every effort to persuade men to pay heed before they must be written off as incorrigible.

REV 8:8 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;

REV 8:9 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.

As in the case of the Egyptian plagues, if one warning is not sufficient more will follow. In the case of the Egyptians the water was turned to blood. Blood has great importance in the Bible. It is said, *"The life is in the blood."* Also, if a man sheds blood his own blood shall be required for the blood he shed (Genesis 8:4-6). The blood of Christ is held to be the cleansing agent for our sins. Over and over again the scriptures emphasize the high place of importance God gives to blood.

The Egyptians had shed the blood of God's people. Therefore, the Egyptians were given more blood than they bargained for. When the water of the Nile turned to blood, the Egyptian was in dire straits. His very life depended upon that river. To pollute it was to leave him helpless.

Mountains often represent power structures in the symbolism of the Bible. God's own people are referred to as Mt. Zion. The fifty-first chapter of Jeremiah warns Babylon that she is a destroying mountain which shall be covered by the sea. For a great mountain to be burning with fire would be for some great power structure to be consumed in God's wrath. For it to fall into the sea would be to predict its disappearance from among the people of the earth. Combining the effects of the first two angel's trumpets, we find that the trees and grass of the vegetable kingdom were to be seriously damaged. The food producing and commerce carrying functions

of the sea would be curtailed sharply, as some power structure was consumed and caused to disappear. God's warnings have been extended in a major manner as the second angel added his warning to that of the first.

REV 8:10 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;

REV 8:11 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.

Although the oceans and seas are of tremendous importance to the welfare of man, the species might survive through the use of fresh water for drinking and cleansing purposes. As the third angel sounds, the fresh water supplies become useless. Only a third are affected, as in the other plagues of this section of the book. Still, the results are clearly severe enough to demand attention. The bitterness is responsible for the death of many men. This is the first of the trumpets which we are expressly informed brings death to men, although the blood in the sea might well denote such. We also noted the hail and brimstone of the first plague had blood intermingled. This implies death even though it is not clearly stated.

Step by step God is closing in on all the major avenues of life support. Each trumpet announces major damage upon an area of creation which is critical to human welfare.

But what is the great star which falls from heaven to cause the bitterness of the waters? Stars are sources of light. Amid the darkness of the sky we see the stars as interruptions of that darkness. Stars are bright enough to call our attention. We speak of movie stars. Luminaries of the political world are spoken of as if they were stars rising in the governmental skies. We feel justified here in concluding the star which fell to be some personality which has opposed the people of God to such an extent that he has been seen and praised before many onlookers.

The fact that the star is mentioned as it is does not by itself lead to the conclusion given. However, this star is called Wormwood. In Jeremiah 9:15 and 23:15 wormwood is given to the people or their leaders because they have turned to idolatry. The secrets of Revelation are often made understandable by the use of terms involved in other portions of the Bible. The connection here would indicate this star has been instrumental in turning God's people from him to other objects of worship. The result of this action could be the collapse of both the star and his followers, plus the removal of the star from prominent places. Bitterness of life, and even death itself, follow in Wormwood's wake.

REV 8:12 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.

The sun, moon and stars are all lights in the heavens. Without them there would be no life since the sun is necessary for plant growth, and plant growth is vital to animal existence. The emphasis in verse twelve lies on the illuminating power of these bodies. They allow us to see where we are going without confusion. Notice it does not say they lost one third of their brightness. It states they did not shine at all for one third of the day. This makes a tremendous difference. One might get around adequately with two thirds of the present brightness of these heavenly objects, but eight hours of several days in succession in complete darkness would be a different matter.

At various times in the history of the world God has permitted some degree of spiritual darkness to descend upon a people who oppose his truth. He warned Pharaoh such would happen (Jeremiah 32:7). In speaking through Isaiah, Jehovah includes in the burden of Babylon a darkening of the heavenly bodies. In Isaiah 13:10 we read, *“The stars of heaven and their constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”* When Jesus was crucified, darkness settled over the earth for several hours. The point is that when men desire to live in spiritual darkness God will allow

them to do so. Yet, he warns them of the seriousness of the situation through a temporary removal of physical light.

The stars which lose their brightness in the present text are believed to be educational, religious, and political leaders. The one third fraction indicates more than an occasional star dimming for a while. The effect is one of major proportions. The world will be affected very seriously. Men cannot be led away from the true light of Jesus Christ without awesome aftereffects.

REV 8:13 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!

Many of the best manuscripts have **eagle** here rather than **angel**. This is not one of the seven angels with the trumpets. Instead, it is an event separating the first four from the last three trumpets. There is a distinct difference in the effects of the plagues brought on by the the first four trumpets and the last three. The last three trumpets bring much more serious effects, and these effects are visited directly upon mankind, as opposed to the indirect effects of the first four trumpets. The first four damaged the environment. The last three are visited upon man himself.

It is only reasonable that when the plagues

brought on by the first four trumpets struck men they would be only too happy to repent and turn from their evil ways to God. It also seems logical that Pharoah and the Egyptians would have done the same. In neither case was this true. Why must man be so callous and stubborn? Why must man suffer so horribly before being willing to turn? And why in many cases does man never turn? We are reminded of the words of Jesus which were spoken as he looked across the city of Jerusalem just before he was to be crucified. *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, AND YE WOULD NOT.”*

Chapter 9

REV 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 to the bottomless pit.

REV 9:2 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.

There is an interesting passage in Jude 13 which may be related to the fall of this star from heaven. In Jude, false teachers are described as wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Such an interpretation of stars is right in line with our previous discussion. A star is supposed to shine with light and provide guidance. Thus, a star which has fallen would be one which at one time provided such light and guidance, but which had failed and now brought only misery and sorrow.

Since the star fell from heaven, the indication is that it at one time found its natural place there. This would seem to be some exalted position in the work of God. As the fallen star enters the earthly environment, he has in his possession a very important key. As we are talking in symbolic terms we need not visualize a literal key made out of metal. Jesus is said to have the keys of death and hell. Peter along with the other apostles was given the keys to the Kingdom of God. In each case the

key represents a means of providing access from one domain into another. This fallen star will be allowed to open a headquarters for Satan and his angels and will provide for the release of a part of the hideous evil which is accumulated there.

The bottomless pit which is opened now is again mentioned in Revelation 20:1. At that time an angel with the key of this pit binds Satan and casts him into the pit. The pit is then sealed and Satan is left within it for an extended period of time. The pit is not the lake of fire, for Satan and his own are released from the bottomless pit, only to be thrown into the lake of fire. There is a temptation to think the star which has the key to the pit here is the same as the angel with the key in 20:1. We believe this not the case. In this scripture the pit is being opened to release curses upon the earth. There the pit is being sealed to prevent the same.

Our conclusion is that the bottomless pit is the source from which Satan and his messengers pour out all their evils upon the earth as God allows men to suffer for their disobedience. It is from this bottomless pit that Satan rules as the prince of darkness. To speak of a bottomless pit is to speak of that which is in the opposite direction from God who is declared in Ecclesiastes 5:8 to be "higher than the highest."

Who is the fallen star? It is probably Satan himself. Both Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28 seem to talk of certain kings as if they were more than mere men. Careful examination reveals that their

situation may be much like that of Simon Peter when Jesus said, “*Get thee behind me Satan.*” Jesus was talking to Peter. Yet, he spoke as though talking to Satan. The ancient kings mentioned in Isaiah and Ezekiel had demonstrated such wickedness in mistreating their positions of exaltation that they could be spoken of in the same terms as Satan.

In chapter twelve of Revelation, Satan is said to have been cast out of heaven to earth. Jesus once told his disciples when they were discussing their power over Satan that he had seen Satan fall from heaven.

Later in this ninth chapter of Revelation, the host of locusts which exit from the bottomless pit have a king leading them who is called the “destroyer.” The name means the same in two different languages. This title perfectly suits Satan, who goes about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

As the pit is opened, smoke rolls out of it. Two points need to be made respecting this smoke. It is no mere trail or wisp. It belches forth as if from some great furnace capable of consuming tremendous amounts of whatever might be placed within it. Smoke is evidence of something being destroyed by burning. The pit begins to sound very much like a preview of the lake of fire, though not identical with it.

The second point is that the smoke obscures the light of the sun, and the air becomes dark as a result. If this fallen star was ever responsible for bringing illuminating light to mankind, he no

longer does so. Instead, he releases billowing smoke which leaves men groping in darkness. Obviously the symbolism represents spiritual confusion resulting from the obscuring of the light of God and Jesus Christ. Surely this event is appropriately listed as a woe upon mankind.

REV 9:3 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.

REV 9:4 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.

REV 9:5 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.

One of the ten plagues of Egypt was a plague of locusts. The normal food for locusts would be vegetation. These locusts are unique. They are told not to consume their usual food. They are to concentrate their activities on the men who have not the seal of God upon them. When the first trumpet had sounded, the vegetation was visited with destruction. This had failed to cause men to repent. Now the horde of locusts is specifically told to avoid the vegetation and attack men.

Not all men are to be their victims. Their target is to be only those men who oppose God. We have previously commented upon the seal of God. The forehead is the center of thought. There are some who are immune to the sting of the locusts. They are the ones who have chosen paths of righteousness in obedience to the will of God. This passage says something in answer to the question dealt with in the thirty-seventh Psalm. There the righteous are told to “*Fret not because of evil-doers.*” God will see that their ways are punished. Sometimes we do fret because it appears the wicked prosper with little discomfort. But there are some extremely unpleasant results of wickedness which never fall upon the righteous. Such would be guilty consciences and the sorrow and violence which these bring upon themselves through the ages. There are other difficulties which they suffer as God strives with them in trying to lead them toward repentance.

The locusts are restricted from actually killing the evil men. The purpose at this time is not destruction. It is chastisement. The tormenting pain of the locust stings will endure for five months. We are told the sting of a locust is sometimes sufficient to make a man wish he were dead. The time listed here is surely adequate to bring about repentance if such is forthcoming. However, some men persist so stubbornly that no obstacles prevent them from the pursuit of evil.

In our comments we hold to the same pattern which we have followed before. It is quite risky to

try to identify these locusts as specific events or beings in history unless the Bible itself does the identifying. Surely the churches of Asia Minor would have understood that men who oppose God shall not forever have an easy road. Sooner or later they will suffer for their indiscretion. The sting of the locusts and the darkness of the smoke from the bottomless pit will give them some taste of the lake of fire which awaits them if they do not alter their ways.

Will men never learn? We read daily of the murders and heartaches which march hand in hand with drunkenness, adultery, lying, and robbery. God clearly tells us, "*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*" Perhaps in God's longsuffering some of these evil ones will turn and find the "highway of holiness."

REV 9:6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

REV 9:7 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.

REV 9:8 And they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

Some things are worse than death. On occasion we visit individuals in the hospital who

have been in pain so long they wish daily for their lives to be ended. At times we have known parents whose offspring have brought such grief upon them it would have been a relief to cross the Jordan and leave it all behind. Such is the case with the sting of the locusts from the bottomless pit. They leave their victims writhing in agony and reaching out for death as an escape route. But they are not permitted that means of deliverance.

The entire picture of the locusts is that of a terrifying opponent. The locusts are as fierce as horses moving into battle. The crowns on their heads denote authority and power. Their faces like men declare intelligence. The hair like that of women is not intended to imply beauty. Such hair flying in the wind as they approached would add to the wild and ferocious appearance. The teeth like those of lions show the capacity for gnashing and tearing those they attack.

REV 9:9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as of the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

REV 9:10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails; and their power was to hurt men five months.

REV 9:11 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.

The breastplates of iron render the attacking locusts immune to counterattack. They are protected from any weapons the evil men whom they are to sting might use against them. In addition to their fierce appearance, they are also able to strike fear into the observer through the fearsome noises which accompany them. Chariots and horses moving across the earth into battle must have created a thunderous roar which would have been horrifying to those who heard them approaching. The very soil must have trembled under their feet.

The scorpion has a tail which curves up over its body. In the end of that tail is a stinger which may inflict severe and lingering pain. It is a pain of the most excruciating sort. One man who had suffered the sting of a scorpion told us he thought that he was going to die, though he did recover. The scorpions are God's way of telling us the lingering results of disobedience to his commandments are not a pleasant subject for our meditation. The pain is not eternal this time. It is temporary, but it lasts sufficiently long that men are given reflection time to recognize the folly.

The king, or leader, of the locusts is known by the title of DESTRUCTION. This title is given in two different languages for emphasis. If this is not Satan, it has to be his number one assistant. From the beginning in Eden it has been the purpose of Satan to destroy everything of consequence on the earth, particularly humanity. His corrupting influence can be seen in both the heavens and the

earth, as well as within the very family of God.

Pictures similar to this one of the locusts are found in the book of Joel. There a description of a locust plague is given. The damage there, however, is to the vegetation instead of to men. The visions of Revelation are often an effective blend of two or more Old Testament incidents, which are woven into a single vigorous lesson of spiritual nature. The present locust army blends the plagues of ancient Egypt with that in the book of Joel. One of those Old Testament pictures dealt with God's wrath visited upon those outside God's faithful, the Egyptians. The other dealt with internal punishments brought on by the disobedience of God's own people.

Only the true servant of God will escape the sting of the locusts. The arrogant atheist, the indifferent pleasure seeker, and the foolish apostate will all feel the lingering pain from the locusts. We remind ourselves that these troubles are still an effort upon God's part to bring the wicked to repentance. The Father is still trying to lead them back home.

REV 9:12 One woe is past; and behold, there come two more woes hereafter.

Out of the seven trumpets five, have now sounded. There are but two more. Each of those which have already been heard has heralded increasing difficulties for the rebellious. The contrast is clear. God knows his own. He has

marked them with his seal. The saints must live in a world where the effects of sin sometimes spill over into their lives. Yet, they are assured of eternal security if they only manage to endure to the end. In contrast, the wicked bring disaster of all kinds upon themselves, both in this world and in the eternal realms. God's longsuffering is at this point drawing ever nearer to its close. It is a perilous thing to ignore God's warning trumpets with their chastening plagues. Dear reader, do not deceive yourself until after the last trumpet has sounded its warning. Such is a risk you can not afford.

REV 9:13 .And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the altar which is before God;

REV 9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

REV 9:15 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.

As the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, John hears a voice giving commands to the angel. This voice is not identified. It is either the voice of God himself, or one who speaks according to his will. It is noteworthy that it speaks from the golden altar. This is the altar which in Old Testament times held the incense. It is the one on which the prayers of the saints had earlier been offered. It is also the

altar from which the angel had taken fire and hurled it to the earth. God is once more making it clear that he is acting in response to the needs of his saints.

The four angels which were bound in the river Euphrates are themselves described as being restricted. Previously, four angels had been assigned the task of restricting the winds from the four corners of the earth until the one hundred forty-four thousand had been sealed. Though it is the angels themselves which are restricted this time, the picture has certain similarities. In both cases destructive forces are hindered until the proper time. They are only released upon the earth at the command of Jehovah.

The river Euphrates is a geographical landmark which would be well known to both the Jews of Palestine as well as the Gentiles of Asia Minor. Across this river had come some of the greatest armies of ancient times. There could be few locations in the knowledge of these people which could speak so clearly of war and violence. It is war and violence which are the focus of the angel which now sounds.

Jesus was announced at his birth as the Prince of Peace. His kingdom was to be spread with the power of the truth rather than the force of the sword. But when men renounce the truth and follow their own will and pleasure, peace is lost (James 4:1-2). Violence and bloodshed are the inevitable result.

The angels which were released were angels of destruction. There are angels of numerous kinds.

Some of them are servants of the Devil. God has prepared everlasting torment for the Devil and his angels. Some angels serve God in announcing upcoming events, as in the case of the announcement to Mary. Some angels will be reapers in the last day. This time we find four angels who bring the horrors of war upon mankind. They did not come into the scheme of things on the spur of the moment. They had been awaiting according to the plans of God for a considerable amount of time. The exact moment has now arrived when they can fulfil their purpose most efficiently.

Their mission is a most unpleasant one. They are to slay the third part of mankind. Each of the trumpets brings a partial destruction. It is always **one third** rather than **all** which is damaged. Before this time one third was visited upon entities other than man himself, or else it involved only injury and pain to man. Now the damage will be partial as before. It will only extend to one third. But it will be directly upon man. And it will include death.

REV 9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

REV 9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat upon 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 mouth issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

What an awesome display of force! The number of horsemen is so great that John only knows it through hearing it announced. It is two hundred million. No army in the history of man has matched this number. It very nearly reaches the population level of the United States at the time of this writing. Again we point out the dangers of pinpointing a historical time and place where such a multitude of soldiers has been or will be gathered. Let us admit the symbolism here is God's method of representing war itself.

The similarity of the horses and their riders to the locusts released under the fifth trumpet is too close to be coincidental. The brimstone, the fire, the smoke, and the protective breastplates all cry out the same source for the locusts and the horsemen. They both have a close association with the bottomless pit. Some wise person has said that, "War is hell." Though war lacks a great deal of matching the torments of the final lake of fire, it does seem to smell suspiciously like the smoke of the furnaces in Satan's bottomless pit.

REV 9:18 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.

REV 9:19 For their power is in their mouths, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

These terrible horses and riders are capable of hurting, both coming and going. Fire, brimstone and smoke pour forth out of their mouths, while their tails have heads which do damage like venomous serpents.

Are these symbolic representations of modern day weapons such as giant bomber planes which spew fire and smoke from the machine guns located in the anterior and drop bombs from the rear? This may be going a bit overboard in being too specific. Whether the animals and machines of war are those of the first century or those of the twentieth century, they cause hideous suffering and much pain and death. The longer evil men are allowed to exercise their imagination in the production and utilization of deadly weapons, the more horrifying the results will be. When man has rejected the Prince of Peace, his selfish greed and cunning intellect combine to fashion a cemetery for a large fraction of the human race. Will the tragedy of war turn men to God? We shall soon see as the Revelation continues.

REV 9:20 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:

REV 9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

A recent newspaper column reported the case of a teenager who had been changed by the knowledge of a catastrophe which had befallen a group of other teens. Beer and wild partying had been followed by a wild motorcycle ride in which two girls had attempted to hold hands while riding adjacent motorcycles at a speed of seventy miles per hour. The motorcycles overturned and one of the young women was hurled nearly one hundred feet. The driver of the motorcycle was crippled for life. He would never walk again. One of the women hoped she might walk after a fashion, given sufficient healing time. The teen who was affected by the account had never met the victims of this accident. However, the parallel between what happened in the accident and experiences in his own life caused him to reflect upon the future and make a complete turnabout in his own actions.

It is just such change of action God had in mind in allowing the woes of the trumpets to be inflicted upon men. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all men should come to repentance. It will not be the fault of God that any are lost. But the account of the results of the sixth trumpet are saddening. The wicked who are not killed in the violence and war just grit their teeth and move straight forward in their sins. Like those of Romans, chapter one, they are absolutely without excuse.

How is it that values can become so terribly distorted? The scripture makes the answer plain. When men hold the importance of the creation to

be greater than the importance of the Creator, a host of troubles are born. They include all of the evils listed here such as murder, fornication, idolatry, sorcery, devil worship, and theft.

Will the reader please note with us the twenty-sixth chapter of the book of Leviticus for a moment. Here is a brief summary of the chapter.

If ye will keep my covenant and my statutes saith the Lord, I will give you rain upon your land. Ye shall eat bread until you are full. There will be peace in the land. Your enemies shall retreat before you. I will be among you. I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. BUT, if ye will not hearken to me and do my commandments I will bring terror upon you. You shall sow seed in vain, for your enemies will eat the harvest. I will punish you with seven times more plagues. I will send wild beasts among you which will destroy both your livestock and your families until your highways are desolate. And if this does not cause you to repent I will bring sword, pestilence and starvation upon you. You shall even come to eat the flesh of your own children.

I will cut down your high places, your images, and your idols. I will make your cities waste and your land barren. And if then you shall confess your iniquities and turn unto me, I will remember my covenant.

When one stands today on Mount Nebo, where Moses was allowed to see the land to which he had led the children of Israel, a great lesson can be

learned. This land was once described as flowing with milk and honey. Today much of it is without vegetation. It is bleak and barren rocks. It is difficult to understand how it could ever have been a “promised land.” But, God is not slack concerning his promises. He told the people of Israel that they had not remembered his covenant. Therefore he would withdraw his blessings and scatter them into captivity. God means what he says. How foolish it is to turn a deaf ear and a stiff neck toward the Lord. The sequence of events is certain. Turn away from God, and he will first warn until no excuse remains for failing to repent. Then cometh the end!!

Chapter 10

REV 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:

REV 10:2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth,

REV 10:3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

Jehovah is not only a God of perfect love, he is also a God of perfect justice. He provides every opportunity for man to see the error of his ways. But when it becomes absolutely obvious God's pearls are being cast to swine, he brings his long suffering to an end. That end will now be seen coming into focus. At the beginning of chapter eight the seventh seal was broken. When that seventh seal was broken, seven angels with seven warning trumpets were revealed. Six of those trumpets have already sounded. Each of the last three trumpets is connected with a woe, visited upon man himself. We are still concerned with the woe produced under the trumpet of the sixth angel.

The terrible effects of the army of two hundred million does not exhaust the woe of the sixth angel. There is more to come. John now sees another mighty angel come down from heaven. This angel has an extremely important announcement to make. Let us take note.

It is extremely tempting to identify this strong angel as Jesus Christ. He comes from heaven. His head is surrounded with a rainbow as God was in the earlier throne scene. His feet are as pillars of fire as those of Jesus were when he walked among the candlesticks. His face shines with glory as did that of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. And, he has in his hand a book as Jesus had after he had received it from the right hand of God.

But, there are problems with this being the Christ. Although one of the angels which appeared to Abraham of old was called Lord, and a figure like that of the son of man appeared in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrews, it is still in doubt that Jesus was ever called an angel. The book of Hebrews clearly states that Jesus Christ is superior to the angels. He is there placed in contrast with them instead of being classed with them. This passage in verse one of Revelation ten is said to be **another** mighty angel. It seems to be in the same class as the other strong angels mentioned in the Revelation. One is introduced in 5:2, and another in 18:21. Perhaps the reason for so many similarities to Christ is that this angel comes directly from the throne of God with his message.

There is another reason for doubting this angel is Jesus Christ. The book which this angel holds is different from that which was taken from the hand of God. That book was filled with writing on both the front and the back, as though a very large quantity of information was contained. It is, of course, true the New Testament is a small book compared

with the entire Bible. The book under consideration in this chapter ten, verse two, may contain only the description of a portion of God's wrath upon those who oppose him.

There is strong similarity between the book given to John here and that given to Ezekiel in Ezekiel, chapter two. We shall draw further comparison as we move on to the latter portions of this chapter.

The angel placed one of his feet upon the sea and the other upon the earth. These are the two major areas where men would need to hear his important proclamation. Many commentators limit the events of the book of Revelation to the territories of Palestine and Asia Minor. Such is a serious mistake. This is only one of the all inclusive statements found in the book. Over and over we are told the battleground is every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. The Revelation is not for the first century only, nor is it for people of some minor portion of the earth. It covers the entire Christian dispensation and every part of the creation.

When the lion as king of the jungle roars, the occupants of the jungle tremble. When God speaks, both the occupants of the sea and of the land quake before his voice. Even if the angel is not Christ or God, the message still reverberates throughout the entire creation with its importance.

REV 10:4 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.

As this mighty angel sounds forth his message, John hears seven thunders. The seven thunders present some type of information to John. The apostle is ready to follow his directions to write down all that he observes. But just as he is about to write what the seven thunders said, his directions are modified. The things which the seven thunders uttered are to be sealed up. At least for the present they are to remain hidden. They are known to John, but not to those of us who read his record.

There is much speculation as to the reason for the command not to reveal the message of the seven thunders. The real truth of the matter is that we may never know what they said, even after the judgment. Limitations like this sharpen our curiosity. We realize there is an “off limits” here. Will the reader allow us to wonder for just a moment? Everyone else seems to have done so. Since these thunders are seven in number and they occur under the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal, we are drawing to the conclusion of God's warnings. It is just possible that the events which were to take place here are too horrible for the righteous to contemplate. Deuteronomy 29:29 tells us there are some mysteries which belong to God, and Him alone. We know the results of man's insistence upon tasting of the mysteries associated with the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Let us then be satisfied. The

Lord knew, and knows, what information is digestible to man and what is not.

In God's own good time he will reveal to us those things which we need to know. He told Daniel in the long ago to seal up the books until the time of the end. Through Christ he has opened much of the mystery to us. If at some time in the future he decides to make known the message of the seven thunders, we shall be ready to receive it. In the meantime we shall be in the same position as the brothers of the rich man who was in torment. They were declared to have all the information God was ready to provide for them. If they did not listen to what God had revealed, there was no use to provide more. They would not make use of it either. It is the same with us.

REV 10:5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

REV 10:6 And sware 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:

REV 10:7 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.

As one who is about to begin witnessing in the courts of the land raises the right hand and promises

to tell the truth, this angel now raises his hand to the heavens to make his momentous announcement. **TIME HAS RUN OUT!** The rebellious have had ample opportunity to repent. God's plan of salvation has been presented to the world in the form of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The wicked have consistently rejected it. God is getting ready to sound the last warning trumpet. Judgment is just around the corner.

The oath which the angel takes here is the most serious possible. It is impossible to associate the telling of truth with anything greater than God. When God allowed this oath to be made upon himself, we may rest assured it is unchangeable. The announcement was that time for repentance has ended. We need not expect any further leniency. The "mystery of godliness" is an important theme running through the Bible. The prophets had foretold it. As we have mentioned before, Daniel was told to seal up the books. Then Jesus was told he was worthy to open the seals of the book in God's hand. Paul said that certain wisdom of God was to be made known to the principalities and powers through the church. He also said he spoke the wisdom of God in a mystery which had been hidden, but now was revealed. He spoke of the "mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19).

Was the mystery finished when the faith was once for all delivered to the saints? Or, is the mystery still unrolling until time for repentance has come to an end? It is certainly true that the Holy Spirit came to guide the apostles unto all truth. But, the

mystery of the gospel is still in the process of being preached to large portions of the globe. When God is satisfied that the time for the harvest has come; that a point of diminishing returns has arrived, the seventh trumpet will be blown. As in the days of Noah, the days of striving with man will be over. The time of purification must follow!

REV 10:8 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.

REV 10:9 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.

The voice which had just told John not to write the message of the seven thunders now commands him to take the little book from the hand of the angel and eat it. It is to be entrusted to John that he may make its contents known to the proper recipients. As John follows this command, he is to be given further details.

Eating a book would normally provide a severe case of indigestion. The symbolism used here makes the act completely understandable. John is to assimilate the contents of the book until he has made them a part of himself. None can adequately teach information which he does not know

thoroughly. Such complete mastery of the contents of the book must be achieved that John can truly say he has digested it.

The results of eating the book will be mixed. While he is in the process of consuming it, the taste will be like that of honey: sweet and pleasant. After having swallowed it, he would find himself with a bad case of sour stomach. The point is that it is often much more pleasant to feast upon the truth of God than to have to reveal to men the results of the refusal to hear and obey. Even the contemplation of telling men they are walking the road to hell is repulsive.

As was mentioned before, Ezekiel had a very similar experience which aids us in understanding the symbolism used here. Ezekiel was also told to eat a book, or a roll. As soon as he had eaten it, he was to go preach to the rebellious house of Israel. The roll Ezekiel was told to eat was written within and without with various woes, lamentations, and mourning which were to come upon the ungrateful people of Israel. When Ezekiel was eating that roll, he found it to be sweet as honey; but when it reached his bowels, he found it necessary to tell his people details of the captivity. It must have been a bitter experience to declare such burdens upon his own kindred. They thought any captivity would be of short duration. He had to tell them it would be extended and most difficult. John is to have a like experience. He must preach to a people who have deliberately spurned God. It will not be a pleasant task.

REV 10:10 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.

REV 10:11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

When John ate the book, events happened exactly as the angel had predicted. The eating was pleasant, but the aftereffects were just the reverse. If the reader has been a Christian for any period of time, he will recognize the same sequence of events in his own life. There are times when tasting of the heavenly gift is sublime. New insights into spiritual matters are exhilarating. The visions of heaven and eternal life in the presence of God lift one to the heights. There are other times when the responsibilities of rebuking and reproofing others press down so heavily upon one that the load seems nearly unbearable.

But to whom is John to transfer the contents of the little book?. The answer is general. The information must be presented to people of many nations, tongues, and kings. In view of what has gone before in the book of Revelation, little doubt is left as to John's audience. He is to teach men throughout all the world, until there is time no longer. It was to be shared with the citizens of Asia Minor in the first century. And it was to be shared with those of the twentieth century far across the ocean. The gospel story must reach to the ends of

the earth, and to the end of time. The message will be the same to each. There comes a time when those who have deliberately separated themselves from God and his word will be eternally cut off from light, from love, and from hope. It will be a time when there will no longer be turning from anguish, sorrow and darkness.

We find ourselves in sympathy with the apostle. Though our own role in spreading the Word of God may be less intense than was his, our hearts are still as heavy as lead, and our bellies are filled with bitterness at the thought of men who will be forever lost when they could have repented.

Chapter 11

REV 11:1 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.

REV 11:2 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.

This passage refers back to the last eight chapters of the book of Ezekiel. In that portion of his book Ezekiel observes one with a measuring reed who is making sure that all the details of the temple described there are according to God's specifications. As the ark of Noah was constructed according to the pattern given by the Lord, the temple where God is worshipped must also meet his most exacting directions.

Isaac Newton is considered to be one of the greatest geniuses of all time in the field of physical science. He is famous for his universal law of gravitation, for his three laws of motion, and for his work in the field of optics. Few persons are aware of the work Newton did in the field of religion. Newton wrote two impressive works of a spiritual nature. One is a chronology of the ancient kingdoms. In that work he tried to correlate historical dates, astronomical records, and Biblical accounts. A second work was a commentary on the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Newton became absorbed in the details of the ancient temple of Jehovah. He felt that in the last eight chapters of Ezekiel and in the other descriptions of Solomon's temple he might find hidden spiritual truths which would be even more important than the law of gravity and the laws of motion. Some observers decided Newton had become senile. Instead of senility he may well have developed to a higher level of spiritual perception than his critics were able to appreciate.

The reason for John's measuring the temple in the present study is the same as that for sealing the one hundred forty-four thousand. The temple is to be under the special protection of God. He will not allow it to be destroyed.

Some students see this reference to the temple as proof the temple was still standing when the book of Revelation was written. If John is told to measure it, it must be in existence. These are persons who believe the book was written before A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed. We must remember we are dealing with visions, not with physical reality. What is the temple John was to measure? The scriptures answer this question simply and clearly. In I Corinthians 3:16-17, in I Corinthians 6:16, and in Ephesians 2:21 the teachings of the Bible leave no doubt as to what the temple of God is in the Christian age. It is the church. John was not in Palestine, and the Revelation says nothing about him being translated there for the measurement. What John is to measure is the spiritual temple of God, the church of Jesus Christ. This fits with the

surrounding symbolism of the book. The physical temple in Jerusalem does not fit.

There are three aspects of the measurement. First, John is to measure the temple. Second, he is to measure the altar. Third, he is to measure the worshippers. Put another way, he is to measure the place of worship, the manner of worship, and the character of the people who worship. All must fit God's specifications. If they do not, they fall outside of his protective domain.

In the days of the ancient temple the court of the Gentiles lay outside the temple. Gentiles were not allowed to enter the temple. Entry into a forbidden area of the temple was punishable by death. Common priests were not to enter the most holy place. Gentiles could enter the court of the Gentiles. They were not to enter the temple proper. In the temple John is to measure there would be no Gentiles. Only the chosen people of God would be allowed. His people would be absolutely secure in their proper association with him. The Gentiles would be allowed to come into the presence of the temple. They would be permitted to even make things uncomfortable for the City of God. But they would never be allowed to eliminate God's true church. It will stand and overcome the very gates of hell (Matthew 16:18).

The Gentiles who shall tread upon the Holy City, and up to the borders of the temple, are those who are not Jews. Let us allow the scriptures themselves to explain. One principle of interpretation is that the best place to start is in the book where

the passage is found. We then look at the ninth verse of the second chapter of Revelation. There John tells us there were some who claimed to be Jews, but in fact they were of the synagogue of Satan. It is possible for one to be a fleshly descendant of Abraham and still not be a true Jew. Paul helps us out in the second chapter of Romans. He says,

“But he is a Jew which, is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

The heart of the above lesson is that those who are not God's people will be allowed to mix with the people of God for a symbolic period of forty-two months. For a lengthy time they will be allowed to make life difficult for true Christians. But, God has carefully measured them. He will not be mocked. He knows exactly who does and who does not belong in his temple. They may deceive themselves. They will not deceive him. His church is defined. The manner of worship is defined. And, the true worshippers, who worship in spirit and in truth, are defined. The spiritual Gentiles will march in exaltation for a while. Then their march will be halted.

A very important symbolic time period is introduced here. The number is “forty-two months.” This same number is mentioned in other places in various forms. At one time it is a “time, times, and half a time.” Again it is “twelve hundred sixty days.” In all three cases the number is the same. It is

precisely **three and one half years**. Seven is a complete number in Biblical symbolism. This three and one half is just half of seven. It is apparent that completeness is broken in each case where the three and one half is used. Something important is to follow. What will it be that follows? We shall have more to say as the term is used repeatedly.

REV 11:3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth.

REV 11:4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

Two witnesses are now introduced who will prophesy throughout the same time period during which the Gentiles tread upon the Holy City. God is not going to allow the Gentiles to run rampant over his people without obligating them to alter their ways through knowledge of the truth. For the entire time they oppress the Holy City they will be face to face with the preaching of the testimony of God.

We now consider the identity of the two witnesses. Some believe them to be the Old and New Testaments. About the only reason for this conclusion is that they are two in number, and they are sources of truth from Jehovah. A much stronger explanation is that they are the testimony of the Law and the Prophets as to the divinity of Jesus Christ. Moses would be the representative of the

law, and Elijah would be the representative of the prophets. A proper understanding of the two witnesses requires inclusion of verse six with verses three and four.

The two witnesses have the basic powers for which Moses and Elijah are remembered. Moses was able to change the waters of Egypt into blood when Pharaoh opposed the will of God. Elijah prayed that it might not rain, and it did not. Both Moses and Elijah, as representatives of the law and the prophets, pointed to the Messiah. When the rich man wished to have someone sent from the dead to warn his brothers who were still alive, he was told, *"They have Moses and the Prophets. If they will not believe them neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead"* (Luke 16). In Jesus' own teaching he referred to the prophets as being, *"Those which testify of me."* Paul, in Romans 10:4 said Jesus was *"the end of the law."* When the earliest sermons of the Christian age were preached by the apostles, the backbone of the sermon was often quotations from the law and the prophets. The testimony was that Jesus was the fulfilment of both.

Upon the Mount of Transfiguration Moses, Elijah, and Christ all appeared. God made it clear that Moses and Elijah dimmed out in the presence of his only begotten Son. The authority had been transferred from them to Jesus. Thus when the Gentiles tread upon the Holy City, they do violence to Christ. But in their defiance to the Messiah they tread upon the two witness of the Messiah: the law and the prophets. Where Daniel, Moses, Isaiah,

Ezekiel, and Joel all bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, these opposers walk all over the Holy City, the church, which is built upon that great confession.

It is not surprising they are garbed in sackcloth as they testify. Sackcloth is the apparel of mourners. The most valuable gift ever offered to man, salvation in the Holy City of God through Jesus, is being mocked and rejected. Jesus once said, “Blessed are they which mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The mourning of which the Lord spoke may have been of several different kinds. Most assuredly one of those kinds of mourning, which shall be comforted, is that which grieves over the rejection of the testimony of God’s Word.

They are called the two olive trees and the two candlesticks because they introduce the true light of Christ into the world. We are not talking of trees with green leaves, etc, here. The olive trees are like those of Zechariah 4:11-14, which held the olive oil, the fuel for the light of the candlesticks. It is not difficult to see how the teachings of Moses and the Prophets could be symbolized as both witnesses of Christ and at the same time as the olive trees and the candlesticks which hold up the light of the world. They stand before the God of the earth because they are supported by his commandment and his authority.

REV 11:5 And if any man hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man

hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

REV 11:6 These have the power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophesy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

It is at places like this one that those who would tie every event in the book of Revelation to some specific historical event in the first century are most embarrassed. Passages such as this must be twisted most awkwardly to make them apply to such times and places. On the other hand, they fit easily into the context if they are allowed their intended heavy symbolism.

Fire consumes and destroys. It has been God's method of literally punishing certain of his enemies. It has also been chosen as a means of symbolizing the consuming wrath of the Almighty. Sodom and Gomorrah were literally consumed with fire and brimstone. Jeremiah, however, was told his words would be like fire which would burn the people of Israel as wood (Jeremiah 5:14). If any man would hurt the two witnesses by fighting against their testimony that Jesus is the divine Son of God, that man is playing with fire. If a man is so bold as to teach others to reject the Christ, he is tightrope walking on the edge of the lake of fire.

The main point of the above is that the Word of God is indestructible. Though mockers and false teachers do their very best to maim and cripple it, the testimony of the Law and the Prophets will live

on. Moses and Elijah had power to punish the enemies of the Lord. All men will someday be judged by the Word of God. Attacking it only makes the attacker's life vain and empty in this present world, and hopeless for eternity.

REV 11:7 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.

REV 11:8 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.

The two witnesses will continue their testimony throughout the entire forty-two months the Gentiles are allowed to tread upon the Holy City. There are things which are to take place after the completion of the forty-two months. There will be much opposition to their efforts during the time period. But, there is no power in heaven or on earth which is capable of muting God's voice. The evidence will be presented.

After they have finished the forty two-months of testimony, a beast arises from the bottomless pit to make war upon them. The beast is allowed to temporarily halt their influence. From all outward appearances they are as dead as a doornail. They lie in the street for all to see. The beast has apparently succeeded in his efforts.

The information at this point is not sufficient to identify the beast. There is enough to make a good start. Let us notice a few of the facts. The beast comes out of the bottomless pit. This is the same source which opened to allow the destroying locusts, with their king who was called the DESTROYER, to bring their plagues upon the earth. Fire and brimstone were associated with that which came out of the bottomless pit. Fire and brimstone are the constituents of the final lake of fire into which Satan is to be cast. We also noted previously that God is called the Most High. That which issued from a bottomless pit would be in the opposite direction. The connection of this beast with Satan is unmistakable.

The foremost characteristic of a beast is violence and force. Aggressiveness and slaughter are the expected behavior. It is, therefore, safe to say the beast is some type of force which Satan is able to bring to bear upon the Law and the Prophets from his headquarters in the bottomless pit. This effort on Satan's part is so successful it leaves the influence of the two witness cold and lifeless.

Our understanding of the beast is aided to some degree when we find in verse eight the bodies of the witnesses are left lying in the streets of "that great city" where also our Lord was crucified. The first impression of many students is that the city where Jesus was crucified was Jerusalem. At one time God even said the prophets of Jerusalem had become to him as Sodom (Jeremiah 23:14). In Isaiah 1:10 God spoke to Jerusalem and Judah and called them

Sodom. There are those students who connect such passages with the spiritual bondage in which the Pharisees were entangled at the time of the Lord and with the crucifixion of Jesus just outside the gates of Jerusalem and conclude Jerusalem must be the “great city.”

There are strong evidences Jerusalem is not the city referred to in verse eight. It is best to use the same book in which one is studying to assist in proper understanding of Bible terms. Time after time in the book of Revelation Babylon is called “that great city.” In 14:8; 16:9; 17:5; 17:18, and repeatedly in the eighteenth chapter, Babylon is referred to as that “great city.” Homer Hailey, in his fine commentary, points out the reference may even go back to Isaiah, chapters 24-27 in which Isaiah sees two cities in conflict. There is the “strong city” of God in Mount Zion, or Jerusalem, from which God reigned. And there was a waste city, “a lofty city” which was to be brought down. The doomed city was spiritually dead and in its fall men became frightened and gave glory to God. This is also true of “the great city” mentioned in the passage in chapter eleven of Revelation.

But the reader will ask, “Was Jesus crucified in Babylon?” Our answer is, “Yes, he was.” Jesus was not crucified in Jerusalem. The Jews despised him to such a degree he was thought of as refuse and garbage, not worthy to die inside the walls of the city. He was therefore taken outside the city to be murdered. He was crucified in Babylon. It was not the literal Babylon far to the east of the land

of Palestine. It was that organization of men into a city of this world which attempts to provide for the progress and pleasure of mankind separate and apart from God. We are told Christians must live in the world, but they must not be of the world. Just so, Jesus found it necessary to live in the evil city of Satan, though he was never a part of it.

Babylon is “Sodom” because she revels in every kind of worldly pleasure, while completely ignoring every command to repent. Babylon is “Egypt” because she holds her citizens in the bondage of sin.

Note the strong connection between the beast from the bottomless pit in verse seven and the “great city” of verse eight. It is not a matter of coincidence that a similar connection occurs in chapter seventeen. In that chapter Babylon rides out as the great harlot. She rides out upon a scarlet colored beast. The beast supports and promotes the progress of the “great city.”

Is Rome intended here as either the beast or the city? The answer is “No” if the symbolism is limited to Rome. Surely the Christians of Asia Minor would have recognized pleasure seeking Rome as being beastlike in character. And, they would have recognized Egypt in the imprisonment and persecution of their fellow Christians. But, just as surely they would have been aware that Rome was but a single manifestation of the beast, and not the beast itself.

REV 11:9 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.

REV 11:10 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 dwell on the earth.

One strong indication we are not talking about literal Jerusalem here is in the fact that persons from all over the world are able to gaze upon the dead bodies of the two witnesses. At no time in the history of the world could the men of every tongue, kindred, nation, and people gaze upon literal dead bodies in Jerusalem. They could, however, do so symbolically in the city of Babylon. Babylon incorporates citizens from every race and tongue on earth. And they would rejoice at the apparent death of the Word of God.

The message of verse nine tells us the world rejoices, wherever it may be, when the witnesses of the authority of Christ are silenced. On some few occasions in history the ones who have been responsible for the death of an enemy have hung the bodies of the enemy up where they could decay in full view. This is done to destroy their influence completely. At the time of this writing there has been just such an occurrence. A number of Americans have been held hostage in Iran for many weeks. To demonstrate their hatred for Americans the people of Iran have found the bodies of certain Americans

and exhibited them for the taking of pictures. Thus, the Americans across the sea could read of their contempt.

A dignified burial is very important in eastern countries. Failure to bury the dead is a sign of complete disrespect. Remember the narration of the rich man and Lazarus. The Bible speaks of the burial of the rich man. It says nothing of the burial of the beggar. In our text above, the citizens of the “great city” will not even allow the bodies of the two witnesses to be given proper burial. Their contempt is total. Later in the book of Revelation the tables will be turned. In the nineteenth chapter the slaughter of the enemies of God is followed by a great supper for the scavenger birds.

For three and one half days the bodies lie exposed for all to see. Surely the murderers of the two witnesses are now saying to themselves, “How stupid were these two witnesses, who went about prattling about Jehovah and his Son. Now every one can see just how ignorant they were.” But, recall what we said about the forty-two months. This is a broken time. The other part is there. Something is yet to follow. History will continue. And now there is another interesting three and one half. The witnesses will not lie dead forever. The time of their lying dead will be short compared to the time of their testimony. One is three and one half years. The other is three and one half days.

The glee of those who dwell upon the earth is ecstatic. The phrase “*those that dwell on the earth*” is an explanation of the magnitude of their rejoicing.

We shall later see another related term “*kings of the earth.*” The kings of the earth and those that dwell upon the earth are not simply people and rulers who live on this terrestrial globe. They are the earthly minded who worship the creation rather than the Creator. The kings of the earth are those who wield great influence among those that dwell on the earth. Looking at it from their earthly and carnal viewpoint their happiness is logical. They do not understand the matters of the Spirit, nor can they understand as long as they fasten their minds on the sensual and temporal.

They can hardly contain themselves. They are so pleased with themselves they congratulate each other and send gifts to commemorate the occasion. Their excitement is difficult for spiritually minded individuals to comprehend. The worldly have been tormented by their guilty consciences while the witnesses preached of repentance and obedience to the will of God. The evil always resent the preaching of the gospel of Christ. They consider those who do that preaching to be meddlers and troublemakers. Even the Christ himself was the object of joy and mockery as he hung dying on the cross. When the spiritual light grows dim, the lovers of spiritual darkness make ready for a party.

REV 11:11 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 that saw them.

REV 11:12 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.

The joy of the murderers is shortlived. They have been subjected to the hated witnesses preaching for three and one half years. Now the witnesses lie lifeless for but three and one half days. Just when it seemed the testimony of the witnesses could be disregarded forever, the situation is reversed. The witnesses will now have a time of rejoicing, while their enemies will tremble in fear.

It would have been utterly impossible for such a recovery to have taken place without divine intervention. But, divine intervention is just what did happen. That which had been dead is now given new life. The new life comes about through the Spirit of life from God. We are reminded of Romans 8:10-11 where Paul says,

“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

We must make another connection between the above scene and that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. How happy those scribes, lawyers, and Pharisees must have been to see the life of Jesus slipping away on the tree of Calvary. How horrifying

it must have been to them to find the apostles and thousands of Spirit filled Christians bursting with new spiritual life after the resurrection and coming of the Kingdom with the power of the Holy Spirit! To all intents and purposes the testimony of the Law and the Prophets had been laid to rest, to cry out no longer of salvation through Christ, and of subjection to the will of Jehovah. Now the witnesses have been revived, and the situation for the mockers of God is nearly unbearable. The problem is much more serious than it was before. The two witnesses are now caught up in a cloud to heaven where they will be forever safe from all attack.

It is impossible to kill the witnesses of God. Tradition tells us nearly every one of the apostles died a martyr's death in defense of the gospel. Yet, today their influence lives on through the pages of the Bible, and in the lives of Christians. And, it lives in a manner more widespread than when they were limited in their walk to the dusty roads of Palestine. Through the teaching of the apostles, the testimony of the Law and the Prophets lives on into eternity. It will not die.

REV 11:13 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.

REV 11:14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

If we recall the identity of the dwellers on the earth, we will more easily understand the nature of the earthquake of verse thirteen. This earthquake is a shaking of the earthly, sensual, and carnal world. It has nothing to do with rock faults in the physical earth. The dwellers on the earth find themselves stunned for the moment at the quaking of their precious city of pleasure, Babylon. A small portion of the city is even penitent and dies to sin, becoming alive to Christ. The rest of the “great city” is forced to make some concession to the glory of God, even if they still refuse to alter their philosophy of life.

There are two instances in the Old Testament which throw some light on the giving of glory to God without true repentance. One of these is in the case of Pharaoh, who suffered through plague after plague. Over and over he was forced to recognize the power of God. Even so, not even the loss of his firstborn was sufficient to bring him to true worship. The second case is that of Nebuchadnezzar. It required some time for this man to come to a proper attitude. Several steps were experienced. Each time it appears he moved a little closer to true repentance, until he finally made what looks to be a complete and sincere confession of God's true glory. After he had been sent into the fields to eat grass like the beasts he states, *“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase”* (Daniel 4:37). It is our contention that the nine tenths of the great city who were not spiritually crucified in the old

man, and who gave glory to God, gave only a forced glory, and not a glory based on true penitence. Such unwilling glorification would be worse than worthless.

REV 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

REV 11:16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

REV 11:17 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.

This is an extremely critical point in our entire understanding of the book of Revelation. Here one must wrestle with the procedure and organization of the whole work. How many cycles are found in the book. Is it one continuous cycle? Are there two cycles with one in the first half and the other in the second half? Are there seven cycles? Or are there any cycles at all? We shall try to lay before the reader what we believe to be God's outline of the book.

It will be remembered the book opened with John declaring he had been given a command by Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit, to reveal in a book

those things which he had seen, was seeing, and would see through visions. The things he was to write were things which should come to pass shortly. John then saw the Christ walking in the midst of seven candlesticks, observing the strengths and weaknesses of the churches. They were told of their conditions and were given advice as to the proper procedure to prepare for the upcoming events.

Then a throne room scene was unfolded, with God upon his throne holding a book with seven seals and waiting for someone who had been proven worthy to open the book. The only one who proved worthy to open the book was Jesus who then appeared in the throne room as a Lamb, sacrificed for the sins of the world. Only he was worthy to open the book which contained the mystery of God; the scheme of redemption for mankind.

As Jesus began to open the seals of the book we first saw him riding out over the world with his gospel, ready to conquer it and reign over it. However, the world rejected it and thus brought upon itself a series of terrible consequences. During the suffering which ensued, God's own people were caught up in the violence and suffering. Yet, they were shown to be safe from the eternal viewpoint. They were marked and sealed. They stood upon Mount Zion unscathed. They were concerned about those who destroyed the world, and they awaited the coming vengeance of God upon the evil-doers.

With the opening of the sixth seal great calamities befell the earth. God's own were providentially protected from eternal destruction,

as long as they remained faithful. But, the spiritual war which surrounds them is fierce.

The first six seals are opened in quick succession. Chapters six and seven of Revelation cover the opening of all six of them. The reader then expects the events of the seventh seal to follow suit. It is not so! When the seventh seal is opened, there are seven trumpets in the hands of seven angels. Each of the trumpets is sounded to give warning of chastisement from God. Jehovah thus demonstrates his long-suffering and unwillingness that any should perish.

Though men reject the gospel of Christ, God warns them through ever increasing burdens or woes. The events of the first six trumpets of the seventh seal occupy chapters eight through eleven. This is a much larger volume of material than all of the other six seals.

As we reach the fifteenth verse of the eleventh chapter, we find six trumpets have sounded their warnings. The seventh is now ready to sound. The seventh woe is at hand. Do the last four verses of chapter eleven describe the entirety of the events of the last trumpet? The present writer thinks not. It is our contention that just as chapter six of Revelation was an overview of the entire book, the last four verses of chapter eleven are an overview of the second half of the book. That is why it includes two basic ideas. The first of the two ideas is the victory of God over the kingdoms of this world. The second is the judgment and punishment of the enemies of God.

Those two themes combined are the heart of Revelation, chapters twelve through twenty-two. When the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of God and when the enemies of God have been defeated and thrown into the lake of fire, there shall be time no longer, and the book of the seven seals will have been completely revealed. The seventh trumpet of the seventh seal lasts until the Christian dispensation is concluded.

If the reader objects that this is stretching the events of John's visions out through too long a period of time and that such could not be in harmony with the statement that John was to write those things which should come to pass shortly, we answer that these things did begin to happen shortly after John received the visions. They did not all have to occur shortly. But, they did have to start occurring shortly. We would also remind the reader that Jesus closed the book by saying, "*surely I come quickly.*" Since Jesus did not come during, or at the end of the first century, we may conclude that some of the events which were to come to pass shortly may well finish simultaneously with the second coming of the Christ.

There are some writers who believe the announcement that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of the Lord are a statement of the establishment of the infant church in the face of Roman and Jewish opposition. This entire plan of interpretation, which places such heavy emphasis upon the first century and Roman persecution, requires a short-changing of the scope of the book. It fits the entire context of the book much better to

see it as a victory over the world rather than a victory over Romanism and Judaism.

To see the statement about the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of the Lord as the establishment of the kingdom of God is to say the kingdoms of this world are now controlled by God and that their subjects are loyal to God. This is not true. Satan is the prince of this world. In his temptations of the Lord, he offered the kingdoms of this world to Christ because he had control of them. Satan dominates them through Babylon, his pleasure city, through his false prophet, and through his beastly use of greed and brute force. When he and all his allies have been thrown into the lake of fire, the kingdoms of this world will have been returned to their rightful ruler. Then God will reign supreme in a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In view of this coming triumph the twenty-four elders, who along with the saints have been awaiting the destruction of those who destroy the earth, fall down upon their faces in praise. They are represented as sitting on their seats, or thrones until this announcement is made. When they hear of the subjection of the kingdoms of this world to God they descend from their thrones and bow before the great **KING OF THE UNIVERSE**. Though the text does not record it, we must believe the saints who had been given the white robes and told to wait for a little season in chapter six must also have sent up a cry of rejoicing. And, so must all of the angels who rejoice at every sign of the advance of righteousness.

The praise of the twenty-four elders is an indication they had placed their confidence correctly. Paul once said, *“I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day”* (2 Timothy 1:12).

God has been reigning in one sense from the beginning of time. This was the difficult lesson that Nebuchadnezzar had to find out the hard way. But, for reasons known only to Him, He has permitted Satan to have a large degree of influence upon this earth. When events have run their course and God's reasons for allowing Satan and his followers the degree of power they have had no longer remain, God will extinguish that power through Christ and his angels. Then God will reign in the sense of verses fifteen through seventeen of the eleventh chapter of Revelation.

REV 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou 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.

REV 11:19 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.

The victory in Jesus will not come without great opposition. Those who love the evil of this world and the temporary pleasures which accompany it will fight viciously for it. Recall with us the second Psalm.

“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 his cords away from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.—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.”

The reference to the time of the dead that they should be judged can hardly be explained away as anything less than the final judgment. The reward which is said to be given to the prophets and the saints who fear God’s name is most surely the final reward. And the destruction of them that destroy the earth can be no less than the punishment which the saints had been crying out for since chapter six. It should be clear these are events which mark the sounding of the seventh woe of the seventh trumpet. But they will be detailed in the conflict between Christ and his church on one side and Satan with his allies on the other. Chapters twelve through twenty-two will present those details.

The opening of the temple in heaven is not the establishment of the church. We do speak of the opening of a new store when it is first prepared for customers to enter it. But, there is another sense in which something is opened. We open a door to see what lies behind it. This latter is the sense in which the temple in heaven is opened. God's temple in heaven did not begin operation at this time. It had existed before this. What did happen is that his temple was now opened so John could see what was happening inside. And, through John's vision, we see also.

The things which are seen in the temple stress the authority and power of Jehovah. The ark of the testimony was the vehicle through which God communicated to his people. It assured them of his presence. It is now shown to give assurance that God means business. The thunder, the lightning, the voices, the earthquake, and the hail, all tell us God is ready with all his weapons for the earthshaking conclusion of the **BATTLE OF THE AGES**. And, he will be the victor, through Jesus and the church!

Chapter 12

REV 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;

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

This marks a major dividing point in the entire book. The first half of the book discusses the introduction of the gospel to the world. The Word of God has ridden out, allowing mankind to react with it either positively or negatively. They could choose between God's side or Satan's side. The battle for the souls of men has been shown to rise in intensity until it reached a tremendous climax with the wrath of God poured out in judgment. At every new trumpet blast Satan's soldiers lashed out in fury as God sought to bring about repentance.

Another cycle is now to be introduced. This time the conflict will be between organized powers. The arena will see God bring his organization, the church, into the fray. Satan will counter with the beasts, the false prophet, and Babylon.

We live today in what the Bible describes as the "latter days." Over and over the prophets spoke of the time when the Messiah was to come. That period of time is the latter days. Examination of the scriptures will readily disclose the reason for this use of the term. The entire total of days extends from Eden to the judgment. Out of that total there

will be one “last day” when the final reckoning will take place. In chapter twelve through twenty-two of Revelation we will have an overview of the latter days as they approach the “last day.” This will be particularly true as men are given the choice between blessing with Christ and his church, or cursings with Satan and his cohorts.

A new vision now appears to John. A woman is seen clothed in the sun, moon, and stars. To be more accurate she is clothed with the sun. She is standing on the moon, and she wears a crown of twelve stars. The sun, moon, and stars are the lightgivers associated with the heavens. This woman radiates light from the heavenly places as opposed to the darkness which is found in the corrupt earth and the tumultuous heaving sea.

Your attention is called to two passages of scripture which throw light on the identity of the woman. One of these is Malachi 4:2;

“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall grow up as calves of the stall.”

This passage is a part of the concluding verses of the old covenant. God has pointed out through the prophet Malachi that his people have broken the old covenant repeatedly. He is ready to usher in a new day. A messenger will introduce a personality who will be the “Sun of Righteousness, or lightgiver of that coming spiritual day. The other passage is found in 2 Peter 1:19;

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart.”

Later when John introduced his gospel he spoke of Jesus Christ as the “True Light.”

Alexander Campbell once called the age in which we live the “Sunlight Age.” The terminology is scriptural as can be seen from the above information. If this is the sunlight age, what then corresponds to the Mosaic and Patriarchal dispensations? Is it not appropriate to refer to them as the dimly lighted patriarchal “starlight” age, and the slightly more illuminated Mosaic “moonlight” age? This view would aid in understanding the twelve stars. There were twelve patriarchs over the twelve tribes of Israel.

This commentary takes the position that the woman who appeared in heaven is “God’s woman” who has loved him through the ages, and who has brought forth his spiritual offspring. Isaiah 54:4 reads, *“For thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy redeemer, the Holy one of Israel.”* In Jeremiah 3:14 God cries out to Israel, *“Turn O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.”* God’s people of Old Testament times are then in this sense considered to be his wife. In the New Testament there are similar usages. We are all familiar with Paul’s language in Romans 7:4. There Christ is more than just an elder brother. He is a husband to the church and expects it to

bring forth fruit to the God of heaven. With Jesus as the bridegroom and the church as his bride, spiritual children are to be produced. Thus, God pictures for us in the beginning of Revelation twelve his true spiritual partner, who is pregnant with his only begotten Son.

This woman is not Mary, the mother of Jesus. Such a view is shortsighted. Mary was only one of a host of God's faithful who have cooperated with God in the enlargement of his family.

There are other instances in the Old Testament where ancient Israel is pictured as an expectant woman. Micah 5:2-3 and Isaiah 66:7 both show Israel as being in the pangs of childbirth as Jehovah awaits his manchild. Just as a woman experiences much discomfort during pregnancy and deliverance, God indicates his woman suffers great anxiety.

REV 12:3 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.

REV 12:4 And his tail drew a 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.

Satan has been attempting to devour the children of God since the beginning in the garden of Eden. Their eternal life in the family of God is more than Satan can tolerate. There is no doubt as

to who the red dragon is for verse nine specifically tells us he is the Devil and Satan. The writer once heard a terrible commotion in his front yard. Two mocking birds were carrying on loudly and were flying in dive bomber fashion attacking a bush in the yard. Closer investigation revealed a serpent in the bush where their nest was located. The serpent was swallowing one of the young birds alive. Our sympathy arose for the parent birds since they had no alternative but to watch the tragedy.

The newborn are usually helpless, and so it may have appeared to Satan that the newborn manchild would be easy prey. Perhaps he even rejoiced in what he thought to be the helplessness of God the Father in the protection of his child. Our minds go back to the efforts of Satan to destroy Jesus through Herod while Jesus was still a babe.

We interrupt our reflections on the woman and her child to concentrate on the characteristics of Satan as they are presented in verses three and four. First, Satan is a ferocious killer. The dragon has always been associated with smoke, fire and fear. This dragon is red in color, and red is connected with the shedding of blood. Secondly, this dragon has seven heads. Heads are the center of thought and planning. The dragon has ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. The ten horns show a great abundance of aggressiveness. Animals with horns use them to push and shove and to intimidate others into obedience. The seven crowns represent complete rulership. How can Satan be ruler if God is the true ruler of the universe? The answer is that he is the

ruler of this world. He is the prince of darkness. No personality stands as high in the organization of evil.

Verse four pictures him sweeping one third of the stars out of the heavens and casting them down to the earth. If the heavens are the center of righteousness and the earth is the center of wickedness and carnality, this verse is saying Satan had enough influence to cause one third of those who had once been true to God to turn away from righteous and illuminating conduct and to go out into the darkness of the world. Again, we must be cautious about thinking in exact numbers. One third was the fraction of the trees, men, etc. which were damaged during the warnings of earlier verses. But, clearly a large portion of God's lights had been extinguished by Satan. He must have most awesome power. If he had succeeded in darkening this vast number of God's light-giving children in the past, what was to prevent him from extinguishing the Sun of Righteousness, the Daystar who was to bring the true light into the world? To him it must have seemed feasible.

REV 12:5 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.

REV 12:6 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.

The man child is Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Psalms 2:8-9 states,

“Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thy 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.”

Also Revelation 19:13-15 presents the Word of God riding out with a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth to rule the nations with a rod of iron, and to smite the nations. Compare also Isaiah 11:1-4.

There is more of significance in the term “man-child.” God’s plan called for the Word of God, a portion of the Godhead, to be born in human flesh and live a life of sinless perfection while passing through the great tribulation common to all of us. He was tempted in all points as humans are, and in the process he was to be completely successful in the shackling of Satan. He was to prove the life of perfect love is infinitely superior to the life of greed and selfishness which Satan proposes. And, he was to establish his church through which the manifold wisdom of God would be made known to the principalities and powers and put them to an open shame.

It is little wonder Satan was waiting for the birth of the man child. To devour this very special Son of God would accomplish more than all of his efforts of the past combined. He had succeeded in corrupting the human race in the garden of Eden

and in bringing curses of destruction and death down through the corridors of time. Now a new threat to the devil's efforts is at hand. He must, therefore, thwart God's plan for the redemption of fallen man through the man child. Satan spares no effort to see that this is accomplished.

Verse five is an example of the tremendous brevity found in the Bible on a number of occasions. The verse covers the life of Christ. Jesus was born to become King of kings and to rule all nations. Satan could not prevent his coronation as King because not even physical death was a sufficient barrier. The Lord was resurrected and ascended to God's right hand to reign with him upon his throne. If Satan was to overcome the newly crowned King he would have to invade the heavenly places to do so.

A word on the "rod of iron" is in order. A rod of iron is one which does not stretch. Unlike a tape measure it will read the same each time. Just so the Word of God will not be altered to fit the whims of the governed. The laws of man are often twisted. The Word of God remains constant. When men live by the Word of God, the rod of iron may become a shepherd's staff, leading them and protecting them at every turn. It casts out fear and fosters confidence. To the contrary, if men rage and rebel against the commandments of God, they will be shattered as an unwanted bowl made out of clay. Satan himself is no exception to this principle. He is being measured with the rod of iron. His foolish actions can only result in his being shattered, broken and destroyed.

The wilderness had often been a haven for God's people. When Moses fled the Egyptian court, he traveled to the wilderness of Sinai. Later when he led the Israelites out of Egypt, they found protection in the wilderness. John the Baptist went into the wilderness to prepare himself for introducing the Christ. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan at the beginning of his ministry. In the wilderness God's woman will be separated from the sinful activities of Satan's kingdom of darkness which temporarily dominates the earth.

However, the woman would not remain in the wilderness forever. Again we find the broken period of time. Something is to follow this stay in the wilderness. There will be more about this later. Retracing our steps for a little, we remember the Gentiles were to tread upon the Holy City for this same time period. Patience upon the part of the people of God would see them through this ordeal during which Satan lashes out at Jehovah. The two witness testify during this time. Satan's forces take the limelight. It is a time when the devil seems to have achieved his goals. The bride, or woman of God, can hardly be seen. God's witnesses are killed. The wicked walk all over the City of God. The church has been driven from the mainstream of the kingdoms of this world.

But this set of conditions is temporary. The witnesses will come to life. The wicked will cease to tread upon the Holy City. The church will exit the wilderness and take its rightful place. The tables

will be turned! Malachi 4:3 describes the victory of the Man-child.

“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall grow up as calves in the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.”

REV 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.

REV 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

REV 12:9 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.

When the Man-child is caught up to the throne of God, Satan is unwilling to accept defeat. He proceeds to gather his forces in an attempt to bring Christ down from his heavenly position. We as humans are probably at a distinct disadvantage in our efforts to fully understand the magnitude of this war in heaven. As men see only the very tip of an iceberg, we likely see only the tip of this spiritual war. To some degree all battles are mental. Physical forces must be organized by minds before they are capable of overwhelming an opponent. But, in this

great war between Satan and God the principal contenders are superhuman. We can only perceive enough of what is taking place to leave us horrified at the thought of it.

The war in heaven is not a conflict which began with the birth of Christ. There is a longlasting rift between God and Satan. Evidence exists that Satan may have once been in a position of responsibility, as a high ranking angel, and that he decided to take more dominion than God had assigned to him. Instead of repenting when chastised, he seems to have persuaded lesser angels to follow him and seek glory which was not theirs to have.

If the reader will examine Isaiah 14:12 he will find God speaking to the king of Babylon, telling him of his fall from the heavens to earth. He is called Lucifer which is from the same root word that we obtain our words LUCID and LUCIFERIN. Both of these words have to do with perception and illumination. It is true that the Isaiah passage is directed to a human king, as shown by verse sixteen. But, there are overtones. The king in Isaiah appears to be typical of the king of Babylon who fights against God in Revelation.

A similar passage is found in Ezekiel 28:11-18. This time the one receiving the warning is a king of Tyre. Once again the description is too grandiose to apply to man alone. This king of Tyre was cast out of the mountain of God to the ground. The two kings of these passages may well embody the same attitudes Satan demonstrated in a pride filled break with Jehovah.

If this is correct, the war in heaven described in Revelation may be an outgrowth, or extension of conflict which originated before, or at the time of the fall of man in Eden. The present writer does not go along with the pre-Adamic entry of sin into the earth. The Bible states that, “*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*” (Romans 5:12). There was no human sin before Adam. However, this does not mean there could not have been sin in the heavenly places before Adam. Satan and his angels could have fallen from the grace of God long before the time of Adam.

The casting down of Satan from heaven in Revelation twelve is not proof that he had a rightful place there up until this time. Verse eight which says their place was no longer found in heaven would simply mean they had lost that place long ago, and their attempt to enter the heavenly places was useless. They had forfeited any claim to a place there by their rebellious conduct.

The account of the temptation of Jesus could reveal something of the pattern of thought which Satan employed in losing favor with God. It will be remembered that Satan tried to get the Christ to depend upon material bread rather than the Word of God which feeds men's souls. Jesus attacked this profane attitude by telling him men live by the Word. Then Satan attempted to persuade Christ to test God by placing himself in a position on the pinnacle of the temple where God would be required to assist him to prove that he was willing and able to do so. Such action would demonstrate a lack of confidence

in the power and character of God. The last of the three temptations show Satan offering Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if he would serve Satan. This would show doubt in God's governing power.

Looking at all three of the temptations, one notes a deadly pattern of thought. First, there is a lack of confidence in God's character. Second, there is a preference of the material over the spiritual. Third, there is a desire for dominion beyond that which has been assigned by God. Apparently Satan was convinced Jesus would follow the same path which he had taken away from the Creator. It was only after Christ met and defeated these silly arguments that he had the right to enter into his public ministry, and later his true kingdom.

Jesus well knew this battle was in the making. He told his followers just before he went to the cross, "*Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out*" (John 12:31). In Luke 10:18 Jesus said, "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*"

Can Satan fall from heaven more than once? Do all of these statements refer to the same fall? The beginning of the book of Job finds him assembled with the Sons of God. How does this harmonize with his having fallen before the time of Eden? The truth of the matter seems to be Satan does not give up easily. Although he has been rejected for his folly, he has gotten up over and over again to fight with Jehovah. He is like a punch-drunk fighter who will not recognize his opponent as his superior. Satan keeps on trying to reestablish his place in heaven.

Every attempt results in failure. His place is not found there anymore. Before all has been concluded, he will have been cast down not only from heaven to earth, but into the eternal lake of fire which has been reserved for he and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

Daniel once caught a vision of this horrible battle between Satan and God's angels. Daniel spoke of a fourth beast which will make war upon the saints and will persecute them for a time, times, and a half a time. This is the same broken time period as found in Revelation. But there will come a time after this broken time in which "*the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*" Daniel goes on to say his thoughts troubled him much!

We must sympathise with Daniel. The devastation caused by the war in heaven must be hideous. We are put into deep mourning by the tragedy of war among men. How much more serious must be the effects of this confrontation between spiritual superpowers. The battle must go to Jehovah, but what terrible sorrow is present in the meantime!

REV. 12:10 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.

Each time a loud voice is heard from heaven an announcement of great importance is to be made. We expect then to hear of some momentous event. And so it is! With the ascension of Christ to the throne of God and Satan's unsuccessful effort to prevent him from remaining there, the heavenly places ring with joy. The elders, the living creatures, the martyrs, the dead in Christ, and the faithful angels must join in rapturous jubilation to sing the praise of God.

We return at this moment to the time when Jesus appeared at the throne to take the sealed book from the hand of God. He was seen to have the appearance of a Lamb slain as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. As the church now prepares to stand against all the wiles of the Devil, we again see this moment of victory of the Saviour over sin and the grave.

Previous to the shedding of the blood of Christ upon the cross, God's plan for man's redemption was unfinished. All men were doomed to eternal separation from Jehovah because all men had sinned, and the wages of sin is death. Satan could properly accuse every man of conduct worthy of spiritual death. Since his accusations were correct, Satan could revel in the fact that God's family was in a position without hope. He had in truth devoured them. After Jesus shed his blood and rose from the grave, Satan's deception became fruitless. Though he had deceived man into sinning, there was a way to remove the guilt through the blood of the Lamb.

Now any man who had believed, repented and

united himself with the Christ through baptism, washing away his sins, could stand without guilt. There is now no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Jesus had spoiled the principalities and powers of darkness and made a shew of them openly. He had triumphed over them (Colossians 2:15).

With the coronation of Jesus, his kingdom was in operation. Various ingredients of the Kingdom of Christ had been in existence before his being caught up to the throne of God. Certain laws were declared. There were thousands ready to follow him. The spiritual territory had been laid out. But, it remained for him to take his place at the right hand of God in heaven for this moment of exultation in Revelation twelve to erupt. The breakthrough from the grave, with the possibility of countless others walking through the gates after the Lord, was the greatest news the world had received since the creation.

This was really the fatal blow to the Serpent. As a chicken whose head has been removed launches into a frenzy of activity, Satan does the same. His actions, however, are far more coordinated than those of the headless chicken. Nevertheless, his end is just as sure.

REV 12:11 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.

REV 12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the

inhabiters 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.

Had it not been for the blood of the Lamb, Satan would never have been overcome. Even today if men ignore the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, they are without hope. Satan may lay claim to them. To overcome by the word of their testimony was to confess Christ among men here on earth in order that Christ might confess them as his own before the angels of heaven. To love not one's life unto death is to be willing to die for Jesus if called upon to do so.

In verse twelve there are three arenas of life. They are the heavens, the earth, and the sea. The heavens will rejoice at the removal of Satan's accusations. Those who have been made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ are no longer due to receive the wages of death. They may die a physical death, but they will now be able to live with God forever. The earth is believed to represent the lust filled world of pleasure where Satan will now run amock. From this worldly playground the Devil will make every attempt to corrupt the family of God. Some will be so foolish as to listen and follow him. Those who decide to depend upon God's assistance through his Holy Spirit need never fear. They shall conquer. The sea of lost men may boil and fume as it tosses about, and Satan may reach out to pull down every soul which does not resist. But, those who will rest in God are safe in his outstretched hand.

A chicken knows nothing after its head has been removed. It thrashes about aimlessly. Satan's head has only been bruised at this point of time. He realizes he has little time to do his devouring, and so he goes about it in frenzied haste. He will call forth every ally and every power he is able to muster to prove he can damage God's children. It matters not if he is doomed and damned. In his stupidity he will take as many with him as possible.

Several somewhat mysterious passages all seem to come together with this short time Satan has left. The two witnesses have a broken week to testify. The Gentiles walk on the Holy City for a broken time. The fourth king of Daniel punishes the saints for this same broken seven. The martyrs are told to rest for a little season. When the "short time" of Satan is up and the Lord Jesus has come "quickly", the tribulation will be over.

REV 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child.

REV 12:14 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 a half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Since Satan was not able to make any inroads into heaven to unseat Jesus from his throne, he turns to persecute the church. Christ may not be

available, but his church is. The church is not a part of the world, but it can not leave the world and still exert an influence upon it.

The woman, who during the Christian dispensation is Christ's church, is given wings to escape from Satan. They are not just any wings; these are the wings of eagles. They are powerful enough to carry her away into the safety of the wilderness and away from severe danger. As mentioned before, that which moves out into the wilderness relinquishes the limelight to others. The church will not be as visible. But, Satan will have serious problems doing as much damage since she can evade him.

The stay in the wilderness is not unplanned. God knew it would occur. He has made a place ready for her specifically for the occasion. While she is in the wilderness, she will be nourished and strengthened for the activities which are to come afterward. Like the two witnesses she will be called into prominence in God's own time.

We must refer to a relationship between the ninth chapter of Daniel and the twelfth chapter of Revelation. Daniel had been praying for the forgiveness of his people who had offended God. They had been taken into Babylonian captivity. God responded by sending the angel Gabriel to aid him in understanding that which was to come. While Daniel had made his request for short time understanding, it seems that God gave him long term answers and revealed things on into the Messianic age. The real captivity was that of sin.

Spiritual Babylon was far more important than the earthly land beyond the Euphrates.

Gabriel informed Daniel there would be a period of seventy sevens elapse before the captivity was completely removed. The King James version says seventy weeks. However, the original language does not say seventy weeks. The translators assumed they could substitute weeks for sevens. From the going forth of the decree to release Israel from Babylon, there would be sixty-nine sevens until a prince would come who would confirm a covenant for one seven. In the midst of that seven there would be a cessation of the sacrifices and an overspreading of abomination, which would render something desolate. The conclusion of the seventy sevens would see several results. It is summed up in Daniel 9:24.

“Seventy sevens are determined upon thy people and upon the Holy City, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”

Take careful note that it was in the midst of a broken seven; that is a time, times, and a half a time, that the sacrifice would cease and the abomination of desolation would come. Again and again a broken time is associated with a prevalent period of evil.

Jesus was later to refer to this “abomination of desolation” spoken of by Daniel. The Lord was

speaking of the destruction of the temple, and the tribulation which would accompany that time of horror. One gospel speaks of the abomination of desolation. Another speaks of seeing the city of Jerusalem surrounded by hostile armies. Apparently the Roman armies which desolated Jerusalem in A.D. 70 were the abomination of desolation.

Jesus later referred to this “abomination of desolation” spoken of by Daniel. He was discussing the destruction of the temple and the end of the world. In one of the gospels it is spoken of as the abomination of desolation. In the parallel passage in another gospel it is referred to as the encompassing of the city of Jerusalem by armies. It seems that the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel is the desolation of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in A.D. 70. Of course, all of this ties in with the removal of temple sacrifices and the abolishing of the Jewish nation.

The writer has struggled long and hard with the relationship between the broken seven of Daniel and the broken times of the book of Revelation. There are obviously precious spiritual secrets to be found there. But, as Jacob wrestled all night with the angel to receive a blessing, we may have to do the same. We are still not through. How strongly parallel are the words of Gabriel that “everlasting righteousness is to be brought in” and the words of the loud voice from heaven that “Salvation is come.”

REV 12:15 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

REV 12:16 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.

The serpent Devil decides to pursue the woman in the wilderness by sending out a flood from his mouth to wash her away. We know the principle features of a flood as inundation and washing away. If the serpent has problems attacking the woman in her place in the wilderness, he believes he still can send out a flood and she will be caught up in it.

What is the flood? Let us remember the names of the serpent. He is both accuser and deceiver. It is reasonable to believe this flood is a flood of deception and lies since it proceeds from the mouth of the father of liars. If the world can be persuaded the church is an imposter and restricts the freedom of men, perhaps she can be swept away from her place in the wilderness. If men can be made to think the church is composed of intellectual infants without adequate powers of reason, they may spurn her and leave her to wither away. So, the devil sets out to do that which he does best. He will try to defeat her with an outpouring of subtilty and trickery.

His technique does not work. The earth opens her mouth and consumes the flood, preventing it from accomplishing his purposes. Evil is self defeating. It is the earth which swallows up the flood. If the earth represents an evil earthly and

carnal domain, what we see here is evil feeding upon itself. Although the church is hidden in the wilderness, it is still being fed and nourished by God. Its food is truth. It will remain healthy while the Devil's lies, and those who believe them consume each other. The lies and deception do not destroy the church. They only lead to the confusion of those who accept the lies.

REV 12:17 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.

Jesus is just one of the seed or offspring of the woman of God. Surely he is the key to the salvation of men. But, he has many brethren and sisters who can be attacked by the serpent. There is a parallel between the picture here and that of the temple and the Holy City. The temple was measured and protected from the Gentiles who represented those who were not God's people. At the same time they were allowed to tread upon the Holy City for forty-two months. In this case the church is safe from destruction. Yet the individuals who make up the church are faced with waging war with the Serpent. They will overcome!

God's remnant has always been precious to him. The majority of mankind has turned away from the Lord. Even among those he has specially blessed, corruption has claimed many. Because of this fact

God has moved forward in his plans by using the remnant who have never completely disappeared. This remnant is that group of people who distinguish themselves as true children of God and brethren of Christ by keeping God's will and proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of God and Saviour of the lost. The urgency of the situation is evident. How will the remnant seed of the woman hidden in the wilderness be able to meet the onslaught of Satan and his allies? The answer is **"I WILL BE WITH THEE!"**

Chapter 13

REV 13:1 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.

REV 13:2 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.

Satan nows calls his first ally to his side. It rises out of the sea to attack the remnant of the woman's seed. Before we go further we must hesitate to offer a word of caution. The breadth of meaning of the major symbols becomes crucial to our understanding of Revelation from this point in the book until the end. If the beast, Babylon and the false prophet, refer only to the Roman empire and the Catholic church, the final victory becomes primarily a victory for the early church over these forces. The establishment of the church over the persecution of Rome and the later conquest over the shackles of the Pope would satisfy the picture of victory as given in the seventeenth through the twentieth chapters.

If, however, these symbols carry a much broader meaning, which includes all the forces which hinder the church through all the ages, the victory over these forces would involve a complete elimination of all the principalities and powers which fight against

God from Eden to the judgment.

It is entirely possible that our position in time has colored our understanding of the symbols of Revelation. We are still close enough in time to the Protestant Reformation to place an undue emphasis upon the importance of the bondage of Catholicism. A victory over Catholicism and Paganism falls far short of the grandeur of the final victory presented in the book of the seven seals.

Consequently, the writer believes there is dual meaning in many of these symbols. There is a primary and narrower meaning, which would have been immediately understandable to the saints of the church of Asia Minor. But, vastly more important is the broad meaning which will be increasingly clear to the ages and the people who must continue to fight the red Dragon and his henchmen until the last enemy be conquered and the kingdom delivered to the Father. Perhaps some of the details such as the image of the beast do not have these broader meanings, but we are ready to defend the idea that the beast, the false prophet, Babylon, and the Dragon himself represent opponents more mighty and lasting than Judaism, Imperial Rome, and Catholicism, although these are undoubtedly included.

Now we return to John's vision of the beast which arises out of the sea. The sea was most forbidding to the non-seafaring nations of that day. It represented borders and boundaries beyond which lay the unknown and the dangerous. During storms its heaving waves carried destructive energy against which no man could defend himself. The scriptures

carry numerous references which assist us in ascertaining why the sea was used as a symbol. In chapter seventeen, verse one, Babylon is said to be sitting on many waters. Later in verse fifteen of that same chapter the waters are explained to be peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. Jeremiah 51:13 speaks of the people of Babylon as like many waters. Isaiah says, *“Ah, the uproar of many peoples, that roar like the roaring of the seas, and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters.”*

There is no doubt that this part of Revelation is related to the four beasts of the seventh chapter of Daniel. Daniel’s four beasts are divinely explained as being great empires which live by force. With all of this information before us, it seems evident that the sea which John saw was the rolling, turbulent and confused masses of the people of the nations who have no direction because they have not sought Jehovah.

John sees a beast rising up out of the sea. This must mean the beast is dependent for its existence upon the bewildered masses of the multitudes, kindreds, nations, and tongues. This beast is remarkably like the beast which was mentioned before in chapter eleven of Revelation. That beast made war upon the two witnesses during the forty-two months during which they testified. He overcame them and killed them. This beast will be allowed to make war upon the saints. He is allowed power for forty-two months and overcomes them temporarily. This beast from the sea also bears close resemblance

to the Dragon. He has seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns. The Dragon had the same. There is one difference. The Dragon's crowns were upon its heads. The sea beast's crowns are upon its horns. This difference may be of minor nature since being on the horns would also be upon the heads.

He has upon his heads the name of blasphemy. We often limit the use of the term blasphemy to the use of foul language which uses God's name in vain. This is certainly a valid use of the term. But it does not reveal the full import. When Jesus was accused of blasphemy, the Jews helped to explain the true nature of the word. They said Jesus was guilty of blasphemy because he had made himself equal with God. They were wrong because Jesus was speaking the truth. He was part of the Godhead. The most severe form of blasphemy is to belittle God himself. The improper use of his name does just that. For any other to attempt to lift himself up to or above the level of the Almighty is to commit blasphemy. This beast then will demand that he be paid the kind of worship which should only be offered to Jehovah.

The description of the beast informs us of one of the basic differences between his method of operation and that of God. God strives to bring men to his will through love and education. This beast will exhibit violence and force to bring men to his will. He will use the sword and the prison to accomplish his ends.

We must go to Daniel again to find out more about this sea beast. In the seventh chapter, Daniel

saw four beasts rather than one. The first of Daniel's beasts was like a lion, the second was like a bear, the third was like a leopard, and the fourth was more horrible. The latter had ten horns. There was one little horn which began to dominate the other horns. Daniel watched until the Ancient of Days brought the books and judged the beast. One like unto the Son of Man was then seen being given dominion over a kingdom which would last forever. The terrible things which occurred while the beasts were persecuting the people of God gave Daniel a very troubled soul.

In the second chapter of Daniel we are told Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. In this dream he saw an image. The image had four major parts. Its head was composed of gold. Its breast and arms were of silver. Its belly and thighs were of brass, and its feet were a mixture of iron and clay. Daniel interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar by telling him these four parts represented four kingdoms or empires. Babylon, over which Nebuchadnezzar reigned, was the head. There would come two other notable empires after Babylon. Then a fourth kingdom would arise which would be stronger than any of the previous three. This last kingdom would break in pieces and subdue much. In the days of these last kings God would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed. It would be like a stone cut out of a mountain, which would break in pieces all of these other kingdoms until they were blown away like chaff in the wind.

In the eighth chapter of Daniel another vision

is encountered. This time it is seen by Belshazzar. He saw a ram and a he-goat in conflict. The he-goat vanquished the ram, and then he became so great he even cast down some of the stars and host of heaven. The angel Gabriel was sent to tell Daniel the meaning of the vision. Daniel was informed the ram was the Medes and the Persians combined as Medo-Persia. The he-goat was Greece. The one great horn of the he-goat would be replaced by four lesser kingdoms. In the latter part of these four lesser kingdoms a very powerful king would arise who should destroy the mighty and holy people. However, when he stood up in opposition to the Prince of princes, he would be broken without any hands being used. Again Daniel tells us he was sick and much astonished by the vision.

Surely the reader can see the connection between the various visions of Daniel and the beast which arose out of the sea in the vision seen by John. Retracing our steps to the eleventh chapter of Revelation, verse fifteen, the pieces of the puzzle fit together beautifully. The time of the Babylonians is long past. The Medo-Persians and the Greeks have come and gone. At the time of the writing of Revelation the Roman empire seemed strong as iron. It had crushed all before it. The kingdom of God had just begun, at least in the form of the church of Jesus Christ. Will the principles of force and violence, as demonstrated by the Roman government, succeed in breaking in pieces the mustard seed of a kingdom which God had planted? Or will the kingdom of heaven, through principles of loving teaching and

example, crush the power of Rome and all other beastlike governmental powers until they are blown away like chaff in the wind? We eagerly await the outcome!

The sea beast is then a representative of governmental force, organized and used against God's church by the power of Satan. At the time of John it was present in the form of the Roman empire. Later it might appear as Nazi Germany or Communist Russia. It combines the ferociousness of the lion, the strength of the bear, and the stealth and cunning of the leopard. And, as God has given authority and all rule and power to Jesus to exercise through his church, the Devil will now provide the sea beast with all of the power and authority which he is capable of delegating.

There is a key question which should not be shunted away and swept under the rug now. Is civil government inherently opposed to the kingdom of God and ultimately to be swept away because of a beastlike nature? Or is it only the beastlike characteristics found in civil government which will be ground into pieces and eliminated before the stone which is cut out of the mountain? In what sense are the kingdoms of the this world to become of our Lord and of his Christ?

Does the ideal society of mankind need organizations other than the local congregations working together under the headship of Jesus Christ? We invite the student's serious attention to the matter. If civil government itself is an instrument devised by Satan, the Christian must separate

himself as completely as possible from it. He must not vote. He must not hold office. He must not serve in the military. He must not receive a salary from governmental sources. The preacher would even be prohibited from performing marriage ceremonies through the authority of the state. If it is only the beastlike characteristics of civil government which are to be turned into powder before the kingdom of God, then the Christian is obligated to enter into the political arena and exert his influence there to help make it less beastlike. One thing is absolutely certain. The attitudes of violence and force are to be vanquished. If this requires the complete disappearance of civil government such will be the case. If the violence and corruption can be separated from it, civil government may be retained.

REV 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded unto death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

REV 13:4 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.

This same beast seems to be spoken of in the seventeenth chapter. At that time the heads of beast are said to seven mountains on which Babylon sits. Seven kings are associated with these seven mountains. If this is the same beast, the head which is wounded unto death is a representative of

governmental force, as opposed to the kingdom of God. Many conservative commentators seek for the identity of the head which is wounded among the Roman emperors. By counting from the first emperor some come to Nero and conclude that the death of Nero marked the wounding of the sea beast. Notice that the head which was wounded did not die. The wound was close to being deadly, but the head which was wounded recovered. Nero did die. The sea beast is not a composite of the Roman emperors. It is rather a composite of the evil empires of the world, including Rome. These empires rise and fall in their glory. The head which was wounded would in that case be Rome as a whole rather than one of the emperors of Rome. Rome did relent for a time in its persecution of Christians but came back with renewed fury.

To say all the world wondered after the beast is to say the vast majority of mankind was awed by the power of civil government by force. Fear is struck into the hearts of men to such an extent they are convinced it is foolish to oppose it. The power displayed seems unsurmountable.

The result is worship of that they feel they can not defeat. In reality they are worshiping the Dragon. They think they are worshiping the beast; however the beast derives his power from the Dragon and, thus, they worship him. They give their time and energy to his service, not because of the truth of his way of life, but because he is capable of forcing them to do his will. Their question reveals the reason they worship him. “Who can resist him?”

REV 13:5 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.

REV 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

In different senses the mouth which was given to the sea beast was given him by both God and Satan. Jesus once told an enemy of Jehovah that he would have no power at all except God had allowed it. In this sense God gave the beast his great mouth and his power. However, in the more usual sense Satan had delegated some of his power to the beast. He used this power to boast and blaspheme. What a terrible misuse of the power of speech!

The awful outpouring from the beast continues for forty-two months. How many times we have encountered this same time period! Once again we look at it as a broken time. If seven years is a complete time, then three and one half years, or forty-two months is a partial time. The beast will not forever be allowed to utter his filthy and degrading words. Like the persecution of the Holy City, the preaching of the witnesses, and the retirement of God's woman into the wilderness, there will be an end to it. God is not forever mocked.

The blasphemy is leveled at three targets. First, it is directed against God. Satan hates everything for which God stands. He desires that God be brought

down at all costs. In this case he makes use of evil political forces represented by the sea beast to speak against Jehovah. Satan would like to have demonstrated to the Christians that Jehovah was no more than the pagan gods such as Zeus or Diana, who were no gods at all. But the tirade of cursing and blasphemy which is directed against Jehovah only brings disaster to the blasphemer. God's name is precious to him.

The fact is that God's name is so precious to him He responded in Old Testament times to a very interesting appeal by the prophets. They appealed to God that He not destroy his people completely because that would hurt His own name. God responded positively. We might add that God's jealousy concerning His name does not appear to be selfish. His name is important to the welfare of His children. Just as the degradation of the name of a human family would reflect upon each member of that family, the blaspheming of God's name is damaging to each of His children. He may be expected to retaliate.

The second target of the beast's blasphemy is God's tabernacle. The tabernacle of God is his protective presence among his own upon the earth. It is to be expected that Satan would wish the providential care of God for his people to be downgraded. If it were possible for him to separate the Father completely from his children, the damage Satan could do would be immeasurable. Thus, if the tabernacle through which the children approach God in worship could be brought to naught, the lifeline

of the Spirit would be broken. We speak here of God's pattern of worship for men. Governmental forces all too often consider the church and its worship to be foes fit only for annihilation or at least persecution.

For his third target, the sea beast aims his blasphemy at those that dwell in heaven. There is a possibility the blasphemy is directed toward those who have already passed from this earth to the heavenly places in the presence of God. This would include such as the martyrs who had died for the testimony of Christ. It would include the four living creatures around the throne of God, and it would include the twenty-four elders and the host of angels. It seems more likely here that the blasphemy is directed against the living children of God who have forsaken earthly lusts, and who have risen above the confused and rolling sea of a Godless society. Of course, one of the above does not eliminate the other. Satan obviously despises both groups.

REV 13:7 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.

REV 13:8 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.

REV 13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

God has always carefully guarded his children's power to make a choice. He could have created automatons who were able only to move at his command. These would not have been human beings. They would have provided no more satisfaction in their obedience than a human would derive from the love a plastic wind up doll could give. God desires our love because we have chosen to love him, not because we have no alternative. Because of these circumstances, Satan and his beasts obtain a degree of influence over all kindreds, tongues and nations. For the limited time which Satan has available, he is able to make inroads into the hearts and lives of men all over the globe.

Verse eight contrasts those who follow Satan and the sea beast with those who dwell in heaven. Those who dwell upon the earth and worship Satan and the beast are the very ones whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life in the heavenly city. There will be other passages in the remainder of the book that will speak of those who dwell on the earth and those who dwell in heaven. One of these two groups consists of the followers of God. The other is made up of the followers of Satan.

This is not the only reference to Jesus as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. God knew from the beginning that it would be necessary to provide an atonement sacrifice for the weak and erring men who were penitent of their sins. Thus, in the plan of Jehovah Jesus was already as good as slain before the world came into being. The writer does not pretend to provide advice to Jehovah as to

how it might have been done differently. Our wisdom is too fragile and fragmentary. God's is both infinite and magnificent.

The Lamb who was slain has a Book of Life. That book contains the names of those who abhor the evil and cleave to that which is good. They have despised the world and made claim for habitation in the heavenly city. As citizens their names are enrolled. One may worship either the beasts and Satan, or he may worship Christ and his Father in heaven. The affections may be placed on heavenly things and in the heavenly city, or they may be attached to the world with its principles of force and violence. Where is your name enrolled dear reader?

Over and over in the letters to the seven churches, in chapters two and three, the concluding remark was made, "Let him that hath an ear hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." It has been some time now since we saw that statement. The fact that it shows up again must mean we are faced with a statement, or statements, which have outstanding importance. What is it that we are to hear so carefully? Is it what has just been stated, or what is about to be presented. We think it is both. The words of verse ten are vitally connected to what has just been examined with respect to the conduct of the sea beast.

REV 13:10 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 faith of the saints.

The Dragon and the beast rule by force. Their followers accept that as the most desirable way of life. They do not understand anyone who does not agree with their philosophy of living. Life is sometimes made extremely difficult for Christians because the majority of society belong to Satan's camp of violence and greed. The Roman emperors made the mistake of believing Christians were weak and could be forced into denying their Lord. How little they knew of true strength!

The Christian knows the meaning of true freedom. He will go to prison for it. He will die physically for it. He looks beyond the forty-two months, into the realms of eternity itself. Those mentalities which live by the threat of taking life with the sword may seem successful for the broken time. Ultimately their promotion of force will bring a harvest. That harvest will include the ones who yield the sword. As a man soweth, that shall he also reap. If one lives by placing those who do not agree with him in prison, he will find that he is ultimately faced with uprisings in which he is powerless and finds himself imprisoned, sometimes in his own prison. One is reminded of Haman of the Old Testament who made a gallows on which to hang Mordecai, and who was hanged himself on that same gallows. Even if one who lives by the principles of Satan manages to live to a ripe old age, he will eventually be imprisoned in the lake of fire.

The patience and faith of the saints is sufficient to sustain them in the face of sword and captivity, the reason being that they are never truly made a

captive by bars of steel. More importantly, they are immune to the second death. Neither Rome nor any other persecuting power will ever conquer them. Through Christ Jesus they are more than conquerors.

REV 13:11 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.

REV 13:12 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.

This second beast will later on be referred to as the false prophet. If we compare chapter nineteen, verses nineteen through twenty-one, with the activities of this beast from the earth we find they are identical. We also see a lamblike appearance in this beast which would imitate the religious nature of the Lamb which was slain from the foundation of the world.

Though the earth beast or false prophet has lamblike horns, his voice is that of the Dragon. Deception and lies are hidden behind the docile appearance. He is called a beast which means he still lives by force. His deceptive appearance only makes him more formidable than the sea beast because it is more difficult to detect his true character.

Putting all this together we believe the earth beast is the representative of all false religion which

would force itself upon either the world or upon Christians. The size of the two little horns is not an indication of shortage of power. In fact he demonstrates all of the power of the sea beast. He simply covers it with a cloak of innocence.

Since this earth beast causes those of the earth, that is those whose names are not written in the book of life, to worship the sea beast, we see him as combining the powers of church and state to accomplish the will of the Dragon. False religion, when allied with the pressure which can be exerted by civil government, has caused multiplied millions to bow before Satan.

Consistent with our previous principles of interpretation of Revelation, we believe the Christians of the seven churches would have seen the earth beast as a combination of pagan religion and the brute force of the Roman empire. It is well known that Rome was willing to allow and even promote the worship of various gods. Christians were even called atheists because they would not worship all of the gods, including the emperor. But, we see more. Superimposed on this first century application is the much broader truth that all false religion can be an abomination to God and his children when it joins forces with the power of the state.

A healthy society requires true religion working through education and example and a government free from the serpent's wiles.

REV 13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from

heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

REV 13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he has the power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwelt on the earth that they shall make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

This earth beast, or false prophet, makes an attempt to show he can match God with his control of nature. As God's true prophets had power to prevent rain, to cause fire to come down out of heaven, and to change water into blood, this false prophet tries to duplicate such miracles.

There is much difference of opinion as to whether these miracles are real or just trickery. There are a number of scripture references which tell of false teachers who come with lying wonders. Christ said that false prophets and false Christs would arise showing signs and wonders which would, if possible, deceive even the elect (Matthew 24:24). Paul spoke of the coming of the man of sin who would arrive working the signs and lying wonders of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The magicians of Egypt matched the early miracles of Moses and Aaron. Some persons believe none of these wonders were truly superhuman. They contend that if they were really miraculous Satan would take on the powers of God. The author disagrees. Surely it is true that many deceptions have been visited on foolish men by those who were no more than clever

magicians or fakers. The Bible, however, does not say the miracles here were deceptions. The deception lies in the earth beast trying to show he is worthy of discipleship. In fact the Bible clearly says the earth beast had the power to do miracles. Satan does have superhuman powers. He is similar to an archangel in his transcendence of nature. Even in New Testament times, the Bible warns against sorcery, etc. If there was no possibility of these things which lie in the spiritual realm happening, there would be no reason for warning against them. Satan would, of course, lend any powers he had to the earth beast or the sea beast in persuading men to worship him.

REV 13:15 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.

REV 13:16 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:

REV 13:17 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.

The miracles which God performs are always in beautiful harmony with the truth he is teaching. As Creator and Sustainer of the universe he has used miracles to confirm his word and present his

character to mankind. The miracles plus the righteous nature of his teaching, as exhibited in the lives of Jesus Christ and the apostles, should lead man to worship him. In opposite manner, the lying signs, wonders, and miracles offered by Satan fit in with his character. Everything he does is aimed at destruction of the purposes of God. These falsehoods should be evident to the Christian. John said "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Now we come to consideration of one of the more difficult symbols in the entire book. We speak of the **IMAGE OF THE BEAST**. The false prophet is able by his miraculous powers to cause those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life to make an image to the sea beast. The image is given power of speech by which he may command that any who do not worship it shall be killed. What is this image of the beast? How does it speak? What kind of life does it possess?

An image is something which can be seen. In Hebrews 1:3 Jesus is said to be the express image of God's person. God is a Spirit. No man hath seen God at any time according to John 1:18. He goes on to say that the Only Begotten of the Father hath declared him. Jesus was then the visible image of the invisible Father. Although it is possible to make an image of a visible entity, it seems the idea being presented in Revelation 13:15 is that of a sea beast which is invisible being represented by an image which is visible. Christians find it easier to worship

God through Jesus who became flesh and dwelt among us. Those who worship the Dragon and the sea beast find it easier through the image of the beast.

One possibility as to the identity of the image of the beast is emperor worship. Christians of the first century were under tremendous pressure to place the emperor on an equality with God. They would be allowed to worship Jehovah as long as they would also make the seemingly simple confession, “Caesar is Lord.” This they could not do. It is known that in some cases statues of the emperors were set up with the expectation all would worship these images.

The problem with this interpretation of the image of the beast lies in its coming to life and speaking. It is possible, though hardly likely, the living and the speaking are literal. We are much more inclined to think the image of the beast is money or material possessions. We are all familiar with the expressions, “Money talks” or “Money is power.” Jesus once said of a coin which was given him, “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s.” Coins are minted by the government. They are the visible representative of the invisible economic power of the government. Such a meaning fits very well into the entire context of the following verses.

Those who did not become committed to the system espoused by the beast would find life nearly impossible for a somewhat different reason than that of the sword and the prison. This time there would be no need of imprisonment or brutality. If they

refused to worship the pagan gods and if they did not fit into the beastlike methods of the nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples around them, they would simply be allowed to die of starvation and isolation. If these stupid Christians refused to go along with the system, then they would simply let them die apart from the system. If the Christian can not buy or sell, he may well find life fleeting away for both himself and his loved ones, with very little he can do about it.

An apt illustration of the manner in which such pressure works is the case of a barber who operated his shop during the height of the economic depression of the nineteen thirties in the United States. The barber's union had decided to raise prices on haircuts and shaves. The barber of which we speak decided to speak against the raise in the union meeting. He felt that the people he served could not afford an increase in prices. Within a week the union saw to it that his barber shop was closed and his license was taken away for a minor infraction which was no more serious than it had been for months previous. Methods such as this are intended to show those who will not bow to material things that Satan, the beasts, and the visible creation which they use are more important than Christians may think.

Those who worship the beast come from all levels of society. The rich and the poor, the great and the small, the slave and his owner, are all susceptible to his fascinating and convincing power. If they will follow him, he will be more than glad to own them by placing his mark upon them. If they refuse they can starve.

Let us consider the mark, the number, and the name of the beast. We believe each of the three is closely related to the other two. Earlier God had promised to write his name upon those who overcame the world. He also spoke in Revelation 7:3 of placing his seal upon their foreheads. Certain numbers are also associated with God, such as three, twelve, and seven. God then has a name which we wear, a mark or seal to identify his own, and numbers which are peculiar to him. The beast has his number, mark, and name.

For the moment let us postpone any attempt to identify the name of the beast. It is important for us to realize what is meant by having the mark of the beast, having the name of the beast, or having the number of his name. The mark of the beast would leave no doubt as to the loyalty of the individual who was so marked. A sheep rancher brands his sheep. A cattleman brands his cattle. We know to whom they belong. Satan marks his own, and we know to whom they belong. The marks are not necessarily visible like a tattoo, any more than God's seal of the Holy Spirit is visible. But the follower of the beast is marked in two ways. He is marked in the forehead which is the seat of thought. His mental processes will be dedicated to the purposes of the beast. He is also marked in the right hand. There are some left-handed people; however, the right hand is the organ which normally puts our thoughts into action. Thus, the man who has the mark of the beast has given both thought and action to wicked service.

REV 13:18 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.

We recall the origin of the sea beast. He arose out of the chaotic heaving of a Godless society. In other words he comes out of the midst of mankind. His number is said to be the number of man. Notice we omitted the article "A." The word A is not there in the original Greek. It is not the number of "A" man. It is the number of man in general. Some students have gone to great lengths to use the system of gematria on this verse. In early Christian times Greek letters as well as Roman letters represented both the alphabet and a numerical value. As an example the Roman X also represented the number ten. By artful manipulation of this information all sorts of suggestions have been made as to what individual man this six hundred sixty-six could be. Among the persons suggested are Caesar Nero, Hitler, and even Henry Kissinger, one time secretary of state for the United States. We have yet to see one of these arguments which did not involve some suspicious maneuvering such as using only part of the letters, or translation from one language to another.

A much preferable way of determining the number of the beast is to see it as the number of man in general as opposed to any certain individual. It is the number of imperfect man as compared with the perfect God. The number 666 is made up of three sixes. Six falls short of seven which is perfect.

The three time repetition especially emphasizes the imperfection. The Bible speaks of the “man of God” and the “man of sin.” Paul said, “My gospel is not of man.” We hold that the number of man, 666, is man setting up his own organizations, independent of God. It is man exalting himself at the expense of Jehovah and in conformation to the desire of Satan and his beasts. It is working for the Prince of Darkness, and it is doomed to failure. It is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). There is a way that seemeth right, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Before we leave the thirteenth chapter, there is a need to make some comparison between the little horn of Daniel and the sea beast of Revelation. In the seventh chapter of Daniel four beasts are seen coming up out of the sea. The fourth of these beasts was different from the other three. It had ten horns and seems more horrible than the others. One of these ten horns grew rapidly and actually plucked up three more of the ten. It is this little horn which grew to a large size that concerns us in our comparison. There is reason to think this little horn may be identical with the sea beast of Revelation, or at least is very very closely related to it.

We note some of the common characteristics of the two.

1. The little horn of Daniel was a speaker of great things.

The sea beast of Revelation opened his mouth in blasphemy against God.

2. The little horn of Daniel made war against the saints of God, and he prevailed.

The sea beast of Revelation makes war against the saints and overcomes them.

3. Power was given to the little horn to continue for a time, times, and a half a time.

Power is given to the beast of Revelation to continue for forty-two months.

4. The beast with the little horn is given to burning flames in the judgment.

The beast of Revelation is consigned to the lake of fire.

5. After the beast with the little horn is judged the everlasting kingdom stands supreme.

After the beast of Revelation is judged the saints of God reign for one thousand years.

There are also some other passages which look to be related to the above. In 2 Thessalonians, chapter two, a “man of sin” is described who is called the son of perdition. He opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, so that he sits in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God. His coming is after the working of Satan with power and signs and lying wonders. He will be destroyed through the Spirit of the Lord’s mouth at his coming.

Paul says he is hindered at the time of the apostles writing, but he will be manifested when the hindrances are removed. John speaks of an anti-Christian spirit which would come, and he says it is already in the world at that time (1 John 4:1-4). He also tells us in 2 John 7 that one who denies Jesus has come in the flesh is antichrist.

May we suggest the little horn, the beast from the sea, the antichrist, and the man of sin are all forms of the same servant of the Dragon. Daniel, Christ, Paul, and John have all labored to warn us of a coming time which will see a great turning away from God, as mankind in general is awed by the power of Satan. This manifestation of the man of sin and of the antichristian spirit will result in the treading down of God's Holy City, the church, for a broken period of time. God's two witnesses of Christ, the law and the prophets, will have so little influence they will be considered dead. The church, God's woman, will have been driven so far out of the mainstream of human activities men will believe the lies and deception of Satan, and many will join those who live by violence and force.

The picture is not pretty. It reminds us of the scene at the crucifixion. The apostles have been scattered. The crowd mocks at the dying Lord, and as his spirit departs, darkness settles over the land. It would seem Satan has proven that he can defy God and make him like it.

Not so! Jesus was raised from the dead. The two witnesses were caught up before those who mocked them and were taken into heaven. The gospel

is being preached. The saints do, and will, reign. The light will overcome the darkness. That is what the rest of the book of Revelation depicts. The conquest will now begin. The low point has been reached and everything is uphill from this point on. Satan will make one last dying gasp in the “Battle of Armageddon.” Then will follow the “VICTORY IN JESUS.”

Chapter 14

REV 14:1 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 on their foreheads.

REV 14:2 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.

Over and over again the Lord allows us to see the complete security of those who are faithful to him. The storm of his wrath thunders ever more loudly to warn the wicked, but his own are under his divine care.

The Lamb is Jesus Christ. The one hundred forty-four thousand are those on earth who have been marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit. Their foreheads are marked because that is the seat of thought and commitment to the Lamb. Almost without fail when we see the one hundred forty-four thousand, there is some calamity to follow, falling on the wicked but not on the followers of the Lamb. The announcement this time is the most severe yet.

Mount Zion was the location of the city of Jerusalem in the land of earthly Palestine. In the spiritual kingdom it takes on a different meaning; yet it represents a position close to God and his righteousness. Psalm 24:3-4 says, *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place. He that hath clean hands and a pure*

heart; who hath not lifted up his soul into vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” Hebrews 12:22-24 is speaking to Christians about spiritual Mount Zion when it declares,

“But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

To stand on Mount Zion with Jesus and with the mark of God upon one's forehead is to stand in perfect assurance that if the reaper of the wicked thrusts in his sickle God's own shall be unscathed. A voice is heard from heaven. It commands attention much as would the mighty roaring of Niagra Falls. It carries the power and volume of a clap of thunder. The voice of harpers is heard as they play their harps. It is mighty because there are so many harpers.

The presence of the harps is not approval for the use of musical instruments in earthly worship. This is a heavenly scene, and it is highly symbolic. The harps tell of the melodious quality of the heavenly music which John hears.

REV 14:3 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 forty-four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

REV 14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God, and to the Lamb.

REV 14:5 And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God.

This is not the first mention of the “new song.” In 5:9 just after Jesus had taken the book of the mystery of God from God’s hand, all heaven broke forth into a new song of redemption. The song can be sung by anyone who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ. It can not be sung by those who have never been released from the bondage of sin. We can see the possibility of heavenly beings existing who have never sinned. Perhaps they could rejoice with the redeemed though not redeemed themselves. However, the principal singers of this song are of two groups. First, there is that faithful multitude who have already passed by death from time to eternity. Second, there are the hundred forty-four thousand who still live on earth in the purity of the Lamb.

The joy of this song of deliverance is much like the joy expressed by Miriam and the Israelites upon

their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt after crossing the Red Sea.

The one hundred forty-four thousand are said to have refrained from defiling themselves with women. This does not mean the entire redeemed group are men. The entire picture is a strange one. If the Lamb is the bridegroom, Jesus Christ, it would seem the bride would be the one who would become unfaithful and would be defiling herself with men. One explanation which suggests itself is that the one who seduces mankind is Babylon. She is cast in the role of a whore. Thus, those who fell to her temptations would be considered as men who rejected the Lamb of God to follow the Scarlet Harlot.

In any case the fornication and unfaithfulness found in the passage is spiritual in nature. These are virgins, but they are men, probably indicative of mankind in general. The unfaithfulness of God's people has long been considered as fornication. If we look at Jeremiah 3:1-10, Israel is said to be a dirty little girl whom God cleaned up, raised, clothed and supported, only to watch her go whoring after other gods. The ones in this one hundred forty-four thousand have given themselves to the Lamb. They have not been consumed with the lusts and pleasures of this world. They have followed the Lamb even when such following was not easy. To follow the Lamb is to give one's life completely, even if it means wearing a crown of thorns, walking the street amidst a mocking mob, or even shedding one's blood as he did his.

How can one dare to place himself in the position of those James addresses in James 4:4.

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

The firstfruit sacrifice was the best of the crop and the flock. To be eligible as a firstfruit sacrifice we must be easily distinguishable from inferior and blemished fruit which is fit only to be cast away. The word “firstfruit” may be misleading unless we are aware of its use in two different contexts. Sometimes the word has to do with the first fruit which ripens. Christ is the firstfruit of those risen from the grave because he is the first to come forth from the grave never to die again. This is not the way the word firstfruit is used in the passage before us. Here it is talking about first, or superior, quality. We sometimes talk of “seconds” when we buy clothing at a discount house. It is in this sense that the word “first” is used here. God did not expect blemished sacrifices to be offered upon his altar. Even if the sacrifice was firstfruit in sense of time, it was not necessarily firstfruit in the sense of quality.

And so, to say the one hundred forty-four thousand were firstfruit to the Lord and to the Lamb is not to speak of other fruit coming later. It is to declare that these were without blemish and suitable for God’s approval. Just as Jesus was without sin and no guile was found in his mouth, so these thousands had united themselves with Jesus and had similar characteristics. Of course, they were not clean by their own efforts. They were unblemished

because they had been purified by the blood of the Lamb.

REV 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of the heavens, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

REV 14:7 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 sea, and the fountains of waters.

The angel flies in the midst of heaven because God wishes all men to have opportunity to hear the message it carries. The final reaping of the earth is near. If any will heed the warning and avail themselves of the salvation which comes through the Lamb, let them, come now. If any have ears to hear, let him hear!

The angel cries-out to those who dwell on the earth. The carnal of every nation, kindred, tongue and people must listen. Again we remind the reader this reaches farther than the people of Asia Minor and the Roman Empire. It is a serious mistake to think the coming bowls of wrath are to be poured out only upon the nations adjoining the Mediterranean Sea. Before God finally reaps his harvest, he has promised the entire earth will be sown with the seed of his Word.

But, the proper preaching of the everlasting

gospel requires warning about destruction. Men are to glorify God because it is He who created all things. He has them within his power at all times, even if Satan has been allowed a degree of freedom. God can at any time call the reapers into action. Fortunately men have an advantage over wheat and grapes. Wheat and grapes cannot shed their corrupt nature and change from blemished condition to an unblemished state. Men can! This type change is just what the angel is calling for. The old heaven and earth are to be replaced by a new one. All who wish to avoid the fate of the old corrupt creation must offer themselves as new men in Christ and become fit for the new heaven and the new earth.

REV 14:8 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.

REV 14:9 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.

Three angels appear in quick succession. Each of them has a momentous announcement. The first comes preaching the gospel. The second warns that Babylon is fallen. The third tells of the fate of those who worship the beast and his image. From verse eight through verse twenty of this chapter we will be given a brief overview of this harvest of the

wicked. Later chapters will elaborate, as God's enemies are conquered one by one.

Babylon is Satan's city. The disobedient people of God had gone into Babylon centuries earlier. They had come out of Babylon some seventy years later after much chastisement. Surely when John wrote and when the people of the seven churches read of this city, they associated it with persecution, luxury, bondage, and Godlessness. It stood for everything God's city of Jerusalem was supposed to oppose. No newspaper headline ever carried a more welcome message than the one this angel announced to those who would listen.

The message of Babylon's fall is given in the past tense. The prophets often used this technique. The event of which they speak is so sure to happen it can be spoken of as already having happened. Babylon is doomed! That great city which had crucified the Lord, and had seen the two witnesses left for dead in the streets, would now receive her just dues.

Babylon would be made to drink a bitter cup. She had persuaded men of every nation to become drunken with her pleasures. Now God will pour her some wine, along with those who have reveled with her. It will be bowls of the wine of his wrath. Her staggering will now be under the burden of his wrath rather than being the results of her drunken stupor.

Along with the fall of Babylon is to come the punishment of those who have received the mark of the beast or worshipped his image. These are those who have accepted physical or economic force as a

way of life. By associating themselves with the beast and its image these men have become the enemies of Jehovah. Their commitment to the cause of the Dragon and the beast has destined them to the type of punishment reserved for these enemies of God.

REV 14:10 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.

REV 14:11 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.

We avoid confusion when we realize there are two wines discussed in this chapter. One of these is the wine of drunken spiritual fornication which Babylon furnishes the nations who wish to intoxicate themselves with pleasure. The other is the wine God pours out of the cup of his wrath upon the disobedient. The connection is obvious. If men wish to become drunken with wine, God will see that they receive some. Those who worship the beast and his image will be made to drink from the same cup of wrath which Babylon has poured out on her. The wine of God's wrath will not be diluted with mercy. Mercy is offered through Jesus Christ. These had turned down the precious blood of Jesus. They could

have eaten his body and drunk from his blood in the Lord's supper. When they rejected such a cup, they placed themselves in line for another. The undiluted cup of the wrath of God awaits them.

Some believe this judgment is not the final judgment. They point out that the final judgment results in the lake of fire. Note that although the latter part of the chapter talks of treading the winepress, verse ten does speak of fire and brimstone. The duration of this torment is for ever and ever. It does not stop when Roman persecution stops. This is simply one more way of telling the story of Christ's final victory over Satan and his allies. The reader should compare the words of Jesus concerning the duration of the torments of hell in Matthew 25:46. There will be no rest from their torment either day or night. In Mark 9:43-50 Jesus talks of being cast into hell where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. The similarities are too great for this punishment described in Revelation 14:10-11 not to be the punishment after the final judgment.

There is a disquieting note in verse ten. The Lamb and the holy angels will be aware of the punishment. It will take place before them. Could heaven really be a place of unmixed joy when there is an awareness of such torment? The answer must be "yes." Heaven can be a place of happiness, even in the knowledge that sinners are being tormented. This is clearly a realm beyond our present one. We can not judge the new heaven and the new earth by the circumstances of the present one. We do note that it is the holy angels and the Lamb before which

the torment takes place, not the glorified saints. We will not permit ourselves to be anxious over problems beyond our abilities.

This is the beginning of the end. The fall of Babylon points toward a holocaust of events which all culminate in the casting of the wicked into an everlasting torment separated from God.

REV 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

REV 14:13 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 labors; and their works do follow them.

The end result of the patience of the saints is a most blessed condition quite in contrast to the fate of the wicked. The keeping of the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus, does require much patience and hope. Often the troubles and trials of today tend to cloud our view of the glorious hope awaiting. But the patience and perseverance will be rewarded. While the wicked are suffering torment with no rest day or night, for ever and ever, the saints who have previously been tormented in this life will be resting for ever and ever with no torment.

Those who die in the Lord from henceforth are those who entered Jesus Christ by putting him on

in baptism (Galatians 3:27). Romans six says we are buried with him in baptism. Being then dead to sin we are alive in Christ. The first chapter of Ephesians uses the words “in Christ” repeatedly. There are three steps to the blessedness promised in verse thirteen. One must be baptised into Christ. One must live faithfully unto death as a member of his body, which is the church. And one must die in the Lord.

There is something in verse twelve which we must look at very carefully. We are told those who die will have rest from their labors. Yet in a previous scene the saints are said to be serving God both day and night. Is this compatible? Can one rest from their labors and still serve God both day and night? Yes, one can! There was work to do in the garden of Eden. But there is no indication it was drudgery until after the fall into sin. Sometimes men on earth are so fortunate as to have employment which they enjoy. Because it is enjoyable it becomes much less tiring. When the faithful serve God day and night around his throne, they will be resting from the labors of this old sin cursed earth. And there will be no need of rest from the service performed by the new glorified bodies since they will not grow tired.

There remains one little trailing phrase in verse thirteen which we have not touched in our discussion as yet. It is “and their works do follow them.” In what way do the works of the saints follow them? One way is that their works are recorded in God's book of remembrance. When the books are opened as the sheep are separated from the goats at the end

of time, the works which are written there will be read out of the record. It was Solomon who said, “*God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*” In the case of the saints whose sins have been blotted out of God’s books, the good works will still be there. Thus, their works will follow them. There is another, and no less important, way in which the works of the saints may follow them. Every Christian is sowing spiritual seed which will bring forth results after that person’s death. Such influences will continue even until the end of time. A cup of cold water given in the name of the Lord to a person in need may grow into a harvest of thousands of souls. One convert made in an entire lifetime may become a gospel preacher who spreads the word to millions.

A scripture which bears on the point at hand is 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned he shall suffer loss.”

REV 14:14 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.

REV 14:15 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.

REV 14:16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

A new vision enters John's field of view. This time one like unto the Son of man sits upon a cloud. The one like unto the Son of man is Jesus. This is obvious from 1:13 where Jesus is described in this same manner. There can be no doubt from the things said about the one appearing at that time. Jesus was intended there. And Jesus is intended here.

White is the color of purity in the book of Revelation. The white cloud provides a throne for the Lord as his head is adorned with a golden crown indicating his victory over the world and his position as King of kings. One would expect to see a scepter in the hand of a king. In place of a scepter Jesus carries a sickle used in reaping a harvest.

Clouds are associated with the divine presence from very early times. The Israelites were guided through the wilderness wanderings by a cloud and a pillar of fire. Moses went up to a cloud when he received the ten commandments. When the temple was completed, a cloud from the presence of God

filled it, showing his approval of the structure. Jesus was caught up in a cloud as he ascended to God as recorded in Acts 1:9-11. In that same passage the onlookers were informed that he would return in a like manner. Matthew 24:30 says Jesus shall be seen at the end time coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Earlier in the Revelation John apparently spoke of this same scene when he said,

“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.”

The sickle is reminiscent of the harvest at the ripening of the kingdom of heaven. Mark records Jesus parable of the harvest in chapter four. He recounts Jesus saying, *“When the fruit is brought forth immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.”* The parable of the tares relates to the same event as the disciples are told the harvest must remain until God decides the crop has reached the proper condition. Then the tares will be separated from the wheat to be burned, and the wheat will be gathered into the Lord’s barn (Matthew 13:24-30).

The entire picture emphasises the judgment and harvest. Jesus has come to claim his own. Not one shall be lost if he has the character of the wheat. All shall be lost who have the character of chaff. Surely there is a relationship between the words of Joel 3:13 and the words of this passage.

“Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get ye down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.”

In Joel the use of the sickle separates the wicked from the faithful. Jerusalem is made Holy as God dwells in Zion. The shadow in Joel becomes the reality of Revelation.

The Bible presents Jehovah as being the husbandman of two great crops. One is a field of wheat. The other is a vineyard. Both are used in combination in the latter part of Revelation chapter fourteen. The disciples once wanted Jesus to get rid of the tares long before God was ready. The martyrs were impatient for God to eliminate those who destroyed the earth. But, God is the one who knows precisely when the crop is in the proper condition for harvest. A good farmer knows that the yield taken from an immature harvest will be less than maximum. He also knows that the wheat may lodge down and be lost if the harvest is delayed too long. God's harvest will be reaped when the divine husbandman has decided it is time. Then, and only then, will the command be sent forth to swing the sickle.

The command here is given by the Lord himself. The angel who instructs the Son of man to thrust in the sickle is not making the decisions himself. He has come from the temple of God in heaven. Some may wonder at the angel giving Christ directions,

but the angel is only transferring the command of the Father to the Son.

How simple is the statement “*And the earth was reaped!*” It is one of those power packed sentences in the scriptures. Another is that in Genesis 1:1 “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” Still a third is “*Jesus wept.*” In five simple words the taking of God’s gigantic harvest is summarized. Considering the multitude of details involved in the harvest of a field of wheat by man, and considering the vast nature of God’s field, we stand astonished.

REV 14:17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

REV 14:18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had the 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.

The first part of this double description of the harvest deals with Christ’s reaping of his own. Now we look at the second half. This is the harvest of the wicked. In the first reaping an angel directed the Son of man to thrust in his sharp sickle. This time one angel directs another angel to thrust in his sickle. The command in both cases is from God. The angel who carries the command has come out of the temple

and the direct presence of God. One of the angels in the harvest of the wicked is said to have power over fire. We recall how an angel had earlier cast fire down to the earth as the prayers of the saints ascended to the throne of God. This angel with power over fire may be the same one.

Little more comment is necessary concerning the ripened condition of the grapes. There are indications in other scriptures that God allows wickedness to run its course, with every opportunity for the evil to turn from their ways. When it is clear they have rejected God and will continue to do so, God reacts with decisiveness. Those who make up the grapes here have been warned, and they have been chastised until it is perfectly evident they have no intention of repenting. Thus, they are fit for nothing less than destruction.

There is nothing said here about any good grapes. All of the grapes mentioned here seem to be parallel to the chaff which is to be burned when the wheat is kept. This may be because the good part has already been discussed as Christ thrusts in his sickle, as described in verse sixteen. Since the part worth keeping has already been collected, these grapes will all be treated as rejected.

REV 14:19 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.

REV 14:20 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.

The winepress has been used by the Lord in Old Testament times to tell of his displeasure with the disobedient. Jeremiah spoke in Lamentations 1:15 of the use of the winepress to tread upon the unfaithful daughter of Judah. *“The Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a winepress.”* In Isaiah 63:3-4,6 we find,

“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them, in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.”

Later, in chapter nineteen, as the King of kings rides out to conquer his enemies, he is said to tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of the Almighty God. Those of us who have not watched the treading of the grapes in a winepress probably do not appreciate the picture as well as those who have witnessed it in person. We can imagine the change must be drastic between the full round condition of the grapes entering the winepress and the mangled, bruised condition of the grapes after

they have been walked on and crushed. The red juice must bear close resemblance to blood. In fact the picture reminds us of an occasional automobile accident which we have seen in which a mangled body is stretched on the pavement drenched in its own blood. The scene is gruesome. God intends for it to be so. Perhaps some will be constrained to avoid it.

The winepress is trodden without the city. We believe the city spoken of in this place is the New Jerusalem. It is a holy city. It is not right that such hideous events take place within such a beautiful city. Remember that when Jesus was crucified it was done outside the city of earthly Jerusalem. The ones who crucified him did not wish for the gore of the cross to be visible inside that city. In the case of the crucifixion the shedding of the blood was unjust. Christ was innocent. This time the blood of sinners will be found flowing outside the New Jerusalem, and it will flow justly, for these have brought their miseries upon themselves.

According to the book of Hebrews we must not be satisfied with the city where Jesus was crucified without the gates. We must seek the continuing city which is to come. In this coming Holy city the blood of Jesus, rather than being unwelcome, will be one of the dearest things ever contemplated.

An enormous amount of blood came out of the winepress. We would normally expect grape juice to come from a winepress, but in this case the grapes are men, and therefore when they are crushed under the wrath of God it is blood which issues forth. The

quantity brings it up to the bridles of the horses and extends over a region of sixteen hundred furlongs. Much speculation has been engaged in. The sixteen hundred furlongs would be an area equal to the entire land of Palestine, or even a little more. This is rendered less meaningful when we realize this book of Revelation was not addressed primarily to the citizens of Palestine, but to citizens of Asia Minor. The amount of distress which would accompany the shedding of such a quantity of blood is greater than any ever experienced in all of human history.

The enemies of God are many. Their foolishness has been immense. The grief suffered by the martyrs and other faithful children of God is incredible. The harvest is always greater than the quantity of seed planted, and it is so in this case. As ye sow, so shall ye reap. However, the number of kernels on the stalk is as much as one hundred times the one kernel which was sown. The sins were great. The punishment will also be great.

What did all of this mean to the seven churches of Asia? We think it meant very much. They had suffered terrible tribulation at the hands of the Roman emperors. Many had been killed for their refusal to say "Caesar is lord." They must have often wondered how long God would permit these conditions to persist. Had God actually forgotten them? Here the answer is given. God had not forgotten the horrors they were enduring. Even if they were to die in the Lord, they would have rest from their labors; and the wonderful works they had accomplished would follow after them. Those who

had been faithful were as wheat which the Lord would gather into his bins. Those who had defiantly opposed God and his people would be trampled in the winepress of God's wrath. As their sins had been great, so would their punishment be great.

But, Rome is not sufficient. This reaping is not just a portion of the earth. This harvest comes from every kindred, nation, people and tongue. When God's family is completed, the entire earth shall be harvested. His wheat shall be gathered into his presence. The chaff will be burned up. The blood of sinners shall flow like a river.

Chapter 15

REV 15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

REV 15:2 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.

REV 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Israel.

The reaping of the earth will now begin. The general picture was presented in chapter fourteen. We shall now encounter the gory details. It will not be pleasant. We shall recoil from the account. But, it is real, and the mystery of God is not complete without this part.

The word seven is used again as God tells us seven angels appear with the seven last plagues. The complete and undiluted wrath of God will now be vented. Just as the seven churches encompass the frailties and strengths of all the churches, the seven last plagues represent God's fury in total. They are called the last plagues because they fill up the wrath of God. The previous difficulties God had sent upon the creation were just a "drop in the bucket"

in comparison to these. The bucket is to be filled to the brim this time.

We have been shown the one hundred forty-four thousand singing a new song around God's throne as the reaping of the earth was introduced in chapter fourteen. Then after the righteous were shown singing the new song on Mount Zion, the hideous portion of the reaping was announced. The same pattern holds as the account is now expanded. No vial of wrath is poured out until God makes sure we know he remembers his own. There is a sea of glass mingled with fire, and the ones who had gained victory over the beast, etc., are envisioned standing on that sea of glass.

In order to understand the meaning of the sea of glass mingled with fire, let us turn the pages of our New Testament back to the four gospels. The disciples had once started to cross the sea of Galilee when a storm arose, threatening to capsize the ship and drown them all. The waves were rolling, and the surface of the sea was heaving. Amidst all this turbulence Jesus spoke those famous words, "*Peace, be still.*" The winds abated, and the sea became calm. Peter once asked the Lord to help him walk on the sea. He briefly succeeded and then began to sink. Jesus indicated it was because of his lack of faith the sea had overcome him.

With these events in mind and remembering our conclusion that the beast from the sea arose out of the seething multitudes of people who teem around without direction because they live Godless lives, we believe the saints are standing on the sea of

glass because they have conquered it. It is a sea of glass for them because its waves hold no personal danger. Through faith in Christ they have calmed its waves. Others may be tossed to and fro and finally sink into its depths. The saints will not do so. They stand in serenity and mastery of it by the power of Jesus.

Why does the sea of glass show a mingling with fire? Fire purifies. Peter spoke of the saints faith being like gold which is tried in the fire (1 Peter 1:7). Malachi mentions the role of fire in the purification of the world under the Messiah. *“He is like a refiner’s fire, and like a fuller’s sope”* (Malachi 3:2). *“All that do wickedly shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up”* (Malachi 4:1). *“Ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet”* (Malachi 4:3). Both in the daily process of living, as well as in the judgment, there will be fires resulting from the irresponsible behavior of the wicked. The saint’s faith must be tried by passing through such fires unscathed.

We summarize the picture of the saints standing on the sea of glass as follows. The righteous have risen above the heaving sea of the Godless. In the power of Christ they have calmed its waves. The fires which consume and destroy the wicked only serve to purify the faith of the godly and leave it shining in polished beauty before the watchful eye of Jehovah.

Before we leave this sea of glass, we must recall the sea of glass mentioned in the fourth chapter of

Revelation. Is this the same sea? That sea was before the throne of God. Some have suggested the sea of glass there might represent an area of purity separating God from anything wicked in nature. The victorious saints in chapter fifteen are singing to God. The picture does have some similarity. Yet, there are difficulties. The beast rises out of the sea in chapter fifteen. This hardly seems a sea of purity. There are also connections here with the mark of the beast, the image of the beast, and the number of his name. If the two passages refer to the same sea, the sea in chapter four is not an area of purity.

There is another possibility which may hold the secret to understanding both references. Throughout the Revelation the sea may refer to masses of people. Both of the passages we consider here may be harmonized if we look at it that way. In chapter four the sea was calm and undisturbed. That would mean the masses of the people were as they should be before the throne of God. This sea is filled with blood and seems to be turbulent. That would mean the people had rebelled against God and had lost their direction and suffered much violence and bloodshed for their foolishness.

We are also reminded of the molten sea used for washing and purification before approaching the altar of God (2 Chronicles 4:2-6). As it has been pointed out before, such a meaning does not mesh with the various sea scenes of Revelation. However, the verse is mentioned in order that the reader may consider it in his meditations.

God has provided those victorious ones who

stand upon the sea with harps. We suppose those harps to be spiritual in nature and indicative of the melodious praise which only those who have overcome the beast can offer to God. In 14:2-3 a new song of redemption which only the redeemed could learn was sung. This is a like picture. The song is that of Moses and the Lamb. Moses was the deliverer of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. The Lamb is the deliverer of spiritual Israel from the bondage of Satan. One represents God's delivered people of Old Testament times. The other represents those delivered under the new covenant. The joy is unbounded at the taste of true freedom.

There shall be two separate throngs raising their voices as a result of the great and marvelous works of the Lord. First, there are those who rejoice for their redemption and who praise God for his loving kindness and for the gift of his son. Second, there are those who raise their voices in wailing and gnashing of teeth as they curse God for the outpouring of his vials of wrath.

Those who sing praise unto Jehovah for his redemption of their souls recognize the justness and mercy of his actions. He is recognized as the King of the universe, particularly as King of the saints. We can only guess at what goes through the minds of those who feel his wrath. Do they also know God's actions are just? Or are they so deceived they accuse him of being unmerciful?

REV 15:4 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.

In one way or another every knee shall be caused to bow, and every tongue shall be caused to confess before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ (Romans 14:10-12). God's actions always flow out of a perfectly benevolent character. They are never unfair. Because his actions can not be condemned, even his execution of judgment must be praised. Therefore, persons from all nations will bow before his glory. Even his judgments aid in causing the kingdoms of this earth to become of our Lord. See Revelation 11:55;10:7 and 17;17 as well as Romans 8:19.

REV 15:5 And after that I looked and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

REV 15:6 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.

The temple, the tabernacle, and the ark of the testimony were all evidences of the presence of God in ancient times. It was through these that men worshipped. It was through them God gave directions to his people. The events which are about to take place in the Revelation are not accidental, nor are they purposeless. They will be placed in action at

the direct command of the Almighty. Each time the temple is opened in this book God sends forth some important representative or some vital announcement.

This time the temple is opened and the seven angels with the seven last plagues make their exit. John had seen them in verse one, but before they went into action, the security of the righteous had to be made clear. This was done by showing them standing upon the sea of glass. The angels were clothed in white linen to show there is nothing wicked or evil in their behavior. Jesus himself was pictured as being girt about the breast with a golden girdle as he walked among the candlesticks. Gold has long been recognized for its costliness. Because of its cost only those of high place could afford it. These angels come straight from the court of the King of all. They have a task of utmost importance.

REV 15:7 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.

REV 15:8 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.

From the first of the book the four beasts, or living creatures, have played a part in the most important events. One of them now provides the

vials for the angels to pour out. The word translated vials is sometimes rendered as “bowls.” When we think of a vial, we usually think of something shaped like a scientist’s test tube. This set of containers was wider and more shallow than test tubes and is probably thought of more accurately as bowls.

The temple is filled with the smoke of God’s glory and power. All the time the vials are being poured out no man may enter the temple. This picture may go back to the dedication of the tabernacle and the temple, as well as to the giving of the law on Sinai. No man might approach the mountain while Moses was receiving the law. When the temple and the tabernacle were purified and ready for service, the glory of God filled these edifices, and men could not enter for the moment (Exodus 40:34) also (1 Kings 10:8).

There is good reason for restricting entry to the temple. Any plea for lessening the effect of the vials which are being poured out is to be ignored. Any attempt to dilute the wine of God’s wrath is going to fail. Abraham was allowed to plead for the citizens of Sodom, but God has given all the warnings and corrective chastening he is going to give by the time the first of these seven vials is poured out. The harvest is to be taken. The period of cultivation is complete. God’s woman has been mistreated long enough by Satan’s assistants.

Chapter 16

REV 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.

REV 16:2 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.

We can not tell whether the voice which issues the command at this time is God's own, or whether it speaks for him. It is certain that it expresses his will since it issues from his temple. It is a great voice in order that there shall be no misunderstanding the urgency of obedience. God's wrath is now to fall in undiluted fury upon his enemies. Nothing will stop it. Seven angels wait that each in sequence may pour out his vial upon a different portion of creation.

The first angel pours out his vial upon the land. As a result those who dedicate themselves to a way of violence and force, as represented by the beast, suffer intense discomfort. We are not told the exact nature of the loathsome sores which afflict them. In the case of the Egyptians of old literal boils seem to have appeared on them. It is possible for God to cause such to occur, and to do so selectively, appearing on those who wore the mark of the beast, and not upon God's own followers.

It should be noted the various portions of the

creation upon which these vials are poured are like those visited by the trumpet warnings earlier. This time there is a vast difference in that all of the earth, sea, etc. are affected rather than only one third.

It is tempting to consider some of the difficulties which exist today in the world as applications of these vials of wrath. There are chemical poisonings, various types of air pollution, and health hazards of all sorts which have been brought about through modern technology. We believe though that the passage before us discusses direct divine intervention instead of troubles resulting from man's own misuse of his environment. If the sores came about because of mistreatment of the environment, the plague would extend to all men. In this case God's followers are immune. Only those with the mark of the beast suffer from the sores of this first vial.

This is not a matter of warning any more as it was with the trumpets. God's longsuffering is ended. Mercy is now replaced with justice. These have rejected his grace and mercy. They have deliberately chosen to have justice. And justice they shall have.

REV 16:3 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.

REV 16:4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

Every part of the creation which was fashioned to serve mankind is now to withhold its services, as God shows vividly the foolishness of distorting his plans. The land was meant to be a source of good food. It became a source of ill health. The sea was a source of food and a means of communication. Now under the vial of the angel it turns to blood, like the blood of a dead man. In other words any food which might have been found in it has been eliminated. Under these conditions it could be neither a source of food nor a carrier of produce.

The blood of a dead man is congealed and even more repulsive than that of a living man. Those who follow the violent life of the beast should expect to reckon with blood. Beastly tactics result in bloodshed. Since these are bloodthirsty people, they shall have blood to drink.

The third angel brings a curse upon the fresh waters. Water for drinking and cleansing purposes is under consideration here. Men have been killed over a few drops of water. When water for drinking purposes is scarce, it is more precious than gold. Our bodies are over seventy-five percent water, and they must have a constant supply of it. Most of us tend to take the abundance of fresh clean water for granted. But those who worship the beast will find he is no source of refreshment. It is from Jehovah we receive refreshment.

REV 16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shall be, because thou hast judged thus.

REV 16:6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.

There are those who would like to accuse God of being cruel in his ultimate treatment of the wicked. The Revelation anticipates this tendency upon the part of some by recording the angel's words of verses five and six. These are not innocent babes God is dealing with. They are defiant fools who stoned the prophets and murdered the saints. They have rejoiced at the persecution of God's kingdom and have wallowed in the blood of the Son of God. The punishment is appropriate to the crime. Again this commentator is not able through the scriptures to pinpoint the degree of literalism versus symbolism as used in these last plagues. Nor is he able to explain how God's own are protected from this curse while it falls upon those who have the mark of the beast. How shall the faithful have fresh water to drink while the wicked have blood only? Though we do not know the details, we are convinced it shall be so.

REV 16:7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

REV 16:8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

REV 16:9 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.

Another voice from the altar agrees with the previous angel as to the righteousness of God's judgments. Do not forget who it was that spoke from the altar back in chapter six. At that time the martyrs who had been beheaded for Christ were asking how long it would be before those who were destroying the world would be stopped. We think it not unlikely the voice which agrees with the angel here is that of the saints who have waited so patiently for God to take his vengeance.

The fourth angel pours out his vial upon the sun. We might expect the effect to be darkness as the sun is extinguished. The opposite is true. The darkness will come later. This time the contents of the vial affect the sun in a different manner. The sun is a blessing to men in several ways. It is an illuminator. It is a purifier. And, it is a source of energy. It is the latter use of the sun which is changed from a blessing to a curse now. The energy which is so necessary to man when it is produced in moderation is now released in uncontrolled fashion.

One of the difficulties scientists have with nuclear energy is that of controlling the rate of release. Nuclear fusion has been made available in the form of explosions, such as in bombs. Some have predicted that if our planetary system lasts long enough, the sun will enlarge until it completely surrounds all of the planets. This is not a pretty thought! The picture here in Revelation is similar.

Isaiah once promised a time when the desert would blossom as the rose under the leadership of the Messiah. In this case the Messiah has been rejected. The same energy which would make the desert blossom will under this curse cause the blossoming roses to turn into scorching desert.

REV 16:10 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.

REV 16:11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

God does not anticipate any repentance on the part of those who are affected by the plagues. They have turned away from every overture made toward them in the past. It is not at all surprising they open their mouths to cry out blasphemies upon God's holy name. They are like a stubborn child who stiffens his neck and grits his teeth when told to pick up a paperwad he has just shot across the schoolroom. Such cursed men and women would rather face the consequences of their sins and speak with blasphemous pride than they would to bow before the will of the Creator. They will go into the very lake of fire itself, cursing the one who could have led them to eternal life.

The fifth angel pours out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and the beast's kingdom becomes full of darkness. What is this seat? And, what is the

type of darkness that comes upon it? The answer to the first of these two questions is at least partially answered in Revelation 13:2. When the first beast rose out of the sea, Satan gave it his power along with his seat and great authority. It would be from this seat directives would go out in an attempt to synchronize the activities of Satan's kingdom. The wicked often organize their activities to accomplish their purposes. Organized crime is altogether too well known to the police throughout the world.

Satan is called the prince of darkness. He is responsible for bringing all sorts of confusion into this world and even into the camp of the saints when they do not watch carefully. Now God is attacking Satan with his own weapons. Lack of coordination and loss of direction plague the efforts of the beast. His efforts to spread his doctrine of **force** and **coercion** will end in defeat. He will make a last effort to bring an army together against God, but his disorientation will make the venture hopeless. From Rome, to Hitler's Germany, to the battle of Armageddon, tongues gnash and teeth are gritted as the armies of the prince of darkness follow their leader to the realm of the damned.

Christians sometimes do things through weakness which they are ashamed of later. The Bible describes such as "being overtaken in a fault." The repenting Christian then asks God to forgive him of the sinful behavior. The wicked are not so. They will live for themselves above all things. Satan conscripts them for his service by appealing to their pride. While supposedly serving self, they unwittingly serve the Deceiver.

REV 16:12 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.

REV 16:13 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.

REV 16:14 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.

The Euphrates river has been of significance in God's plan from the time of Eden. It was one of the four rivers mentioned in the description of the garden, as found in Genesis chapter two. Ur of the Chaldees was the country from which Abraham was called to set out to the promised land. Ur of the Chaldees was watered by the Euphrates river. When the people of Israel and Judah were taken into captivity, they were removed to Babylon and Assyria beyond the Euphrates. One can easily see how the people of God would recognize a threat in that which was beyond the Euphrates.

One of the more important events associated with the Euphrates river is the defeat of the city of Babylon at the hands of Cyrus the Persian. Old Babylon was the capitol of the Babylonian empire.

It was so magnificently fortified it was thought to be completely invincible. However, Cyrus was able to enter the city by diverting the flow of water in the Euphrates which coursed through the very heart of that city. When the river bed was dry, he led his army into the city to conquer it. In connection with the account in Revelation there are two points which should be noticed. First, Cyrus came from the east to claim his victory. Second, he accomplished the victory only after the waters of the river had been dried up. These two points are more than coincidental. They provide a key for unlocking the meaning of a number of events taking place in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of this last book of the Bible.

To a large degree the vials of God's wrath were poured out upon the same divisions of creation as were affected by the seven trumpet warnings. There is a major difference. While the trumpets affected only one third of each division, the vials reach the entirety of each division. In the case of the trumpets God was still warning. This time he is vanquishing and punishing his opposers. The end is just beginning here. But it will continue until it concludes with the final judgment and the lake of fire.

In chapter nine we saw four angels holding back a great army of two hundred million at the Euphrates. When the four angels ceased to restrain the army, they killed a third of men with fire, smoke and brimstone. Still the ones who were not killed failed to repent of their murders, thefts, fornications, and sorceries. Though it is not called by name in

chapter nine, Babylon was the source of that army. Now God is about to turn the tables. Babylon itself will be invaded and destroyed by the kings of the east.

But who are the “kings of the east?” When Babylon was conquered by Cyrus of old, there was but one king. This time the word is plural. The explanations of their identity are manifold. Many of them are attempts to pinpoint some invasion of history as the fulfilment of this event. We heartily disagree with such an explanation. The invasion of Babylon, as presented in Revelation, is not a physical battle. It is a spiritual matter. The church has been driven into the wilderness while Babylon and the forces of Satan have rampaged over the earth. God is now ready to reverse that situation. His own forces will now prepare to invade the heart of Satan's country.

The **KINGS OF THE EAST** are Jesus Christ and his saints. It helps to understand that the original language does not use the word east. The word used is literally “sunrising”. It is the kings of the “sunrising” who will invade Babylon. These kings of the east are referred to no other place in the Bible. There is a king of the north. There is a king of the south. Both of these are in the singular. But these are kings of the sunrising, and they are in the plural. The last chapter of Malachi promises “the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings. Jesus is over and over called the spiritual light of the world. He is also called King of kings and Lord of lords. Who could more appropriately be called the King of the sunrising?

But, you object, What about the fact that these are kings, not just a king? The answer is that those who follow Christ are kings. Jesus said to the church at Laodicea, *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and sat with my Father in his throne.”* We are kings along with the Christ. And we are kings of light also. Jesus said, *“Let your light so shine that men may see your good works.”* John said, *“If we walk in the light as he is in the light—.”* Yes my friends, Jesus is King of the Sunrising. And we are kings of the sunrising of the new day. God is depending upon us to march into Babylon with our Lord and take it.

Some may object that the invasion of Babylon by the army of God does not fit comfortably with the vile nature of the terrible plagues poured out from the other vials. However, there is one important thing in common. This plague, along with all the others, brings tremendous discomfort to Satan’s empire. There could be no greater threat to Satan’s cause than for an army of devoted Christians to descend upon it.

Another objection is that the kings of the east were called out by the unclean spirits which came from the mouth of Satan and his aids and, therefore could not be the followers of Christ. This is not a valid objection. Satan and his aids did not call forth the kings of the east. Satan’s forces are called the kings of the **earth**. In fact, it was the threat of invasion by the kings of the east which aroused Satan to answer that threat by marshalling the kings

of the earth to meet them. Satan's great city of Babylon is endangered. The kings of the **east** and the kings of the **earth** are mortal enemies who are to fight in the great and final battle. Babylon will be the prize.

Would all this mean anything to the Christians of the first century? Would it be meaningful to those persecuted saints of the seven churches? Yes! The city of Rome would have represented Babylon to them. Geographically they were located east of Rome. An important lesson would be that Rome would not stand forever in haughty derision of Christians.

Surely they would have seen the greater lesson overshadowing the immediate enemy of that day. When all the dust of the battle of the ages had settled, Satan's "great city", Babylon would lie in ruins. The carnal kings of the earth would not stand in the face of the spiritual kings of the east. There would be victory in Jesus over every enemy, even to death itself.

REV 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

REV 16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

Christians are repeatedly warned in the New Testament to watch and be prepared for the coming of Christ. They are again reminded here. Why? Is

this battle of Armageddon to take place when Jesus returns? No, that is not the reason for the warning here. The reason is that those who are kings of the east and are going to have a part in defeating Satan are those who are always ready for service. There are multiplied millions who are ready to do service for the Dragon and the kings of the earth. Jesus needs ready servants to oppose them. No man should ever take the chance of remaining in Satan's service for even a moment. To do so is to stand naked in sinful shame before the all-seeing eye of the Lord. He will not be deceived. Only those who are ready will fight for him.

The Devil calls the kings of the earth together to fight for Babylon by sending forth three unclean spirits. They are repulsive like frogs, and they come out of the mouth of the Dragon himself, the beast, and the false prophet. They demonstrate great power by the working of awesome miracles. The effort is to make men take confidence in opposition to God. As God has miraculous power, Satan tries to match it. But while the miracles of God bring men to righteousness, the miracles of Satan lead men to evil. From the beginning Satan has depended upon three attractions to man. They are the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Hand in hand with these temptations go violence, force, and pleasure. Satan would be delighted to persuade men they are to cherish such as a way of life. He would like to deceive us into believing his lie that these are sufficiently powerful to align ourselves against the host of God on earth and in heaven.

These lying spirits will be successful in persuading many men to fight on Satan's side in the great battle of Armageddon.

Satan is said to gather his army to a place called "Armageddon." This name has been a center of debate for students of the Revelation through the centuries. Many look for a great physical battle on the plain of Esdraelon in Palestine. There is a hill there called Megiddo which overlooks one of the most fruitful areas of the Middle East. This was a famous battlefield. Chapter four of Judges tells of a great victory under Deborah, as the people of God defeated the Canaanites. This was the location of Gideon's victory over the large army of the Midianites. It was at Megiddo that good king Josiah died while Egypt was pitted against the Assyrians. There would have been no great mystery to the people of God as to the meaning of Armageddon. They well understood it as the scene of the greatest battles in their history.

This time the battle will not be with literal horses, bows and arrows, spears, or even nuclear weapons. The weapons in this battle will be on the one side the fiery darts of Satan, and on the other side the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit. The kings of the earth will be hurling Satan's darts, while the kings of the east will be swinging the sword of the Spirit.

God could have chosen no other site to so well emphasize the importance of this gigantic conflict between the forces of good and evil. The entire history of mankind would be altered by the outcome of this battle.

REV 16:17 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.

REV 16:18 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.

We have reached the last of the seven angels. This one pours his vial out upon the air. This is meaningful since Satan is called the Prince of the powers of the air. The principalities and powers with which we are said to wrestle in Ephesians 6:12 will now feel the power of the plagues, even in their high places. A voice comes forth from God's own headquarters, his temple in heaven. With the authority of Jehovah himself the voice declares the finality of the present events. When the plague poured out of the seventh vial has run its course, the battle of the ages will have been concluded. The final victory will have been won for God, for his Son, for his angels, and for his children.

Verse eighteen tells of an earthquake to end all earthquakes. Those who live in the quiet regions of the earth can not appreciate this picture. The visitor to the land of the seven churches can see vivid evidence of how meaningful this lesson would have been to the first century recipients of Revelation. Scattered over the entire area of the seven churches, there are ruins of once majestic structures. They

now lie broken and crumbled on the ground where the quaking earth has shaken them to pieces and left them flattened. Those people knew the power of an earthquake. Now they are told that a very large earthquake is coming. It is to be so great men will never have seen one like it. It will dwarf all which have come before. It will be a spiritual earthquake. And it will leave Satan's city of Babylon in a state of shock.

REV 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

REV 16:20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

REV 16:21 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.

Jesus once said it should be clear that he did not cast out devils by the power of Satan because doing so would mean Satan was working against himself. The earthquake which splits Babylon into three parts appears to mean the unity of the capitol of Satan's empire has dissolved. Each part now must work without the assistance of the other parts. Thus, Babylon has been dealt a blow from which she will never recover.

We repeat! The great earthquake is not physical. It is spiritual. The principalities and powers against which we fight are not visible. The entire city of Babylon is a spiritual city, invisible to humans. This does not mean it is not real. Some of the most real of all things can not be seen. The earthquake which rocks the great city is also real. The shock waves which result from it will have much to do with the quality of life for all spiritual beings, including man.

The word translated as “nations” in verse nineteen is often translated as “gentiles”, or “heathen”, as contrasted with the faithful citizens of God’s kingdom. The message here is that all those gatherings of organized power and pleasure which had previously drawn men away from New Jerusalem, the city of God, would crumble. They would fall along with Babylon, their parent city.

One is reminded of the broken time again. The Gentiles were to tread upon the holy city for a time, times, and a half a time. The time of the gentiles would finally be fulfilled. The cities of the nations, or the “Gentiles”, fell before this great earthquake. God does not forget his promises as men do. Babylon had been steadily moving toward this fate since it began. Its citizens have persuaded themselves God is powerless to prevent or punish their sinful ways. What they have believed does not make it so. The only reason for the delay was the desire on the part of God that every man have the opportunity of repentance. Such opportunity has now been extended. Since the citizens of Babylon will not repent, even in the face of repeated warnings, God

will now remember to bring his wrath upon them. We sometimes speak of the wrath of a woman scorned. The wrath of a scorned Jehovah is worse. Babylon will feel the full effect of mocking the Almighty.

Every island and mountain are caused to disappear. In symbolic language mountains and islands are concentrations of power and influence. When God is through with Babylon she will not have the slightest vantage of her former grandeur. She will be a place fit only for the habitation of the owl and the jackal.

Long before, in the time of the kings of Israel, Jeremiah had spoken of the utter desolation to be brought upon Babylon. He said, .

“It shall no more be inhabited forever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation” (Jeremiah 50:40).

And again he said,

“And it shall be, when thou has made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates and thou shalt say, “Thus shalt Babylon sink and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her” (Jeremiah 51:60-64).

BABYLON WILL BE ANNIHILATED.

Along with the great earthquake will come a terrible hailstorm with hail weighing nearly one

hundred pounds per hailstone. In Old Testament times God had used physical hail to defeat the armies which fought against his people. He had brought hail upon the Egyptians, and he had brought it also upon the Canaanites as recorded in Joshua 10:11. Now this is used as a way to show how devastating his attack will be upon the citizens of Babylon. These are no baby hailstones. They will weigh as much as a talent. A talent is generally considered to have been ninety-six pounds. A hailstone the size of an egg can put a sizable dent in an automobile. One can only imagine the damage which might be inflicted by these monstrous projectiles.

By this time we should have learned to expect the reaction which is displayed by the inhabitants of Babylon when exposed to the displeasure of God. Rather than repenting, they curse God and stiffen their necks against him. The greater the discomfort the greater the flow of blasphemy from their filthy mouths. These are not the repenting kind. They will gnash their teeth and howl in the lake of fire before they will bow to the will of God.

Chapter 17

REV 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:

REV 17:2 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.

Now that the seven vials of wrath have been poured out, Babylon will inevitably come tumbling down. Of the seven angels who were responsible for bringing about the demise of Babylon, one invites John to inspect the results. It matters very little which of the angels this is. One could perform the task as well as another.

The many waters mentioned in verse one are explained in verse fifteen of this same chapter. They are the peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. How many times have we encountered this phraseology thus far in the Revelation? Those who would limit Babylon to Rome must contend with this all encompassing description of the great city. They can not do so. The Lord could have used no clearer language to indicate persons from all over the earth. This vast multitude is made up of individuals from every portion of the earth, who by their support of Satan's cause have made the existence of the city of Babylon possible. Just as the New Jerusalem is dependent for its existence upon

the citizens of the kingdom of God, so is the existence of Babylon dependent upon the citizens of the kingdom of darkness.

Babylon is called a great whore because she draws mankind away from the true and pure relationship which should exist with Christ. Three cities of old are described by the Lord as being harlots. They are Tyre, (Isaiah 23) Ninevah, (Nahum 3) and Jerusalem (Jeremiah 2:20). Just as the beast of Revelation combined the characteristics of several of Daniel's beasts, this great harlot combines the seductive characteristics of each of the above harlot cities.

Verse two informs us the great whore has committed fornication with the kings of the earth. These kings of the earth are clearly the same as those of chapter sixteen, verse fourteen. They are those influential persons whom Satan has managed to gather together to do battle with the kings of the East. The fornication which they have committed is spiritual fornication. They find the spiritual connections with Satan to be far more satisfying than communion with the true and living God and with his Son. Instead of being filled with the Spirit of holiness and being activated by it, they lend their thrones to the prince of darkness. They have so little real insight into eternal things that they will spend their energies and those of the nations which they lead in exchange for a relatively short hour of fame, power, and pleasure.

It is not just the kings of the earth who humble themselves with the great whore. Persons of every

level follow their example. Harlots of every age have been famous for causing their clients to become drunken, and then relieving them of whatever valuables they may have with them. Babylon fits the mold. Individuals who have no spiritual discernment see only the golden goblet which Babylon extends. They never care to look beyond to the streets which are paved with gold. Every Christian associates with such persons on a daily basis. Giddy with Babylon's cup of pleasure, they stagger continually closer to the shore of the lake of fire.

REV 17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

REV 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

Why was John taken to the wilderness to view the judgment of the whore? Some believe it was because the great whore was the apostate church. The woman had been given the wings of an eagle that she might fly into the wilderness (12:14). The present commentator believes there is a connection, but not because this woman is the same woman who

fled into the wilderness to be nourished by God for a time, times, and a half a time. It seems more likely the wilderness is a place removed from the mainstream of human action. Because mankind refused to accept the church as a vital part of their affairs, she was driven out of that mainstream. Now Babylon, which has been in the limelight while the church was relegated to seeming insignificance, is to find herself in the wilderness. As Lazarus and the rich man found their conditions reversed, Babylon and the church will find their lot exchanged. The church will be glorified, and Babylon will be destined to banishment. She who has been inhabited by throngs of milling foolish sinners will now be found, like Babylon of old, a desolate and uninhabited wilderness.

Babylon sits for the moment in great splendor and beauty. Because of their isolation from the world of sin, many Christians have a somewhat distorted view of the harlot. They know sin and corruption go hand in hand. Therefore they tend to imagine the harlot as a hardened and ugly, disease ridden woman. If this were the true picture of the harlot, fewer men would seek her out. The truth is that many harlots are endowed with great physical beauty. Your writer remembers one of his former students who later reportedly became a professional harlot. She was quiet and very pretty. One would hardly have suspected she would descend to such a level of morality. The corruption was underneath, not on the surface. Just so was Babylon, the devil's woman. She was, and is, radiantly attractive; suited perfectly

for her purpose of deluding mankind into evil pathways. She promises riches, pleasure, and power as she sits upon her steed arrayed in luxury and holding out her golden goblet.

The beast upon which the woman sits is discussed further later in the chapter. We shall pause here only long enough to consider the meaning of the seven heads, the ten horns, and the names of blasphemy. These same characteristics were ascribed to the beast which rose out of the sea in chapter thirteen. It is the same beast in both cases. The picture is that of a sea of people from which this hideous monster with the heads, the horns, and the blasphemous names arises bearing the harlot rider.

The horns of the beast indicate his violent and forceful nature. He delights in using pressure to accomplish its purposes. The heads symbolize the immense mental power available to him. He is crafty and intelligent. The names of blasphemy tell of his complete and utter mockery of everything connected with Jehovah.

Satan has now called forth three powerful allies in his onslaught upon God's woman, the church. First, there is the false prophet, second, there is the beast, and third, there is harlot Babylon. Two of them are now pictured in cooperation. The beast supports Babylon who has her beauty enhanced by his power. Babylon does not need to depend upon her seductive beauty alone. She may call upon the violence and force of the beast to take her where her beauty alone fails. Conversely, the beast might have been extremely repulsive if he were to roam about

alone. With seductive Babylon riding upon his back, his appearance becomes much more acceptable. Together the two make an awesome and destructive team.

REV 17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

REV 17:6 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.

Let us look more closely at evidence concerning the identification of Babylon, the harlot. Is she Rome? Is she the apostate church? Is she Satan's city of sinners? The students have differed sharply on the matter. Our best chance of understanding the matter lies in going back to the ancient city of Babylon, which God used as a namesake for this evil woman. Here are some of the facts about Babylon of old.

1. Babylon was founded by Nimrod, the great grandson of Noah. He was the grandson of Ham, and the son of Cush.

2. There is strong evidence the passage in Genesis which tells us Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord is saying Nimrod was a man who loved the thrill of the kill.

3. The early followers of Nimrod attempted to build the tower of Babel as a means of making a name for themselves and asserting their independence of the Lord.

4. God took note of their attitude and actions and confused their powers of communication, preventing the progress of their organization.

5. The same location later became the site of the city of Babylon from which the Babylonian empire arose.

6. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian, captured Jerusalem and took the Jews as prisoners for a period of seventy years.

7. God repeatedly warned his people they would be taken captive if they did not repent.

8. At this time Babylon was wrapped in luxury, containing the hanging gardens which were one of the wonders of the ancient world.

9. After using Babylon as a tool in the punishment of his people God promised the wicked city would be destroyed.

10. The following passages should be carefully examined by the reader to see the comparison between ancient Babylon, and the Babylon of Revelation.

Just as Babylon of old had held the people of God in bondage and persecution, just so had the emperors of Rome captivated and persecuted the early Christians. It would be difficult to miss the similarity of the two cities even if one tried.

But, there are compelling reasons for not limiting the Babylon of Revelation to Rome. Even the Christians of that day must have been able to see that the victory of Christ must not be over Rome alone, nor even the entire Roman empire. It must encompass all the forces Satan has mustered in opposition to the church during the entire Christian age. If the apostate church has established its citizenship in Satan's city, then it too must carry its chosen name of Babylon. Whether it be pagan Rome, papal Rome, or those living on the opposite side of the earth, if it lives in luxurious seduction of God's people, and if it rides forward on the strength of beastlike governmental force, it is Babylon. The battleground is all the earth. The citizens of Babylon are those who travel the broad way from every nation, tongue, kindred and tribe, from the establishment of the church until the triumphal ride of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

She is called mystery Babylon because her true nature is deliberately concealed by her apparent beauty. The allies of Satan seldom present themselves in their true light. What is seen on the surface is far from reality. We have a favorite saying, "All that glitters is not gold." John is now to have the opportunity of seeing the glitter removed and the deception revealed.

Not only is Babylon said to be a great whore herself, she is also responsible for bringing forth a host of abominable offspring. When Christ and the church bring forth their offspring, holy children of God are the result. Holiness is spread through the land. When Satan, as the father of liars, and Babylon, the mother of harlots, reproduce, the progeny are spiritually wicked and prove themselves fit for eternal destruction. These offspring of Satan do not walk in Rome alone. They stalk the entire earth.

REV 17:7 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.

In chapter eleven, verse eight, this same city of Babylon is called the great city in which the Lord was crucified. This is typical of her. She revels in the shedding of blood, whether it be that of the Son of God or of the apostles and martyrs. Just as one addicted to alcohol swaggers in boisterous boasting, Babylon reaches her peak of exultation when Christians are suffering and dying. The sight of her makes John marvel at her wicked power. The word admiration is used. This leaves the impression of approval. A better choice of words by the translators here would have been “amazement.” John was by no means in approval of her actions. He was simply overwhelmed for the moment at her boldness in evil doing.

The angel now offers to reveal things to John which were to be passed on through the ages until the Lord's final victory. Further information will now be provided about both the woman and the beast which she rides.

Notice the number of times the seven heads and the ten horns are mentioned in connection with the dragon and the beast. God wishes for us to be fully aware of both the intelligence and the violent power which Satan brings to the battle against the remnant of the seed of God's woman, the church.

REV 17:8 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.

REV 17:9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

We have previously noted the use of the beast in symbolic language as governmental force and violence. Daniel represented various empires by beasts of different kinds. This beast is a very strange one. He appears and disappears periodically. His place of origin is the bottomless pit from which come all the hellish torments Satan can muster in support of his destructive ends. It was out of this pit the

locusts came in chapter nine. Recall that the leader of the locust plague was the “destroyer.”

The beast was, and is not and yet is, because he makes his appearances repeatedly, and then retreats as though he were non-existent. He is, and is not because for the moment he has disappeared from the scene. Again and again he rears his ugly head to terrify the children of God.

However, his appearing and disappearing acts will come to a halt. His ultimate end is the lake of fire which in this place is called “perdition.” He makes his residence in the bottomless pit which smells of fire and brimstone. God will thus accommodate his attraction to such and cast him into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Let us be careful not to confuse them that dwell upon the earth with the total population of the physical earth. These are the ones who have not washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. Their sins have not been blotted out, and their names have not found their place in God's book of life as citizens of the kingdom of heaven. The kings of the earth in Revelation are often the influential among the carnal minded. The people who dwell upon the earth are those of like mind, over whom the kings of the earth reign. These are they who have turned away from God and his righteousness and who are impressed enough by the beast to follow his way of death. On the other hand the citizens of the kingdom of heaven follow the Lamb. *“They know my voice and follow me.”*

The seven heads of the beast are now said to be seven mountains on which the woman sits. These seven mountains are not literal mountains upon which the city of Rome is built. They are concentrations of political power. The lustful pleasures of the city of Satan fit like hand in glove with political corruption. Each needs the other. The pride of life, the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh are found blended in effective working order, as the great whore and her blasphemous beast team up to perfection in their evil ride.

REV 17:10 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.

REV 17:11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth unto perdition.

There has been much speculation over the identity of the seven kings of verse ten. Some believe them to be great empires such as Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, Egypt, Rome, etc. Others see them as individual Roman emperors. Efforts to identify these kings under either of the above plans fall short of satisfaction. Scholars disagree on which empires should be included. They also disagree on which Roman emperors should be counted. Each group of students appears to be quite satisfied with their own plan. However, those who believe otherwise are quick to point out the flaws in the arguments of the other camp.

The use of the number seven as a number of completeness leads us to hold that the seven kings represent political force which has opposed the people of God through the ages. The fact that the present king is the sixth and one is yet to come is indication that this particular instrument of Satan is reaching the end of its line. The end is approaching but has not yet arrived, for there is one king yet to come. Whatever the identity of the seven kings, it is clear the beast is going to appear in the future from John's viewpoint, through some political organization which as yet had not made its appearance. This seventh king was not to enjoy as lengthy a domain as the previous kings. This is significant for the saints, since they will have less time to suffer at his hands.

Suddenly a strange statement is injected concerning the seven kings. It is as though there were a point beyond completeness. An eighth king is introduced. The reader will note that though this eighth king is listed as an eighth he is said to be of the seven. He is also said to be the beast which was, and is, yet is not. A king is a ruling force. In harmony with our previous identification of the beast as government by force and violence, we suggest that this eighth king is the power of force and violence which rules all of the seven kings, and thus he is a part of all of them. His end is perdition, the lake of fire.

REV 17:12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are the ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive

power as kings for one hour with the beast.

REV 17:13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

REV 17:14 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.

Out of the various political mountains, or heads of the beast, grow ten horns. It would appear that the ten kings here are to be differentiated from the seven kings of verse ten. The ten kings receive their dominion in the future, as viewed from the vantage point of John. They receive their power for a very short period of time, one hour. In the case of both the seventh king of verse ten and the ten kings of verse twelve, the time of dominion is stated to be short. It seems there was to be some major power subdivided into fragments, each of which was to devote its energies to the cause of the Prince of darkness.

The ten kings are of one mind and one heart. Christians are told to have the mind of Christ. These ten kings have the mind of Satan. They adore his methods and adopt his techniques. They make the fatal mistake of committing themselves wholly to his wicked ends. This can have but one result. They will have bound themselves to a losing cause. In this condition there can be no hope for them.

Having placed themselves on the side of Satan,

they have automatically set themselves in opposition to the Lamb of God. It is no accident that we see two contrasting animals in this picture. First, there is a beast with seven heads and ten horns. Second, there is a Lamb. There could be no more ferocious animal than the one pictured here with the heads and the horns. And one would have to search long and hard to find a more gentle animal than the Lamb. While the beast goes about his activities using force and violence, the Lamb of God leads men in the gentle ways of love and teaching. The beast slaughters. The Lamb is slaughtered upon the cross. Yet it is the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, who will seize the final victory. Every lord of the earth and every king of all time must ultimately bow the knee before the Christ.

We must not overlook the importance of the subjects of the Lamb. These are called the chosen and the faithful. As he suffered unto the death, they will follow his example. As he poured out his blood upon the cross, they will also persevere unto death itself. Nothing in heaven, on earth, or under the earth is capable of separating them from the King of kings. He needs these faithful to demonstrate to the principalities and powers the utter folly of Satan's rebellion. And the faithful need him even more than he needs them, for he is their Protector, Shepherd, and God.

REV 17:15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

REV 17:16 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.

Once again we encounter that all encompassing series of words which describe the battlefield of the great war which rages between God and Satan. This battle is fought in the hearts of men of every land. The great whore, Babylon, could never have existed independent of evil men, any more than the church of Christ could exist independent of the righteous. The city of God needs men whose hearts are filled with holiness. Babylon needs men whose hearts are filled with lust and pride. Through the ages there have been many of the latter type just as Jesus indicated there would be when he said, "*Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.*" If the great whore sitteth upon the waters and the waters are the multitudes of worldly people, she has a large sitting room.

But look at the new note which sounds forth in verse sixteen. The ten horns which John saw on the beast turn against the wicked woman. Just what is going on here? The scripture itself has said these ten horns are kings who receive rulership for a limited time in sympathy with the beast. They have pledged their power and strength to the beast, and they have made war against Jesus, the Lamb of God. How strange they should now come to hate Babylon who is also an instrument of Satan in his

attack against the church. Why do these ten kings hate the great whore?

The reason may well be that Babylon no longer is able to serve their evil purposes because she loses her power of attraction. The next chapter is to tell of the complete destruction of the “great city.” When evil companions find no more benefit in cooperation, they quickly find new companions. They sometimes become as bitter enemies of each other as they once were of the forces of good. Gangland wars are notoriously vicious and speak clearly of the selfishness which lies just below the surface of such unholy alliances. When Babylon comes crashing down to defeat in the war against the Lamb the ten kings want nothing more to do with her. In fact they would like nothing better than to eat her flesh and burn her bones. Then she would be completely banished from their sight. She will now be a detriment to them instead of giving them guidance from astride her awesome beast.

We are beginning to see the pattern which is so often demonstrated among the enemies of God. One of God's favorite methods of defeating what seem to be overwhelming odds is to turn the enemy against itself. With infighting or even outright war among its ranks it becomes much easier for the armies of God to defeat the foe. The horns of the very beast upon which Babylon has been riding are now turned upon her and are ready to gore her.

REV 17:17 For God hath put it in their heart to fulfil his will, and to agree, and to

give their kingdoms unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

REV 17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

This is one of the strange passages in the Bible which sound as if God opposes himself. It resembles the passage which says God hardened Pharaoh's heart. We understand the Pharaoh passage to mean that when God confronted Pharaoh with his demand for the release of his people Pharaoh reacted to that demand by determining within his heart that he would not obey. Thus God in effect did harden his heart, though indirectly.

How then did God put it into the heart of these evil kings to give their kingdoms to the beast? He did it in much the same way as in hardening Pharaoh's heart. By presenting such wicked men with a choice of the Lamb or the beast, God made it possible for them to choose the beast. Of course, God would not desire or approve of any ruling power aligning itself against him. The meaning of the present passage is clarified by considering verse seventeen here with 10:7 and 11:15. As the ten kings volunteer their kingdoms in the service of the beast, they unwittingly and unwillingly serve the very God they fight.

The words of God which are to be fulfilled, as mentioned in the latter part of verse seventeen, are the words of the prophets. The end of the mystery of God is that the kingdoms of this world will become

of God. They shall become subject to Christ, and he shall reign over them for ever and ever. According to Romans 8:19, the entire creation awaits the victory of Jesus Christ and the manifestation of the sons of God in triumphant conquest. Satan once offered Jesus all the kingdoms of this world if he would only fall down and worship him. How foolish it would have been for Christ to have succumbed to such deception! When the mystery of God has been completely unrolled, it will reveal Christ in his true position ready to deliver the victorious kingdom to the Father. Every enemy will have been made his footstool.

The kings of the earth often think they have control of the things which satisfy the pride of life, the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh. It is not so. They are not in control of these things. In reality they are controlled by them. They do not rule over Babylon. Babylon rules over them. But mighty Babylon will fall, and so will the kings of the earth. They both have made the mistake of fighting against the everlasting and almighty Creator of heaven and earth. Jesus once said, *“All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth.”* Again Paul said, *“Them cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.”*

Chapter 18

REV 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.

REV 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

REV 18:3 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.

John's statement "after these things" may not mean after them in point of time. It could mean this vision followed the previous one. However, it does seem logical in the context to consider it chronologically. The final battle is well underway now. Satan has been stung by the invasion of the kings of the East, and he gathers his forces against Jehovah. One of his strongest allies is the city of Babylon. When the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, we found Babylon divided into three parts. Now it is only proper to announce its complete fall.

We have no indication who the angel was. Since the word angel means "messenger", some make an attempt to identify almost any angel found in the

book of Revelation with some messenger other than an angel of heaven. We shall understand this angel in the strictest sense of the word. He came down out of heaven. He has great power and cries mightily in a strong voice because his announcement is of such great importance. The most important announcements in this book are made by angels with loud or strong voices.

The message of this angel qualifies as one of supreme importance. Satan's capitol city has come tumbling down. To see just how important this defeat is to Satan, let us consider what it would mean to Christ for an angel of Satan to make a loud announcement that the church, or "City of God", had completely crumbled and fallen to rise no more. Babylon is the organization which ties Satan's forces together. When Babylon falls the handwriting is certainly on the wall for the Prince of Darkness.

To be absolutely sure the announcement is not misunderstood the word fallen is repeated. In addition, the resulting plight of the great city is pictured in no uncertain terms. Before this it has been in the very mainstream of humanity. But now it is to be forsaken and isolated. It will now be fit only for habitation by the scavenger birds, who feed upon the dead, and by devils and evil spirits.

This writer has only seen recently for the first time photographs of the area which once was ancient Babylon. The lesson is unmistakable. God had allowed his people to be captivated for decades in this land as a means of punishment for their idolatry and unfaithfulness. When the hateful land had

accomplished that purpose, God turned his chastening rod upon the captor. God had warned that it would become deserted and be a place fit only for flocks to roam. In harmony with this pronouncement, one of the pictures showed a flock of sheep grazing on the mounds which were the remains of the city. The vegetation which was shown in the picture was hardly enough for grazing purposes.

Of course, this is not earthly Babylon of which the mighty angel speaks. This is the spiritual city of Satan. It is doomed, never to rise again! One of the main points Jehovah made in reference to earthly Babylon was the permanence of her fall. Like a rock thrown into the sea she would never be seen again. The lesson is the same here. Spiritual Babylon is to vanish from existence, to be seen no more.

REV 18:4 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.

REV 18:5 For her sins have reached into heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

REV 18:6 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.

Jesus said his sheep would hear his voice and would come to him. God has always pled for his

people to separate themselves from evil before his wrath explodes upon them. It was so in the days of Noah. It was also true in the days of Sodom. And now in the end times it is to be true of Babylon. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Man simply can not serve both God and Satan. If he wishes to serve the devil and enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, he must be ready to receive the wages of sin, which is spiritual death. There is no alternative. To escape the wrath of God one must hear his voice and put distance between one's self and Babylon.

There is no escape because God has constantly been aware of Babylon's wicked activities. The prayers of Cornelius once came up to remind God of Cornelius' devout nature. He was blessed because of this. The sins of Babylon have risen up to heaven to keep God reminded of her opposition to him. Her iniquities will not be forgiven because she will not repent. She has been earning her reward for centuries through her mistreatment of God's people. She shall now receive "doubletime" as the factory workers often put it. There is one interesting thing about sowing spiritual seed. One may expect to see a harvest greater than the seed which was sown. One righteous act will result in a harvest of several righteous actions. Even so, one evil seed sown may come back in the full ear, multiplied many times. The cup discussed here is similar to the one Jesus mentioned when asking his disciples if they could drink of his cup. It is not a physical cup. Out of the cup here come either spiritual curses or blessings,

depending upon the life of the drinker. Babylon has poured out a steady stream of persecution and distasteful things upon Christians. The same bitter cup will now be turned up for her to swallow, except the flow will be twice as great. She could not extinguish the saints with her poison, but she will die from it.

REV 18:7 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.

REV 18:8 There 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 who judgeth her.

The amount of pleasure she enjoyed at the expense of the righteous will now be measured, and that measurement will be used to determine the amount of punishment she is to receive. We can not help but be reminded of the word to the rich man in the story of Lazarus and the rich man. In that account he is told that while alive he enjoyed sumptuous living while Lazarus was suffering horribly. Then the tables were to be turned with Lazarus resting in the bosom of Abraham and the rich man suffering horribly. It is so here. The saints are in line for an eternal reward, while Babylon which lived in luxury is to be brought to complete ruin.

Babylon's attitude of false security is common among the wicked. She is of the opinion that her glory and pleasure will last forever and never be taken away. Since the wicked are so short sighted, they fail to see the end of their actions. Over and over God has brought those with such attitudes crashing down to reality. They include such names as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Edomites. Each of these expressed themselves much as Babylon did. But ultimately each of them felt the brunt of the wrath of God by being abased. Babylon is now to join them.

The contrast between the queen and the widow is very vivid. The queen has anything and everything her heart desires. Little does she think about the abject poverty of some of her subjects. At the same time the widow may not have enough to keep her alive. If she survives she may live on a mere pittance. Queen Babylon will discover the folly of her haughtiness. If she has the least idea she will escape the full force of God's punishment, she will be made to think again. Her own misery is to be made double that of those she has misused. The day is at hand when the queen shall be made to sit as a widow, and the widow shall take her place as queen, the eternal bride of the Lamb of God and King of kings.

The speed and suddenness of Babylon's downfall is shocking. It is depicted as occurring in a single day. Her declaration has been that she will NEVER be brought down nor see sorrow. God declares her to be deluded. Not only will she come crashing down, she will do it with unbelievable abruptness. As with

other places in the book of Revelation the time is not to be taken as a literal day. It is God's way of saying she has reigned for many days. She shall be deposed in one.

The plagues which are to be brought upon her are famine, mourning, and death. What a condition for a former queen! God had told his people to come out of her. These are the plagues he desired for his people to avoid. All who make themselves citizens of Satan's great city will finally watch it crumble into ruins and lie smoldering in ashes as she is **UTTERLY BURNED**. Nothing worth while shall remain. All that brought the ringing laughter and lusty pleasure will be replaced by despair and tears.

The reason Babylon can fall so low after being so high is that she has been defiant of Jehovah, the true and living God. She has been deceived into measuring herself by her own standards. She is not to be handling her own accounts this time. God will do the reckoning. He is the Almighty and is capable of assigning appropriate punishment. He is also capable of seeing that the punishment is executed. There is no power in existence capable of interfering, including that of Satan himself. Again we note the false security of those who measure themselves by themselves rather than by the teaching of the Word of God. Their measuring instruments are deceptive and untrustworthy. They are filled with errors. Abruptly, and without any stain upon his perfect goodness, God will bring every such man and woman to the fire which will burn forever.

REV 18:9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall lament for her and bewail her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.

REV 18:10 Standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come.

There is an interesting question concerning the ten kings which are the ten horns of the beast and are said to hate the whore (17:16). In verse nine of chapter eighteen the kings of the earth wail and lament at the destruction of Babylon. If these are the same kings as the ten kings of 17:16 they seem to have had a most sudden change of affections. It is quite possible they are not identical. The ten kings may well be more specific in nature, referring to a unique period. In comparison, the kings of the earth who lament the burning of Babylon represent all of those who have wielded power through their association with the great harlot and her pleasures. At any rate the kings of the earth are completely grief stricken. The false beauty of Satan's empire has been laid bare and thus rendered ineffective. Now they will be unable to draw men to the foot of their throne by offering the pleasures which last but for a season. Even more distasteful, they will find their perfumed bedsheets burned to ashes.

Like Peter, the apostle, they stand afar off. Peter was afraid to be too closely associated with his Lord

lest he become a partaker in the cup the Master was about to drink. He could well have been crucified himself if he freely confessed his association with Jesus. Now the kings of the earth who have previously taken full advantage of all possible connection with Babylon are very careful to maintain their distance. They shed bitter tears over her downfall, but they do not wish to share in the ashpit.

The wicked feel less obligation to share in the consequences of their fellowship than do Christians. The Christian is expected to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. The sinner feels much more free to rejoice with the false success of his compatriots, while dissociating himself with them when the bitter end of their foolish ways arrives. They would reap the profits and sever their connections when the benefits cease.

It is well nigh inconceivable to the kings of the earth that such a mighty organization as was Babylon would come tumbling down so suddenly. There are two dominant ideas threaded through the description of the fall. One is the absolute completeness of the destruction. The other is the abruptness of it. Previously one day had been mentioned. Then the time is shortened to just ONE HOUR!!

We must once again call attention to the symbolism of time in Revelation. Admittedly the time of one hour given here is symbolic as is the case of many other times used in the book. Let us make some comparisons between other uses of time and that used in this place. One recurring time phrase

used is that of time, times, and half a time. Translated, this becomes three and one half years. This was obviously a broken or incomplete period which was to be followed by other subsequent events. Another passage informed the saints they would have persecution for ten days. Ten days is a relatively short time period. They would be able to endure it since it would come to an end soon. Again, it was said the locusts would have stings with the power to hurt men for five months. Five months is a long enough time for men to repent of their evil deeds, but not excessively long. In the twentieth chapter we shall note the binding of Satan for one thousand years. Compared with the previous time periods one thousand years is a very long time. Surely this time period is meant to refer to an entire era. With all these different time references it is more meaningful to return to the ONE HOUR given as the time for Babylon's fall to be completed. Babylon, which appears to be indestructible, is to be brought to ruin in an astonishingly short time span.

It is difficult to see how the serious student can really believe this applies only to the earthly city of Rome, or even to the entire Roman empire. Surely no one who has read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* could gather from that account that Rome fell in the sudden manner described in John's vision. She crumbled bit by bit over a period of centuries. No, dear reader, the Babylon which falls in the eighteenth chapter of Revelation is the entire city of Satan. It has not fallen as yet. The world still drinks deeply of the cup of the wine of

her fornication. The kings of the earth live deliciously with her in their delusions. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life still pull men together in the pursuit of the Serpent's putrid promises. But it shall not last! With a suddenness which will catch the breath, God will bring an end to her corrupt reign. In one day, yea in one HOUR she shall be burnt and lying in cinders with only smoke and ashes replacing her previous splendor.

And at that point one of the major allies which Satan brought forward to fight against the church will have been eliminated. The citizens of Asia Minor could rejoice in knowing that whatever part the city of Rome, or even the Roman empire as a whole, had in this greater city will be destroyed with her. Whether she lasted to the end of the first century or to the thirtieth century is of much less importance than is the absolute certainty that her end will be both complete and abrupt. God is not slack concerning his promises!

REV 18:11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise anymore.

REV 18:12 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 of vessels of ivory, and all manner of vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and of iron, and marble.

REV 18:13 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.

The kings of the earth who revel in power and possessions are not the only group who will bewail the fall of Babylon. The profiteers who transfer the merchandise for exorbitant gain will also weep. The Bible has numerous passages condemning those who would take advantage of their fellowman by buying and selling at excessive profit. It is our understanding that God does not frown upon one making an honest living by trading one product for another when the trade benefits both parties. The problem arises when such beneficial trading is overwhelmed by motives of greed and undue profit. Some men live in luxury because they have managed to gain control of goods which are essential to the lives of others. Those who weep over Babylon are not the honest neighborhood grocer or the operator of the local dress shop. They are the greedy, selfish followers of Satan's creed. They devour others for their own gain.

There is hardly a category of merchandise on earth which is not included in this extensive list. It includes the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. And it closes by listing the most valuable of all things: the souls of men. Such merchants hold absolutely nothing to be sacred and immune to their profit taking. If one tells such an individual he must reserve time on the Lord's day for an employee to

worship, he will soon find the profiteer releases him as an employee. Even young women are enticed to sell themselves as prostitutes. Three classes destroy their souls in such filthy transactions: the prostitutes, the ones who control them, and the clients who pay them. Many a business man has sold his soul for a few thousands of dollars.

When Babylon falls, those who depend upon Satan's worldly organization for such sinful gains will find the evil cooperative has been crushed before the Lord of all the earth.

REV 18:14 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.

REV 18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing.

REV 18:16 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!

REV 18:17 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.

As in the case of the kings of the earth the merchants are horrified at the spectacle of Babylon's

destruction. They also stand at a respectable distance lest they participate in her plagues. Their tears flow no less freely than those of the kings of the earth, for they have lived like kings while the saints of God suffered starvation, pain, and even death.

Their grief and unbelief are much as might be the case if one were to find the corpse of a beautiful national beauty contest winner charred and burnt in the ashes of a house where she had been living. All the finery of her expensive gowns and dainty slippers would appear even more horrible by reason of the contrast before and after the event.

Man is not a pleasant creature when he has departed from his God. His values become twisted until he thinks the things of this earth, which were created for service to God, are ends within themselves. Man's covetousness turns the beautiful creation into a thousand idols, all of which he places before Jehovah. But the things which are seen are made by that which is not seen. The visible things shall pass away. Jesus words of wisdom will then be seen. *"Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you."*

The shipmasters may be classed as part of the merchants, or they may be a class within themselves. Whichever is true we find them joining in the lamentation. Much of the profits of the merchants depend upon overseas shipping. Among the richest of all men are those who own giant fleets of ships. The possible profits from such ventures are enormous.

Once again we do not see God condemning all

transoceanic shipping. There is nothing wrong with being a king. But when the king centers his activities on greed and power rather than service, he serves Babylon. There is nothing wrong within itself in being a merchant. The wrong comes in taking advantage of others for excessive profit. There is nothing wrong with owning a fleet of ships to transport goods from one continent to another. But, there is much wrong with abusing others, and taking advantage of them to benefit one's self. In each of these cases the offender proves his loyalty is to Satan rather than God. Their treasuries will empty when Babylon meets her final hour.

REV 18:18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

REV 18:19 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.

There is an interesting parallel passage in chapter twenty-three of Isaiah. The shipmasters of Tarshish are told to howl because Tyre has been laid waste. Her merchants were princes, and her shipmasters were laying up treasures. Tyre was also called a harlot. But the time would come when her merchandise would be given to them that dwell before the Lord.

The chorus sung by the rich and the powerful is a most miserable croaking. The kings of the earth, the merchants with their costly goods, and the shipmasters also will sing a new song now. However, it will be very different from the new song of those who are redeemed by the Lamb. It will be a song as filled with sorrow, as the song of the saints is filled with joy.

How many times the suddenness of the destruction is emphasized. First, it is one day; then it is one hour. Now the one hour is repeated. How secure the dwellers in Jericho must have felt behind the great walls of that city. And, how secure the citizens of Babylon feel yet today! She seems to be quite impregnable. But Jericho's walls fell flat and sudden. Babylon will be even more surprised when the fire of God's wrath burns her to a crisp, within the hour.

REV 18:20 Rejoice over her, thou heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

REV 18:21 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.

Christians are told to forgive and pray for their enemies. They are told vengeance belongs to the Lord. He will see that proper retribution is taken. In the sixth chapter of the book the martyrs cried

out for the destruction of those who continued to visit havoc upon the earth. They were told at that time to put on their white robes and wait patiently until the number who would be killed, as they were, would be fulfilled. Now it is apparent that the martyrs are to witness the answer to their plea. Those who destroy the earth are to be thrown into complete disorganization. The apostles and prophets who have been stoned and murdered for the testimony of Jesus will not have to take their own vengeance. God will perform the distasteful task himself.

The millstones the author has seen look as if they weighed about two hundred-fifty pounds. They are about three feet in diameter and about six inches thick with a hole in the center. It would take a very short time for one who had one tied to his neck, to sink to the bottom of the sea. It would be impossible to return to the surface. The angel now not only allows the millstone to drop into the sea; he hurls it into the waters with great violence. After Jehovah is through with Babylon it will completely and eternally disappear from the society of man.

God's prophecy concerning ancient Babylon came true. Jeremiah foretold just such destruction of the earthly city. For century after century men had no precise knowledge of the site where it once stood. After many years of search the spade of the archeologist managed to unearth some of its ruins. But one could hardly consider what is left a city today. There are a few mounds where sheep and goats graze on the grass which now grows over the

collapsed walls. This is all that remains of what was once a thriving metropolis. Satan's spiritual harlot city will meet a similar fate. It shall so fully disappear that it shall not ever be found, even with the most diligent search.

REV 18:22 And the voice of the 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;

The harper and the musicians represent the gaiety which was once so much a part of the revelry of the Godless city. All joy will turn to mourning in that day of doom.

Any manufacturing of products which supported Babylon shall come to a halt. Since the purpose of all such products is gain and greed, there will be no need of this type of produce. This does not mean there will be no more production after the fall of Babylon. It is only the music and the produce of the wicked city which will be halted.

There is much repetition of the phrase "no more at all." The cessation is not just for the moment or for a broken time like the time, times, and half a time we encountered before. Babylon is not disappearing for the time being. She is to be utterly destroyed—forever. Not a trace of the city will remain.

REV 18:23 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.

REV 18:24 And in her was found the blood of the prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Light is essential for the activities of the evening and the night. While the craftsmen of verse twenty-two would have been plying their crafts in the daylight hours, the ones who see by candlelight after dark will also find their actions blocked by the darkness. Even the reproductive functions will be brought to a halt, leaving Babylon without children. Bridegroom and bride will have no place, nor reason for existence in the ruined city.

All this futility is to be brought to pass because the kings, the merchants, and other evil men and women are persuaded by Satan to follow their own selfish ways and to serve their own selfish interests. They then deceived the multitudes into enrolling the multitudes behind them in their deadly deeds. Men of every nation on earth are participants. Surely there must have been good and righteous people in many countries on earth down through the ages. Nevertheless, the masses are apt to follow the path which leads to destruction.

Verse twenty-four reads as if mighty Babylon

had been opened up for an autopsy. Inside of her was found the blood of the prophets and the saints upon which she had feasted. The past tense is used here to indicate the surety of the activities described. Babylon still exists. But she is sure to be dethroned. And when she is dethroned, the blood of every Christian slain upon the land will be evidence of her unmerciful slaughter.

On occasion farmers shoot a dog who is suspected of killing sheep. They may not be completely sure they have killed the right dog. But when they find wool in the stomach of the dog, they know they have made no mistake. This is the killer. When the charred remains of Babylon are examined, there can be no doubt God has poured out his wrath upon the proper target.

Chapter eighteen says very little about the actual details of the destruction of Babylon. It speaks of the kings hating her and of her flesh being eaten and of her being charred with fire. Then it describes her as lying in smoking ruins. Is the destruction brought about through such things as war and human forces. Or, is this destruction visited directly from God in heaven? Let us pay close attention to chapter nineteen for further answers to these questions.

Chapter 19

REV 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor and power, unto the Lord our God:

REV 19:2 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.

The statement “after these things” does not demand that the matters follow in chronological order. John may simply mean that this vision follows the previous visions. What he saw in a later vision might well take place before that which he saw in a previous one. However, the context here does seem to indicate a chronological sequence. The voice which he hears is offering praise for the judgment which has been visited upon the harlot city.

The much people in heaven who cry out with a great voice includes the prophets, the martyrs, and all others who loved not their lives unto death. It would particularly include those who had, in chapter six, asked God how long it would be before those who destroyed the earth would be halted. Their blood had been shed and their lives had been sacrificed. Now God has engineered the vengeance of one of their chief persecutors, Babylon. We could well understand a cry of relief.

It is not proper to accuse God of cruelty and unjustness for what has happened to Babylon, as

some so-called religious persons would do today. The multitudes fall before God and give him glory and honor. One seeks to remove glory and honor from those who misuse others. But, Jehovah has used his glory and honor appropriately in the fall of Babylon. He is to be praised for his actions.

Babylon is a great whore because she used her attractiveness to lure men away from the pure and holy relationship they should have with Jesus Christ and Jehovah himself. By doing this she has brought much misery and corruption to the earth. She deserves every woe or plague which has been emptied upon her.

This rejoicing over the destruction of the wicked would have been out of place if God had not approved of it. In verse twenty of chapter eighteen God had said, *“Rejoice over her; thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets.”* Christians are instructed to pray for those who despitefully use them and persecute them. But this is a scene taking place after which God's long suffering has been exhausted in the knowledge that Babylon is not going to repent. At this point it is not wrong to rejoice over her woes.

REV 19:3 And again they said Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever

REV 19:4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

REV 19:5 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.

Over and over the cry Alleuia, or “praise ye the Lord” rises from the Lord’s faithful who have gone on through the valley of death. And as they ring forth their praises, the smoke of the burned city rises also. Never again will Satan’s city come to life from the smoldering ashes. She is gone forever.

Not only do the people who have died in the Lord rejoice. They are joined by the four beasts, or living creatures, who serve closest to the throne of the Almighty. Saint and cherubim together praise Jehovah, falling down before him and offering him the sacrifice of their lips.

A voice comes from the very throne itself calling with divine authority for all the faithful to join in the song of jubilation. From the least to the greatest, all are to blend heart and voice without the slightest discord. Moses, Abraham, Paul and Peter will be side by side with the widow who cast in the mite and with the beggar Lazarus. In unison this mighty chorus will ring out in the song of heavenly harmony.

REV 19:6 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, Allehuia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

REV 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice,

and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

REV 19:8 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.

A major part of the great rejoicing is over the fact that God has now chosen to exert his reign in a new manner. He has always been King of the universe. His throne is from everlasting to everlasting. But, he has seen fit to tolerate Satan and his followers for a time while he exhorted those who would listen to come out from among them. With the fall of Babylon it now becomes evident to both Satan and the people of God that the power to snuff out the opposition has been present all the time. The only reason it has not been exercised before is that every opportunity for repentance was to be offered.

Now that all the voices of heaven have joined in the praises to the King, the result is a thunderous ovation which causes both heaven and earth to tremble before it. Once before we had heard such a heavenly chorus sounding praise to Jehovah. That was in the latter part of the fifth chapter before the Christ took the sealed book from the hand of God and began to open it. Immediately after that the sixth chapter described the riding out of the conquering Christ across the earth with his gospel. In that previous scene of praise there was a picture

of the situation as it should be with every creature in heaven and earth offering their worship. This time the Word of God has been presented, and men have had the opportunity to react to it. Babylon would later speak out with a resounding NO!. But, Babylon has now been conquered. Again praises ring through the heavenly places, as well they should!

The marriage of the Lamb is at hand. Jesus said,

“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

We as Christians look forward to the time when we shall be with Jesus. We realize all too clearly that our present relationship leaves much to be desired. We live in a world stained with sin and in bodies which are mortal and corruptible, unfit for a complete consummation of our union with him.

With the fall of Babylon his rival for the affections of his people is removed. The harlot will no longer seduce and corrupt them with her temporal pleasures and lusts. Christ’s bride, the church, has rejected every overture of the great whore. She has arrayed herself in deeds of righteousness, and she has kept her robes clean through the blood of the Lamb. Thus, she stands ready in radiant glory to walk with him in white in eternity. As soon as the remainder of the foes of Christ have been cast into the lake of fire and seething brimstone, the marriage will take place.

Christ must remain in heaven until every enemy is brought down. Then he will come back to take his wife unto himself for all the endless ages when time shall be no more. Be patient, fellow Christian. The marriage feast is not as far away as some may think!

REV 19:9 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.

REV 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

No one has ever experienced the true happiness which will attend those who share in the final union with Jesus. All other pleasures are as nothing in comparison with the joy of living with him in the Father's house of many mansions. There are seven beautitudes in the book of Revelation. This is the most majestic of the seven. We shall only appreciate it fully when we take part in it. Under no conditions should we risk missing it.

We need not fret with uncertainty either. These are the true sayings of God. He has kept his promises without fail. This promise will be kept likewise.

Upon hearing of such hope John fell before the one who brought him such a message of happiness.

He was quickly corrected. It is improper to worship any other than Jehovah. The messenger declared himself to be only a fellow servant along with many others who have declared the joy of the gospel. Men have often erred in paying undue honor to the man who preaches the message, rather than to the designer of the message. Preachers and leaders of every type in the church must be ever alert to the dangers of receiving praise which is due only to God. Any who act as earthen vessels to carry such a precious cargo may expect to receive such adoration from time to time. Men are so happy to have been blessed beyond their hope that they sometimes confuse the author with the messenger. Let all who have the privilege to preach take care to give God the glory, the honor, and the praise.

What is meant by saying, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy? The meaning is that prophecy loses all of its vitality if it is not centered on Jesus and the joy which comes in the marriage of the Lamb. Foretelling the future is quite worthless in and of itself. But if that future reveals the Christ as the conqueror of every enemy, then prophecy comes to vibrant life. All the prophecy in the Bible has one main theme. That theme is **“Victory through Jesus.”**

REV 19:11 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.

REV 19:12 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.

REV 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of God.

The good news has been given that the marriage of the Lamb is sure. Mighty Babylon has met its doom. This is certain evidence that God will overcome the remainder of the opposition. Yet there is a need for certain actions before the marriage feast takes place. We shall see more of that final celebration when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven to be the Lamb's wife, as described in chapter twenty-one.

For the present the battle must continue. Babylon is gone. Satan is left without his capitol city. However, the beast and the false prophet remain. In addition those who received the mark of the beast still mock the rule of Jehovah. All of these enemies must be defeated. Thus, the King of kings rides out to bring them to the proper end.

The heavens are opened in John's vision. A white horse comes bounding forth from heaven to ride over the earth. Upon the white horse is the Word of God. Previously John had seen a door opened into heaven. Now he sees the entire heaven opened. This must be a most monumental event.

This is the same rider who was astride the white horse of chapter six. At that time he was pictured as he began his ride to present the gospel to mankind. He was described there as going forth

“conquering and to conquer.” Much has happened since then. The gospel has been preached to all the world. Men have had more opportunity to hear than they deserve. Many have rejected the good news and mocked the Kingdom of God. There will be no mercy now. Such men are not fit for proper burial. That part of mankind which will not repent will be left in such a state as to be food for the vultures and the eagles.

We must not confuse this appearance of the Word with the final coming of the Christ when he appears in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them that know not the Lord and obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9). That event is spoken of in verse nine of chapter twenty. It occurs after the extended reign of Christ and the martyrs.

Nor is this a literal fleshly war fought with steel swords or even atomic bombs. This is a spiritual war. The major weapon is the sword which proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. That is, of course, the truth of his teachings.

He is called faithful and true because as part of the Godhead he can not lie. His facts are sure. His commands never lead men in wrong directions. And when he makes a promise it will not be broken. Even when it meant the intense suffering of the cross, he remained true to the purposes for which he left the glory of heaven and came to earth. Some generals may forsake their armies when times become hard. Some shepherds may abandon their sheep to the wolves when danger threatens. But Jesus is faithful. Jesus is true. Fear not!

He judges in righteousness; many judges with whom men are familiar do not judge impartially. Human judges may be bribed. But Jesus is no respecter of persons. All will receive exactly, according to their works.

He even makes war in righteousness! War is the most hideous exercise known to man. The expense in money is indescribable. The expense in bloodshed is even worse. The spiritual disaster which is left in the wake of war defies evaluation. Rape, robbery, and murder are not uncommon, and sometimes these occur with the full acceptance of the leaders. When Jesus makes war, his war is truly a holy war. Only the wicked are slain. Only the truth is supported. And the war is fought with the sword of the Spirit or WORD OF GOD.

His eyes penetrate the wicked hearts of the unrighteous. Simultaneously, he knows the deeds of the righteous. He wears many crowns upon his head as a sign that he stands vastly superior to any earthly king. In the sixth chapter of this book he was shown as wearing a single crown. Now he has gained many victories over foes throughout the ages. His army of soldiers of the cross has overcome through his blood time after time. Even though dying a natural death these faithful have become martyrs in that their lives have been living sacrifices. No power shall be able to stand before this King of kings with his army of Christian soldiers.

He has a name known to no one save he himself. This is reminiscent of the promise to the church at Pergamos in chapter two where they were promised

a name which only they who received it would know. We will not speculate on this name. It has secrets known only to Jesus, and it would be folly for us to guess about it. Surely we can say it is a very special name which describes our Lord and Saviour in all his dignity and glory.

His garments are stained with blood as if they had been dipped in it. Is this the blood of the martyred saints? Is this the blood of Jesus himself as he died for the world in the crucifixion? We think it is neither. The most probable explanation is that it is the blood of his enemies. The picture is likely a reference to Isaiah 63:1-6. In speaking of Edom, which often represents the opposition to the people of God, a question is asked. *“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?”* The answer comes back, *“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.”* Even though this picture is a picture of a spiritual battle, the lesson is clear. The Word of God is going to take the lifeblood of the wicked, leaving them strewn upon the spiritual battlefield.

There are two passages in the New Testament which aid us here in understanding the symbolism. One speaks to us of crucifying the old man. It is not possible to crucify an individual without shedding his blood. Yet this passage is talking about spiritual change rather than physical death. The other passage

speaks of crucifying the Son of God afresh. It is not talking about physically placing him upon the cross once more. The shedding of the blood of Christ's enemies and the staining of his garments in that blood is a graphic way of affirming their complete removal as opposers.

REV 19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

REV 19:15 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.

REV 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Who are the armies of heaven which follow the Christ into this great battle? They could be the legions of angels which Jesus said were available to him at the time he was taken to the crucifixion. There is a better explanation than this; it is an explanation which fits more suitably into the context. If the student will recall the twelfth verse of the sixteenth chapter, he will remember the mention of the "kings of the East." The Euphrates river was to be dried when the sixth angel poured out his vial. This was to make way for the invasion by the kings of the East. Immediately after this, Satan, the beast, and the false prophet sent forth a call to the kings

of the earth to do battle. The kings of the East, and the kings of the earth, are found on opposite sides. We see the kings of the East as kings of the sunrising, and associated with the “Sun of righteousness.” It is he who is King of kings and Lord of lords. The armies of heaven consist of both the living and the dead who have conquered sin and Satan. They were ready for the invasion in chapter sixteen. Now they ride the white horses of purity and victory through the kingdom of darkness killing the old men of sin and replacing them with new men in Jesus Christ. After Satan had gathered his forces under the kings of the earth, the battle of Armageddon began. The first prize to be taken was Babylon. It was first divided into three parts. In a very short time it was captured and burned. Its ashes are seen emitting smoke which curls upward for ever and ever. It never rises again.

As the armies which were in heaven ride out following the great King in chapter nineteen, we simply see the battle of Armageddon continuing. The great harlot city was a key conquest, but much remained to be vanquished. And so, the kings of the East which includes the prophets, the martyrs, and all of those who refused the mark of the beast, will ride across the earth victoriously behind the Word of God. We do not see them literally returning to the earth, nor do we see Jesus himself returning in bodily form at this time. We do see the Word of God as victorious over every ally of the Dragon. As Christians teach the gospel, the cause of the armies of heaven under Jesus becomes so powerful nothing

less than unconditional surrender is possible for the forces of evil.

The white linen in which the armies of heaven are clothed is mentioned several times throughout the book, but we can not help remembering the answer given to the saints who cried out, "*How long shall it be?*" in chapter six. They were told to put on white robes for a season and wait. They are now allowed to participate in the elimination of the destruction of the earth. And they wear those white robes of righteousness.

The contrast between the bloodstained vesture of the Christ, and the clean white linen of his followers is impressive. No man is capable of destroying Satan through his personal power. The blood of Christ's enemies is shed by the power of the gospel. That power is manifested through the sword of the Spirit which proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. He alone can remove the stain of sin from the soul. And he alone can tread the winepress of the wrath of God, thus smearing himself with the blood of the enemy.

With the sword which proceeds out of his mouth Christ is to smite the nations. It is immediately stated that he will rule them with a rod of iron. This verse leads some to see the sword as a rod of iron and therefore a literal sword. The point is mistaken. It is not a rod of iron because it is composed of metal. It is a rod of iron because it can not be bent. The rules and laws of men are administered by weak and frail humans. Bribes are sometimes taken. Evasion of the law is possible. It is not so with

Christ. That which does not measure up to his expectations will be shattered as is an undesirable vessel in the hands of a potter. Men will not stretch or break the rod of iron. It will break them.

We must not pass this portion of the text without referring the reader to the second psalm. Let us not assume he will turn to it, but place it before him. The psalm acts as its own commentary.

*“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 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—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 POTTERS VESSEL.** (Psalm 2)*

There can now be no mistaking the meaning of the passage in Revelation chapter nineteen. The heathen who reject the Son of God as King of the earth and appointed by his Father shall be destroyed before his Word which is an unbending rod of iron. The picture becomes even clearer when comparison

is made to two other passages in Revelation. These are 2:27 and 12:5. The saints shall apply the rod. The saints of Thyatira are promised they shall rule over the nations with a rod of iron if they are faithful unto the end.

One of the most difficult considerations in this entire section dealing with the battle of Armageddon and the destruction of the wicked is the nature of their destruction. This passage follows repeated descriptions of the longsuffering of God with warning after warning. Now it appears his longsuffering has reached an end, and he is ready to visit his wrath in place of his mercy. At the same time it seems as though the picture is that of application of the Word instead of physical punishment. The question is whether this destruction is removal of the wicked through converting them or through overwhelming physical force. In just what manner is the rod of iron applied?

We are persuaded this is a description of the fiercest spiritual battle of all history. Christ with his church, as kings of the East, are on one side. The Dragon, the Beast, the False Prophet, and the kings of the earth are on the other side. Though the combatants have changed from time to time, we are witnessing a climactic battle in a war has been raging since the events of the Garden of Eden.

Satan was severely wounded at the resurrection of Jesus, and knowing he had but a short time he called forth his allies to fight against Christ and the church. God has held back some of the consequences which could have been visited upon the wicked. Now

he allows the full contrast between the results of evil and those of righteous conduct to be made. The world has been allowed to follow the antichristian spirit until it has reached its ripened state. The folly of Satan's rebellious ways stands out clear and plain where all can see it. Adjacent to it and in stark contrast stands the purity and holiness of the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. Both have been allowed to run their course in the affairs of men. The joy, peace and hope of life with Christ have been made evident. Just as evident is the hatred, tears, and violence of existence in the domain of the Prince of Darkness.

The manifold wisdom of God will have been completely manifested through the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. Satan will have hurled his mightiest weapons in the direction of the Son of God and the remnant of the woman's seed, the church. The church will have withstood the heaviest onslaughts. God's family which was begun in the Garden of Eden will have increased greatly as multitudes of men and women will have been born a second time into his spiritual household. They will have had every condemnation against their souls removed through the purifying power of the blood of the Lamb. Just as men marching off the edge of a cliff would die by the thousands in defying the physical laws of nature, those who persist in marching off the precipice with Satan will lose their lives in this terrible spiritual battle. The winepress of God will exact its toll.

Surely there will be some who will kiss the Son

lest he be angry even at this late date. They will kill the old man of sin and be converted and born again into the family of God. But one way or the other Jesus Christ will claim his victory.

REV 19:17 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.

REV 19:18 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.

It is time for another momentous message. An angel so bright it can be seen while standing in the forefront of the sun is to make the announcement. Once again the voice is a loud one. This news must reach through all the earth, to every tongue, kindred, tribe, and nation.

The message is that the scavenger birds are to have a feast. The food for the feast is to be provided by Jehovah. It is no longer the followers of the Lamb who suffer persecution and death at the hands of the beast and the false prophet. The tables are now turned.

Jesus was once asked to comment upon the end times. He made an interesting statement. *“Wheresoever the carcass is, there shall the eagles be*

gathered together.” The primary application of his statement was likely the destruction which was to come upon the city of Jerusalem as the Jewish nation was nearing its end. The symbol of the Romans was the eagle. However, the statement may have had very important overtones pointing to the present text. Could he have been reflecting on the scene described here? The birds which eat flesh are the scavenger birds. In most parts of the world the sign of respect for the dead is to give them a dignified burial. Contrariwise it would be a mark of utter disdain to leave the bodies of the dead for the birds to pick clean. The picture here is the latter. After the battle is waged the wicked will be left for the vultures and the eagles. They deserve no more!

The scripture now categorizes the types of persons who will be slain and fed to the birds. It begins with the kings of the earth. They have been most faithful supporters of Satan. As leaders they will fall and be mentioned first. But they are not the only ones to fall. Those slightly less important; that is the captains, shall accompany them. Just a little less important yet are the mighty men. Also included is the flesh of horses.

Why? Throughout the Bible the horse is presented as an animal of war rather than a beast of burden. The Israelites were told not to depend upon horses and chariots, but to place their trust in Jehovah. When Jesus rides out in this very chapter he rides out on a white horse. The white horse was especially a sign of victory. Now those who placed their confidence in force and weaponry will find their

confidence misplaced. Both the weapons and the users shall fall before the Lord and his Word. Both freemen and bondmen shall be found among the corpses of the terrifying supper for the birds. The freemen are those who handle their own affairs. The bondmen are those who serve others. The wicked will include both classes. The great and the small, the important and the unimportant, will fall together. The Lord, with his eyes penetrating like flames of fire, will claim victory over men of every class.

REV 19:19 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.

REV 19:20 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 were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Babylon, the organized, pleasure loving, capitol city of Satan, has already fallen. But the beast has still remained active. The philosophy of force still stands defiantly in the path of the white horse and his rider. The battle of Armageddon still rages. It will soon be over. Those who depend on force for success in life are as completely doomed to failure as those who fraternize with the great whore. Why is it men can not learn vicariously from Solomon,

the wisest of all men? After reigning over Israel in the time of her greatest glory and using the horses which God had warned against, Solomon concluded such use of power was vanity and vexation. After satiating himself with wine, women, and song, he found such fleeting pleasures to also be vanity and vexation. Solomon had tried both Babylon and the beast. Neither provided fulfilment. His conclusion was to *“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”*

The False Prophet is the third great ally called by Satan to do battle against the church. He had associated himself with political force in the attempt to draw men away from Christ to false religious teaching. The False Prophet would claim to be a spokesman for God, but in actuality he spreads the false teaching of Satan. Any effects which he is able to produce are used to cause men to uphold force and pleasure as the proper paths of action. This is to be nullified as he will now be rendered helpless before the army of the Lord.

REV 19:21 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.

Mighty Babylon lies in smoking ruins. Now the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire. As the battle continues, Satan is losing his most powerful allies one by one. Brimstone is sulfur. A combination of fire and brimstone would be burning

sulfur. In this case the quantity is sufficient to produce a lake. To be cast into such a holocaust defies the power of imagination. The odor of the vaporized sulfur dioxide would be intolerable. The heat of the flames and the suffocating effect of the liquid would combine to bring torment indescribable. As this book is filled with symbolic language, there is little doubt this follows the pattern. However, this occasion may be one in which the literal torment would be preferable to that which it symbolizes. The punishment is severe. So is the crime! It is no light thing to trample in the blood of the Son of God. What punishment fits such a crime? Only God knows!

We have encountered the word “remnant” before in reference to the children of God whom Satan set out to persecute as recorded in chapter twelve. Satan has been unsuccessful in eliminating this remnant of God. They still remain, standing secure on Mount Zion, in spite of his gigantic efforts to destroy them. On the other hand, Satan’s own remnant is now to be rendered worthless. Not one iota of his forces are to be spared. Gone is Babylon. Gone is the beast. Gone is the False Prophet. Gone are the kings of the earth. Gone are the captains, the mighty men, the horses and the horsemen, both great and small, both bond and free. The serpent stands alone. The Christ rides surrounded by his linen clothed army while he flashes the sword of the Spirit over every kindred, tongue, tribe and nation.

Every power in heaven, on earth, and under the earth must now stand stricken with awe before the conquest of the King of kings and Lord of lords. His Word has prevailed. **ALL HAIL THE KING!**

Chapter 20

REV 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.

REV 20:2 And he laid hold on the Dragon, that old Serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.

REV 20:3 And cast him into a 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.

In chapter nine, when the fifth angel sounded we noted a star falling from heaven. The star was obviously a personality since he was given the key to the bottomless pit. At that point it was concluded that the fallen star was Satan himself. The key allowed him to use the pit as a headquarters. From the pit he was able to send forth hordes of evil things to plague the earth.

In the present scene an angel descends from heaven with the key to the pit in hand. Some hold the angel in Revelation twenty to be Jesus Christ. Once again we must remind the reader that throughout the book of Revelation Christ is consistently superior to the angels. It is incompatible with the entire context of the book to identify Jesus as an angel. There may be reason for equating Jesus with the "Angel of the Lord" of the Old Testament. However, although the angel of the Lord is sometimes

called “Lord” he may only be a very special messenger of God, holding a higher position than others.

The present picture is a continuation of the activities of chapter nineteen. The armies of heaven had followed Christ in the defeat of his enemies. This defeat had been the result of using the sword which proceeded out of his mouth. That sword is clearly the Word of God, or the gospel. The bottomless pit will be closed by that same power. The key to binding Satan and locking the bottomless pit is the Word.

For a period of time Satan had been allowed to open the pit and exert his every effort to devour the children of God. Now he is to be abruptly halted. His pit is to be sealed. Of even greater concern for him is that he is to be inside it after the sealing. Neither he nor any of his wicked servants will now be stalking the earth.

There is a possible connection between this passage and two other scriptures. One is 2 Peter 2:4. The other is Jude 6. In these passages the angels are described as being cast down and reserved in chains and darkness until the judgment. This condition is not that of the lake of fire. The lake of fire awaits the loosing of Satan as well as the judgment. See later in this same chapter.

Verse two leaves no doubt as to who was to be captured by the angel. In this verse the wicked one is called by all four of the names most commonly used in the New Testament. Other names such as the “Accuser” could have been added. The four used here are sufficient. Each of the four terms describes

some different characteristic than do the other three.

The chain carried by the angel is symbolic. A chain is a device which restricts movement or activity. Both the chain and the key are means of curtailing Satan's influence. Both exert their power through the Word. The apostles were once told they were given the "keys of the kingdom." They were not given literal keys. They were entrusted with the Word of God which opened the way for men to leave the kingdom of darkness and enter the kingdom of God's dear Son. Jesus is said to have the key of David. When he opens a door, no man can shut it. When he shuts a door, no man can open it (Revelation 3:7). Jesus had provided this angel power through the Word to shut the door of the pit. It would not be opened until he allowed it.

This is the conclusion of the battle of Armageddon which began with the invasion of Babylon by the kings of the East. Satan had mustered every force at his command to resist the invasion. One by one they had fallen. Babylon came tumbling down. Those who had the mark of the beast were killed. The beast and the false prophet were cast into the lake of fire. Only Satan himself remained to fight. Now he is to be taken. His organization, his leadership, and he himself, have succumbed to the power of the Word which proceeded out of the mouth of the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is a serious mistake to separate the twentieth chapter of Revelation from chapters sixteen through nineteen. This is one battle. It begins in Revelation 16:12 and reaches its climax in Revelation 20:2.

Satan is said to be bound for one thousand years. We can no more place a literal meaning on the one thousand years than we can upon the chain or the key. We shall not understand the one thousand years unless we pause to reflect upon other time periods mentioned in this book. This passage has formed the heart of a doctrine which teaches that Jesus will return to earth and reign from a literal throne of David in Jerusalem for one thousand calendar years. There is no more reason for believing this thousand years is literal than for seeing the other time periods in such manner. Let us look at some of them.

Because of the importance of the issue at hand, we must review some matters which have already been handled at length. Your patience is requested. Forty-two months was mentioned as the time during which the woman would be nourished in the wilderness. Three and one half is half of a perfect seven. The woman's stay in the wilderness would then be followed by a brighter time. One of the churches of Asia Minor is told it will have persecution for ten days. The ten days is symbolic of a very short period of time which can be endured in view of better things ahead. The locusts were said to have power to sting men and torment them for five months. Five months is a long time for one to hurt. This no doubt gave time for the individuals to repent. None of these time periods is to be taken literally. Each time period fits the lesson it was intended to teach.

Now we are told Satan will be chained and sealed for one thousand years. One has to TRY if he

is to miss the point. Satan had been allowed to persecute the remnant of God's children for an extended period. This was followed by a tremendous conflict when Satan and his forces were defeated by the power of the Word of God. Then there will be a VERY LONG time during which Satan will be removed from the scene. It need not be a literal thousand years. It certainly does have to be a much longer time than the ten days, the five months, or the forty-two months. No man ever lived one thousand years. That includes Methusaleh. The time period during which Satan is to be bound is to make all previous persecution seem short.

Just how complete is the binding of Satan? Verse three teaches it is absolute and complete. Just how would one employ words to describe a more complete removal of influence than that pictured? Satan is first bound. Then he is cast into a bottomless pit. This is followed by sealing the pit. It is then said that he does not deceive the nations any more for the entire time period. It does not say his deception slows down. It is a flat statement that he does not deceive at all!

There are those who would soften this passage by saying the passage speaks of Satan being partially restricted as is a dog on a chain. The dog is bound and can not roam at will. But he may still bite someone who wanders into the area permitted by the length of the chain. Friends, may we honestly say this partial restriction is the kind of binding portrayed in Revelation 20:3? How could the Lord have said what he had to say any more positively

and clearly? Just as he made it abundantly clear in the second verse that it was Satan who was to be bound, he makes it equally clear in verse three the binding is absolute and complete. Satan has no influence left. And it will stay that way for a long time.

Has Satan already been bound? Has the one thousand years begun? There have been decided differences among men as to the teaching of the scriptures on these points. Let us examine the issues in the light of the scriptures.

There are those who hold that Satan is now bound. A number of different passages are utilized to support the position. The first we will mention is Matthew 4 where Jesus is confronted by the Devil in the temptations. In all three temptations he answered him with the statement, "*It is written.*" The Devil was thus defeated and his influence was never again quite the same. But in only a few short years we are told that the Devil entered into Judas at the time of the betrayal. He was obviously still roaming the earth seeking whom he might devour.

Matthew 12:25-30 is said to prove Satan has already been bound. There Jesus had cast out devils through the power of the Holy Spirit. He was accused of doing it through the power of Beelzebub. His answer was that one must first bind the strong man before entering his house to take spoils. He was saying Satan would surely not cast out his own assistants. Jesus was opposing the work of Satan and it would be necessary to restrict Satan before his territory could be invaded. He says nothing in

Matthew twelve about a complete and absolute binding which lasts for an extended period. The binding of the strong man was simply sufficient to accomplish the task of the moment.

Another passage appealed to is Colossians 2:13-15. This scripture speaks of Christ's death upon the cross as a means of triumph over and spoiling of the principalities and powers. He is said to have made an open show of this triumph as his blood was offered on the cross providing forgiveness of sins. Through the atonement offered by Christ there is now no more condemnation for those who live in Christ. The Accuser has nothing to accuse them of. Their sins are gone. Thus, Satan is perceived by these individuals as being already bound. According to them, we are presently living in the one thousand year period. To those who hold this position, the one thousand years is the entire gospel dispensation following the crucifixion.

We must take issue with this viewpoint. The one thousand years is part of the gospel dispensation. It is not the entirety of it. According to the twelfth chapter of Revelation, Satan was waiting to devour the Christ at the time he was born. God then caught up his Son to heaven and left Satan frustrated. It was then that Satan decided to persecute the church. The snatching up of Christ is his ascension to the right hand of God after the death, burial, and resurrection. And so, rather than Satan having been bound completely and sealed in the bottomless pit, he is raving mad and thrashing about knowing that he has but a short time to work. We are living presently in that short time.

There is every evidence today that Satan is alive and well. It is true in the twentieth century, and it has been true in every century from Eden until now. Particularly evident are his activities since the establishment of the church. He has done his utmost to destroy the Kingdom of Heaven. His efforts have resulted in the development of Babylon, his capitol city of pleasure and lust. He has invaded government, and the philosophy of force and violence as a governmental principle demonstrates the mark of the beast on a global scale. He has infiltrated religion to the extent that the Word of God has been superseded by the commandments of men. Thus the False Prophet does his deadly work.

My friends, do you really find yourself able to say Satan has been bound, thrown into a bottomless pit, sealed in, and presently deceives the nations no more? Murder, theft, rape, lying, bribery, starvation, disease, and injustice of every kind nearly smother us on every side. Satan is not bound today. At least not in the sense of the binding of Revelation 20:3. The gospel dispensation will see that binding, but it has not yet arrived!

Dear reader, this passage of the Bible points ahead to a time upon this earth when the gospel shall have won a tremendous victory! The beginning of the end for Satan undoubtedly took place when the Babe was born in Bethlehem. The serpent made a strong effort to destroy the Son of God before he passed his infancy. The effort failed. He tried again with the temptations in the wilderness. Again he was defeated. He tried at the cross and failed once

again. At present he is persecuting the church. The present persecution will result in yet another defeat for he and his allies. Satan will be stripped of his power and rendered ineffective. Meanwhile the church will come forth from the wilderness to take a prominent place in the mainstream of human affairs.

It strikes your commentator that vast numbers of Christians have lost hope in the last few decades. Alexander Campbell once named his periodical the “Millennial Harbinger.” He and many others entertained hope that the gospel would spread over the earth and be accepted by men to such a degree that the entire civilized world would be raised to spiritual levels previously unrealized. Men such as Alexander Campbell, Moses Lard, B.W. Johnson, Ashley Johnson, and others were crying out the good news that the confusion in the world would be replaced by a victorious church as men in large numbers received the Word of God. The church was growing and vital. Sometimes over one hundred persons were baptised during a single gospel meeting.

These people were not looking forward to an earthly reign with Christ ruling from Jerusalem for a literal one thousand years. They were looking for a period of time when Christ, reigning from heaven through the power of the scriptures, would see his Kingdom dominant in the hearts of men. It was a grand vision! It was a scriptural hope!

Where there is no vision the people perish. What has happened to our vision and our hope? There are

several things. It is likely that Alexander Campbell's death was accelerated by grief over the Civil War. Rather than seeing the Restoration Movement reaching for greater heights, he saw storm clouds gathering. The mark of the beast was leaving the blood of young men running in rivulets across the battlefields. The lion and the lamb were most certainly not lying down together in peace as yet.

And then came the war which was supposed to end all wars. If World War I could be won, many people throughout the earth thought peace might prevail. It was not to be. Within a very short time men were at each other's throats again in World War II. Faith and hope were blunted. Some of those who had looked for peace on earth decided such could only come if a new order arrived in which Christ himself returned in person. They promoted premillennialism. Others concluded that Satan had already been bound and that we must put up with every increasing evil and wickedness until the second coming and the judgment.

The problem has its roots in our inability to see the entire picture from a proper perspective. We tend to magnify the events of the present and overlook the past and the future. We see the battles and not the war. Satan has won many skirmishes in the past. He will probably win more in the future. He will NOT win the **BATTLE OF THE AGES!**

Let us refuse to concede the earth to the Devil. Babylon will be demolished. The Beast and the False Prophet will be removed to the lake of fire. And Satan shall be completely bound and sealed in the

bottomless pit where he can deceive the people no longer for a very long time. All this has not happened as yet. But it will take place. And it will be the result of the gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God. The sword which proceeds out of the mouth of the King of kings will seal Satan in the pit.

There is a point of major importance here. The Devil need not be the sole source of rebellion against God. He does clearly take the lead. He is very influential. Vast numbers ally themselves with him. But, men are creatures of choice within themselves. They have the power of accepting or rejecting the instructions of Jehovah. Adam or Eve either one could have decided to take of the forbidden fruit in the garden without the Devil provoking that sin. It is not to be presumed that sealing the Devil in the pit where he can no longer tempt men will bring a cessation of all sin. Sin is the transgression of the law. Man is quite capable of this transgression on his own.

Therefore, we are not to expect that during the extended period in which the Devil is incapacitated the world will be sinless. However, without Satan and his angels encouraging the matter on every side we should expect to see an enormous contrast with the present conditions of wickedness and immorality. Another point of interest is that the curse of death and corruption would still be present. Only with the resurrection and the coming of the new heavens and the new earth will the twin monsters of death and corruption flee away. There will still be tears. There

will still be disease. There will still be aging and death.

But someone objects, “If Satan is to be so completely bound as this, what is the meaning of the “little season” for which he is to be loosed? (Verse 3)” If he is to be so completely subdued, why would he be allowed to run loose again? Our answer is that man has never been very wise in the midst of prosperity. It has been said that there are only three generations from pauper to pauper. All too often we must learn our lessons the hard way. Man threw away the perfect conditions of the Garden of Eden. Perhaps he could do the same again, rejecting the gospel and thereby opening the pit and loosing the bonds.

It is through the church that the manifold wisdom of God is to be made known to the principalities and powers. Once the church has demonstrated God's wisdom by causing men to live in righteousness and to reject the Devil, perhaps that task is completed.

Also we might notice that when one opponent in the boxing ring knocks the other down, the fight is not declared won until the stunned fighter is given an opportunity to regain his feet and try again. The fight does not usually last very long. The battered fighter goes down and out, and there is no doubt as to who was the conqueror. This may be God's strategy. All of the principalities and powers must be made to realize the folly of Satan's rebellion. The woman takes a hoe and cuts off the head of a snake. The body of the snake thrashes and twitches until there

is one final tremble, and everyone knows it is dead. This may be the last twitch which when observed causes all the principalities and powers to know who is the victor. For the particularly interested reader we recommend a careful examination of Gabriel's observation of human events, as recorded in the tenth chapter of Daniel (Daniel 10:12-21).

REV 20:4 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 on their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

As in the case of the chain and the key of verse one the thrones are a part of the vision which John is observing. Symbolically they represent the rulership of these souls over something. Who are the ones who sit upon these thrones? Over what do they reign?

The ones who sit upon the thrones are those who loved not their lives unto the death, as described earlier in the book. Some of them have actually been murdered as martyrs because of their determined testimony for the Lord. Others have sacrificed and served faithfully unto death, and thus have received a crown of life. They have proven while alive they were able to reign over self, sin, and

Satan. We saw them before in chapter six as they were lying at the foot of the altar in heaven where they had given themselves as living sacrifices and dying examples.

There is more. These are the kings of the East, or kings of the “Sunrising”, before whom the waters of the Euphrates were dried in order that they might invade and conquer Babylon. They have now successfully invaded and conquered. They, therefore, accompanied the Lord in his triumphant ride of chapter nineteen. They are part of the armies of heaven. Satan had rejoiced in their physical death and what he thought was the end of their influence on the earth. He should have learned his lesson long before. He had watched Jesus die on the cross, but that death had not marked the end of the influence of the Christ. Rather, it had enhanced it. The body of Jesus was resurrected to ascend into heaven. His cause was impossible to extinguish.

These who sit upon the thrones are the ones who would not accept the philosophy of force represented by the beast. The power they exerted was not by force but by example and teaching. Many of these martyrs were considered anything but kings while alive on earth. They often turned the other cheek and even prayed for their enemies. They suffered loss of jobs and deprivation of their property because of their faith. Their minds were marked with the spirit of the Lamb instead of the mark of the beast. Their hands labored in the service of God and their fellowman, not in the accumulation of earthly possessions.

But now it is different! Like Lazarus who rested in the bosom of Abraham after death, these who were once last are now first. They have been the least. They are now the greatest. They sit with Jesus because they have assisted in the conquest of Satan. And they sit not just for ten days or five months. They sit with him for one thousand years, a long enough time to make all the earlier trials seem as trifles.

If the reader is still thinking of the battle of Armageddon as a physical battle followed by a physical feast for the vultures, and then a set of physical thrones, he has missed the heart of the lesson. The kings of the East only leave heaven with their Lord in the sense that all they lived and died for while on earth is now exploding into prominence. They do not come back physically to sit upon earthly thrones. They live in heaven with the Christ and with the Father. Meanwhile the teachings which they promoted, and for which they gave their lives, now bring about a resurrection of their influence. Any doubt about the spiritual nature of their reign should be dispelled by noticing it was not the bodies which were seen upon the thrones. It was the souls.

REV 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

REV 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath a 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.

The rest of the dead are in contrast to the ones who lived and reigned with Christ. They are the ones who were unwilling to sacrifice their lives in the service of the Lamb. They are the ones who refused to be sealed with the Holy Spirit, or take the new name, or confess the Son of God. They have reached the point of death with the mark of the beast on their foreheads and on their right hand. Babylon, the Beast, and the False Prophet were their objects of worship.

During the period in which the saints reign with Christ and Satan is confined in the bottomless pit, the influence of the wicked dead will have largely faded away. They have died physically and their cause lies gasping. They have no hope. They can only await the final resurrection in which they will be brought forth from the graves to face the judgment. The first resurrection in which the faithful have participated has nothing at all for them. They died the first death. They now await the second, which is the lake of fire. Those who took part in the first resurrection were made holy and happy. These who followed the Serpent are to be both unholy and unhappy.

One reason some believe the thousand years and the entire gospel dispensation to be identical is that those who live and reign during that time are said to be priests and kings throughout the entire period. Several times the New Testament uses similar wording. We are said to be a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9). Earlier, in the first chapter of Revelation, the Christians of the seven churches are

told God has made them both kings and priests. The past tense is used. They were alive. Yet they are already referred to as kings. The conclusion drawn from this is that if one is described as a king in this early part of the Christian dispensation the thousand years must already be in place. This conclusion does not follow. Christ is also said to be reigning at the right hand of God after his ascension (Acts 2). But, at that time Satan is still active as we can see from his entering into Judas. There is a sense in which Christ reigns now. There is also a sense in which every Christian reigns now. However, the twentieth chapter of Revelation speaks of a time when Christ's enemies have been subjugated except for death, the last enemy.

Physical death is not a mark of defeat for the faithful king of the East. It merely marks a transition to a state in which he or she can await the first resurrection when Christ shall reign from heaven with his saints over a better world than we now know.

But, does not the sixth chapter of Romans speak of every Christian being raised from baptism to walk a new life. Surely this is the first resurrection! As Christ died and received his kingship, we would then die to our sins and be given our kingship as we reign over sin. Yes, we are raised to walk a new life. And, yes we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. But, no this is not the resurrection of Revelation twenty. Satan still must be resisted that he will flee from us. The Beast would still place his mark upon us. The great harlot would still attempt

to intoxicate us and drink our blood. When the first resurrection of Revelation twenty takes place, the influence of Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet will not be there.

We will be asked why the scriptures do not have more to say about such a glorious period. Why is it mentioned but once in this chapter and nowhere else if it is such a wondrous thing? We answer that it IS mentioned in many other places. The prophets of the Old Testament spoke much of it. We have only to examine the scriptures to see that God looked forward to this time. It is a major goal of the Christian age. It will not be present throughout the entire time of the church, for the church will be driven into the wilderness for a broken period of time. But then the church will return to prominence. The two witnesses will rise from the streets of the great city as men are convinced the law and the prophets were not pointing to an imposter.

What did the prophets say of such new age? We shall not exhaust the subject by any means. But let us look at some few passages. Isaiah saw a day when a stem and a branch would grow out of the root of Jesse. He would smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and slay the wicked with the breath of his lips. He would rule in righteousness and peace would abound on earth. The entire earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord, even as the waters cover the earth (Isaiah 11:1-10). Notice the parallel between the end of the nineteenth chapter through the tenth verse of chapter twenty and the ten verses of Isaiah eleven. You say this is only in the Holy

Mountain that such is true. Yes, we agree, but it is a Holy Mountain much more prominent than we see in the last years of the twentieth century.

Daniel saw a time of great controversy. Kingdoms would come and go. The Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans would stand high in human affairs. Then in the time of the Romans there would be a rock cut out of the mountain without hands. This rock would be a kingdom which would crush and consume all other kingdoms, and it would grow until it filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:31-44). Later Daniel was to tell of great persecution which would befall the saints of the Most High for a period of forty-two months. It is not a coincidence that this is the same time period as mentioned in the Revelation during which the church is driven into the wilderness. After that, the greatness of the kingdom under the **WHOLE EARTH** is given to the saints. It is an everlasting Kingdom and all dominions then serve and obey the Almighty (Daniel 7:25-28).

David spoke of the same matter in the thirty-seventh Psalm. Repeatedly he tells us not to fret because of evildoers. God shall cut them off, and the meek shall inherit the earth. The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell there forever. Jesus echoed the statements of David when he said, "*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.*"

When Christ was asked to teach his disciples to pray, he told them to pray, "*Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*" It is true that the Kingdom has been established since

that time. It is no longer appropriate to pray for the establishment of the Kingdom. But, it is not true that the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus was telling his disciples to work and pray for just such a set of conditions as Isaiah, Daniel, David, and many other prophets, including himself saw coming.

From the above it can be readily seen the reign of Christ and the martyrs described in Revelation twenty is not an isolated idea mentioned nowhere else in the scriptures. It is a major goal of the entire gospel age. It is a more complete picture of the scene announced by the angel in Revelation 11:15. *“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.”* He shall reign from heaven, not from an earthly throne in Jerusalem. He shall reign for a very long time. And, when this old heaven and earth are fled away, he will take us to himself and give the kingdom to the Father where the saints will enjoy the new heaven and earth without end. Does Christ reign now? Yes! But when he has taken his great power unto himself and defeated the foes in the great spiritual battle of Armageddon, the reign will reach majestic proportions yet undreamed of. What a tragedy it is that many Christians have lost that vision after once having grasped it. Truly the meek SHALL inherit the earth.

Even if we are dead when such shall take place Satan can not take away the joy. We shall reign and exercise our priesthood through the resurgence of the gospel in the first resurrection.

REV 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

REV 20:8 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.

After the lengthy period of dominance by Christ and the church, Satan will once more be allowed to roam loose over the land. We have already given a possible answer to the question WHY? Ultimately we are forced to admit we do not know. We can only surmise from some of the things we do know. There are other related questions to which the answer is just as difficult. God is stronger than Satan. Why then did he not eliminate him from the scene at the first indication of rebellion? Why was he ever allowed to roam in the Garden of Eden? We have no measuring stick to apply to the actions of an infinite God.

It is likely that we as mortal and finite men will never be able to answer such questions to our satisfaction. We assume it has something to do with the freedom of choice which is the nature of all truly spiritual beings. We can go no further in explanation. We simply accept the facts. Satan is first restricted to a point of disappearance. He is then allowed to exert himself again for a “little season.”

Penitence on the part of Satan might be expected after such a set of experiences. He had

been struck a gigantic blow by the death and resurrection of the Lord. Knowing he had but a short time and writhing in the throes of death, he had attacked the church. His efforts were temporarily successful in that he was able to drive the church into the wilderness for a time. But all he had done was reversed with the fall of Babylon, the capture of the Beast and the False Prophet, and his own imprisonment. Clear thinking on his part would have resulted in a change of heart and action. However, clear thinking has never been Satan's strong point. Penitence on the part of the Devil is out of character.

We are correct! Rather than repenting of his actions Satan conceives of his release as one more opportunity to deceive and destroy the children of God. He no longer has his previous allies, but that does not deter him. Men are still able to choose. Satan has found them most gullible before, especially when they are in prosperity. Thus, he will go out into the multitudes and enlist all who will enter his side to battle against God. He is highly successful. Vast numbers from the four quarters of the earth are enrolled in his service.

Where and what are Gog and Magog? An examination of the book of Ezekiel will throw light on this matter. A careful reading of Ezekiel, chapter thirty-eight, will reveal that Gog and Magog represent all the heathen of the earth who are willing to live in opposition to God. These foolish individuals will be ready to listen to the deception and lies of the Devil and will array themselves against Jehovah and his saints.

Just what happened when Satan was loosed from the bottomless pit? The answer must be found in an examination of the imprisonment process. If our explanation of the imprisonment is accurate, our explanation of the release will be. If the former is in error, the latter will be also. The former conclusion was that Satan's binding and imprisonment came about through a willingness of the kindreds, tribes, tongues and nations to heed the Word of God. We will now be consistent in stating that the release comes about when men in large numbers disallow the Word of God, and once again heed the voice of the "Father of liars." A world which had been blessed by service to God will once more become corrupt.

Jesus asked, "*When the Son of man returns will he find faith upon the earth?*" This passage leaves us with great pessimism. There will be faith but there will also be enormous wickedness which has developed during the little season.

We anticipate there are those who will quote the above verse along with others such as Matthew 24:6,37-38 and 2 Timothy 3:13 to show that the world will become increasingly wicked until the Christ returns in judgment. None of the three passages, nor all three of them together, prove such a point. There are two times during which the New Testament indicates great wickedness will exist. One of these times is before the period of righteousness of Revelation 20:4-6. Satan has all of his forces active during that time. Evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse. That, however, does not declare

the wickedness to be perpetual. The first resurrection will curtail it sharply. There will be wars and rumours of war during the forty-two months. Then there will be a lengthy period of peace. The other period of great wickedness will be after the dominance of Christ and the martyrs. For a short season terrible wickedness will exist as Satan gathers Gog and Magog in numbers like the sand of the sea.

REV 20:9 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.

REV 20:10 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.

The wicked followers of Satan grow so strong they threaten to overwhelm the camp of the saints and the city of God. We are reminded of similar circumstances when the Assyrian army had marched to the very gates of Jerusalem, the City of God. The Assyrians had defied and insulted Jehovah by word and action. They had spoiled the villages and mocked the false gods of the various peoples. Even the physical forces of Israel seemed impotent against them. What would stop them now?

What man can not do, God can do. In a single night a destroying angel left thousands of the choicest

soldiers of the Assyrians dead. The same will be true at the time of the defeat of Gog and Magog.

Let us not confuse the battle of Armageddon with the defeat of Gog and Magog. The battle of Armageddon was concluded when Satan was thrown into the bottomless pit and sealed up. That battle was fought before the thousand year reign of righteousness. This present conflict follows after the thousand years. The battle of Armageddon was fought with the educational power of the Sword of the Spirit. God worked through the saints without stepping in directly. It was demonstrated to Satan that the preaching of the gospel is sufficient to demolish his folly. This battle after the thousand years is to be concluded in a different manner. God will send destroying fire from heaven to quench and devour the efforts of the wicked.

The saints of God now live in Christ's kingdom with the New Jerusalem as their capitol city. There is a future state of the New Jerusalem. Some day it will descend from heaven as described in Revelation 21:1-2. It will be adorned then as a bride for her husband to enter into the marriage of the Lamb. That is its glorified and eternal state. But the New Jerusalem does exist today. Hebrews 12:22 says the saints have already come to Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem. As a part of that city we are now preparing ourselves to meet the Lamb unblemished. The church is the City of God. It is the camp of the saints. Satan had lost his own great city of Babylon. He now makes a grand last effort to destroy that of

Jehovah. His attempts will fail most miserably. The city of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the citizens thereof are protected by the outstretched hand of the Almighty.

The great deceiver himself is now cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. He will join the Beast and the False Prophet who have been there throughout the thousand years. He will never again be loosed upon the earth. The word which is translated as “ever” in the passage before us is the same Greek word from which we get eon. The passage could be translated to say he shall be tormented for eons of eons. Jesus spoke of the lake of fire as a place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. If, after all of God’s efforts to bring about a change of heart, Satan and those who serve him persist in rejecting the truth, God has no alternative but to separate them from himself eternally. The lake of fire and brimstone is his way of telling us of the severity of such a separation. There will not be another “little season” after this one. Satan and his aids will have been permanently removed from the company of the righteous. The earth will be left in a scarred condition as sorrow, tears, corruption and death have left their blemishes. But Satan, Babylon, the Beast, and the False Prophet are gone forever. The victory is **almost** complete.

There are several scriptures which should be investigated by the reader at this juncture. It is possible that some passages which are difficult to place chronologically may have application in the “little season.” Among these are the “eighth king” of

Revelation 17:11, the “lawless one” of 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8, and “the time of trouble” Since these passages are not as clear as some of the others, we shall let it suffice to call the students attention and move on.

REV 20:11 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.

REV 20:12 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.

The great white throne which is seen by John here is the throne of God. It is the supreme throne of all the universe. Nothing can successfully challenge the authority associated with it. Satan has made every attempt to do so without success. It is white because it is absolutely pure and righteous. Anything that is stained with sin must ultimately be removed from its presence.

Daniel saw this same throne according to the account of Daniel 7:9-10. The Ancient of Days whose raiment and hair were as white as snow sat in judgment of ten thousand times ten thousand. The books were opened, and he condemned the little horn who spoke great blasphemies to be burned with fire.

The reason the old heaven and earth must flee

away is that there is no place for them because of their contamination with sin and the curse of Satan. Though Satan is now gone, the results of his efforts still show. The creation still groans in the bondage of corruption waiting for the manifestation of the saints (Romans 8:18-21). New and glorified bodies are going to be given to the sons of God. They can not abide in a corrupt heaven and earth. Thus, the old creation will be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The disappearance of the heavens and earth is not a new concept. It was discussed by Peter in 2 Peter 3. There we are told of a series of three earths. The first existed before the flood. It was sinstained and full of wickedness. It was overflowed by the flood of the time of Noah. A new and relatively clean earth took its place. God then warned that the present heaven and earth would be replaced. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works therein shall be burned up. He then adds that we look forward to a new heavens and a new earth. We shall pursue the topic of the new heavens and the new earth further when we get into chapter twenty-one.

Now all of the dead of all time are brought before the judgment throne of Jehovah. All men will participate in this great scene. It will include both the holy and the unholy. This is the scene spoken of by the Christ in Matthew 25:31-46 in which both the sheep and the goats are present. We can not help but be reminded of the statement of the writer

to the Hebrews, “*It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27). None will miss that appointment. Everyone will be there, without exception.

One interesting consideration is the identity of the one who sits upon the great white throne. Is it the Father, or is it the Son? Verse twelve says that the dead stood before God as the books were opened. However, in Matthew twenty-five we are told the Son of man will appear in his glory to supervise the judgment. The difficulty is not serious. Jesus told the Christians in the early part of this book he would allow the faithful to sit with him on his throne even as he overcame and sits with his Father on his throne. For Jesus to sit in judgment is for the Father to do the same. They will both be sitting on that throne.

Certain books were opened and will provide information upon which the judgment may depend. What are these books? The first of them we will consider will be the book of life. In this book of life the names of the just are written. Names have appeared and disappeared from this book as time has passed by. On earth we maintain rolls of citizens of certain cities. These persons may claim all of the rights of citizenship. God maintains a roll of citizens in the New Jerusalem or City of God. Those whose names are written in that book are entitled to all of the benefits of that citizenship. Phillipians 4:3 speaks of that book. Also Revelation 3:5 informs us that those who overcome will continue to have their names written in this book of life. If however, they

do not overcome, but fall before Satan, their names will be blotted out of the Lamb's book of life. The book of life is a most critical book. If one's name is found there, he will reap glory. If it is not found there, he will reap torment.

The book of life is not the only book opened. What are the others? Surely the Old and New Testaments are included in these other books. Jesus said in John 12:48, "*The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*" Both Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4 tell us that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God. Thus, in the judgment our lives will be examined in the light of the directions which God has given to us. Ecclesiastes may shed further illumination upon the matter. We are told, "*God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). This would indicate that one of the books opened in the judgment would include the works of every man ever born. We must add here that God blots out of this book of remembrance those sins of which we truly repent. If we follow his plan for forgiveness, those evil things which were once written in the book of remembrance will not appear there in the judgment. They will have been erased by the blood of the Lamb of God.

One last point is found in verse twelve. It is said they are judged according to their works. Some feel this statement is indication of degrees of reward and punishment. Your writer believes there are other passages in the scriptures which teach such degrees.

This present verse may or may not be related to that discussion. It could possibly mean the separation of the sheep from the goats is to be made on the basis of all the records of a man's actions, and not as a result of some whim or shifting mood on God's part at that time. Men often judge with partial and biased judgments. God's final judgment will be both accurate and impartial.

REV 20:13 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.

REV 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

REV 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

It might occur to some that great difficulty would be encountered in bringing all the dead to the judgment throne. After all some men have perished at sea and were thrown overboard into the depths of the ocean. By the time of the judgment many will have been dead for thousands of years. Their bodies will have long past returned to the dust from which they came. Perhaps even the atoms of which their bodies were composed have helped to form the bodies of others who lived later. Will this prevent God from gathering the dead at the great white throne? The answer must be a resounding NO! The graves will

release the bodies of the long dead. The sea will give up its dead. With God all things are possible. It is not our prerogative to tell God what can and cannot be done. Christ said in Matthew 16:18 the gates of hell should not prevail against the church. At the resurrection the gates of death, hell, and the grave shall be broken down before the power of the Almighty. All who have been confined there will be ejected to meet that great and terrible day.

Perhaps Paul's discussion of the resurrection as given in I Corinthians, chapter fifteen, will aid us in answering some of the perplexities of that event. The bodies which come forth at that time will be as different from the bodies which entered the grave as a full grown plant is from the seed which produced it. The essence of that which is planted shall be that which is resurrected. Yet it shall be altered to fit an eternal destiny. It will be able to stand unblinded in the very presence of the glory of Jehovah which dims the sun itself. On the other hand, it will be able to continue unconsumed in the eternal fire of the brimstone lake.

It is repeated that every man will be judged according to his works. God does not wish that this point to be missed. The judgment will not be based upon the groups to which a man belonged. It will not be based upon the influential persons one has known. It will not be influenced by bribery or perjury. It will depend wholly upon each man's works. We recall Jesus repeated statements to the seven churches of Asia, "*I know thy works.*"

Now death, the last enemy of God, is to be rendered impotent. Even during the thousand years

during which Satan was imprisoned and the saints reigned, the curse of death still stalked the earth. Before the reign of Christ could be brought to a successful climax, every enemy had to be conquered.

“Even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:20-28).

The close of chapter twenty marks the end of the scourge of Satan upon earth. From the Garden of Eden until this point in time the conflict of Satan with the authority of God had brought to man every type of grief imaginable. The twenty-second chapter of Revelation puts it beautifully. *“There shall be no more curse.”* Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet have all reached their ultimate destiny in the lake of fire. They have been joined there by all of those whose names were not written in the Lamb’s book of life. Satan’s great city of Babylon which depended upon pride and lust for her existence has been burned. Her ashes rise up for ever and ever. The old earth and the old heavens have fled away from the presence of the throne of God. Death and the grave have been defeated and cast into the lake of fire.

Satan had first spent himself in opposing the

Word of God as described in the first eleven chapters of Revelation. He had little success. The Word of God is not to be overwhelmed so easily. He had then turned his attention to the persecution of the church as described in chapters twelve through twenty. In that attack he also failed miserably. All of the principalities and powers must now sit up and take notice. The wisdom of God is unlimited. Rebellion brings everlasting destruction and separation from his presence.

We must agree with Adam Clarke in his choice of Romans 11:22 as one of the most meaningful verses in all of the Bible.

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them that fell severity but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

Our prayer is that the reader will avoid every appearance of evil and let love cast out fear.

It hardly seems imaginable to us that some would limit this magnificent victory to a defeat of the persecutions visited upon Christianity by Rome. This is no limited victory. This is a conquest over every force Satan has ever been able to muster against the Almighty God. To see only the submission of Rome in this triumph is to rob God of the results of sending his only begotten Son for the redemption of mankind. It is to see Christ as the conqueror of a small territory in the area of the Mediterranean Sea rather than of both the heavens and the earth.

There is a continuity which runs from the drying of the waters of the Euphrates for the invasion of Babylon by the kings of the East to the casting of death and hell into the lake of fire. Satan's allies, the enemies of God, fall one by one until none are left. Let us give the Lamb of God all of his glory and not just a small fraction of it.

If any shall ask what this victory would mean to the first century Christians of Asia Minor who were suffering immediate persecution and death, we must answer that it would have meant everything. We must give those faithful Christians credit for enough vision to see past Rome. If only Rome were to be included in their victory, it must be a hollow one. Other representatives of the Beast and the False Prophet would rise to take the place of Rome. These martyrs did not give their lives to conquer Rome. They gave their lives to defeat Satan with his entire kingdom of darkness. Chapters sixteen through twenty of Revelation declare their labors successful.

Chapter 21

REV 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.

REV 21:2 And I John saw the holy city new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The first heaven and earth had fled away before the holy face of God. They were contaminated and scarred with the curse of sin. In that corrupt condition they could not remain forever in the presence of the King of righteousness. They simply would not fit into the perfect purity of the new creation.

This is not the first mention of a new heaven and a new earth. Isaiah warned the heathen nations who set themselves up against Israel their mountains would be melted and their heavens rolled together as a scroll (Isaiah 34:3). In the fifty-first chapter he said, *“The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment.”* In chapter sixty-five Isaiah declares God’s joyous vision of hope for Israel. *“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy (Isaiah 65:17-18).*

Thus, even in Old Testament times God was beginning to introduce the idea that a new and better

creation was to be expected. The heathen world would pass away because of its unholy character. Even the earthly kingdom of Israel would need to be replaced by a better order. It may be noteworthy here that the old Israel provided the seed for the new spiritual Israel which was to replace her.

Is there to be absolutely nothing left of the old creation, or is the new creation to be a renewal of the old heaven and earth? Since Bible students have been at great variance on the matter, we shall attempt to dismiss for the present all human testimony and focus our attention upon the scriptures themselves. It matters little what men conclude, and this includes ourselves. But the teaching of the Bible is life and it is spirit. Let us examine it.

Haggai speaks of a time to come when God will shake the heaven and the earth. *“Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come”* (Haggai 2:6-7). The same event seems to be referred to in Hebrews 12:26-28. *“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 can not be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear: for God is a consuming fire.”*

The above passages indicate a contrast between the material and the spiritual. The material creation

will be shaken by the confrontation with the Son of God. When the shaking is completed, the material creation will have been removed. It will be superceded by the spiritual creation of which the Kingdom of heaven is our foretaste.

Peter speaks of the passing of the heavens and the earth. Let us hear him. *“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 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 away with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness”* (2 Peter 3:10-13).

We now have a number of terms which all refer to a like event. The old creation has no more place. It is to flee away. It is to pass away. It is to be burned up. It is to be melted. It is to be dissolved. It is to be shaken until the things that are made are removed and only the unshakeable remains.

At this point one might reach a hasty conclusion that there is not the slightest iota of the old creation carried over into the new. However, we have other teaching which must not be ignored. Since we have just examined 2 Peter 3, let us look further at this chapter. Earlier in the chapter Peter has been warning those who would take the return of Christ

lightly because of the long wait. He informs them that this same attitude prevailed in the days of Noah. He then reminds them the world that then was perished, being overflowed with water. He goes on to say the present heaven and earth are to perish through fire. Notice that Peter talks of three heavens and earths. There is the one before the flood. There is the present one. And there is the one still to come. Since the present world contains traces of the world before the overflowing with water, it is possible that the new heaven and earth may contain traces of the heaven and earth which now are.

The reader is reminded that when something melts it is not completely annihilated. When something burns, ashes remain. When salt dissolves in water, the salt can still be reclaimed by evaporating the water. Let us be honest, and let us be careful. God's truths are not mined without a little sweat.

Our study is not complete without a look at Romans 8:17-23. Paul has been telling the Romans they must live spiritual lives if they are to be considered adopted children of God. Then he says, *"If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."* Notice the present suffering leads to an enjoyment of the inheritance after our manifestation in the glorified condition. He continues, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature*

was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

This passage teaches that something from the present creation will be present after the glorification of the saints. The sons of God are heirs. They shall be glorified as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord. The glory which shall be enjoyed at that time will make all present suffering seem trivial. Verse nineteen tells us the entire present creation is waiting expectantly for this manifestation of the saints in glory. The word “creature” is used three times in the three verses nineteen through twenty-one. It is precisely the same word which is found in verse twenty-two which is there translated as “creation.” The American Standard translates all four of the occurrences as “creation.” So do many other of the later translations. The context makes it very clear that the “creature” as the King James has it here is not limited to humanity. It says in verse twenty the creature, or creation, was not subjected to vanity willingly, but was subjected by one who has subjected the same in hope. Now it can not be said that mankind was subjected to vanity unwillingly. Every man who is lost has brought himself to that condition by willing disobedience. On the other hand, it can be said that the creation was subjected to vanity unwillingly. The curse which came upon the earth was not because of rebellion. It came as a part of the punishment of man.

Both the sons of God and the creation itself are

subjected in hope. They await the glorious manifestation of God's children with earnest desire and expectation. The same deliverance which releases men from the present sufferings and projects them into glory will release the creation itself from the bondage of corruption. Today both the sons of God and the creation groan and labor together in hope. It shall not be so in the new heaven and new earth.

Along with the previous considerations in the passing away of the old heaven and earth, we should note the words of Paul to the Corinthians in chapter fifteen of First Corinthians. A proper understanding of the transformation of the natural body into a new and glorious spiritual body may shed light on the disappearance of an old material creation and the appearance of a new spiritual creation. Paul says, *"That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."*

We note that Paul speaks as if the old body is gone. He says the one which shall be is NOT the one which is planted. He then proceeds to explain his meaning. The body which is raised will be as different from the old as the sun is from the stars. It will be as different as the grain of wheat is from the full grown plant which arises from it.

Paul says, "It" is buried or planted. Then he says "It" is raised. The body that is raised is not to be the body which was planted. Yet **it** is buried and **it** is raised. The difficulty is parallel to the entire

new creation. “It shall be melted, dissolved, burned up, and flee away.” But it looks forward to deliverance from the curse of death and the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Under Christ the new creation has begun. It is in somewhat the same condition as is a tender plant before it breaks through the surface of the ground to bask in the sunshine. Nevertheless, it has germinated. God tells us of an entirely new life. An old man is first crucified (Romans 6:6). Then a new man is born (John 3:6-7). The new man requires spiritual bread which is found in Jesus Christ (John 6:48-51). He must quench his thirst with spiritual water (John 4:13-14). He is clothed in new spiritual garments (Galatians 3:27). He walks in the light of the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2) and (I John 1:7). He has come to a New Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22).

It is sometimes said the church is the vestibule of heaven. The idea is that many of the promised future blessings are already enjoyed to a lesser degree while we live in our natural bodies on this present earth. A very meaningful passage is found in Deuteronomy 11:18. There God tells his people if they will treasure his words and see that these words are taught from generation to generation they will find their lives to be like “*the days of heaven upon the earth.*” If this could be said of the pre-Christian age, it must be even more true of these latter days.

While we live in the natural body and await in hope the glorious liberty which is to come, Jesus is preparing a place for us. He said, “*I go to prepare a place for you that where I am there ye may be*

also.” He was speaking of the new heaven and the new earth. Faithful Christians have been stepping into the vestibule of this new creation for many centuries now. As the bride of Christ they have been washing their garments in the blood of the Lamb in preparation for the ultimate union with the Bridegroom in the holy and pure atmosphere of the new creation.

We have heard much talk about the heaven to come. We have heard almost nothing about the new earth. Upon occasion when we have mentioned the subject to supposedly well informed preachers or other church leaders we have received flippant replies implying that it really makes little difference. A typical response is to the effect that we will find out some day, so why worry about it? These answers to questions about the new earth are out of order. The Bible talks about it. Why shouldn't we? There are precious promises in the scriptures which could take on added meaning if we had more insight into the new heaven and the new earth.

One of the most beautiful of all the Psalms is the thirty-seventh. It begins by telling the reader not to fret because of evildoers. These wicked ones will be cut down like the grass. If looked at on a short time basis we have every right to ask, “Are not the righteous cut down also?” James says our life whether wicked or righteous is like a vapor which appeareth for a while and then vanishes away. There must be more in the psalm. If we pursue the matter farther, we find the psalm repeating over and over, “*The meek shall inherit the earth.*” At least six times in this one Psalm the wicked are warned they shall

be cut off, while the meek and righteous are promised the earth as their inheritance. Not only are they promised the earth as their inheritance. They are told this inheritance is to last forever.

Next consider the statement of Jesus in Matthew 5:5. "*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.*" The Bible has much to say about the inheritance of the saints. Paul said in First Corinthians 15:50, "*Flesh and blood can not inherit the Kingdom of God.*" As the context will show, he was talking about the future inheritance after the resurrection.

Dear friends, I do not think that I or any other Christian has yet inherited this present earth. The Devil offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world to fall down and worship him. Satan controls large portions of the present earth. His wages of death are paid on every hand. The bondage of corruption is altogether too evident with all the accompanying tears and sorrow. I do not want to inherit this sick and sorry world. I want a new heaven and earth which has been liberated from the clutches of Satan. That is precisely what God has promised if I can be counted as one of his meek ones.

Peter promised a time of refreshing which was still to come. He said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the **TIMES OF REFRESHING** shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ which was before preached unto you: whom the heavens must receive until the **TIMES OF RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS**" (Acts 3:19-21). Peter was talking about a future time when Jesus

would appear. He was talking about the new heaven and the new earth when there would be a restitution of the old creation. He was talking about a time of refreshing from this stale and sinstained world. He was talking about the new creation which the saints will inherit when the the bondage of corruption has been swept away in the glorious manifestation of the sons of God. He was talking about a new spiritual creation as different from the old as the resurrected body will be from the natural body which preceded it, and as the kernel of wheat is different from the plant which grows out of it. I am going to do my utmost to be there. I urge the reader to do the same.

Will we recognize one another there if the new bodies are to be so different? The Bible does not say. If the events of Lazarus and the rich man are real rather than illustrative, there may be indication of recognition. These two knew each other after they died. However, there is much mystery surrounding those events. It hardly seems that the experiences of Lazarus and the rich man occur after the final judgment since we can not conceive of those in final bliss being aware of the torment of others throughout eternity. Jesus said, "*They neither marry, nor are given in marriage*" after the resurrection. Thus, we know present marriage relationships will not exist. It is also true that we do not depend strictly upon physical characteristics to recognize others even now. Personalities are very much a part of such recognition. In other words the spiritual is as important as the physical. If recognition of our present friends is essential to eternal happiness, we may be sure that recognition will be possible. God

is fully capable of handling the situation!

Several pages have now been occupied in the study of the first verse of chapter twenty-one. We are still not through. After telling of the replacement of the old heaven and earth with the new one, we are told there is to be “no more sea” in this new creation. Obviously the elimination of this sea is a desirable matter. We need to know the identity of this sea as well as the reason for rejoicing over its departure.

There are twenty-six passages in the book of Revelation which contain the word “sea.” In a number of them the sea is simply considered as a portion of the creation. It is used as the third part of a triad: earth, heaven, and sea. There seems to be no close relationship between the above usage and this statement that there shall be no more sea. It is true that if the heavens and earth pass away the sea might disappear from the scene along with them. However, in this case there is a new heaven and a new earth to replace the old heaven and the old earth. But there is no new sea to replace the old one. There must be some deeper reason for adding, “*There shall be no more sea.*”

We shall find it necessary to go all the way back to the throne scene of chapter four to track down the meaning of the phrase. Before the throne of God there was a “sea of glass” as clear as crystal. The picture there is that of perfect calm. You may remember the entire description at that time was of a universe in subjection to Jehovah as it should be. There was no turmoil or heaving of the sea. Angels, men, and all creatures were glorifying the Creator

and singing his praises. This was followed by visions picturing the rejection of the Word of God with the resulting upheavals. The entire book of Revelation tells of the consequences of this disobedience.

The sea is mentioned again in chapter thirteen. This time a horrible beast arises out of its heaving and rolling depths. The beast served as Satan's henchman. Later John saw mystery Babylon sitting upon many waters and sitting astride a similar beast. The waters are then explained as being the peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. In chapter fifteen, verse two, the saints are pictured as standing on the surface of a sea of glass singing a song of victory. This time the sea is mingled with blood.

Let us then follow the sequence of events and note the continuous development of an idea. The sea is the heaving mass of people on earth who have no direction because they reject or ignore the commandments of God. They are calm in the throne scene because this is a picture of the universe under ideal conditions. The beast then arises out of the sea because force and violence come to life and thrive in a Godless society. The saints stand upon the surface of the sea because they can not be overwhelmed by it. It is mingled with blood because bloodshed and death are the outcome of the ways of violence. It disappears with the old creation because it is a part of the defiled old creation. In the new creation men shall no longer grope and stumble in meaningless heaving. There is no more sea!

A new heaven and a new earth would hardly be complete without a new city. The city will be the New Jerusalem. It will be a holy city. The old earthly

city of Jerusalem was at times called a holy city, but much of earthly Jerusalem was intermingled with the unholy. It is not to be so with the New Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven. Much of the remainder of this great book of Revelation will be a description of that new city of God.

John is not the first to catch a vision of a holy city and temple. Ezekiel spent several chapters at the end of his book describing such a picture. He even went so far as to mention twelve gates. Isaiah spoke of an afflicted city which would be rebuilt. *“O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones”* (Isaiah 54:11-12). Hear Isaiah again, *“Thy gates shall be open continually. They shall not be shut day or night.— Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall no more be thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory”* (Isaiah 60:11-22). Abraham searched for a heavenly city with foundations whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:9-16). Paul referred to an earthly Jerusalem which was in bondage, and to another Jerusalem which is ABOVE (Galatians 4:25-26).

But why does it come down from heaven? Are we not to go to heaven for our eternal reward? God’s abode is heaven. If the New Jerusalem is to be our

everlasting home, are we still to be in one place and God in another? Most commentators have passed over this matter without discussion. Let us consider it. The primary thought here is not one of geographical location. It is not a question of God sending this new city from where he is to the point in space and time where we will be. It is highly likely that space and time as we know it today shall pass with the old creation. If we are not very careful, we will find ourselves so entangled with the limitations of the present world we will lose sight of the real lesson.

That real lesson is that finally God is to be with man again. Man began his existence in a beautiful garden. He was privileged to hear the voice of God. He drank of the water of life and ate of the tree of life. Death was a stranger, as were also tears and grief. The woman knew no pain in childbearing; the sweat of clearing the soil from thistles and thorns was unknown.

Then came the fall and the curse. Man was driven from the garden and from the presence of Jehovah. Cherubim were placed as guards to prevent man's reentry. For thousands of years we have suffered the results of Adam's rebellion, as well as our own. How longingly have the remnant of God's faithful dreamed of a return to the purity, the security, and the fellowship which were lost so long ago!

Before there could be a return, the victory over Satan had to be won. The entire Bible tells us of the long range plan of God to bring man back to him.

We sometimes call it the scheme of redemption. The book of Revelation is a vivid picture of the latter days when the Christ and his saints do final battle with Satan and emerge as “more than conquerors.”

The twenty-first chapter of Revelation informs us that the battle is now won. The battlefield has been cleared. A new creation has replaced the old. Man began in a beautiful garden. He will end in a beautiful city. What was lost will be regained. Once more he will eat of the tree of life. Once more he will drink of the water of life. And once again he will be united with God. It is not that God will send the city from himself to another place where we shall be. It is that the city is the bride of Christ and the marriage of the Lamb is now to be fulfilled. Usually a father gives his daughter to her husband in marriage. The Father offers the church to the bridegroom who has been preparing a place for her that he might come and take her to himself. She is without spot or blemish and is adorned in her white robes of righteousness to be joined with her Saviour. She will know an eternal happiness of which the joys of marriage on earth can only provide a hint.

REV 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

REV 21:4 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.

The vision of God through the ages has been that of a people who would be his people in order that he might be their God. When Israel moved into the promised land, he pleaded with them to be careful in avoiding the idolatry of the land. Over and over he used the two phrases together. *“They shall be my people”*, and *“I shall be their God.”* This was not selfishness on the part of God. It really indicated a desire on his part to care for us in a fashion which could never be possible without such a relationship. When a man and woman marry, each takes delight in the fact that they shall be able to care for the other in ways that only they can do. We shall never be completely happy until we have truly demonstrated that “we are God’s people”, and he can then reply, “I am their God.” No other set of conditions can ever begin to match these.

A very special relationship exists between a people and their god. The people are expected to worship their god and do all within their power to please him. If people worship Diana, they do all in their power to please her. If they worship Ra, the sun god, they will strive to please him. If they worship Jehovah, the true and living God, they will do all things possible to determine his wishes and fulfill them. We are being told in verse three that in the new creation there shall be no desire to disobey. Every thought and action will be in support and adoration of God.

The other side of the coin is that God will fulfill the needs of his people. If men worship a god of sex, they expect to derive sexual pleasure from their service. If they worship a god of agriculture, they anticipate fruitful harvests. If they worship the Nile, they expect the flooding of the river to bring fertility and abundance to the land. Only the true God can provide for **all** of the needs of his people. All others are too small and too limited. Sexual pleasures are not enough, though they are one of the provisions from Jehovah. Fertile fields and abundant harvest are insufficient. Jehovah knows more about the needs of his people than they know themselves. With him as their God they may expect perfect providence. Nothing will be able to interfere with their wellbeing. It is this perfect providence which will be described in the upcoming verses as we explore the conditions of life in the new heaven, the new earth, and the new city.

First, we are told that the pain, the death, the sorrow and the tears will not be there. How many of us have agonized with the pain of migraine headaches, arthritis, terrible burns, cancer, or any one of thousands of other painful problems? Or perchance we suffered indirectly as we watched helplessly while our loved ones endured it. Such will then have passed away. Along with the passing of pain will go a part of the sorrow and tears.

We say a part of the sorrow and tears because not all sorrow and tears are brought about by physical pain. It is likely that Jesus suffered as much or more during the crucifixion from the emotional agony than from the physical torment.

Perhaps a sweetheart breaks off an engagement, or a husband announces to his wife he can no longer stand the sight of her. A home may be burned with everything a family has worked for during a whole lifetime. A child may go wrong, and the parents watch as the soul of the child decays and rots. All of these things can bring such sorrow and tears that the eye sockets are dry and can no longer weep, while the heart continues to do so. In the new heaven and earth it will not be so.

Even death will have departed. Often one wonders in the Bible whether the discussion in hand deals with physical death or spiritual death. We shall not be concerned with this difficulty when married to the Lamb. The resurrection will have brought an end to physical death. But much more important, the second death will have been eliminated. Those who have been determined to separate themselves from God will now have been consigned to the lake of fire. The peace which passes understanding will have settled over the city of God.

REV 21:5 And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true.

REV 21:6 And he said unto me, They are come to pass. 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.

REV 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Verses five through seven of this chapter are an assurance from Jehovah that the Christian may depend upon him. His explanation is his power as ruler of the universe. This is the one who guarantees the things John is writing. It is he who will be responsible for seeing all things made new. His promises have been kept in the past, and they will continue to be kept in the future. He is from before the beginning until after the end. Who could better care for those whom he held dear?

It is almost as if God recognized the very greatness of these promises would render it difficult to see them as being real. He assures us they are not fables. He is both capable and trustworthy. A primary support for his contention of dependability is his everlastingness. Before the old creation was ever brought into being, he was there. After it served its purpose and time had fled away, he was there. In the new creation which lies beyond space and time, he will be there. We may rest our future in the hands of infinite power, eternal being, and absolute love. We are his people, and we are to be married to the Lamb.

One of his most precious promises is access to the water of life. Ponce de Leon was not the first to offer a fountain of youth. When Jesus spoke to the woman at the well of Samaria in chapter four of the gospel of John, he offered her the living water. She

was told he could provide it if she were thirsty. Long ago Ezekiel saw a stream coming forth from the temple of God. Wherever it flowed it brought abundance of life and healing. One desperately needs water to sustain physical life. The spiritual water of life is just as vital in the sustenance of eternal life.

The verse says this water may be taken of freely. There are two senses in which this might be true. First, there will be no restrictions on taking “second servings.” One may return as many times as desired. Second, it is offered without cost. It is a free gift from God. The resident of the new and holy city may be forever vibrant with energy.

The word “overcometh” is used so often in the book of Revelation the student will possibly become flippant while reading if not careful. The water of life as well as the other promised blessings of the new creation are not for everyone. They are reserved for those who overcome through the blood of Jesus Christ. They are an inheritance for those of whom God can say, “*These are my people.*” It is only those who endure unto the end who are to drink of the water of life freely and tread the golden streets.

Verse seven brings the matter down to a more personal basis than has been the case previously. Before it was said, “*They shall be my people.*” Now it is, “*He shall be my son.*” The God who knows the fall of each and every sparrow will care for and tend to each of his children on a personal level. Contrary to the goals of some religions which teach the ultimate to be a loss of all individuality as one blends into the universe and reaches Nirvana, Christians

look forward to a perfection of the individual. This perfection comes simultaneously with surrender to the will of God. There is no contradiction. A famous quotation in America at one time was, "What is good for General Motors is good for America." That quotation may, or may not, have been true. What is true is that "What is pleasing to God is fulfilling to man." The victory over all things which gains entrance into the perfected city is won only when one is led by the Spirit; when one is a "son of God" (Romans 8:14-17).

REV 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

The reason for the great beauty of holiness in the new heaven and earth is the disappearance of those who have previously destroyed the old one. They shall be excluded and will pay the price of their alliance with Satan. They shall be with the Devil in eternity. There are many classes of them. There are the fearful who are intimidated by other wicked ones. They are afraid to take a stand for the Christ. Since they fail to confess his name before men now, he will refuse to confess their name then. When danger threatened, they failed to trust in the strength of God to see them through. They will not be there.

There will be no unbelievers. The unbelieving are those who refuse to have the knowledge of God in their hearts though it surrounds them on every side. Romans, chapter one, describes them. God has not left us without witness. His evidences are absolutely overwhelming. In spite of all this these unbelievers reject the testimony and go their own ways ignoring the offers of grace and mercy. Since they have chosen to go their way and direct their own steps now, he will allow them to remain separate from him forever and ever.

The abominable could include a host of evil people. God listed several groups of abominable persons in Proverbs, chapter six. They were: the proud, the liar, the murderer, the one with an evil imagination, the one whose feet run toward mischief, the false witness, and the one who sows discord among brethren.

Murderers are those who are so callous they are capable of cutting off the life which God himself provided. God created man in his own image. He is not pleased when mere man takes it upon himself to interfere. To show the degree of his displeasure he declared in the days of Noah, *"Whoso sheddeth the man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."* And now he shows the full extent of his feelings by excluding murderers from the holy city.

Whoremongers follow a similar pattern of disrespect for life. They would use the creative powers provided for the reproduction of mankind for filthy ends. They would make that which is intended to be pure, holy, and creative to be vile and degraded.

Man can not distort every good and upright blessing which has been provided him and use it for selfish purposes and then expect to escape the consequences.

The sorcerers are those who would attempt to replace the powers of God with magic, drugs, and superstition. God has worked to provide man with every need in every age. When man then declares this providence to be insufficient by calling upon other sources of power, he insults the Maker. He will be called to account.

Idolators place the creation before the Creator. Idolatry may be the worship of gods made of wood, stone, silver, or gold; or it may be covetousness which inspires one to spend his time trying to obtain that which belongs to others. While he should be spending his life in the service of God and fellowman, he wastes his energies in the accumulation and worship of manna.

The last of the evildoers who are not to be found in the New Jerusalem are the liars. Liars are those who distort the truth in any manner. To live in freedom one must be in possession of the truth for it is the truth which makes man free (John 8:32). Any time men believe a lie they must live in bondage. Those who promote such darkness and confusion are certainly not needed in the city where there is to be no night.

The glorified city of God is a blessed city There is nothing remaining to bring the tiniest tear to the eye, or the slightest fear in the heart. Every class of wickedness has been left outside the gates. Peace, joy and love stand unstained.

REV 21:9 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.

REV 21:10 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.

Please note the contrast between the statement here "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." with the earlier statement "I will shew you the judgment of the harlot."

The seven angels with the last plagues had concluded the work of eliminating the destroyers of the earth. It is only to be expected that one of them would be afforded the privilege of showing John the new and glorified city of God. The scene has been set for the union of the Lamb and his bride.

But is this new city which is described as the bride of the Lamb the glorified church, or is it the dwelling place of the church? It has been made very clear that the church is the bride of Christ in such passages as Ephesians 5:23-33 and 2 Corinthians 11:2. These passages present the church as a radiantly beautiful maiden who is betrothed to Jesus and is in a period of preparation awaiting a coming marriage. The twenty-first chapter of Revelation indicates the time for that long awaited marriage has arrived. She is now to be presented to her husband.

Yet as Revelation continues, the New Jerusalem is spoken of as if it were a magnificent city where the saints might live in eternity. We met a surprise like this once before. John looked to see the lion of the tribe of Judah. When he settled his vision, it was not a lion which he saw; it was the slain Lamb of God. This time John is told to look at the Lamb's wife, and he sees her as the city of God. Part of the explanation may lie in our improper definition of a city. God does not define a city as a mass of sidewalks and skyscrapers. His definition of a city is a group of people associated together to accomplish common goals. Babylon was not a material city. It was a group of spiritual beings who had combined their efforts in opposition to the Master. The saints themselves are the city, and we might add they are a most glorious one!

They descend from heaven because that is where they have been reunited after the resurrection. The dead in Christ were raised first. Then those who were alive in Christ were caught up together to meet them and be forever with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:15-17). Now together with the Lamb they are prepared to take up their abode in the place which he has been preparing. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). Hebrews 13:14 says, "*For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*" There is really no difficulty. The saints will dwell in that new city because they will be that city.

REV 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

REV 21:12 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:

REV 21:13 On the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

The plainest of women radiate beauty when dressed in a wedding gown and walking down the aisle to meet the bridegroom. That radiance is but a small preview of the glory of the New Jerusalem as it is presented to the Lamb. A woman's beauty is a gift of God. The New Jerusalem is a strange combination. It is made possible by the gift of salvation from God to man. It is also made possible as men have offered themselves as living sacrifices or gifts to God.

God showed his approval and his presence in both the tabernacle and in the temple of the Old Testament by allowing his glory to fill them after their purification. At one time a prophet saw the glory of God gradually leaving the earthly city of Jerusalem because of its terrible wickedness. The New Jerusalem is without blemish. She walks in the glory of God.

Along with John we are to view the New Jerusalem. We will first see it from outside the city.

Then we will enter the gates and examine the inside. Miles before one arrives at a large city, the lights may be seen as they light up the sky. Although ancient cities of the Middle East would not have been expending the massive amounts of electrical energy for lighting that modern cities do, one would no doubt still have been able to see the candlelights and torchlights from a distance. The contrast between anything seen either then or now on earth and the beauty of this heavenly city is most striking. As we draw near the light of the city causes it to glisten as jasper. Jasper is thought to have radiated multicolored rays as diamonds do today. Back when God was presented on his throne in chapter four, his glory was said to be as jasper. The same glory is now characteristic of his glorified city.

A great and high wall surrounds the city. It was typical for any great city of Palestine to be surrounded by such a wall. Often the cities were situated on top of a large hill for security reasons. Thus, it was possible to see their lights by night and their walls by day for a long distance, and long before arrival. Among the large cities of ancient times which were known for their protecting walls were Ninevah, Babylon, and Jerusalem. We are reminded also of Jericho whose walls came tumbling down after the Israelites had marched around them and blown their trumpets.

The walls of the New Jerusalem will provide perfect security against anything which might serve to contaminate its absolute purity. The gates have angels as porters, and each gate has the name of

one of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon it. Israel did not cease to exist when the Christian age arrived. It simply changed its nature. No longer was it fleshly Israel. It was now spiritual Israel, the Israel of faith. From the time of Jacob and his sons until the end of time Israel was and is God's chosen people. The ancient fleshly Israelites were born into it by the flesh. Christians are born of the water and of the Spirit. And so if one is not of Israel, one does not enter the city. The gates are open in all directions to indicate accessibility to every kindred, tribe, nation, and tongue. Only the wicked are excluded.

REV 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The wall was set solidly upon twelve foundations. The foundations of a wall are of great importance to the durability of the wall. This large city has but twelve foundation stones to support the entire wall. This must mean each is very large and the wall can not be broken down. The foundation stones of this wall are the twelve apostles. The obvious meaning is that the teaching and example of the apostles provide a basis for the construction of the city. Paul at one time said, "*Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*" (I Corinthians 3:12). Yet another time Jesus himself is called the "chief cornerstone." Although one must be careful about mixing figures of speech in the Bible, we feel confident in saying the apostles are foundation stones of the New

Jerusalem because they faithfully taught the words of the Rock of Ages. *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord will endure forever.”*

REV 21:15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

REV 21:16 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.

REV 21:17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

The angel who was speaking to John then produced a golden reed to measure the size of the city. This is important. It will determine whether or not the splendid city is large enough to hold all who might wish to enter. Let us see. The measuring instrument must be more than an ordinary measuring stick if it is to measure such a magnificent city. Therefore, it is made of gold.

Ezekiel once told of the measuring of the temple in his vision. There is a relationship between the measuring of the temple in Ezekiel and the measuring of the New Jerusalem here. In Ezekiel's case it was to determine who was within the confines of the holy temple and who was so vile they must

not be a part of it. This measurement of the holy city tells us no one need be left out if that one is adorned in the white robes of righteousness afforded by the blood of the Lamb. The city, the gates, and the wall are all to be measured. They will be found completely satisfactory for the purposes of God.

Much has been made over the physical measurements of the city. The main point of this measurement is that the city is sufficiently large for the residence of every man and woman who has sought the Lord with all of their heart, soul, strength, and mind. It is approximately fifteen hundred miles long, wide, and high. This would be a portion of space equal to the space covered by the part of the United States east of the Mississippi River and extending fifteen hundred miles into the air.

You are reminded that we are discussing a spiritual city. The measurements are symbolic, and any bodies which might be found there are actually a part of the city. Physical measurement leaves much to be desired. Nevertheless, just for the sake of curiosity let us do a little arithmetic and see how impressive the literal measurements would be.

Fifteen hundred miles times fifteen hundred miles times fifteen hundred miles gives us a total of 3,375,000,000 cubic miles. As of 1985 A.D., there are about six billion persons on earth. The number has been increasing at such a rate that population experts tells us the total number of persons to have lived on earth throughout all history is less than four hundred billion. If we divide the four hundred billion people into the three and one third billion cubic miles, we find we have about .007 cubic miles

per person. A cubic mile would contain 5,280 times 5,280 times 5,280 cubic feet. This gives us more than 125,000,000,000 cubic feet in a cubic mile. If every person who had ever lived up to the present time were to be allotted an equal share of this space, it would be .007 times 125,000,000,000 cubic feet. This leaves us with 875 million cubic feet per person. Obviously this would not cramp our style too badly! Add to this the fact that Jesus said the majority of men are following the way that leads to destruction and only the few find the way that leads to life eternal.

Surely we have no way to know how many souls will be found in the eternal city. But we repeat what we believe to be the heart of the message provided by the measurement in chapter twenty-one. No person who has spent a lifetime in the faithful service of The Father will need worry about the size of the apartments in the heavenly city.

REV 21:18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

REV 21:19 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;

REV 21:20 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.

REV 21:21 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.

The sight of the city from outside the walls is awe inspiring. To describe its beauty challenges the power of language itself. The wall around the city glistens with the sparkling rays of the jasper, similar to our diamonds. The city inside the wall has the appearance of pure gold. However, it is not gold of the ordinary type. This gold can be seen through like glass. We sometimes speak of something being as clear as crystal. The impression one receives here is of the tint of gold, yet with the transparency of glass.

Each of the foundation stones is a different precious gem. Some of them are known today. Others are foreign to our present experience. One thing is apparent. All the colors of the spectrum are represented. It is not just the beauty of the gems which causes them to be used in the vision here. These gems are invaluable. The New Jerusalem is inconceivably valuable. We recall that this city is made up of redeemed souls, each of which is more valuable than all the present world. This is the bride of the Lamb. She is prepared for her marriage. Provided the relationship is as it should be, there is nothing more precious to a husband than is his wife. This relationship between the Lamb and his bride is perfect. The New Jerusalem, the Lamb's

bride, is exquisite in both her beauty and her value.

Each of the twelve gates is one monstrous pearl. Jesus used the pearl of great price to teach the value of the Kingdom of God. He said it was so precious a man would sell all he had in order to obtain it. Now we find each gate of this city to be a single pearl. The value of any one of them would be beyond the imagination. Their value is at least partially due to the fact that they are entrances into the heavenly city. No other gate ever presented like promises.

Even the street of the city is pure gold. The word street here is in the singular. There are at least two possibilities. One is that the word is used in the collective sense for all the streets of the city. Another is that the city has but one main street. In visiting the remains of ancient Ephesus, one is struck by the importance of one main pathway through the city. It was lined with great columns and paved with marble blocks. All other streets became insignificant in comparison to this one main street. However, no street of any earthly city ever began to compare with the street of gold in the New Jerusalem.

As one stands on Marble street in the ruins of old Ephesus, the breath is almost taken by the memories of past days and the magnificent theatre which can be viewed from it. Imagine the experience of walking the street of pure gold in the city with gates of pearl and foundations stones of precious gems. Many faithful saints have suffered extreme poverty in this life. They have been pillaged and persecuted. They have abhorred the methods used to gain fortunes at the expense of others. O, how

different this will be! As joint heirs with Jesus Christ they shall inherit the new heaven and the new earth. And they will walk continually upon streets of gold in the new city.

REV 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

REV 21:23 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.

There is a possible relationship between the temple spoken of here and the one measured in 11:1. There the temple, the altar, and the worshippers were all to be measured. At that time we saw the temple as being the people of God with their worship. I and II Corinthians call both the individual Christian and the congregation the temple of God (I Corinthians 6:19) and (2 Corinthians 6:16).

Probably the main thrust of the verse is that there is no distance between God and his people any more. The temple and the tabernacle of the past were the closest approach man could make to God. The veil of the flesh always stood between man and God. In the New Jerusalem God will be so close there will be no need for drawing near to him through such means.

Perhaps we should add here a point we passed by in discussing the statement that there will be “no more sea” when the old heaven and earth have fled away. There are some who believe the sea of

Revelation 4:6 which was before the throne of God represented a distance which had been placed between God and man. Those same persons would see the removal of the sea in 21:1 as the elimination of that distance so that man could now come directly into the presence of his Maker. They would point to this verse as a supporting scripture. This is a possibility. However, the sequence of changes in the use of the term “sea” seems to fit in better with the explanation of the sea which we gave then.

There is no need of sun, moon, or stars in the new city. We are not talking about a physical city. We are talking about a spiritual city. One of the primary concerns of the entire gospel of John is to emphasize the importance of the spiritual over the physical. Of the two the spiritual is far more important. The physical is temporal. The spiritual is eternal. The important water is spiritual water. The important bread is the bread of life. The most important clothing is the white robes of righteous living. The most important life is the spiritual life. And the true light is that of Jesus Christ. Verse twenty-three simply underscores what John was saying in his gospel. When the material world has faded away and the new spiritual world has taken its place, the light of the sun, moon, and stars will be no longer. The true light of God and of the Lamb will illuminate it. “God is light. And in him there is no darkness at all.”

REV 21:24 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.

REV 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

REV 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

This is a different use of the term “kings of the earth” than has been the case a number of times before. Usually this phrase has been used to designate carnal kings who stood in opposition to the King of kings. The kings of the earth this time are those rulers of men who have been wise enough to see that they themselves are subjects of one far greater than they. People of every kindred, tribe, nation and tongue will walk in the glory of the city. And this shall include even a few of the mighty and the noble. No nation or king ever received any glory that was not allowed by Divine providence. But the glory must be returned to God who gave it. Herod did not give the glory to God, and he was eaten of worms. Daniel did give glory to God, and he prospered. That which is worth saving from every age and in every place will add to the radiance of the Holy City.

Paul once said to the Athenians that God had need of nothing we can provide for him. Yet God has made it possible for us to give him one very important thing. That thing is service and glorification of him. If we glorify him, he will in turn glorify us. When a wife glorifies her husband, she glorifies herself. In

like manner when we glorify God, we truly glorify ourselves. However, the glory only comes to those who unite themselves with the Lamb.

There is a very beautiful passage in Isaiah 60:1-3. *“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee, for behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”* This prophecy will not reach complete fulfilment until the Sun of Righteousness shines eternally upon God’s people in the new creation.

In ancient cities the gates were left open throughout the day for the daily activities of the citizens and for the entrance and exit of citizens and visitors. They were only closed during the day in cases of danger or siege from an enemy. At night, however, the gates were closed to offer security. There were many dangers of the night which were not present during the daylight hours.

In the New Jerusalem there will be no night with its accompanying dangers. As a result, there will be no need for closing the gates of that city. The gates of that city were for the entrance of every righteous soul regardless of the color of his skin, the level of his prestige among men, or the number of possessions he once had on the old earth. We find it difficult to conceive of anyone ever using the gates of the New Jerusalem for exit. Nor does the Bible even mention exit.

REV 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Though the gates are wide open to the righteous, there is no need to fear the entrance of anything which would contaminate the holy state of that sanctuary. The reason is perfectly obvious. All things capable of defiling it are gone. Every enemy of righteousness, including the last one, death, has been cast into the lake of fire. The gates of the city may be flung open wide.

We have now been treated to a view of the externity of the city. We have even peered through the gates to see the street of pure gold. We have seen the walls of jasper with their foundations of various precious gems. We have seen the entire city bathed in the glory of God and all the righteous. What shall we see when we enter through the gates and into the city?

Chapter 22

REV 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.

REV 22:2 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 nations.

In the long ago Ezekiel saw a stream flowing from a temple of God. It was very small at first. The farther downstream one went the larger the stream became until it was a wide and deep river. There were many trees on each side of Ezekiel's river. The water of that river was of a healing nature. "*And everything shall live whither the river cometh.*" The fruit of the trees was for food, and the leaves were medicinal. There were, however, some places where his river did not reach and, therefore, could not heal.

In John 4:5-30 we read of Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus offered to give her living water. We do not know whether or not she received the offer. We do know multiplied millions have been offered the water of life during the Christian age and have spurned it. Since it did not reach them, it could not heal them.

In the New Jerusalem all the citizens will have previously proven themselves thirsty for this water. Therefore, no part of the new creation will be

destitute of it. All will quench their thirst and will drink copiously.

The arrangement of the river of life, the tree of life, and the street of gold is difficult to picture from the description. It sounds from the language as if the tree of life grows in the middle of the street and on both sides of the river. Is the street split by the river? Just what is the picture?

As was mentioned before, the word street may be used in the generic sense and refer to many streets. If so the street or streets would run along both sides of the river of life. The tree of life can also be spoken of in generic manner to refer to many individual trees. We do this when we say “The pine tree grows well in Tennessee.” We do not mean a single pine tree. We refer to pine trees in general. It would also be possible for the tree of life to grow in the midst of the street if the street were a boulevard with a median between lanes. The pedestrians could then walk the pavement of gold on each side of the median.

Let us review the scene then. We have a river of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On both sides of the river are boulevards paved with gold, and in the media of the boulevards grow numerous individual trees of life.

These trees are everbearing in the true sense of the word. All year long they bear their fruit such that one need never walk up to a tree and find he must wait until it is the proper season. It is always the proper season. If this tree is like that of Ezekiel, the fruit of the tree provides solid food for the citizens.

But the leaves of the tree also have a use. They are medicinal. This would have been needed desperately in the old creation. In the new creation pain, sickness and dying will have been left behind. If even the faintest trace of illness were to appear, the remedy would be abundant.

The resemblance between conditions in the garden of Eden and those here could hardly go unnoticed. There was a tree of life and a river in that garden also. Man will have regained all that was lost when Adam and Eve sinned. But this brings on another interesting question. Is the new creation identical with the original creation before it became cursed with sin? It is the writer's belief that, although similar, the circumstances are not exactly alike. When God created man, he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. When Eve was created, Adam said, "*This is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones.*" Thus, it seems man was made of flesh in the garden of Eden. Later Jesus said, "*Flesh and blood can not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.*" Flesh is corruptible, but the bodies of those in the new creation following the resurrection are to be incorruptible.

There was marriage and reproduction in the garden of Eden. In the glorified state of the resurrection there will neither be marriage nor giving in marriage. Therefore, I believe the new creation is not simply a return to the identical conditions of the original creation.

REV 22:3 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.

REV 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

The curse which came into being because of sin in the garden of Eden will be eradicated. That curse was placed upon the entire original creation. Man would be forced to labor by the sweat of his brow. Woman would bear children only with difficulty. The land would be infested with thorns and thistles, and the serpent would crawl on its belly.

In addition to the above, the old heaven and earth now began to groan under the bondage of corruption and death. It would continue to do so until the manifestation of the sons of God in glorious liberty. When that occurred the entire creation would share in that liberation (Romans 8:17-24). That time of restitution of all things has arrived at this point in the Revelation. Every effect of sin has been removed. The last-enemy was death, and it has been swallowed up in victory!

The author has spent many years in the teaching of physical science to college students. One of the most impressive laws in all of science is one called the “second law of thermodynamics.” This law is a description of the constant degradation of the order found in the universe. This law might well be called the “law of corruption.” All systems left to themselves without a source of outside interference move toward a condition in which the energy is converted into unusable heat. It is as if the universe

had been wound up and made orderly, and then steadily unwinds into a state of disorder. Pockets of order may increase, such as is the case in construction of buildings or growth of living organisms. Yet they ultimately decay and crumble. Any apparent increase of order is temporary. If we could look at the entire universe at once, we would see it moving constantly toward what scientists call its “heat death” when no more usable energy is available.

When asked about this as an evidence that the universe had a beginning, we find many scientists hedging by saying the condition will probably reverse itself after a few billion years during which the present expansion turns to contraction, and many present natural laws also operate in reverse. However, this is contrary to all present scientific observation. If one stays with the uniformitarianism which those same scientists hold so dear, there is no expectation of reversal. It is not at all impossible that this second law of thermodynamics is a part of the bondage of corruption which was initiated in the garden. At any rate this condition will be no more in the new heaven and earth.

Where sin exists there must be a degree of separation from the throne of God. This has been the case throughout the long ages which have passed from Eden to the final judgment. With the coming of the new creation the habitat of man is uncontaminated, and man may draw nigh to God’s throne. It is not the throne of the Father only. It is also the throne of the Lamb. In the fifth chapter of

Revelation John saw the Lamb of God approach the throne of God to take the book of the seven seals from his right hand. As the perfect sacrifice, Jesus had shed his blood and proven himself worthy of revealing the mystery of God. Apparently when he was resurrected after overcoming the world, he was welcomed to the throne and took his place at God's right hand (Acts 2:34).

Jesus made a magnificent offer to the saints at Laodicea. If they overcame the world as he had overcome, they would be granted the privilege of sitting with him on his throne, even as he sits upon the Father's throne. Dear friend, when and if we overcome we also shall be able to approach so closely we can sit with Christ and the Father on their throne in the golden city. However, it shall only be so if we succeed in overcoming the world.

We shall serve him then if we have proven ourselves willing to serve him now. This will not be a burden. Some years ago your author was engaged in religious discussion with an individual who expressed grave doubts about the authenticity of the book of Revelation. One of his objections was the humiliation he saw in this throne scene. The thought of waiting anxiously around the throne of God for the slightest expression of his will in order that we might obey his every command seemed to him a loss of dignity. As he put it, "Man would flitter and flutter around the throne awaiting God's next decree."

We must beg to disagree with this objection. Subordination becomes chafing only when the supervisor is selfish or uninformed. God is neither!

No command ever given by Jehovah was intended to hinder the development of man. In fact it is only an omniscient being who could have the insight necessary to give directions perfectly suited to man's optimum development. All of us have at one time or another been requested to perform some task which we found far more challenging and fulfilling than we had ever dreamed it would be when assigned to us. This condition will be true around the throne of God. The tasks assigned will be perfectly suited to the glory of God and to the joy and pleasure of man. Those who find such service to God unpleasant and chafing will be contending with much more serious problems since they will have been consigned to complete separation from him in the second death.

Today men serve God without seeing his face. In the new creation they shall see him face to face. Now we look through a glass darkly. When that which is perfect is come we shall see him as he is (I Corinthians 13:12) and (I John 3:2). The entire set of beautitudes in Matthew chapter five will be fulfilled completely. Now they are partial. Then they will be complete. Then the peacemakers and the pure in heart will no longer have to see at a distance through insights and the power of words. They shall be with him in person.

Those who serve God around his throne will have his name written on their foreheads. This is not the first mention of such marking. The followers of the beast were to have a mark on both their right hand and on their forehead. In chapter three of this book Jesus had promised the saints at Philadelphia

that if they overcame he would make them a pillar in his temple, and he would write upon them his name, the name of God, and the name of the city of God. In verse three of chapter seven the angels were told not to hurt the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, until the servants of God had been sealed in their forehead. This same marked group were to be protected in the locust plague of chapter nine. In Ephesians 1:13 we are told God seals his people with the Holy Spirit.

We are not talking about a brand made with hot metal. We are concerned with dedication to God. The followers of the beast were marked on the right hand because they were willing to labor in the service of the beast. They were marked on the forehead because they offered their mind to him. These who serve God are the ones who have demonstrated they are children of God by being led by the Spirit. They have dedicated themselves completely to divine service. Rebellion is unthinkable.

REV 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither the light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

REV 22:6 And he saith 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.

REV 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed

is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

We were told in 14:13 that those who die in the Lord are blessed because they shall rest from their labors. In this place we are told his servants shall serve him in an endless day where there is no night. How can we harmonize endless service with rest from our labors? Any supposed difficulties which arise from superficial examination of such scriptures are hurriedly resolved when deeper investigation into the context is made. The labors which the dead rest from are those labors in this sin cursed earth where Satan must be fought on every hand. Some effort is grueling and unpleasant. Other tasks are pure delight. The challenges which will be presented in the glorious new creation will be accomplished in new spiritual bodies which will not grow weary. They will be anticipated with great eagerness. And they will be performed in eternal “Sonshine.”

In chapter twenty the martyrs and those who had not worshipped the beast were permitted to reign with Christ for a very long, but nevertheless a limited period. Now there is no limit. They shall reign for ever and ever.

But if one is to reign, he must reign over something. Over what do these kings reign? The answer is that they shall reign over that which they have overcome. Paul speaks of such a reign in 2 Timothy 2:10-12. *“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds, but the Word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s*

sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer we shall also reign with him."

We shall have triumphed over selfishness, sin, persecution, pain, death, and every principality and power which is opposed to righteousness. Although none of these shall be present in glory, we shall still reign over them as a result of our victory.

Now we are reminded that these wonderful promises are not the words of John himself. Nor are they the words of an angel. They are the promises of Jehovah who can not lie. From the time of Moses, the prophets had pointed to these magnificent things of the future. Among them were Isaiah, Daniel, Solomon, David, Ezekiel, and others. Each of them had caught a vision of this perfect day. They had predicted the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it had come to pass exactly as prophesied. A second coming has been predicted in the New Testament. It will not fail. Jesus will return in judgment and in glory. At that time he will consummate the new creation.

Those who believe the events of the book of Revelation are limited to the lifetime of the Christians of Asia Minor or even of the first two centuries find themselves in inextricable complications by this time. In almost the same breath it is said that these things must shortly come to pass—and that Jesus comes quickly. The coming of Jesus in judgment with both reward and punishment did not occur in the first or second century.

It is clear that this reference is a restatement of the one that was made to John in 1:1. There it was said John was to show things which must “shortly come to pass.” In 1:3 it was added, “the time is at hand.” In 4:1 John is told to come up hither and see things “which must be hereafter.” When all these references are combined, it is not difficult to see what is being said. The events of the book of Revelation did BEGIN to come to pass shortly. However they shall not be completed until the mystery of God is finished. When the last enemy has been defeated; when the curse has been removed, when the final judgment has been concluded, when the new heaven and earth have arrived, and when the glorified righteous live in the New Jerusalem married to the Lamb, they will have been finished.

Jesus will come quickly, or suddenly, as a thief in the night. He will come altogether too quickly for the majority of the citizens; they who serve in the kingdom of darkness. But those who keep the sayings of this book will be prepared because they will have overcome.

REV 22:8 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.

REV 22:9 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.

John is so gratified and awestricken by the import of the things he has seen and heard he falls to the feet of the messenger who has been responsible for showing them to him. The angel abruptly calls for him to cease such adoration. We must also be careful that we do not follow such incorrect action. It is altogether too easy to give glory to those who have been privileged to carry the messages of God rather than to God who provided the message. Christian leaders of all types must be constantly on guard against accepting worship or undue glory which belongs only to Jehovah. It is true that we are to give honor to whom honor is due. But we are to distinguish between honor given to men and the glory due to God.

The reason given by the angel for not receiving John's worship is the angel's position as a fellowservant. He serves John, and he serves John's brethren who are the prophets. He also serves those who follow the teachings of this book. He is a servant to John because he brought him the message. He is a servant to the prophets because he is showing the culmination of their prophecies. He is a servant to those who keep the sayings of this book because he is providing them with spiritual food. This is in perfect agreement with Hebrews 1:13-14. "*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to MINISTER for them who be heirs of salvation?*"

REV 22:10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophesy of this book: for the time is at hand.

REV 22:11 He that is unjust, let him be

unjust still: and he that 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.

Daniel had been told to seal up the words and seal up the book of his prophecy even unto the time of the end. Between his time and the end time many would run to and fro and knowledge would be expanded (Daniel 12:4). The testimony of Jesus had been the spirit of prophecy from the beginning. Now every prophecy has been fulfilled. God's entire scheme of redemption has been unrolled from end to end. John is to place the opened book of the seven seals before all who will receive it. It will remain to see who will receive it and who will reject it. What God has revealed let no man hide.

When the story of Jesus and his salvation is placed before men, there remains no more sacrifice (Hebrews 10:26). Jesus has been shown as victorious over all that Satan represents. If having seen his great victory they can still remain bondservants of sin, they must be allowed to make their choice and remain in their filth. The time comes when God has done all that can be done for men short of removing their freedom of choice. When that time arrives those who have responded responsibly shall be blessed. Those who have chosen Satan will have to exist with him forever. Jesus put it very exactly when he said, "*Seek and ye shall find.—Ask and it shall be given unto you.*" We shall be allowed to join ourselves to whatever we desire. Someday the choice will be irreversible.

REV 22:12 And, Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

REV 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

As if the reader needed a special reminder that things do not continue at this point as they were from the beginning of the creation, Jesus repeats his admonition of verse seven. He will come quickly. There is not one of us who has much time. If we are so fortunate as to live for eighty or one hundred years, life will still pass away as a vapor or as a withered flower. We may be called from the land of the living at any time. Therefore, we must react properly to the unrolled mystery of God. We must choose today to become righteous and receive the mark of Jehovah in our forehead, or we risk being allowed to remain filthy for eternity. *“Today is the day of salvation.—Now is the accepted time.”*

When Jesus comes his reward will be with him. Every person will receive what has been promised. God's books are without flaw. No name has ever been written in, or removed from, the book of life by mistake. None shall find themselves in the lake of fire who did not make clear choice of going there. This passage along with many others leads this writer to believe those who have served God most diligently in this life will receive in accordance with their diligence, and that the ones who have been most active and deliberate in their sin will be beaten

with “many stripes.” Be this as it may, we are assured Jesus knows exactly what he is doing. The matter will be handled by divine intelligence.

Way back in the first chapter, John had begun the book by saying Jesus was the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. Jesus underscores this now. It is likely the reason for it being repeated is the nature of the statements in verses eleven and twelve. God knows the works of men from the beginning to the end. He knows whether the individual has chosen to be righteous or to be filthy. He knows what effect the person’s life has had on the progress of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is completely capable of seeing his every promise administered.

REV 22:14 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.

REV 22:15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

The reward Jesus has with him when he comes will be an invitation to the righteous to enter through the gates of pearl into the New Jerusalem and to eat of the tree of life. Those who do so will only be those who have kept his commandments. Some persons do not appreciate the word “commandment” and do not believe such a word should be admitted as a part of the vocabulary of Jehovah. They try to

explain away the word commandment by saying the so-called commandments of God are just God's way of explaining to us the manner in which he expects us to act.

It is difficult to see why the word "commandments" should be so grievous. God has the absolute right to command. He will not abuse that right in any way. Our attitude should be "Dear Lord command. Thy servant will obey." Side by side in the gospel of John are the following words. "*If ye love me keep my commandments.*" and "*If ye ask any thing in my name I will do it.*" It is the right and responsibility of God to command. It is our privilege and responsibility to request. If we honor his commands, he will honor our requests. The blessings of the New Jerusalem go hand in hand with the mark of God on the forehead of the saints.

It is a tremendous blessing to enter the gates of that holy city because entry will allow us to be separated from everything that had a part in the destruction of the old heaven and earth. Verse eight of chapter twenty-one explained why the list of evildoers could not enter the city. They all have been cut down and cast into the lake of fire. "*Cease from anger; and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth*" (Psalm 37:8-9).

REV 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring of

David, and the bright and morning star.

REV 22:17 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 of the water of life freely.

The angel mentioned in verse sixteen is the same angel as the one mentioned in 1:1. This angel seems to have been a special angel responsible for seeing that John received the entire testimony which was revealed to him in the Revelation. There is no indication that the angel was Gabriel, but the task performed closely resembles the one performed when Gabriel assisted Daniel in skill and understanding of the visions which came to him (Daniel 9:22).

Jesus now identifies himself as the root and offspring of David. Isaiah had said, *“He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground”* (Isaiah 53:2). God had promised Abraham that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. He had promised David his seed should rule forever. Now David’s life had long been terminated. But Jesus had grown up from the dry ground where David had been cut off. He had been given the throne of David (Acts 2:29-33). He also possessed the key of David (Isaiah 22:22) and (Revelation 3:7). All of the promises God had made to David will be completed in Jesus Christ who is the stem of Jesse and the root of David. Though cut off, David still grows through Christ.

Jesus also presents himself as the morning star. The morning star is the one that heralds the coming

day. In this case it is no ordinary day. It is the perfect day with no night which illuminates the new creation. The Christians at the church of Thyatira had been promised the morning star if they overcame the world. When they enter into the New Jerusalem, they will receive that promise. Jesus will be the light of that wonderful abode.

One of the most touching invitations of all time is now extended. Jesus has done all he is going to do. God has done all he might be expected to do. The Holy Spirit has joined in the effort as the entire Godhead cooperated in preparing the holy highway. Together they exhort all who will to walk that highway, to enter the grand city, and to drink the water of life without hindrance. Only those who have spiritual ears will heed the invitation. They will have invited others. Some will have joined them while others will have rejected all overtures.

It is still appropriate to use the words of this invitation to encourage those outside Christ to unite with him and to begin drinking of that water of life today. Jesus gave the woman at the well of Samaria an offer of this kind. But the picture here is that of the final promise. We can offer only a taste of that water today. One day those who thirst for it will find themselves drinking it in the fulness of eternity.

REV 22:18 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 which are written in this book:

REV 22:19 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.

What a tremendously sobering thought this is! How many men must have asked themselves if they have placed themselves in danger through the writing of comments upon the material. Any distortion of the things presented brings addition of curses and removal of blessings. As the present writer has labored to place this commentary in written form, he has constantly been aware of this warning. This has been so true that a number of times he has seriously considered retreating from any publication of the book. After long and prayerful consideration, the matter has been resolved. The comments will be presented. But the reader is besought to always return to the Bible text itself as the true fountain. The difference between the message God has presented and the comments of any finite human must always be respected. **LET GOD BE TRUE, AND EVERY MAN A LIAR.**

As a gospel preacher I have preached many a sermon. At one time I became so much concerned about this passage along with those found in Deuteronomy 4:2 and Proverbs 30:5 that I actually hesitated to preach for fear of adding to, subtracting from, or distorting the Word of God. There is much to lose if one is wrong here.

But is the Word of God to be spread only by reading and not by explanation? This surely can not be the case. There is an account in the Bible which can be of much comfort to such concerned preachers and teachers. It is found in Nehemiah, chapter eight. There the people of God had returned from Babylonian captivity and were rejoicing at the rebuilding of the temple. Ezra, the scribe, stood on a pulpit of wood as the people were gathered in the street before the water gate in Jerusalem. He then opened the book of the law of Moses and blessed the Lord, the great God. All the people said, Amen, Amen. They read in the book of the law distinctly, AND GAVE THE SENSE and caused them to understand the reading.

Thus, if we make absolutely sure God is to receive all the glory for the truth, we are on the right road. If we urgently request the reader to use this commentary only to probe the unsearchable riches of the inspired Word of God, we trust we are approved. One can hardly expect that during the writing of four hundred pages of commentary on a book as symbolically oriented as is Revelation there will be no error. May God's grace and mercy rest upon our labor for we are but earthen vessels.

Dear reader, this commentary is the work of a frail man. Do not thrust your Bible aside and lean on any commentary. Use it only to see if it will aid you in uncovering some truth which was already in the Bible text, but which as yet you had not appreciated. I have labored too hard for too many years to find the curses of this book poured out upon

my head, or to have my name removed from the book of life. Examine the scriptures daily to see whether these things be so.

REV 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

REV 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Three times here within fifteen verses the Bible says Jesus is coming quickly. It is stated in verse seven, in verse twelve, and again in verse twenty. Since the Bible wastes neither space nor words we may be sure the matter is urgent! There are two very important reasons for warning that he is coming quickly. The first is that both the Christians of the seven churches, and those of all the centuries down to the final judgment must endure in order to receive final reward. On many occasions this endurance may seem to be beyond the ability to bear. The promise that Jesus is coming quickly is extremely comforting to one in such straits. He is made aware that “This too shall pass.”

The second reason for the repetition of the words “I come quickly” lies in the need for sinners to come out of Babylon before it is too late and they suffer the plagues which will be visited upon her. If Jesus comes while they are still in their sins they will wish he had delayed his coming.

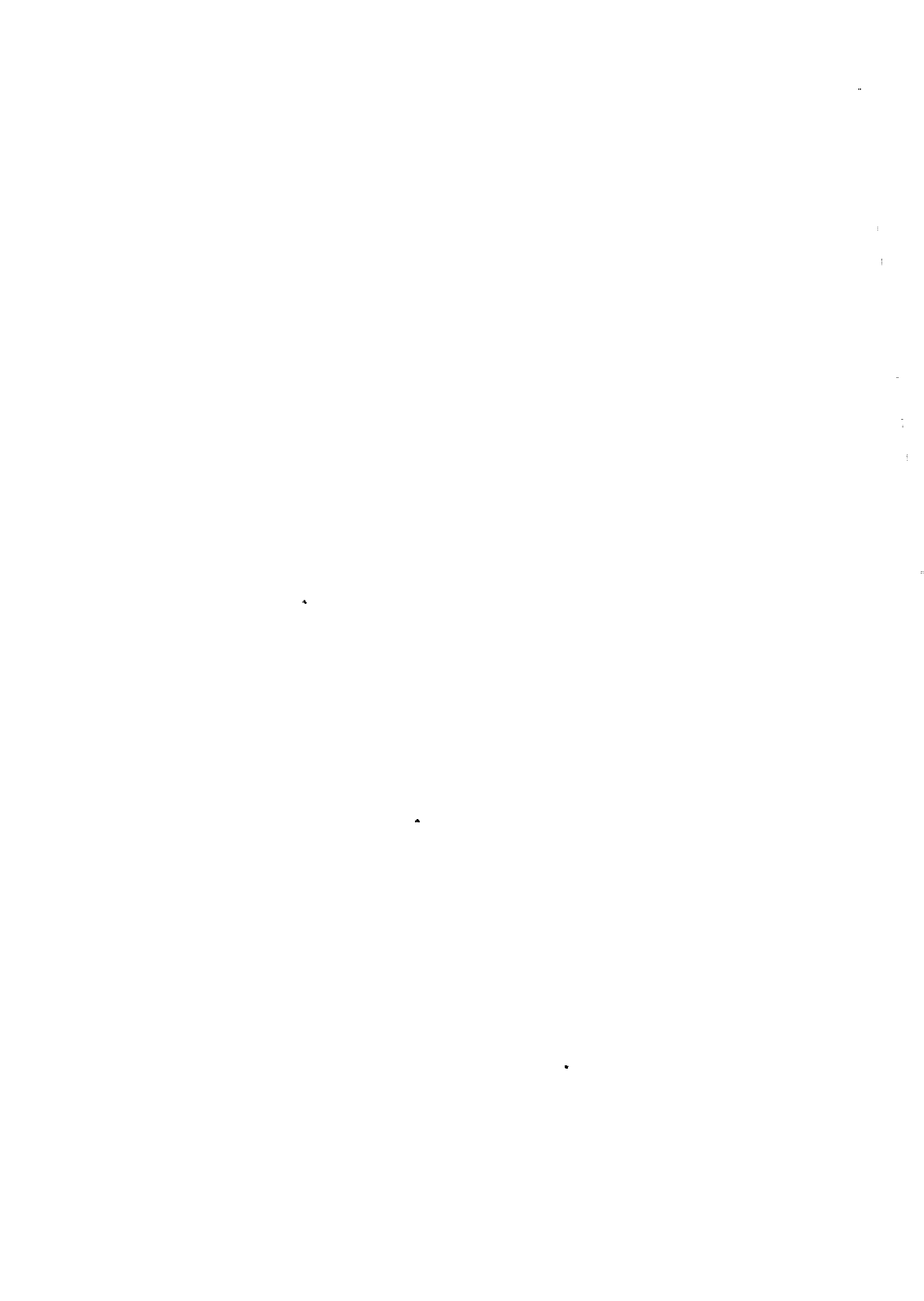
All faithful Christians will join with the apostle as he adds his amen to that which he has written.

With him we cry out, “Hasten the day! Come Lord Jesus.”

The book of Revelation ends as it began with John's prayer for the grace of God to rest upon the Christians of the seven churches of Asia, and upon all who read the words of this prophecy. We are grateful beyond words to all three members of the Godhead for the warnings, promises, and encouragement of the message. We are also grateful to John for his servanthship in bringing them to us. What a satisfaction it must have been to John who was writing this record while in exile on the isle of Patmos for his testimony of Jesus. Satanic forces might have temporarily taken away his freedom. However, they could not steal his message of hope. They might for a moment take away his precious fellowship with other Christians. But, God had made up for that in allowing him to pen words which would help bring all men together in the New Jerusalem. Satan might control the events of the day on that bleak island. But John's pen would allow him to soar with the wings of an eagle through time and space as he told men of the climactic events in the battle of the ages.

Let us live in such a manner that we may join the great apostle John in the land of endless day. As Jesus overcame the world, and now sits upon God's throne, we must also overcome and sit with him. *“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor thing present, nor*

things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ” (Romans 8:37-39). “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).



Afterword

There Will Be A Victory In Jesus!

Now that we have investigated the entire book of Revelation on a verse by verse basis it will be helpful to briefly summarize the book on a chapter level.

Chapter 1

The book is addressed to the Christians of the seven churches of Asia Minor. It comes from all three members of the Godhead. A vision is seen of Jesus Christ examining the churches as he walks among the candlesticks.

Chapter 2

Strengths and weaknesses of the churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira are pointed out. Promises and warnings are issued to them.

Chapter 3

The same pattern of examination, promises, and warnings are provided for the churches of Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Chapter 4

John is invited to look into the throne room of heaven where he sees Jehovah on his throne in all his glory. God is surrounded by four cherubim and twenty-four elders who serve and glorify him.

Chapter 5

A book containing the mystery of God is produced. It is bound with seven seals. Information is contained in the book concerning things which would begin happening shortly. Because of his unblemished life and his sacrificial death, Jesus has proven worthy of opening the seven seals and revealing the previously hidden plans of God. A beautiful scene of the entire creation praising Jehovah and the Lamb of God is shown. The picture is of the universe as it should be.

Chapter 6

As Jesus begins to open the seven seals, four horses and riders move out over the earth. The first is Jesus riding out with the gospel. The second is the war and conflict which occur when men reject the gospel and serve themselves. The third is mourning, sorrow, and famine which follow war and conflict. The fourth is death, as large fractions of mankind die in the wake of their rebellion.

Chapter 7

Before God begins His efforts in chastising rebellious men, He shows John He has identified

himself with the faithful upon the earth. They will be in his protective custody. Spiritual Israel will see salvation, even though they lose their physical lives. If they must give up their lives, they will simply join the white robed multitude who have already died, both from martyrdom and from natural death in the service of Jesus.

Chapter 8

Six seals have been opened in chapters six and seven. As the seventh seal is opened, seven angels with trumpets begin to sound. Each of these trumpets sounds forth a warning to foolish men who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. All of the original creation is affected. However, the damage is only partial. Only one third of each portion of the creation suffers. The first four trumpets included in chapter eight affect only the nonhuman sphere.

Chapter 9

A star, which appears to be Satan, falls to the earth from heaven. He has a key with which he opens Satanic headquarters to unleash an army of pests which have the power to make men wish they were dead. The stings of these locusts last for five months. This should be enough to cause repentance. One third of mankind is killed, but even such horror is not sufficient to cause the remainder of men to change their ways.

Chapter 10

As the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, seven thunders are heard. John is told not to reveal what they have said. He is provided with a little book containing the Word of God. He is told to preach it to many people.

Chapter 11

John is then instructed to measure the church to see which individuals should be protected as a part of it, and which should be left outside for further lessons from God. The law and the prophets are to testify of the Son of God for three and one half years.

This broken time shall see an end. Evil men will believe they have eliminated the law and the prophet's influence. But God will revive them in the very sight of their foes. The gospel will win a great victory as the kingdoms of this world are overwhelmed by the Kingdom of God and Christ. Those who have been destroying the earth will themselves be destroyed through the power emanating from the throne of God.

NOTE: This concludes the first cycle of conflict in the Revelation. The gospel has ridden out. It has been rejected by evil men and accepted by the righteous. The evil have been duly warned and finally punished. The righteous have been protected and given their reward.

The second half of the book moves into a description of the conflict between massive organizations. On one side will be Satan and his principalities and powers. On the other side will be the Christ and his church.

Chapter 12

A woman who brings forth God's children appears in John's vision. She gives birth to Christ, and immediately Satan attacks him. Satan is unsuccessful since God snatches the Christ up into heaven itself. Finding he can not conquer the Only Begotten Son, Satan decides to persecute the remainder of God's children which is the church. The church is driven into seclusion where God nurtures and protects her for future glory.

Chapter 13

Satan calls forth his first ally, the beast from the sea. The Beast represents governmental authority acting through brute force in opposition to the church. After being wounded, and then recovering, the Beast is joined by a second Beast which looks like a lamb but roars like a dragon. This second beast represents corrupt religion which glorifies man rather than God, and makes alliances with governmental force to accomplish its ends.

Chapter 14

The one hundred forty-four thousand, or spiritual Israel on earth, are depicted as safe on Mount Zion as news is proclaimed that Babylon is to fall. Babylon is the organized seductive pleasure of this world which seduces and corrupts men through lust and pride. Babylon has done great damage. The saints have suffered and died at her hands. But they will now be protected, and God will reap the earth. He will trample upon that which is not fit for gathering unto himself.

Chapter 15

Seven terrible plagues are prepared for pouring out upon the old creation. The ensuing events are so devastating God's temple in heaven is closed while the plagues are visited upon the earth. Nevertheless, the saints are found standing on the top of this turbulent sea of confusion. They sing a song of praise to God.

Chapter 16

The first six angels pour out their plagues upon various parts of the creation. This time the damage is not limited to one third as it was previously.

When the sixth angel pours out his plague, the way is made ready for the invasion of Babylon by the kings of the East. The kings of the East are Christians. When Satan realizes the threat to his

great city of Babylon, he sends out spirits from the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Serpent himself to muster the kings of the earth for battle against the kings of the east. The mighty conflict which results is called “Armageddon.” Mighty Babylon is divided into three parts, and God brings a great storm from heaven which aids his saints in the battle.

Chapter 17

John is allowed a vision of Babylon. He sees her as the great harlot which she is. She rides the beast of force and comes out of the heaving sea of people who know not Jehovah. One king after another attempts to defend her but rises and falls in battle against Christ and the kings of the East. The kings of the earth who fight for Babylon are ready to give their all in support of their seductive mistress.

Chapter 18

The people of God are warned to come out of Babylon before they share in the punishment which is to be brought upon her. The kings of the earth who fought for her are shown weeping over the vanquished and smoking city. The merchants who were made rich by giving their energies in her behalf also stand grieving. Even the shipmasters who transported her goods weep bitterly. Babylon is utterly demolished. She will not rise again. She has been conquered by the Sun of Righteousness and his kings of the sunrising.

Chapter 19

The saints are now shown rejoicing that Babylon has been destroyed. They know when all of the enemies of God have been defeated the last barrier to the marriage feast and the marriage of the Lamb and his bride will have been removed. The heavens are then opened, and Christ rides forth with the armies of heaven and the Word of God to subdue the foes of righteousness. Through the Word of God, or the teachings of Christ, the opponents are slain and are fed to the scavenger birds. The Beast and the False Prophet are removed from the earth and are cast into the lake of fire.

Chapter 20

Satan himself is then captured, bound, and thrown into the bottomless pit from which the plague of locusts had come. The pit is sealed in order that Satan can have no more influence in the deception of the nations for a very long time. Because of the triumph of the Word of God upon the earth the martyrs and faithful saints are said to reign for the same period of time Satan is sealed in the pit. For this extremely long time represented by one thousand years the Word of God stands dominant upon the earth. At the end of the time Satan is allowed to once more exert his influence for a "little season." He gathers an army together preparing to attack the church.

God then brings down one last storm from heaven to devour his foes. Satan is cast into the lake

of fire with the Beast and the False Prophet. The resurrection takes place along with the judgment. Death, hell, and all those whose names are not written in the book of life are also cast into the lake of fire. Since death is the last enemy, God, Christ, and the church are completely victorious at long last.

Chapter 21

The saints who have been resurrected in their new and incorruptible bodies are now provided a new and holy abode. The old heaven and earth which were contaminated with the curse of sin give way to the new heaven and earth. The turbulent sea of misguided men from which the Beast and the Harlot arose is now gone.

The new heaven and new earth are incomplete without a new city. New Jerusalem descends from God out of heaven. New Jerusalem is the glorified church. She is adorned as a bride ready for the marriage to Christ, her husband. She is described in unimaginably beautiful and valuable terms. John is first shown the city from the outside. He is then to view the internal blessings.

Chapter 22

Nothing evil is allowed to exist in the holy city. It is too late for repentance now. The filthy must remain filthy, and the holy must remain holy forevermore. Those who are allowed in the city will

have the mark of God upon their forehead. They will serve him, not self or Satan.

Spiritual life, food and water are found in abundance. The citizens of the city are invited to drink freely of the water of life. God and the Lamb will be present with them in a much closer sense than that which is true of Christians on earth today.

The Revelation closes with a most solemn charge from God that none add to, nor take away from, the message revealed through the opening of the book of the seven seals.

Some Closing Remarks

We have come to the close of this most interesting examination of the last book of the Bible. It has been extraordinarily profitable to this writer. In the beginning there was hope of clearer personal understanding of several difficult portions of the book. Although it can hardly be said that the material has been mastered, we do believe our knowledge is greater, and our faith is stronger. Our study has led us to view with some suspicion any man who leaves the impression that every verse has been digested. The greatest effort has been made to be honest in our approach. Even so, it is literally impossible for one to cut oneself off from previous teachings and read the book separate from the training of years gone by. It is most difficult to eliminate the tendency to explain passages within the context of what we know our friends and loved ones would like for us to say.

But, the truth is not found in following men. The commentaries and teachings of men may be used to discover the truths others have managed to mine. However, they must recede into the background as we return again and again to the pure and unadulterated Word of God. One great physical scientist said it was only after he learned to follow the truth wherever it led, regardless of the consequences, that he began to reap a harvest. Jesus said, "If ye are MY DISCIPLES ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

If we have aided any to better understanding of the way of the Lord, we rejoice. If on the other hand, we have abused the Word or misled any unintentionally, we ask God's forgiveness, and also theirs.

Jehovah has granted good health and time, plus a host of other blessings during the ten years this commentary was being researched and written. To God and to his Only Begotten Son must go the wisdom, the power, the honor, the glory, and the praise. Amen.

A List Of Key Symbols With Meaning

Chapter One

SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA—A group of congregations in Asia Minor representing the strengths and weakness of congregations in all times and places.

SEVEN SPIRITS—The complete power of the Holy Spirit available for activating the purposes of the Godhead.

Chapter Two

HIDDEN MANNA—Invisible nourishment which is ours through digesting the teachings of Jesus Christ.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN—A group of Jews who claimed to be worshipping and serving God, but who prove by their rejection of Christ that they are actually worshipping Satan.

ROD OF IRON—God’s standard of measurement which is never broken, bent, or stretched to fit the desires of men.

THE MORNING STAR—Jesus himself who is in Malachi called the “Sun of Righteousness.”

TEN DAYS OF TRIBULATION—A temporary suffering which will soon be replaced by better conditions.

Chapter Three

KEY OF DAVID—Authority over the people of God to open and close doors of action and opportunity.

NEW JERUSALEM—The glorified church as lovers of Christ who will live with him in eternity.

Chapter Four

TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS—The spiritual leaders of the people of God in both the Mosaic and the Christian ages. The twelve sons of Israel and the twelve apostles of the church.

CRYSTAL SEA—The multitudes of people who in the vision of this chapter lie calm and placid under the oversight of God, the Ruler of the universe.

FOUR LIVING CREATURES—Particularly important spiritual beings who represent the angelic hosts, and who are charged with dispensing the providential purposes of God on earth.

Chapter Five

BOOK OF THE SEVEN SEALS—Record of endtime events which was sealed by Daniel and could only

be revealed by Jesus Christ after he had proved himself worthy by his perfect life and sacrificial death.

NEW SONG—A song of joy and gratitude which can only be sung by those who have been redeemed from sin through the blood of the Lamb.

Chapter Six

WHITE HORSE—Christ riding out with the pure and holy gospel, ready to conquer the multitudes for his kingdom.

RED HORSE—War, violence and bloodshed which occur when men reject the teaching of the Prince of peace.

BLACK HORSE—Sorrow, poverty and injustice which come about as a result of the violence and bloodshed under the red horse.

PALE HORSE—Death and the grave which are the inevitable end of war and famine.

SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR—Those unfortunate souls who were caught up in the results of the spiritual conflict and who lost their physical lives while serving faithfully.

Chapter Seven

ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND—The faithful of God who live upon the earth, who have been marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit, and who will be protected in eternity because they belong to him.

WHITE ROBED MULTITUDE—Those multitudes from various nations and times who have lived by faith and passed from life to eternity.

Chapter Eight

SEVEN TRUMPETS—Major upheavals in every part of the creation which act as warnings to men to repent of their foolish and rebellious actions.

Chapter Nine

STAR WHICH FALLS FROM HEAVEN—Satan who once had a place among the heavenly host, but who abused that privilege and was consequently cast out.

KEY TO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT—Power to open a Satanic headquarters and release various torments from the kingdom of darkness upon disobedient men.

KING OF THE LOCUSTS—Satan, who is called Abaddon which means “Destroyer.”

FIVE MONTH STING—Nearly unbearable torment which lingers long enough that it should cause evil men to reconsider their folly.

Chapter Ten

LITTLE BOOK—The same book of the seven seals which has now been opened to reveal the Mystery of God's final actions.

SEVEN THUNDERS—Warnings of a coming storm of wrath from the hand of God so severe it will not be described.

Chapter Eleven

TEMPLE OF GOD—The church, which is the meeting place for man and God in worship, and which must meet God's specifications in every detail.

GENTILES—Men who are not of the people of God and who oppose and persecute his own.

FORTY-TWO MONTHS—Half of a complete seven years; thus a broken time which is to be followed by other important events.

TWELVE HUNDRED SIXTY DAYS—Precisely the same as the forty-two months and the time, times, and half a time mentioned elsewhere.

THE TWO WITNESSES—The law and the prophets as represented by Moses and Elijah. Both the law and the prophets bear testimony of Jesus.

GREAT CITY WHERE THE LORD WAS CRUCIFIED—Spiritual Babylon, composed of those who follow the Prince of darkness and who crucified the Lord.

PEOPLE, KINDREDS, TONGUES, AND NATIONS—The vast treasure of souls in every time and place which Satan seeks to devour, and which the Lord seeks to save.

Chapter Twelve

WOMAN CLOTHED WITH SUN, MOON AND STARS—God's partner in bringing forth his children on earth. His faithful in the starlight of the patriarchal age, the moonlight of the Mosaic age, and the sunlight of the Christian age.

GREAT RED DRAGON—That old serpent the Devil who seeks to devour all of the children, but particularly the Only Begotten Son.

MAN CHILD—Jesus Christ who was born of a woman, and though he was the Son of God took great pride in referring to himself as "Son of man."

WILDERNESS—A place where the church could be preserved and nourished by God away from the

mainstream of society where the multitudes walk the broad way which leads to destruction.

Chapter Thirteen

BEAST FROM THE SEA—Brute force supported by the multitudes in the form of organized government, and opposed to the principle of love which motivates the followers of the Lamb.

BEAST FROM THE EARTH—Organized force exerted by those who hold to earthly and carnal philosophies of life. It later becomes clear the Sea Beast and the False Prophet are identical.

IMAGE OF THE BEAST—Material possessions such as money and goods which covetous men may be persuaded to worship through the influence of the political and religious organizations of the sea and earth beasts.

MARK OF THE BEAST—The attitude of men who belong to Satan and who live by the selfish lusts of the flesh, as opposed to the attitude of love demonstrated by those who are marked with the Holy Spirit.

NUMBER OF THE BEAST—An identifying characteristic of those who are followers of the beastlike philosophies of Satan. It is not the number of A man, but the number of MAN in general. Those

who have this number are persuaded man is self sufficient and does not need God to direct his paths.

Chapter Fourteen

BABYLON—The spiritual capitol of Satan's kingdom of darkness. It is as important to Satan as is New Jerusalem, or the church, to the kingdom of God.

WINEPRESS OF GOD'S WRATH—God's way of describing the terror of falling into his hands when his longsuffering has been exhausted.

Chapter Fifteen

SEA OF GLASS MINGLED WITH FIRE—The multitudes of people who were pictured as placid earlier but now are in turmoil and intermixed with the chastising fire of God's wrath.

SEVEN VIALS—Containers for the plagues which God will pour out upon an impenitent and defiant opposition.

Chapter Sixteen

ARMAGEDDON—The spiritual battlefield for a terrible conflict between the forces of Satan and the forces of Jehovah.

KINGS OF THE EAST—Literally these are "Kings of the sunrising." They are Christians who follow

the “Sun of Righteousness”, and they are ready to invade Satan’s capitol city of Babylon.

KINGS OF THE EARTH—Powerful and influential individuals who can muster forces from the carnal who “dwell upon the earth” and persuade them to fight against the kings of the east.

Chapter Seventeen

SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS—Enormous cunning and power demonstrated by the “kings of the earth” as they command the forces of Babylon.

Chapter Eighteen

MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH—Those who make an art of improper gain through the empire of Satan, and through his city of pleasure, Babylon.

SHIPMASTERS—Servants of Satan’s empire who accumulate possessions through control of the movements of such goods.

Chapter Nineteen

MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB—The final union of Christ and the church as bride and Bridegroom, to be followed by eternal bliss in the place which he has gone to prepare for us.

RIDER ON A WHITE HORSE—Jesus Christ riding out to complete the task of conquering which he began in the beginning of chapter six.

LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE—The final place of torment for those who have proven they do not wish to live close to God. The place where the “worm dieth not” and the “fire is not quenched.”

Chapter Twenty

GREAT CHAIN—The gospel which has the power to completely subdue Satan and render him helpless.

ONE THOUSAND YEARS—A symbolic term indicating a very long time during which the church will enjoy dominance and prosperity after having spent a relatively short “forty-two months” in wilderness persecution.

LITTLE SEASON—A comparatively short period of time following the extended “thousand years” during which Satan will be allowed to deceive the nations and amass forces in opposition to the saints.

GOG AND MAGOG—The gullible and foolish multitudes who have always been vulnerable to the subtlety of the “Father of liars”, and willing to enroll in his fight against Jehovah and his people.

GREAT WHITE THRONE—The judgment seat of God and of his Christ for the final separation which must take place between the ones who are to hear, “Depart from me ye workers of iniquity”, and those who are to “Enter into the joys of thy Lord.”

NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH—The new spiritual abode for the saints. It will be as different from this old sin stained earth as the glorious new immortal and incorruptible bodies of the saints are from those they inhabited before.

***A List Of Cross References Between
The Book Of Revelation And The
Major And Minor Prophets Of The
Old Testament***

Revelation Old Testament Prophet

Chapter 1

7 Daniel 7:13 Zechariah 12:10
8 Isaiah 41:4 44:6 48:12
12 Zechariah 4:2
13 Ezekiel 1:26 Daniel 7:13 10:16
14 Daniel 7:9 10:6
15 Ezekiel 1:7 43:2
16 Isaiah 49:2
17 Ezekiel 1:28 Daniel 8:18 10:10
20 Malachi 2:7 Zechariah 4:2

Chapter 2

16 Isaiah 11:4
23 Jeremiah 11:20
27 Daniel 7:22

Chapter 3

- 7 Isaiah 22:22
- 9 Isaiah 49:23 60:14
- 10 Isaiah 24:17
- 14 Isaiah 65:16
- 17 Hosea 12:8
- 18 Hosea 55:1

Chapter 4

- 2 Isaiah 6:1 Jeremiah 17:12
Ezekiel 1:26 Ezekiel 10:1
Daniel 7:9
- 3 Ezekiel 1:28
- 5 Ezekiel 1:13 Zechariah 4:2
- 6 Ezekiel 1:5 10:14
- 7 Ezekiel 1:10
- 8 Isaiah 6:2-3

Chapter 5

- 1 Ezekiel 2:9-10 Isaiah 29:11
Daniel 12:4
- 5 Isaiah 11:1
- 6 Isaiah 53:7
Zechariah 3:9 4:10
- 9 Daniel 4:1 6:25
- 11 Daniel 7:10

Chapter 6

- 3 Zechariah 6:3 6:11
- 4 Zechariah 6:2
- 8 Ezekiel 14:21
- 10 Zechariah 1:12
- 12 Joel 2:10
- 14 Isaiah 34:4 Jeremiah 3:21 4:24
- 15 Isaiah 2:19
- 16 Hosea 10:8
- 17 Isaiah 13:6
Zephaniah 1:14

Chapter 7

- 1 Daniel 7:2
- 3 Ezekiel 9:4
- 10 Isaiah 43:11
Jeremiah 3:23
Hosea 13:4
- 14 Isaiah 1:18
Zechariah 3:3-5
- 15 Isaiah 4:5-6
- 16 Isaiah 44:10
- 17 Isaiah 25:8

Chapter 8

- 7 Ezekiel 38:22
Isaiah 2:13
- 8 Jeremiah 51:25
Amos 7:4

- Ezekiel 14:19
- 10 Isaiah 14:12
- 11 Jeremiah 9:15 23:15
- 12 Isaiah 13:10 Amos 8:9

Chapter 9

- 2 Joel 2:2,10
- 4 Ezekiel 9:4
- 6 Isaiah 2:19
Jeremiah 8:3
- 7 Joel 2:4
Nahum 3:17
Daniel 7:8
- 8 Joel 1:6
- 9 Joel 2:5-7
- 16 Daniel 7:10
Ezekiel 38:4
- 17 Isaiah 5:28:29
- 19 Isaiah 9:15
- 20 Daniel 5:23

Chapter 10

- 1 Ezekiel 1:28
- 4 Daniel 8:26 12:4,9
- 5 Daniel 12:7
- 6 Daniel 12:7
- 9 Jeremiah 15:16
Ezekiel 2:8
Ezekiel 3:1-3
- 10 Ezekiel 3:3 2:10

Chapter 11

- 1 Ezekiel 40:3
Zechariah 2:1
- 2 Ezekiel 40:17,20
- 4 Jeremiah 11:16
Zechariah 4:3,11,14
- 5 Jeremiah 1:10 5:14
Ezekiel 43:3
Hosea 6:5
- 7 Daniel 7:21
Zechariah 14:2
- 11 Ezekiel 37:5,9,10,14
- 12 Isaiah 14:13 60:8
- 15 Isaiah 27:13
Daniel 2:44 7:14,18,27
- 18 Daniel 7:9-10

Chapter 12

- 2 Isaiah 66:7
- 4 Daniel 8:10
- 7 Daniel 10:13,21 12:1
- 10 Zechariah 3:1
- 12 Isaiah 49:13
- 14 Daniel 7:25 12:7
- 15 Isaiah 49:19

Chapter 13

- 1 Daniel 7:2,7
- 2 Daniel 7:4-6
- 5 Daniel 7:8,11,25 11:36

- 7 Daniel 7:21
- 8 Daniel 12:1
- 10 Isaiah 33:1

Chapter 14

- 5 Zephaniah 3:13
- 8 Jeremiah 51:7
- 10 Isaiah 51:17
Jeremiah 25:15
- 11 Isaiah 34:10
- 14 Ezekiel 1:26
Daniel 7:13
- 15 Joel 3:13
Jeremiah 51:33
- 18 Joel 3:13
- 20 Isaiah 63:3

Chapter 15

- 3 Hosea 14:9
- 4 Jeremiah 10:7
Isaiah 41:2,25
- 6 Ezekiel 44:17
- 8 Isaiah 6:4

Chapter 16

- 6 Isaiah 49:26
- 9 Daniel 5:22:23
- 12 Jeremiah 1:38 51:36
Isaiah 41:2,25

- 18 Daniel 12:1
- 19 Isaiah 51:17,23
Jeremiah 25:15

Chapter 17

- 1 Jeremiah 51:13
- 2 Jeremiah 51:7
- 4 Daniel 11:38
Jeremiah 51:7
- 12 Daniel 12:20
Zechariah 1:18,19,21
- 14 Jeremiah 50:44-45
- 15 Isaiah 8:7
- 16 Jeremiah 50:41-42
Ezekiel 16:37-44

Chapter 18

- 1 Ezekiel 43:2
- 2 Isaiah 13:19,21 21:8 34:11-14
Jeremiah 50:39 51:37
- 3 Isaiah 47:15
- 4 Isaiah 48:20 52:11
Jeremiah 50:8 51
- 5 Jeremiah 51:8-9
Jonah 1:2
- 6 Jeremiah 50:15,29 51:24,49
- 7 Ezekiel 28:2
Isaiah 47:7
Zephaniah 2:15
- 8 Ezekiel 47:9
Jeremiah 50:34

- 9 Ezekiel 26:16-17
Jeremiah 50:46
- 10 Isaiah 21:9
- 11 Ezekiel 27:27-36
- 13 Ezekiel 27:13
- 17 Isaiah 23:14
Ezekiel 27:29
- 18 Ezekiel 27:30-31
- 19 Ezekiel 27:30-31
- 20 Isaiah 44:23 49:13
Jeremiah 51:48
- 21 Jeremiah 51:64
- 22 Isaiah 24:8
Jeremiah 7:34
Jeremiah 16:9 25:10
Ezekiel 26:13
- 23 Jeremiah 25:10 7:34 16:9 38:11
Isaiah 23:8
Nahum 3:4
- 24 Jeremiah 51:49

Chapter 19

- 3 Isaiah 34:10
- 6 Ezekiel 1:24
- 8 Ezekiel 16:10
- 11 Isaiah 11:4
- 13 Isaiah 68:2-3
- 15 Isaiah 11:4 63:3
- 16 Daniel 2:47
- 17 Ezekiel 39:17
- 18 Ezekiel 39:18,20
- 20 Daniel 7:11

Chapter 20

- 3 Daniel 6:17
- 4 Daniel 7:9,22,27
- 6 Isaiah 61:6
- 8 Ezekiel 38:2 39:1
- 9 Isaiah 8:8
Ezekiel 38:9,16
- 11 Daniel 2:35
- 12 Daniel 7:20 12:1
Jeremiah 17:10 22:19

Chapter 21

- 1 Isaiah 65:17 66:22
- 2 Isaiah 52:1 54:5 61:10
- 3 Ezekiel 43:17
- 4 Isaiah 25:8 35:10 61:3 65:19
- 5 Isaiah 43:19
- 6 Isaiah 12:3 55:1
- 7 Zechariah 8:8
- 10 Ezekiel 48
- 12 Ezekiel 48:31-34
- 13 Ezekiel 48:31-34
- 15 Ezekiel 40:3
Zechariah 2:1
- 19 Isaiah 54:11
Ezekiel 1:26
- 23 Isaiah 24:23 60:19-20
- 24 Isaiah 60:3,5,11 66:12
- 25 Isaiah 60:11 60:20
Zechariah 14:7

27 Isaiah 35:8 52:1 60:21
Joel 3:17

Chapter 22

1 Ezekiel 47:1 14:8
2 Ezekiel 47:12
3 Zechariah 14:11
Ezekiel 48:35
5 Daniel 7:27
10 Daniel 8:26 12:4,9
11 Ezekiel 3:27
Daniel 12:10
12 Isaiah 40:10 62:11
13 Isaiah 41:4 44:6 48:12
14 Daniel 12:12
16 Zechariah 6:12
17 Isaiah 55:1

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