

# Revelation chapters 1-22

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## About the author

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All who knew him will always remember him for his love of the Scriptures and his extensive knowledge and recall of the same.

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Warren & Maureen Paynter

# A Revelation of Jesus Christ

## **This present age**

- Chap 1 Jesus Christ in glory. (The head of the church)
- 2 The seven-fold church on earth. (The body of Jesus Christ)
- 3 (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea)
- 4 The rainbow throne set in heaven. (A rainbow throne, 24 enthroned elders, the seven-fold Holy Spirit, the sea of glass, the four living beings)
- 5 The seven-sealed scroll. (A scroll sealed with seven seals, the Lamb prevails to open and to read the scroll)
6. Verses 1 to 11.  
The Lamb breaks the first five seals (terrestrial visitations)  
(The white horse, the red horse, the black horse, the pale horse, the martyrs under the altar)
- 6 & 7 verse 12 to chapter 7 verse 17  
The Lamb breaks the sixth seal. (This present age ends, the Day of the Lord begins, when this seal is broken, we see:
- (1) Fearful signs including the moon being turned to blood.
  - (2) Recognition of the day of wrath on the part of sinners.
  - (3) Sealing of 144,000 Israelites as servants of God on the earth.
  - (4) The raptured church in heaven before the rainbow throne.

## **The Day of the Lord**

### **1. The tribulation**

- Chap 8 The seventh seal opened. The Great Tribulation begins.  
The first four trumpets. Wrath commences. Celestial visitations.
- 9 Fifth trumpet ... first woe ... Abyss opened ... intra-terrestrial visitations.  
Sixth trumpet ... second woe... 200 million supernatural horsemen ... one third of mankind dies.
- 10 The little scroll. Wrath not yet ended but to continue and intensify.
- 11 The two witnesses, Moses and Elijah. They prophesy for 1260 days after which they are killed by the Antichrist (beast).
- 12 The woman (Israel), the manchild (144,000), the dragon (Satan).
- 13 The two beasts. (The Antichrist and the false prophet)
- 14 Manchild raptured, three angels testify, the harvest and winepress of wrath.
- 15 Triumphant tribulation martyrs, final wrath determined.
- 16 Seven bowls of wrath poured out upon the earth. Consummation of the wrath of Almighty God, culminating in the great battle of Armageddon.

- 17 The scarlet-clothed woman mounted upon the beast. The harlot church, left behind when the Rapture takes place, finally destroyed by the Antichrist.
- 18 The destruction of great Babylon. God judges and destroys the whole Babylonian system of commerce, politics and religion.
- 19 The marriage supper of the Lamb. Only those blessed of the Lord are called to this supper.  
The Lamb and his heavenly host descend to make war on the nations. Armageddon takes place.  
The Antichrist and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire.

## 2. **The Millennium**

- Chap 20 The dragon bound for 1000 years.  
Tribulation martyrs resurrected and reign.  
Satan loosed after 1000 years to deceive the nations once more.  
The great white throne.
- 21 The New Jerusalem the abode of the redeemed.
- 22 The river of life. The tree of life promised.

I come quickly ... even so, come, Lord Jesus.

# **A Revelation of Jesus Christ**

## **Chapter one**

*Jesus Christ in glory ... the head of the church*

### **Verses 1-3**

John declares that this book is a Revelation given by God (the Father) to Jesus Christ, to show his servants those things which were to take place in the future. The Greek word apokalupsis translated Revelation, is compounded from the words apo ... from, and kalupto ... to cover or hide, thus the meaning is the “unveiling” of that which was previously hidden.

(The Greek word prototokos translated ‘firstborn’ seven times and ‘first begotten’ twice. The Lord Jesus is the first in the new creation, just as Adam was the first in the Edenic creation. The new creation begins with him. This headship of the new creation does not in any way compromise his eternal power and Godhead.)

### **Verses 4-8**

John addresses the seven Asian assemblies, bestowing grace and peace from:

- (1) The Father (him which is, and which was, and which is to come)
- (2) From the seven-fold Holy Spirit (from trench ... amply.)
  - a) The Spirit of the Lord
  - b) The Spirit of wisdom
  - c) The Spirit of understanding
  - d) The Spirit of counsel
  - e) The Spirit of might
  - f) The Spirit of knowledge
  - g) The Spirit of the fear of the Lord. Isa 11:2
- (3) And from Jesus Christ who is:
  - a) The faithful witness. The only perfect messenger from God.
  - b) The firstborn of the dead.
  - c) The ruler of the kings of the earth. (“Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.” Psalm 2:8)

Glory and dominion (surely the prerogatives of God) are ascribed to Jesus Christ who is the one who:

1. Loves us. (Not “loved us” as in the KJV, for the love of the Lord Jesus for his own is never ending.)
2. Loosed us from our sins by his blood. (Cleansing from sin is ours only by virtue of his shed blood.

✚ “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7b.)

3. Made us a kingdom, priests to God his Father. (Vincent “Word Studies”, says, kingdom describes the body of the redeemed collectively. ‘Priests’ indicates their individual position.)

In verse 7, we have the first mention of the theme of Revelation.

- ✚ Every eye will see him, every one who pierced him.
- ✚ All the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.

Again we see in verse eight the clear statement of the deity of Christ.

- ✚ “I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Because of this fact we can rest assured that what he says will come to pass.

### **Verses 9-11**

John reminds the seven assemblies of the fact that he is their brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience in Jesus. Note how the kingdom of our Lord is linked to tribulation and patience. Paul “strengthened the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God”, on his return to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. Acts 14:22.

The emperor Domitian was persecuting the Christians. John reminds them that he is suffering persecution even as they are. Indeed John was on the isle of Patmos, being exiled there according to tradition by Domitian, in the year 95 A.D.

- ✚ “On account of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

It was during this exile that he received the Revelation from Jesus Christ.

John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day or the first day of the week. This is not to be confused with the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord begins right after the Rapture of

the church and is terminated by the creation of a new heaven and earth when the day of God begins. 1 Peter 3:12.

John hears a trumpet-like voice behind him, commanding him to write what he sees on a scroll, and to send it to the seven assemblies in Asia, to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

### **Verses 12-16**

Hearing the voice, John turns to see where the voice comes from. He sees seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like a Son of Man. John sees the glorified Christ. This is not the Lord on whose bosom he had leaned (John 13:23), but Jesus Christ as judge preparing to visit wrath on the wicked. It would serve us well to remember that there is coming a time when he who is “able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him”, will say to those who would not come, “Depart from me you workers of iniquity.”

John gives us a nine-fold description of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **1. And amidst the lampstands one like a Son of Man**

This title is used of the Lord 30 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark, 25 times in Luke, 12 times in John, once each in Acts and Hebrews, and twice in Revelation, making 85 times in all. It is always preceded by the definite article except in John 5:27; Heb 2:6; Rev 1:13; 14:14.

In Matthew 16:13 the Lord Jesus asks his disciples a question, “Who do men say that I the Son of Man am?”





They answer, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

Jesus then asks, “Whom say ye that I am?”

Simon Peter answers, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Here we find the deity of the Son of Man clearly expressed, the Lord Jesus saying that flesh and blood had not revealed that truth to Peter but “my Father which is in heaven.”

We have neither time nor place to investigate all the places where this name occurs, so a few must suffice.

-  The Son of Man has power to forgive sin. Mt 9:6; Mk 2:10; Lu 5:24.
-  He is Lord of the Sabbath. Only God can claim this. Mt 12:8; Mk 2:28; Lu 6:5.
-  The Son of Man will send forth his angels. Surely only God can claim the angels as belonging to him? Mt 13:41.
-  Jesus speaks of the Son of Man being seated on the throne of his glory. Matt 19:28; 25:31.

✚ Betrayed by Judas, the Lord Jesus stands before the high priest who says, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus answers, "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Mk 14:62. The high priest said, "He hath spoken blasphemy."

This title relates to the Lord Jesus on earth. He is God indeed but he is also man. Not fallen man, not of Adam's sinful race, but sinless man, lower than the angels true, but man as God intended man to be.

As Son of Man he has nowhere to lay his head; he will be betrayed, delivered into sinful men's power; he will die and rise again. As Son of Man he will come in the clouds of glory to exercise authority over men, commanding the angels to remove all things that offend, from his kingdom. Matt 13:41.

## 2. **Clothed with a long robe and a golden girdle round his breast**

A long robe down to the feet is the garment of dignity and honour. (Vincent). It speaks of the Lord Jesus as king and priest. The Greek word occurs only here in the N.T. But is used in the O.T. Septuagint in Lev 16:4 of the holy linen coat Aaron wore, when he went into the holiest of all on the Day of Atonement. We are also reminded of Isaiah's vision when he "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Isa 6:1.

### Golden girdle

Aaron also had a girdle but only of gold interwoven with blue, purple, scarlet and fine twined linen. Exodus 28:8. Our Lord is girded with a golden girdle around his breast. In Isaiah 22:21, God speaks of the Messiah who was to come from the house of David and says:

✚ "I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a Father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. v 22. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."

Again

✚ "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." Isa 11:5.

In his address to the assembly at Philadelphia John uses the Scripture in Isa 22:21-22. (See Rev 3:7-8.)

3. **His head and his hair were white as wool, white as snow**

Daniel writes:

✚ “As I looked thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head was like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire.” Dan 7:9.

That the ancient of days is Jesus Christ is evident for the scene in Daniel is that of the judgment and:

✚ “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” John 5:22.

Surely we see here the spotless purity and holiness of the Lord Jesus?

4. **His eyes were like a flame of fire**

We turn to Daniel again who writes in Dan 10:5-6:

✚ “Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.”

No sin can remain hidden from the eyes of the Lord. We read in Zech 4:10,

✚ “These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth.”

So Paul in Hebrews 4:13:

✚ “And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

5. **His feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace**

We have seen under point (4) above, what Daniel says about his feet. A furnace always speaks of trial and judgment. When Sodom was destroyed Abraham looked and saw:

✚ “And, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.” Gen 19:28.



Jesus Christ speaks of the wicked being cast into a furnace of fire. Mt 13:42. These very feet, burnished for judgment in a furnace, will trample the vine of the earth.

✚ “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.” Isaiah 63:3 (also 63:7.)

6. **His voice was like the sound of many waters**

In Dan 10:6 above we read of his voice being like the sound of a multitude. Similar words are used of the voice of the Lord in Ezek 43:2. The words he speaks will not be of mercy and forgiveness, but of condemnation. Remember that when God’s mercy is spurned:

✚ “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” Hebrews 10:26-27.

7. **In his right hand he held seven stars**

The seven stars are the seven angels or messengers sent to the seven assemblies. While the word angel is generally used of supernatural beings in the N.T. the word means messenger and is used of John the Baptist in Matt 11:10, and here it obviously refers to human messengers who will take the Revelation to the seven assemblies once John has written all he sees.

8. **From his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword**

It is not without reason that the Lord is called the Lord of hosts. Zechariah writes:

✚ “Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.” Zech 14:3. The Lord appears to Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand to contend for Israel. Joshua 5:13-14.

In Isaiah, speaking of the Day of the Lord’s vengeance, the prophet writes:

✚ “For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness ...” Isa 34:5-6.

Again in Isa 66:16:

✚ “For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.”

In Revelation 19:15 we read:

✚ “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations.”

The Lord warns the assembly at Pergamos to repent:

✚ “Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” Rev 2:16.

Here again we see the Lord Jesus depicted, not as Saviour, but as judge.

9. **His face was like the sun shining in full strength**

No man has ever seen God and lived. In the Old Testament the theophanies were never appearances of God in all his glory.

Moses said to the Lord:

✚ “Shew me thy glory.” Ex 33:18.

The Lord answers him:

✚ “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” Ex 33:20.

The Lord then says he will put Moses in the cleft of a rock and as he passes by, he will cover him with his hand, and Moses will see his back parts, but not his face. Ex 33:21-23.

Paul tells King Agrippa about his encounter with the glorified Christ on the road to Damascus:

✚ “At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun.” Acts 26:13.

This was the Lord Jesus, and so great was the light that Paul was blinded. No wonder Paul writes to Timothy of the Lord Jesus:

✚ “I charge you to keep the commandment stainless and irreproachable until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in due time he will make known, the blessed and only sovereign, the king of kings and Lord of Lords, who alone possesses immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no human being has ever seen or is able to see.” 1 Timothy 6:14-16.

No one ever saw the Lord in all his glory, during his earthly days. It was only on the mount of transfiguration, that some of his glory burst out of the temple of his body briefly. Matt 17:2.

### **Verses 17-20**


When John sees the Lord Jesus, he falls at his feet as one who is dead. The Lord lays his right hand on him saying, "Fear not." Awesome as he is in the Revelation, we have nothing to fear, if we serve him as we ought to. Only those who rebel against him, and reject him need fear, and they need to fear indeed.

The Lord Jesus now makes three statements to John about himself.

(a) **I am the first and the last, and the living one**


The Lord Jesus identifies himself in this statement, with Jehovah (JHWH).

We read in Isa 44:6:

 "Thus saith the Lord the king of Israel and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."

Similar passages are Isaiah 41:4 and 48:12. This is no new revelation for he used the name "I am", whereby Jehovah revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3:14), many times during the days of his humiliation. He used the name "I am" (Gk. Ego eimi) six times unqualified by any other phrase. (Jn 4:26 Samaritan woman; 6:20 walking on the sea; 8:24, 28 in connection with unbelief; 8:58 Abraham; 13:19 Judas; 18:5, 6, 8 his arrest in Gethsemane. Jesus also used it in conjunction with other phrases. (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51 ... bread of life; John 8:12 ... light of the world; John 10:7, 9 ... door; John 10:11, 14 ... good shepherd; John 11:25 ... resurrection and the life; John 14:6 ... the way, the truth, the life; John 15:1, 5 ... the true vine.)

Let there be no doubt that all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Jesus Christ bodily. Col 2:9. He accepted worship as being his due. Thomas called him:

 "My Lord and my God." John 20:28.

(b) **I became dead and behold I am living unto the ages of the ages**

Here we have the whole purpose of the coming of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus loved sinful men so much that he became:

 "Obedient to death; yes, death by the cross." (Phil 2:8 Berk.)

That our Lord Jesus died voluntarily is the clear teaching of the Bible. Jesus himself said:

✚ “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down and power to take it again; this charge have I received from my Father.” John 10:17-18.

Again before Pilate he said:

✚ “Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.” John 19:11.

But now, having died to obtain eternal redemption for us by entering once for all into the holiest through his own blood (Heb 9:12), he lives for evermore. How we can praise God for the words of Paul to the Romans (6:9):

✚ “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.”

And it is because of the fact death has no more dominion over him that he can say:-

(c) **I have the keys of death and of Hades**

When God created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, he said:

✚ “Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Gen 1:28.

By disobeying God, man surrendered his dominion to the one who tempted him, namely, Satan. Satan has certain rights in this day and age, which are his by virtue of Adam’s disobedience.

- ✚ He could request the right to tempt Job. (Job 1:12)
- ✚ He could beg earnestly for Peter to sift him as wheat. Luke 22:31.
- ✚ He can accuse the brethren night and day before our God. Rev 12:10.
- ✚ He has also been given the power of death for we read in Hebrews 2:14 “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil.”

No wonder then that he could promise his disciples:

✚ “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” Mt 16:18.

In Matthew 16:19, Jesus Christ gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter, but this could never have been, had he not first wrested the keys of death and of Hades from Satan. Now Hades is the Greek word used for the Old Testament word 'Sheol'. Before Christ died all the dead, believing as well as unbelieving, went to Sheol or Hades. This place was divided, and contained the place called "Abraham's bosom" as well as a place of torment. Luke 16:22-23. There could be no crossing from the one to the other for Abraham said to the rich man:

✚ "Between us and you a great chasm has been firmly fixed." Lu 16:26.

Since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus no believer goes to Hades or Sheol. It is now:

✚ "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." 2 Cor 5:8.

Paul says:

✚ "I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better:" Phil 1:23.

This is why death is so often referred to as sleep as far as a believer is concerned. (Stephen ... Acts 7:60; saints ... 1 Cor 15:6; 1 Thess 4:13-15.) So the gates of Hades cannot prevail against those who love the Lord.

Now in Revelation 1:19-20, the Lord Jesus commands John to write:-

1) Write the things which you have seen.

✚ The things which are. (That is those things pertaining to the present age, during which God is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people unto his name. Acts 15:14)

✚ And the things which are to occur after these things. (Namely, the Day of the Lord which is ushered in by the Great Tribulation.)

2) The Lord Jesus explains to John the mystery of the seven stars in his right hand, and the seven golden lampstands.

✚ The seven stars are the angels or messengers of the seven assemblies. The Greek word 'angelos' refers to human messengers here and not angels.

✚ The seven lampstands are the seven Asian assemblies. We are aware that a lampstand serves one purpose. A lampstand holds up the light, so that all can see it, and benefit by it. So the purpose of the church's existence is to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the

church, so that all men might have the opportunity of believing on him.

## **Chapters two and three**

### ***The seven-fold church, Christ's body here on earth***

There were many more assemblies in Asia than the seven selected by the Lord Jesus Christ, as recipients of the Revelation given to John on the isle of Patmos. Paul founded assemblies in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Perga, just to mention a few. In fact Colosse, an assembly to which Paul wrote one of his epistles, was only 11 miles away from Laodicea.

Why, if there were so many more assemblies in Asia, did the Lord Jesus not include them? Why only seven? And why these particular assemblies? Seven assemblies were chosen because seven is the number of perfection. Witness the fact that God instituted the week as the number of days to be reckoned in measuring time. When the seven days of a week are completed we begin a new week. The Hebrew word for seven means to be complete, to be full, to be satisfied, to have enough.

These particular assemblies were chosen as examples. Every single assembly in existence, or which has ever existed, will fall into one of these examples described here. A full spectrum of the whole body of Christ on earth is found in these examples.

It is possible for the lampstand of an assembly to be removed. Rev 2:5. When this occurs, it ceases to be one of the Lord's assemblies but will, like the Jews, become a synagogue of Satan. Rev 2:9. Sad to say, there are many congregations where Christ is not Lord, where his deity, his incarnation of a virgin by the Holy Ghost, his sinless life, his atoning death, his resurrection, and his coming again, is not taught and even ridiculed. Certainly modern day theologians belonging to the "God is dead" school of thought are not Christian nor are those who follow them. This also holds true of all cults who do not hold to the pure Word of God. Such assemblies or congregations are certainly not part of the bride of Christ (the true church), but belong to the apostate harlot church so graphically described in Revelation 17.

From the first century to the present every assembly still acknowledged by Jesus Christ, has fitted into one of these seven kinds of assemblies. Assemblies in certain ages, or particular countries or localities, or even denominations, may be predominantly Ephesian or Smyrnan for example, but there is no warrant for dividing the church age into different ages, whereby the first is called Ephesian and the last Laodicean. So in the first century there were Laodicean-like assemblies, just as, in the present age, there are Smyrna-like assemblies.

### **The seven assemblies**

1	Ephesus	loveless	Rev 2:1-7
2	Smyrna	persecuted	Rev 2:8-11
3	Pergamos	complacent	Rev 2:12-17
4	Thyatira	compromised	Rev 2:18-29
5	Sardis	dead	Rev 3:1-6
6	Philadelphia	faithful	Rev 3:7-13
7	Laodicea	lukewarm	Rev 3:14-22


Let us look at these assemblies collectively to see what the Lord has to say to them, for what he says to them is vital to us, if we would be what he wants us to be.

### **The angels of the assemblies**

As has been stated before, the angels of the assemblies were not angelic beings. They were human messengers, sent from the assemblies to John, who would carry back to the saints, the message of the Revelation.

### **The assemblies themselves**

It would be as well here to look at the Greek word translated church or assembly in the New Testament. It is the Greek word 'ekklesia' and it is a compound of the word 'ek' which means "out of", and 'kaleo' which means "to call". So 'ekklesia' means to call out. So the church has been called out of the world to be a separate and distinct people. We are in the world but we are not of the world. So we see Peter speaking to the Jewish saints in dispersion:

 "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9.

Peter then exhorts them "as strangers and pilgrims" to abstain from fleshy lusts, which war against the soul. So then ought we to be, and where there is a breakdown in our relationship with the Lord, it is always because we do not maintain our heavenly calling.

It would be as well to look at the places in Asia where these seven assemblies were situated.

### **Ephesus**

The name means 'desirable'. Originally a Greek colony at the mouth of the Cayster River. Such Greek cities were founded from Marseilles to Alexandria. These cities were

trading posts founded to foster trade but were instrumental in spreading Greek culture around the civilized world.

The city was the centre of the debased cult worship of Artemis, the Greek Goddess corresponding to the roman Diana. The temple in Ephesus, devoted to the worship of the Goddess, was reckoned as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was in Ephesus that Paul found disciples of Apollos who had only been baptised unto repentance. He rebaptised them and laid hands on them so that they might receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul preached in the synagogue for the space of three months before taking the disciples to the school of Tyrannus, where he disputed daily. Here it was that special miracles were wrought by Paul, and certain vagabond Jews tried to cast out demons as Paul no doubt was doing, with disastrous consequences for themselves. Many who believed brought books on the occult and magic and burned them publicly.

Paul's ministry, however, ended with an uproar. The Word of God grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20), so much so that the livelihood of the silversmiths, led by Demetrius, was threatened. Demetrius stirred up the worshippers of Artemis to such an extent that Paul left Ephesus after a stay that had lasted two years. (Acts 19:10.)

### **Smyrna**

An ancient city founded by a people known as the Lelages. It passed into the possession of the Greeks in the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C., and was destroyed in the same century by the Lydians. It was rebuilt in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. By Lysimachus, one of Alexander the Great's generals, who took over the rule of Thrace and Bithynia, on the death of Alexander. The city became very prosperous, and, in A.D. 26, a temple dedicated to the worship of the roman emperor Tiberius was built. Polycarp, a disciple of John was martyred here. (He was bishop of Smyrna.) It was the last of the Christian cities of Asia to be conquered by the Turks in 1424 A.D. It is still a large city today and is known by its Turkish name Izmir.

### **Pergamos**

A city of Mysia, the people were descendants of Greek colonists. After the death of Lysimachus, an independent of Greek kings (the Attalids), was founded. They ruled the city until the last king of the dynasty, Attalus III, willed his kingdom and title to the Romans. It was a great centre of worship dedicated to Asclepius, the God of healing and medicine. The symbol of Asclepius was the serpent. The staff and serpent of this pagan God, are perpetuated in the medical staff and serpent entwined. Aware of the fact that the serpent is so closely associated with Satan (that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan ... Rev 20:2), it is no wonder that the Lord Jesus says that Pergamos is the place of "Satan's throne". There is a reputed link between Babylon and Pergamos and so also Rome. The Babylonian magicians are supposed to have fled from their city when it was conquered by Cyrus. They subsequently established themselves at Pergamos. Hislop in his "Two Babylons" says of the worship of Asclepius in Pergamos:

✚ "That seat, after the death of Belshazzar, and the expulsion of the Chaldean priesthood from Babylon by the Medo-Persian kings, was at Pergamos, where



afterwards was one of the seven churches of Asia. There, in consequence, for many centuries was Satan's seat. Rev 2:13. There, under favour of the deified kings of Pergamos, was his favourite abode, there was the worship of Asclepius, under the form of a serpent, celebrated with frantic orgies and excesses, that elsewhere were kept under some measure of restraint."

The city of Pergamos was the site of the first temple erected in Asia for the worship of a Roman emperor (dedicated to Augustus Caesar.)

The city still exists today as the Turkish town of Bergama.

### **Thyatira**

This was a border town, situated in n. Lydia near its border with Mysia. Originally it was a small, unimportant town. It rapidly gained commercial importance, and was renowned for its trade guilds. Every artisan belonged to some guild or other and these guilds wielded considerable influence. Lydia, the first convert of Paul the apostle in Philippi, was there on business from Thyatira. She was, according to Acts 16:14, "a seller of purple." Thyatira was also known in earlier times as Pelopia and Semiramis. The latter name could indicate a Babylonian connection for it was also the name of nimrod's consort. It was about 40 miles from Pergamos and could have been subjected to the same influences.

### **Sardis**

Sardis was the capital city of the ancient kingdom of Lydia. The wealth of the city was enormous, and Croesus, one of its kings, is still regarded as the epitome of wealth, even today. The city was built on the slope of Mt. Tmolus and the city was practically impregnable. Its very difficult access caused complacency, and it was sacked by the Persians in 549 B.C. In 17 A.D. it was destroyed by an earthquake and, although it was rebuilt, it never regained its old importance.

### **Philadelphia**

Also situated in Lydia, it was founded by Attalus II. It lies near Mt. Tmolus and was situated on an easily defended hill. It was also destroyed by the great earthquake of 17 A.D. It long resisted the Turks but was finally overcome in about 1400 A.D.

### **Laodicea**

Situated in the province of Phrygia, Laodicea was founded by Antiochus II who named it after his wife Laodike. It was of little importance until the roman province of Asia was formed. (190 B.C.) Under the Romans, the city became great and wealthy. It was the seat of rich banking firms, as well as a rich woolen industry. An eye-salve was also manufactured there.

## **1. Description of Jesus Christ with regard to each of the seven assemblies**

### **a) To the Ephesian assembly**

✚ “These things saith he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.”

The Lord Jesus holds the seven stars in his right hand; he walks among the seven golden lampstands. He is absolute Lord of the church. All that pertains to it is controlled by him. In Matt 16:18 he says:

✚ “Upon this rock I will build my church.”

In Acts 20:28, Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders:

✚ “to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

In Eph 1:22-23, Paul says that the Father

✚ “hath put all in subjection under his (Jesus Christ’s) feet, and gave him for a head over all for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”

Again in Eph 5:23 Paul writes:

✚ “The husband is the wife’s head as also the Christ is the head of the church, himself Saviour of the body.”

So in Col 1:18:

✚ “He (Jesus Christ) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, firstborn from the dead; that in all he might have the pre-eminence.”

The assemblies are his own. They belong to him. They are responsible to him and he is responsible for them.

b) **To the assembly at Smyrna**

✚ “These things saith the first and the last, who became dead, and lived.”

Jesus Christ assures these believers of three facts concerning himself:-

i. **His deity**

In all our trials and afflictions they were to remember that their Lord was none other than the eternal one. It may seem as if evil is more potent than

good. It may seem as if God does not hear us in our afflictions. Neither of these is true.

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,” said the Lord. Matt 28:18. The prince of this world is cast out. John 12:31.

✚ “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Heb 7:25.

Why must we so often suffer, be in peril, experience the hatred of men? There are many Scriptures which would answer here but one will have to suffice. We read in Hebrews 2:10:

✚ “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.”

Suffering is a vital requirement in the perfecting of his saints. Paul writes in Romans 8:17-18:

✚ “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together. 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.”

We can overcome the Spirit of Antichrist:

✚ “... because greater is he that is in you (the Lord Jesus Christ), than he that is in the world (Satan). 1 John 4:4.

## ii. **His death**

The obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ was such that he was prepared to become:

✚ “... obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil 2:8.

If the saints at Smyrna, or anywhere else for that matter, have to die for their faith, let them remember that the Lord also died. So also many of the Old Testament saints “...were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword” Heb 11:35-37.

These all obtained a good report through faith. Heb 11:39.

iii. **His resurrection**

Though the Lord Jesus laid down his life, death could not hold him captive. Peter, speaking of the Lord on the day of Pentecost, quotes from Ps 16:9-10 when he says:

✚ “Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.” Acts 2:27.

✚ “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” John 11:25.

c) **To the assembly at Pergamos**

✚ “These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword.”

There are some people who, mistakenly, believe that God does not see the transgressions of believers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Speaking of this the writer of Hebrews says:

✚ “If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.” (Heb 12:25)

Listing the sins of the ungodly in Eph 5:1-8 Paul says that no fornicator or idolater (sins classified as “the doctrine of Balaam in Rev 2:14, which were already being manifested in the assembly at Pergamos), hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. He warns the Ephesians

✚ “Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

If the Lord smites the nations with the sharp two-edged sword in Rev 19:15, he will surely do the same to those in the church who presumptuously believe that they can sin with impunity. God is no respecter of persons. Acts 10:34. He told Moses:

✚ “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Exodus 32:33.

d) **To the assembly at Thyatira**

✚ “These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like burnished brass.”

Perhaps Jezebel is the wickedest woman who has ever lived. When she married Ahab she introduced Baal-worship from Zidon. Jehu said to Joram in 2 Kings 9:22:

✚ “What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?”

She sought to exterminate the prophets of the Lord, being thwarted to some degree by Obadiah who hid fifty of them in a cave and gave them bread and water. 1 Kings 18:4. Perhaps the most infamous act of her wicked life was when she arranged for false witnesses to accuse Naboth, in order that he would be stoned, and Ahab, her husband, could obtain his vineyard. 1 Kings 21:1-29. In the 25<sup>th</sup> verse of this passage we read:

✚ “Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him.”

So, in Thyatira, a woman who was Jezebel-like was teaching and seducing the saints to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. No wonder the Lord Jesus is described, in his relation to this assembly, as one who will bring swift retribution upon them. A dire warning is given to all in Jude 4:

✚ “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Peter also speaking of such says:

✚ “Revelry during the day is their idea of enjoyment; they are foul blots and blemishes that revel in their lusts as they stuff themselves at your table. They have their eyes full of adultery and their appetite for sin is never satisfied ... for as they utter arrogant nonsense, they entice, through immoral passions of the flesh, those who have barely escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty they are themselves slaves of corruption; for a person is slave to whatever overpowers him.” 2 Peter 2:13-19. (Berk.)

Let us beware, if we sow to the flesh, we shall, of the flesh, reap corruption. Gal 6:8.

e) **To the assembly at Sardis**

✚ “These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars.”

Sardis had a name of being alive but was in reality dead. The Lord Jesus has the Holy Spirit, by whom he can quicken the assembly and bring it back to life; he also has the seven messengers who he is sending with the message given to John, so that they might take heed of their warning. There is no other way to have spiritual life in a church, but to have the Holy Spirit manifesting life there. There are many churches where there is an absolutely dead orthodoxy. One cannot criticise their doctrine, for doctrinally they are correct. Paul, speaking of his ministry says:

✚ “Our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” 2 Cor 3:5-6.

In his first letter to Corinth (1 Cor 2:4-5), Paul writes:

✚ “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Correct doctrine is not enough. The life of the Holy Spirit being manifested in the assembly is of cardinal importance. Our works need to be done in the power of the Spirit of God. We need to be:

✚ “filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Eph 5:18-20.

f) **To the assembly at Philadelphia**

✚ “These things saith the holy one, the true, that hath the key of David, who openeth and none shall shut, and who shutteth and none openeth.”

To this assembly the Lord is the holy one, the true one. They were serving him faithfully and he would make them holy even as he was. He would be true because they were being true. Peter says:

✚ “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15.

True holiness is not only to be separate from the world but to be separated to God. Paul says:

✚ “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification ... for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” 1 Th 4:3-7.

He has the key of David. The house of David is a royal house for God promised David:

✚ “Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever.” 2 Sam 7:16.

This promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ for Isaiah writes (Isa 9:6-7):

✚ “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever.”

We have already seen that the Lord Jesus, as the king of those who serve him as he should be served, will set an open door before them. None other can open or shut. Isaiah 22:22. Paul says:

✚ “A great door and effectual is opened unto me.” 1 Cor 16:9.

Again:

✚ “When I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord.” 2 Cor 2:12.

So to the assembly at Philadelphia the Lord Jesus is a holy, true, kingly opener of doors. How blessed to know him as such.

g) **To the assembly at Laodicea**

✚ “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”

He is the Amen to the assembly at Laodicea. He has the final word. What others may say is not important. What the Lord Jesus says is. When he has spoken, none other dare to speak. He is the faithful and true witness. There

are others who will tell us what we would like to hear. The false prophets told Ahab the things he wanted to hear. 1 Kings 22. But Micaiah told Ahab the truth.

The Laodicean church was making a wrong assessment. The Lord Jesus revealed to them what they were really like. He caused them to see themselves as God saw them. So the Holy Spirit causes the sinner to see himself as God sees him. John 16:8. He will reprove the world...

Their spiritual condition was the exact opposite of what they supposed it to be. It was important to know how far short they fell. The one who was witnessing against them was no mere man but the beginning of the creation of God or the source of all that exists. His witness was well worth listening and obeying the one speaking.

## **2. True character of the deeds of the seven assemblies**

To five of these assemblies Jesus says, "I know thy works." As we look at each assembly again, we will see them as the Lord Jesus sees them.

### **a) Ephesus as seen by the Lord Jesus**

✚ "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name sake, and hast not grown weary ... but this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

As far as the practical side of the life of faith, the Ephesian church cannot be faulted. Its works were acceptable. Not all works will pass his scrutiny. Paul says:

✚ "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal 2:16.

Paul says that by grace we are saved through faith "not of works lest any man should boast." Eph 2:9. Again in Titus 3:5, Paul writes:

✚ "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."

Repentance from dead works and faith toward God precede the works that God looks for in us. The Lord purges our consciences from dead works so that we might serve the living God. Heb 9:14. He then makes us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. Heb 13:21.



As far as patience or endurance was concerned, they were also exemplary. The same Greek word used here (hupomonee), is used in Luke 8:15 where Jesus says:

✚ “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

So also we read in Heb 12:1:

✚ “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus...”

They hated evil men. There can be no fellowship with those who are enemies of the Gospel of Christ.

✚ “Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” 2 Cor 6:17.

They had not grown weary. Paul says:

✚ “Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Gal 6:9.

Their doctrine was correct. They knew the Word of God. They had rejected false apostles. Paul writes of these false apostles, for he says in 2 Cor 11:13-15 that, like Satan their master, they pose as ministers of righteousness. Likewise, they hated the works of the Nicolaitans. We will see the assembly at Pergamos actually harbouring men who advocated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Who were the Nicolaitans? Accepting that the word comes from the two Greek words, nikao ... to conquer, and laos ... the people, and so “Rulers of the people”, we come to the beginnings of the differentiation between clergy and laity, an abomination to God. All distinctive garb, titles which are self-assumed, are hateful to the Lord. Jesus said:

✚ “But be not ye called rabbi: for one is your master, Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon earth: for one is your father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, Christ.” Matt 23:8-10.

What then was lacking in Ephesus? The one quality lacking was love, and lacking that, all else was worthless. Paul in 1 Cor 13 shows that nothing is of any value to God unless it is motivated by love.

b) **Smyrna as seen by the Lord Jesus**

✚ “I know thy tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are Satan’s synagogue.”

Paul says:

✚ “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 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.” Rom 2:28-29.

The fiercest opposition to the early church came from the Jews who rejected the gospel. In Asia and in Greece, the Jews opposed Paul vehemently. (see Acts 13:44-45; 13:50; 14:2-5, 19; 17:5, 13; 18:5-6, 12.) Let us beware of falling after the manner of the Jews. When the Lord Jesus removes the lampstand of an assembly, it also becomes a synagogue of Satan.

Concerning the tribulation we endure now, Paul says:

✚ “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” 2 Cor 4:17.

True riches also are not those which will pass away. Jesus tells of a rich man, who dies before he can enjoy his riches, and says:

✚ “So is he that layeth up treasure to himself, and is not rich toward God.” Luke 12:21.

c) **Pergamos as seen by the Lord Jesus**

✚ “I know where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.”

When the Lord judges us, all will be taken into consideration. Here the Lord tells the saints at Pergamos, that he is aware of the fact that they live where Satan has great power and influence. Today some believers are fortunate to live in lands where there is religious toleration. Others live where the Lord’s people are hated. To be a Christian behind the iron curtain where atheists can waste the church, calls for real determination.

To hold fast to the Lord's name and not to deny the faith, where it is possible that you can be killed for it, is the test of true discipleship. Many have done just that throughout the ages. The believers at Pergamos had done so. One, Antipas by name, had laid down his life for his faithfulness.

d) **Thyatira as seen by the Lord Jesus**

✚ “I know thy works, and the love and the faith and the ministry and thy patience, and thy last works to be more than the first.”

There is much to commend this assembly. They had good works and the last to be more than the first. They would not grow weary in well doing. There was patience too, as they served the Lord. They were true in their ministry as well. There are many ministries and we ought all to be active in that sphere to which we have been called.

The gift ministries of Christ are for the

✚ “... perfecting of the saints unto a work of ministry, unto a building of the body of Christ.” Eph 4:12.

All the saints should be active in the work of ministry. The natural body has no inactive members; neither should the Spiritual body have inactive members. There was still an active faith and above all, they, unlike the Ephesian assembly, still had a love that had not grown cold.

e) **Sardis as seen by the Lord Jesus**

✚ “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Become watchful and stablish the things remaining, which were about to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before my God.”

Here is an assembly where there is nothing which is commendable. They were reputed to be alive but were dead. Sound doctrine must be of the heart and not of the head. One can know the truth and present the truth parrot-fashion, and yet that truth may not be meaningful in one's own life. The Pharisees knew and taught the law but were hypocrites:

✚ “All their works they do for to be seen of men.” Matt 23:5.

Men might approve and praise, but God, who looks on the heart will say, “Thou art dead.”

Become watchful says the Lord Jesus and stablish the things remaining, which are about to die. There are many warning to believers throughout the Bible, telling us to be watchful. Paul writes in 1 Cor 16:13:

✚ “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with love.”

In view of the Lord’s return we should remember his words in Luke 21:36:

✚ “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

He warns Peter, James and John:

✚ “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matt 26:41.

f) **Philadelphia as seen by the Lord Jesus**

✚ “I know thy works, (Lo, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut it), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.”

The great thing that God looks for in his people is faithfulness. Paul writes in 1 Cor 4:2:

✚ “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

They were faithful in doctrine ... thou didst keep my word. Jesus said:

✚ “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32.

To those who did not receive him, Jesus said:

✚ “My word hath no place in you.” John 8:37.

They had not denied his name. How vital to remember this for Jesus said:

✚ “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth

me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” Luke 12:8-9.

The assembly at Philadelphia had only a little strength or power. The rendering in William’s New Testament reads:

✚ “I know that you have but little strength, and yet you have obeyed my message and you have not disowned my name.”

This reads as follows in the Berkeley version:

✚ “See, I have provided an opened door in front of you, one which no one is able to close; because, while possessing little strength you have observed my word and have not renounced my name.”

A poor assembly, without worldly resources, perhaps not strong numerically, but faithful.

g) **Laodicea as seen by the Lord Jesus**

✚ “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth.”

They were not cold in the assembly at Laodicea. There was no attachment to the world, no espousal of wickedness, no hatred of the things of God. But, if they were not cold, they certainly were not hot. It could not be said of them:

✚ “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” John 2:17. (quoted from Psalm 69:9.)

Now, when he was as yet unsaved, the apostle Paul had such a great zeal, that he persecuted the church. Phil 3:6. Once saved, he continued to manifest the same singleness of purpose for he writes:

✚ “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Phil 3:13-14.

We deceive ourselves if we think that the Lord Jesus will accept lukewarm followers. Jesus said:

✚ “He that is not with me is against me.” Luke 11:23.

Again he said:

✚ “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” Luke 16:13.

It was their love for mammon which caused the Laodiceans to be lukewarm.

### 3. **Jesus Christ’s praise or reproof. The assemblies’ spiritual state**

#### **Ephesus**

✚ “But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works.”

How terrible to think that the Lord can, and often does, have something against us. When the Lord Jesus makes an assertion, we need to take heed for he does not make mistakes. He said:

✚ “If I judge, my judgment is true.” John 8:16.

The fault at Ephesus was a serious one. They had left their first love. Paul says in 1 Cor 13 that all spiritual gifts, that all ministrations, are vain without love. Jesus said the following to a scribe who asked him, “Which is the first commandment of all?”, “The first of all the commandments is, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” Jesus said to him, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God”, when he answered:

✚ “Well, master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” Mark 12:28-34.

The Lord calls on them to remember from whence they had fallen. They were to compare themselves, as they were then, to what they had been before, and they were to repent and return to their first state. Let us remember that when the Lord reproves us, it is always to bring us back to the path of obedience.

## Smyrna

✚ “Fear not what things thou art about to suffer: lo, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried and have a tribulation of ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”

There was a time of persecution ahead for the saints at Smyrna, but they were not to fear. Speaking to Israel in Isaiah 43:2, God says:

✚ “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

We read in Isaiah 63:9:

✚ “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.”

Paul says:

✚ “Beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it”, (Gal 1:13)

Yet the Lord Jesus said:

✚ “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Acts 9:5.

He thus identified himself with his people. It has been said that prisons have held the worst and the best of human society. We need to look beyond the human vessels being used to see the real persecutor of the people of God. It is always the devil. He hates the church of Jesus Christ, and will afflict it, as long as he can.

The tribulation of the saints at Smyrna was to last for the period of ten days. Some would die for the faith for the Lord said, “Be thou faithful to the point of death.” Jesus said:

✚ “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hades.” Matt 10:28.

When the body has been killed, the believer is beyond the reach of the devil. And those who die for his name sake have his promise of a crown of life.

## Pergamos

✚ “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast some there holding the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. Thus hast thou also some holding the teaching of Nicolaitans likewise. Repent therefore.”

We come to the place now where we deal with those who depart from the doctrine of Christ, for this is the great point where the censure of the Lord Jesus is directed in Pergamos. There were two departures from the faith once and for all delivered to the saints Jude 3.

### 1 The teaching of Balaam

The story of the prophet Balaam is told in Numbers 22-31. He was hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the children of Israel. He was forbidden to do so by God, but subsequently disobeyed, and almost lost his life because of his folly, being compelled to bless Israel. At Peor, the children of Israel committed fornication with the Moabites and bowed down to their idols (Num 25:1-5). They were enticed by the Moabites as the result of the counsel of Balaam Num 31:16. As a result, 24,000 Israelites died.

Now in 2 Peter 2:1-22, the apostle writes of men whose pernicious ways will cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of. He compares them to the fallen angels confined in Tartarus, and to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, saying:

✚ “... which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam” 2 Pet 2:15.

Jude likewise speaks of such false teachers who have run greedily after the error of Balaam Jude 11. Paul says in 1 Cor 6:9:

✚ “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

That there were those in the early church who encouraged immorality, requiring that their followers should plumb the “depths of Satan”, to appreciate the blessing of Christ, is clear from church history. However, there is also spiritual fornication, where the Lord is not served as he ought to be served, but idols are substituted for him.



Israel did the same and suffered the condemnation of God. Israel was portrayed by the prophet Hosea, as the unfaithful wife of Jehovah, who had committed fornication with the Gods of the nations. This was why she was uprooted and scattered throughout the world. This church is doing the same. So, likewise, those who profess to love and serve Jesus Christ, will suffer condemnation if they do the same things.

## 2 The teaching of the Nicolaitans

We see that the “deeds of the Nicolaitans”, hated by the Ephesian assembly, have now become the “doctrine of the Nicolaitans”. As has already been mentioned, the growth of the unscriptural separation of believers into ‘clergy’ and ‘laity’ took place rapidly. The priesthood of all believers was denied, and an unscriptural priesthood was formed. Beside the Aaronic priesthood, and that of Melchizedek, the Scripture recognises no other priesthood but that of all who have trusted in Christ. We are all part of the “royal priesthood”. 1 Peter 2:9. So every believer ought to have the opportunity of ministering in the place where he fellowships.

Idolatry very soon became entrenched in the church. In the Eastern Church the iconoclasts fought a rearguard action but, eventually, it too followed the Roman church in the worship of saints, relics and other such things. There is also the question of the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which have now become the doctrine of the Nicolaitans error, left unchecked, soon entrenches itself at the expense of the truth if it is not dealt with. Thus, the Lord says:

✚ “Repent, therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.”

## Thyatira

✚ “But I have against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my bondmen to commit fornication, and to eat idol-sacrifices. And I gave her time to repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. Lo, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into Great Tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth reins and heart: and I will give to each of you according to your works. But to you I say, to the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who have not the depths of Satan, as they are saying, I lay on you no other burden.”

We find a woman in this assembly exercising great power and authority. Symbolically, she is called Jezebel, for she was like that old queen who seduced Ahab and his people to forsake the Lord and to worship Baal

You actually suffer a woman like her to take the place of authority. Paul says:

✚ “I suffer not a woman to be a teacher, not to usurp authority over the man.” 1 Tim 2:12.

She callest herself a prophetess. She certainly did not get her calling from God. There were prophetesses in the Old Testament such as Deborah, Huldah and Anna (judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36.) Miriam was also a prophetess (Exodus 15:14). So also Philip the evangelist had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. Acts 21:9. So a woman may prophesy but only as she is called of the Lord.

This woman in Thyatira, like Balaam, taught the Lord’s servants to commit fornication and to eat idol-sacrifices. Although she had been given time to repent, she was unwilling to do so. Leading part of the assembly into error, she had entrenched evil (plumbing the depths of Satan), in the assembly and would not repent although given the opportunity to do so. She could repent if she so desired, but would not. She would be cast into a bed, and so the scene of the sin would become the scene of her punishment. Her followers too, would be cast into Great Tribulation and they would be killed with death, if they did not repent.

Thus all the churches would know that he searches the reins and the heart. That all things were known to him and he would punish iniquity. No other burden would be laid on those in Thyatira who had been faithful to the Lord and did not adhere to this doctrine. In other words they were only required to abstain from and to oppose these false teachings.

### **Sardis**

✚ “Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt in no wise know the hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; because they are worthy.”

They were to remember what they had heard and received and repent and become watchful. If they did not repent and watch, the Lord would come as a thief, and they would not know the hour of his coming. In Matt 24:36, Jesus says:

✚ “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”

He then warns of the servant who says, “My Lord delayeth.” Jesus said that his Lord would come in an hour that he knew not, and would cut him asunder. We need to remember the Biblical definition of a thief:

✚ “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” John 10:10.

The Lord then is not coming as a thief for his own, but as a thief with regard to the wicked, that is, to kill, and destroy them. In the parable of the ten virgins, the Lord Jesus again teaches watchfulness. He says:

✚ “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour.” Mt 25:13.

A similar warning is given in Mark 13:32 and Jesus says:

✚ “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.” Mark 13:35-36.

Jesus tells us to:

✚ “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord ... if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched.” Luke 12:35-40.

Those few disciples in Sardis, who had not defiled their garments, would walk with him, clothed in white, because they were worthy.

### **Philadelphia**

✚ “Lo, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but lie; lo, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I will keep thee from the hour of trial, which hour is to come upon the whole inhabited earth. I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown.”

We have already dealt with the synagogue of Satan, who they are, apostate Jews, and have seen that assemblies can become the same, no longer recognised by Jesus Christ as his own, but apostates.

They will be made to come and worship before the saints feet. This worship will naturally be directed towards the Lord, and it will be worship that they will be compelled to render. Paul says:

✚ “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Phil 2:10-11.

Even the wicked shall be compelled to own the lordship of Christ, but they will not be saved. Only those who voluntarily own him are saved. They of the synagogue of Satan will also know of the love of Christ for his own. When the wicked finally come to the realisation of the purposes of God, and they will when they see his word fulfilled, they will know finally that the Lord has loved his own with a love that many waters cannot quench. Song Of Sol 8:7.

The Lord Jesus promises to keep these believers from the hour of trial which was coming, because they had kept the word of his patience. This was a reference to a time of persecution for all Christians, due to the fact that the faith had been declared a “religio illicita”. There is a time coming in the future too, when the saints who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, will be “kept from the hour of trial”. When the Lord pours out his wrath upon the earth, those who are his own people will have been caught up to meet him in the air, prior to the awful Day of the Lord.

The Lord warns the Philadelphians to hold fast to what they have so that no man would take their crown. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts them in Heb 10:23:

✚ “Let us hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;).”

### **Laodicea**

✚ “Because thou sayest, (that) I am rich, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by the fire, that thou be rich; and white garments, that thou be clothed and the shame of thy nakedness be not manifested, and eye salve to anoint thy eyes, that thou see. As many as I love I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore and

repent. Lo, I stand at the door and knock: if any hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

The Lord sums up the wretched state of this assembly. They imagined that they were rich and had need of nothing. There are many who say the same today. Some churches are extremely rich; they have vast investments, ornate church buildings, wealthy adherents and great political power. But these things have nothing to do with spiritual values. Material possessions and advantages are not even considered by the Lord. He looks for spiritual treasures, for a faith that cannot be shaken, for a love that will never abate, for a simple trust in himself like that of a child, for a hope that will never waver.

Laodicea was wretched, poor, miserable, blind and naked. But the Lord Jesus could change all this. He could give them the white garments of righteousness they needed, just as he had caused Joshua, the high priest, to be clothed. Zech 3:4.

He could give them the true riches, treasure in heaven, which could not be corrupted. Matt 6:19-21.

He could open the eyes of their understanding (Eph 1:18) so that the blindness caused by the God of this world, could be dispelled. 2 Cor 4:1-6. As many as he loves he rebukes and chastens, so that we might be partakers of his holiness. Heb 12:10.

We see the Lord Jesus shut out by the people in this assembly. He should be in their midst (Mt 18:20), but is outside a closed door. To those who hear his voice (of reproof), and open the door in obedience to him, he promises to come in, and to sup with them. How wonderful to have him enter in again, into a life that was barren and sterile, and to have fellowship with him. It is only as we do this that his blood will cleanse us from all sin, and we can fellowship with him in the glorious light of his person. 1 John 1:7.

#### **4. The Spirit's call for attention**

To all the seven assemblies the call goes out:



“Who hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

While the Lord Jesus was on earth he glorified the Father and revealed him to men. John 17:4. Being glorified and seated on his Father's right

hand (Heb 1:13), he sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost Jesus said of the Spirit:

✚ “When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” John 16:13-14.

All the churches, throughout all the ages, have had need of the Holy Spirit, and the widespread apostasy in the church in all ages, and particularly now, is due to the fact that the churches have not been willing to give heed to what the Spirit saith to the churches.

## 5. **Christ’s promise to those who overcome**

### **His promise to Ephesus**

✚ “To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.”

We read in Gen 2:9 of the tree of life in the midst of the garden (of Eden). Lest man, in his state of sin and disobedience, take and eat of the tree of life, and live forever, God caused him to be driven forth, and placed cherubim with flaming swords, to guard the way to the tree of life. Gen 3:22-24.

But because the Lord Jesus suffered for us upon the tree on Calvary, we who overcome will have the right to the tree of life in the New Jerusalem Rev 22:2, 14.

### **His promise to Smyrna**

✚ “Who overcometh shall in no wise be hurt of the second death.”

When death entered in to the world because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, they did not die physically but spiritually. Gen 2:17. Physical death only came many long years later, in Adam’s case 930 years later. So Paul refers to the unsaved as “dead in trespasses and sins.” Eph 2:1; Col 2:13.

Spiritual life can only come as the result of the new birth or regeneration. John 3:3; Titus 3:5. The second death can have no power over those who are born again. Those who rise in the first resurrection will see that:

✚ “On such the second death hath no power.” Rev 20:6.

The second death is stated to be the lake of fire. Rev 20:15. The second death cannot touch those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **His promise to Pergamos**

✚ “To him that overcometh, to him will I give the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.”

We read in Psalm 78:24:

✚ “And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.”

In Psalm 105:40 we read:

✚ “(he) satisfied them with the bread of heaven.”

In the apocrypha it is referred to as “angel’s bread”. Will we need food for sustenance in glory? We do not know, but if we do the bread of heaven will be our portion. Men have argued for ages as to what the origin of manna was. The tamarisk which grew in Sinai, has been suggested as the source of manna. This could not be for in describing the manna (Num 11:7-9), Moses says that when the dew fell upon the camp at night, the manna fell upon it. It was truly the bread of heaven.

Stones with names on are found elsewhere in Scripture. The breastplate of the high priest had four rows of stones on it with the names of the children of Israel on them. Exodus 28:15-21. Just as each tribe had its name written on a stone, so our great high priest will give each overcomer a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to himself. The colour white speaks of purity. Our new name will be a name that will be fitting. Names are given to children which are often not fitting. We do not express the meaning of the name. But God, who renamed Abram calling him Abraham, who renamed Jacob calling him Israel, will certainly find a new name which will be an accurate description of what we are. And as Jacob (a supplanter) became Israel (a prevailer with God), and as Abram (exalted father) became Abraham (father of a multitude) so our new name will describe us accurately.

### **His promise to Thyatira**

✚ “And who overcometh, and who keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall

rule them with a rod of iron, as the potter's vessels are broken to shivers: as I have also received of my Father: and I will give him the morning star.”

There is to be no slackening off in our serving the Lord, if we desire the rewards to overcomers. His works must be kept to the end. Works are the proof of a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. James writes:

✚ “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man will say, thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.” Jas 2:17-18.

The parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-28) indicates that the Lord will give dominion to his servants who are faithful in their service. As he himself will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Ps 2:9; Rev 19:15) so shall those also who overcome. The bright and morning star, given to those who overcome, could be the New Jerusalem, encircling the earth in the Millennium.

### **His promise to Sardis**

✚ “Who overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

In Isaiah 64:6 God says:

✚ “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.”

Jesus died to provide us with the righteousness that God requires. We see the Lord causing Joshua the high priest to be clothed after his filthy garments are taken away. Zech 3:1-5. The glorified saints stand before the throne of God, clothed in white robes which have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev 7:9-17. When Moses pleaded for Israel, God said:

✚ “Whatsoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.” Exodus 32:33.

So the Lord Jesus in the Gospels promises to confess before his Father and the angels, those who confess him here. Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8.



### **His promise to Philadelphia**

✚ “Who overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of the heaven from my God, and my new name.”

The pillar speaks of a firm support. It is used in this sense in Gal 2:9 where Paul describes James, Cephas and John as pillars. Paul, in 1 Timothy 3:15, speaks of the church of the living God as “the pillar and support of the truth.” We see a permanence as well for they “shall go out thence no more.”

The rest of the passage speaks of possession. We belong to God. We belong in the New Jerusalem and we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. So God’s name, the new name of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ and the name of the city we will dwell in forever, will be written on those who overcome. Thus, we who were sealed by the Holy Spirit, (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30) are sealed for all the ages by the Lord.

### **His promise to Laodicea**

✚ “Who overcometh, I will give to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.”

This is perhaps the greatest of all the promises made to those who overcome. That the Lord Jesus is seated on his Father’s throne is the testimony of the Scripture. We need look at a few examples only. The Father says to the Lord Jesus:

✚ “Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Hebrews 1:13.

Again we read in Hebrews 8:1:

✚ “We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.”

We read in Mark 16:19:

✚ “So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.”

As the Lord Jesus was exalted by the Father so we also, if we suffer together with him, will be glorified together with him. Romans 10:17.

All in all then, overcomers are promised the fruit of the tree of life, the crown of life, the hidden manna and a white stone with a new name written on it, authority over the nations and the morning star, garments of white, they will be made pillars in God's temple and have God's name written on them, and they will be seated together with the Lord Jesus on his throne.

## **Events leading up to the great Day of the Lord**

### **Chapter four**

#### ***A rainbow throne in heaven***

It would be as well, at this stage, to state that the book of the Revelation is chronological in its sequence. The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) do not present the ministry of the Lord in a chronological order. It is only by studying the Gospel of John that we can determine that the ministry of Jesus Christ lasted for a period of at least three years. He alone records that there were at least three Passovers during Christ's ministry. (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55.) John maintains the same method that he employed in his gospel, in the Revelation. He records the unfolding of God's end-time purposes in an orderly, chronological sequence.

#### **Verse 1**

After the vision of the sevenfold church on earth, John sees a door opened in heaven. He is about to see the activities of heaven, preparing for the time when God's work of taking out of the Gentiles a people for himself, has been completed. The first voice heard by John was like a trumpet saying, "Come up here, and I will show you the things which must occur, after these things." (lit.)

#### **Verses 2-3**

That they are individuals is made clear by two passages in the Revelation.

- A) In Rev 5:5 we read, "One of the elders said to me, stop weeping; behold, the lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome so as to open the scroll and its seven seals."
- B) Rev 7:13 reads, "And one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'These who are clothed in white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?'"

As Israel had elders before the church, could it not be argued that they represent Israel? In fact, Israel had elders who ruled, and so also the church. Why should there not be heavenly elders with certain responsibilities accorded them by God? God has ever loved to delegate authority to his creatures. If elders are given responsibilities in Israel, the church, then why not in heaven? Twelve is the governmental number of God, thus there are twenty-four elders in the Revelation and they are mentioned twelve times.

John is immediately in the Spirit, and sees a throne set in heaven. Seated on the throne he sees one, who is, in appearance, like a jasper and a sardius. There was a rainbow round the throne, in appearance, like unto an emerald. There is no concrete evidence that the summoning of John to heaven is a type of the Rapture of the saints. Paul, the apostle, had, in like manner, been caught up to heaven. Whether he was in the body or out of the body, he could not tell. He writes that he heard unspeakable words, which it was not lawful for him to utter. 2 Cor 12:1-7. It was on this occasion that he received the Revelation of that which he preached about, and wrote about, in his epistles. Gal 1:11-12. John did not hear a trumpet but a voice which sounded like a trumpet. Unlike Paul, John is very definite about his condition at the time. "I was in the Spirit" he says.

God takes John to a heavenly vantage point so the things taking place behind the earthly scene, may be recorded. The person seated on the throne is the Father. The Father's appearance is like a jasper and a sardius. We read in Rev 21:11 of the New Jerusalem coming down from God, having the glory of God: and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. (So the glassy sea Rev 4:6 is said to be like crystal.)

We see here then, the glory of the Father, for the precious jasper stone is linked with God's glory in Rev 21:11. Any encounter with God will leave man overcome with his infinite glory. In Ex 33:18, Moses says, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." God answers:

✚ "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand as I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." Ex 33:20-23.

Jeremiah speaks of the throne of God and says:

✚ "A glorious throne, on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary." Jer 17:12.

The sardius was a stone quarried near to Sardis whence its name. It was the first stone of the first row of stones, on the breastplate of judgment (Exodus 28:15-17; 39:10.) As the first stone it represented the tribe of Judah, the royal tribe, on the breastplate. We read:

✚ “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”  
Gen 49:10.

We see here firstly regal power and then we see legal power. He who sits on the throne is the absolute ruler of all that exists. He has the right and power to execute judgment upon all who will not submit to his authority. That judgment is at hand is clear and it is God, who is seated here upon a throne encircled by a rainbow like unto an emerald who will cause men to know, and that very shortly that he is a consuming fire. Hebrews 12:29. We need to distinguish between the rainbow throne, and the great white throne, of Rev 20:11. When the great white throne is set up, the heaven and the earth will flee away from the face of him who sits on it.

We read in Genesis that God made a covenant never to destroy the earth by water again. As a sign of this covenant he set the rainbow in the sky, as a perpetual reminder of the everlasting covenant. Gen 9:8-17. The rainbow throne holds a promise that, though wrath is God's purpose for the immediate future, yet, when that wrath has been consummated, and the time of the Great Tribulation has come to an end, there will be a further period of probation for the human race. God will allow man to remain on the earth, under the direct rule of Jesus Christ, for a further thousand years, under the most perfect conditions.

It is of interest to note that the emerald was the first stone of the second row, on the breastplate of judgment worn by the high priest. Ex 28:18; 39:11. It represented the tribe of Reuben. The emerald is green in colour, like the restless sea, and it is said of Reuben, “unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.” Gen 49:4. What transpires in heaven after John sees God on the rainbow throne, heralds a time of unparalleled upheavals, a time of which Luke writes:

✚ “And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”  
Luk 21:25-26.

#### **Verse 4**

Chapter four of the Revelation is particularly concerned with the fact that God is a glorious sovereign, who rules the entire creation. It is of interest to note that the word translated throne is the Greek word “Thronos”. It occurs 59 times in the New Testament, 44 times in the Revelation, and 14 times in chapter 4. (Almost 25% of its occurrences in the N.T.)

We read in Psalm 29:10:

✚ “The Lord sat as king over the deluge; the Lord sits as king forever.”

Seated upon the rainbow throne, who can doubt that his purpose is the same as at the time of the flood, namely, a visitation of wrath upon humanity. We see another 24 thrones arrayed around the throne of God. Seated upon them are 24 elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads. There are two Greek words translated crowns in the N.T. The one word is 'diadema' and the other is 'stephanos'. It is the latter word that is used here.

Who are these 24 elders? Are they meant to represent the raptured church as some aver? We read about them twelve times in the Revelation. (Rev 4:4, 10; 5:5, 6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4.) They are not the church, nor do they symbolise any other body, but are individuals. They do not need redemption. When they sing a new song in Rev 5:9 the King James wrongly translates part thereof as:

✚ “Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

We read in verse 8 that the elders have harps and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints. They then sing:

✚ “Thou hast redeemed them (the saints) to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

Now Paul says:

✚ “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” 1 Tim 5:17.

These elders in Revelation are connected with the governmental purposes of God. They help in the administration of the universe. God loves to delegate responsibility to his creatures. His angels are ministering spirits who minister to those who are heirs to salvation. Heb 1:14. So God uses these elders to rule and govern the whole of creation. They also lead the heavenly host in a great paean of praise to him who sits upon the throne and also the Lamb. They fall down and worship the ever living one. (Rev 4:10; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4.) They also fall down and worship the Lamb. (Rev 5:8.) We also see them address John telling him not to weep, and asking him the identity of the great multitude. Rev 5:5; 7:13. In this they act on behalf of God who never addresses John directly.

## **Verse 5**

We see here the seven-fold spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) before the throne. Soon we shall see the Lamb. We are reminded of the fact that all the persons of the Godhead are involved in every work of God, whether it be creation, or redemption, or wrath.

John tells us that from the throne there proceed lightnings, sounds, and thunders. We see these same phenomena occurring in three other places in the Revelation. They occur in

Rev 8:5, just after the breaking of the seventh seal, that is just as the Great Tribulation is about to begin, for, just afterwards, the first judgment trumpet sounds.

Again, in Rev 11:19, they occur, after the second woe. This is at the end of the first 3½ years of the Great Tribulation (which will last for 7 years), and just before the time when the Antichrist will demand universal worship of himself.

Then in Rev 16:18, they occur, when the seventh vial or bowl of God's wrath is poured out on the earth, right at the end of the Great Tribulation. Their manifestation here, then, is clear evidence that the day of grace is ending, and that God is moving from mercy to wrath.

### **Verses 6-8**

Before the throne, John sees a sea of glass like unto crystal.

#### **The sea of glass like crystal**

It is pointless to try to find some hidden meaning to the sea of glass. Some see it as representing the holiness and purity of God; others read some other hidden meaning into it. What is significant is that the sea of glass is before the rainbow throne, and it is not occupied by anyone. That John speaks of it as being clear as crystal indicates an unobstructed view of the entire sea.

Later, we see that John sees:

✚ “A great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne.” Rev 7:9.

They are, therefore, occupying the sea of glass, standing on it before the throne. There are many explanations as to who these white-robed people are. Arguments will be presented later in this study, with a view to establishing the fact that they are none other than the raptured church. Still later, John sees the sea of glass mixed with fire. Standing on it now are those who, during the tribulation, have:

✚ “come off victorious from the beast, and from his image ...” Rev 15:2.

Here are those who are martyred by the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. They have steadfastly refused to do homage to him, remaining faithful and true to their Lord. Needless to say, these believers were not believers when the Rapture took place, their faith in their Lord came after the Rapture had taken place.

John describes four living creatures, in the midst and round the throne. He says that they are full of eyes, before and behind. The first is like a lion, the second is like a calf, the third had the face of a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each living creature had six wings, which were full of eyes, around and within. John says that:

✚ “They rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

The description of the living creatures is almost identical to Ezekiel’s description of cherubim (Ez 1:5-10; 10:5-20.) They differ in that, in Ezekiel, the cherubim are described as having four wings instead of six, and each cherub has four faces, that of a man, an ox, an eagle and a lion, instead of one face each, as in the Revelation. In Isaiah 6:2-3, we see another order of heavenly beings, seraphim, who are six-winged, and who, like those in the Revelation, praise God with the trisagion (thrice holy.)

Both cherubim and seraphim, are closely related to the worship and praise of God in heaven. They cover his throne, and laud his holiness. God placed cherubim, with a flaming sword turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life, after he had driven Adam and Eve out of Eden Gen 3:24. Two cherubim of beaten gold were to shadow the mercy seat, covering the Ark of the Covenant, in the holiest of all, in the tabernacle. Ex 25:17-22; 37:6-9. The curtains of the tabernacle were embroidered with cherubim. Ex 26:1; 36:8. So also the veil separating the two chambers of the tabernacle. Ex 26:31; 36:35. God was to dwell between the cherubim, in the holy of holies, while he sojourned with his people, Israel Num 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron 13:6; Ps 80:1; 99:1; Isa 37:16.

The cherubim of the temple of Solomon were huge figures, each 10 cubits high, with a wingspan of 10 cubits. With wings spread out in the sanctuary, their wings touched in the centre. The walls were carved with cherubim as were the doors. 1 Kings 6:23-35; 2 Chron 3:7-14. It was under the outstretched wings of these great cherubs, that the Ark of the Covenant was placed. 1 Kings 8:6-7; 2 Chron 5:7-8.

In David's great Psalm of deliverance (2 Sam 22:11; Psalm 18:10), he says of the Lord:

✚ “He rode upon a cherub, and did fly.”

We see that the cherubim are always present where God manifests himself, whether in the tabernacle, or the temple, or when God reveals himself to Ezekiel or to John. They shadow the mercy seat in the tabernacle, and twice over, in the temple. Wherever the throne of God is, there we will find the cherubim. In fact, there was a time when Satan did the same, before sin was found in him. He is described in Ezekiel 28:14, as:

✚ “The anointed cherub that covers (the throne of God) with overshadowing wings.”

It was this great cherub, whose heart was lifted up with pride, so that he coveted the throne which he was supposed to guard, who lead the great host of rebel angels in revolt against God.

The only place where the seraphim are mentioned is in the book of Isaiah and in chapter six. All we can say is that they are similar to, if not identical to, the cherubim. Now the

Greek word translated “living creature” in the Revelation is the word “zoon”. The translation “beast” is most inappropriate. It occurs 20 times in John’s prophecy. (Rev 4:6, 7 (4 times), 8, 9; 5:6, 8, 11, 14; 6:1, 3, 5, 6, 7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4.)

These beings are said to say “Holy, holy, holy”, day and night to him who sits upon the throne. Rev 4:8. They give glory and honour and thanks to him. Rev 4:9. Together with the 24 elders, they fall down and worship the Lamb, because he has redeemed mankind by his blood. Rev 5:8. The great angelic choir joins with them and the elders saying:

✚ “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing.” Rev 5:11-12.

When all creation worships the Lamb, they echo, amen.” Rev 5:14. They call forth the horsemen of chapter 6, bringing to the earth the initial perils which proceed the Great Tribulation. Rev 6:1, 3, 5, 6, 7. They fall before the throne and worship God together with the elders and all the angels. Rev 7:11. One of them gives the seven golden bowls, full of the wrath of God, to the seven angels, who will pour them out on the kingdom of the Antichrist Rev 15:7. Finally, just before the marriage supper of the Lamb, the living creatures and the 24 elders fall down and worship God, saying, “Amen, alleluia.” Rev 19:4.

These Scriptures reveal two facts to us:

1. They initiate and participate in the worship of God.
2. They will be actively engaged in bringing down wrath on the wicked, thus vindicating the holiness of God.

### **Verses 9-11**

John tells us that when the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to the one sitting upon the throne, who lives unto the ages of the ages, the 24 elders fall down before him who sits upon the throne, and they worship him casting their crowns at his feet. All is laid at the feet of God, by those who truly love and revere him. So too, one day, the saints will fall down at his feet, and cast the crowns which they have won, at the feet of our great God and heavenly Father. Let us take note of the praise given to God by the 24 elders.

1. “Thou art worthy to receive glory and honour and power.”
2. They give the reason as to why all praise and honour and glory are due to God. It is because God created all things. The entire universe is the work of God. Nothing exists apart from the creative power of God. Men may talk of evolution, and they may have fine theories as to how matter came into existence. They love to propound a universe without a creator. But Scripture says, “By faith we understand that the universe was created at God’s command, so that what we now see was made out of what cannot be seen.” Hebrews 11:2. It is therefore only right and correct that his creation should



praise him. It is for this reason that the Psalmist in Psalm 148 calls on all creation to praise him.

✚ “Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights. Praise him all his angels. Praise him all his hosts. Praise him sun and moon. Praise him all ye radiant stars. Praise him heaven of heavens, and you waters above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for it was he who commanded and they were created.” Ps 148:1-5.

He then calls on all that is on earth to praise the Lord. Ps 148:6-14. It is only here on earth that rebel sinners, influenced by Satan and his fallen host, refuse to worship the Lord of heaven.

3. We are to praise God because we were created for his pleasure, or because of his will. It was because of his will that creation came into existence. Therefore it is only right that we, who were created because of his will, should praise him. Man is not on earth by some haphazard chance. We are not the end-product of a long and wasteful process of evolution. Rather we are here because God said:

✚ “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Gen 1:26.

✚ So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he him.” Gen 1:27.

Part of the plan of God is that man should worship him and have fellowship with him. God indeed today still seeks men and women who will abandon their sin and rebellion, and will turn to him, through Jesus Christ our Lord, worshipping him in spirit and in truth. John 4:23-24.

## **Chapter five**

### ***The seven-sealed scroll, the freshly-slain lamb***

#### **Verses 1-4**

John has been describing the great scene of worship in heaven, directed to the Father, seated upon the rainbow throne. He now tells us that he saw a scroll in the right hand of him who sat upon the throne. The scroll has been written on, on both sides, and has been sealed with seven seals. What was written on the scroll could not be made known until the seals had been broken.

Before proceeding further let us look at other scrolls mentioned in Revelation.

1. There is the scroll which John is commanded to write.

✚ “What thou seest, write in a scroll, and send it to the seven assemblies.:

This scroll is referred to in Rev 1:11; 22:7, 9, 10, 18, 19.

2. There is the scroll of life belonging to the Lamb. In this scroll are written the names of all those who have been saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Concerning this scroll we read that God will not blot the names of those who overcome, out of the Book of Life. Rev 3:5. There is a dire warning in Rev 13:8 that a time is coming when all those who dwell on the earth, whose names are not written in this book, will worship the beast from the Abyss. Then in Rev 20:12, 15; we read that, at the last resurrection, after the Millennium, the Book of Life will be opened, and, whosoever is not found written in it, will be cast into the lake of fire. Finally we are told that only those whose names are written in the Book of Life, will enter into the New Jerusalem. Rev 21:27.
3. Then the Revelation mentions the scrolls opened at the time of the judgment at the great white throne. We are told that the dead will be judged according to the things that are written in these scrolls. Judgement of the wicked will thus be according to their works. Rev 20:12.
4. Finally, there is the scroll about which we are now concerned. It is a scroll sealed with seven seals. Rev 5:1-9. Once the seventh seal is broken, that which is written on this scroll is known, and is recorded as part of the scroll that John was commanded to write. Thus its contents are recorded from chapter 8:2, of the Revelation. The contents of this scroll are so awful that there is silence in heaven, for half an hour, once the seventh seal is broken. The partially fulfilled scroll is seen in the angel's hand in Rev 10:2-10 but this will be dealt with later.

In Rev 5:2, we see a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose the seals thereof?” Then, as now, a sealed document could only be opened by the person who had legal authority to do so. Usually this is the person to whom it is addressed. We read that no one either in heaven, or on earth, or underneath the earth, was able to open the scroll or to look at it. Of all in heaven, all the myriads of angels who do God's bidding, not one could take a single look at its contents.

So no living soul on earth could be found who was worthy. And in that place underneath the earth called Hades? Certainly none could be found there who was worthy. No single being in all the universe could be found who was worthy. No wonder John wept much.

### **Verses 5-7**

As John weeps much because no one was found worthy to open the scroll, one of the 24 elders speaks to him and says:

✚ “Weep not. Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose the seven seals thereof.”

We read in Gen 49:9:

✚ “Judah is a lion’s cub. With the prey, my son, you have gone high up; he stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as a lioness who dares provoke and rouse him?” (Ampl)

We see here Judah, the royal tribe, likened to a lion. Great and terrible in strength. But these verses actually look far beyond Judah himself. They describe the greatest of Judah's seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. He said to his disciples:

✚ “All power (exousia ... authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”  
Matt 28:18.

Authority to take the scroll in heaven and to break its seals.

He is also the root of David We read in Isa 11:1:

✚ “There shall come forth a rod (shoot) out of the stem (stump) of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.”

Now the shoot out of the stump of Jesse is the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Hebrew the word for shoot is the word “natzer” from which the name of the town of Nazareth is derived. This is why Matthew writes:

✚ “And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene” Matt 2:23.

Here we see no lofty oak or cedar, but only a shoot out of a stump. Not one of the great ones of the earth, but a humble, peasant carpenter, from a despised city called Nazareth “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” asks Nathaniel. “Come and see”, replies his friend Philip Not only did the Lord Jesus come from a despised town, but he was not even descended from the illustrious line of Solomon, but from the line of his obscure blood-brother (both had Bathsheba as their mother and David as father), Nathan.

When we see the human background of the Lord Jesus, we can only echo the words of Paul, the apostle:

✚ “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things which are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. 1 Cor 1:27-29.

John continues:

✚ “I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a lamb standing, as if it had been sacrificed. It had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.”

The Lamb stands midway between the throne and the heavenly beings associated with it. The Lamb stands right in the centre. He is the one on whom all God’s eternal purposes hinge. All God’s purposes as far as the redemption of sinners is concerned depend on the Lamb of God.

In John 12:27, Jesus says:

✚ “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour.”

The Lamb was one that had been slain or sacrificed. Vincent says the Greek word indicates violence, butchery. For the Lamb to take away the sin of the world, he must needs die. Paul writes to the Corinthians:

✚ “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” 1 Cor 15:3.

On the cross:

✚ “God made him who knew no sin to be made sin on our behalf, so that in him we might share the righteousness of God.” 2 Cor 5:21. (Berk)

No wonder Peter says:

✚ “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain ways received by tradition from your Fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or spot.” 1 Peter 1:18-19.

But the Lamb is alive again. On the day of Pentecost Peter says:

✚ “This person you killed by nailing him to the cross through the hands of lawless men, for he was delivered up in the determined will and foreknowledge of God – him God raised up by setting him free from the pangs of death; for he could not be held in its grip.” Acts 2:23-24.

“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” said the Lord Jesus to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, after his resurrection. Paul writes to the Romans:

✚ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” Romans 6:8-10.

So:

✚ “Because he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God has highly exalted him and endowed him with the name above every name.” Phil 2:8-9.

It is because of this that he alone in the entire universe, has prevailed to open the seven-sealed scroll.

It is of interest to note that the Lord Jesus is portrayed as both a lion and a lamb in these Scriptures. The lion is the king of the beasts and is a symbol of strength while the Lamb is a symbol of weakness and defencelessness. There was none as strong as Christ, for all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily. Col 2:9. Yet he placed himself in a position of weakness, willingly submitting to sinful man, allowing himself to be taken to be slain. All this he did to redeem us from our sins.

The Greek word translated lamb is the word “arnion”, a little lamb, and is used only by John, and is used 30 times in the New Testament. In John 21:15, Jesus says to Peter, “Feed my little lambs.” In Rev 13:11, it is used of the false prophet. He is described as having two horns, like a little lamb, but he is not a little lamb, but a wild beast, the word “therion” in the Greek. In all other instances the word arnion is used only in the Revelation, and always exclusively of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev 5: 6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4 (twice), 10; 15:3; 17:14 (twice); 19:7, 9; 21: 9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3.) Thus it is used twenty eight times of the Lord Jesus, in the Revelation. This book is thus very clearly seen to be the book of the Lamb, for not only is he alone able to break its seals, it has so much to say about him.

It would be as well here to note that the word translated “slain” or “slaughtered”, the Greek word “sphazo” is also used exclusively by John. It is used of animal sacrifices, in the sense of being slaughtered. As has been noted, it always indicates violence or butchery. It is used in 1 John 3:12 (twice), of the slaying of Abel by his brother Cain. In Rev 6:4, it is used of those slain violently in warfare, when the red horse comes forth after the Lamb breaks the second seal. In Rev 6:9, it is used of the martyrs who had been slain because of the Word of God. In Rev 13:3, it is used in connection with the death of the beast or the Antichrist, who will most probably be assassinated. In Rev 18:24, it is used of those who had been slain, and whose blood was to be found in great Babylon. Then it is used in Rev 5:6, 9, 12; 13:8; to describe the fact that the Lamb of God the Lord Jesus Christ, was slain, or died violently, and that for us. How truly Isaiah spoke and wrote:

✚ “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” Isa 53:7.

We see the Lamb possessed of the seven-fold spirit of God. So when the Lord Jesus, as the Son of Man, began his earthly ministry which was to culminate with the great work of redemption on the cross of Calvary, he began it and completed it, by the power of the Holy Spirit. At his baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove in the river Jordan Matt 3:16; Luke 3:22. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Luke 4:1. He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee (Luke 4:14) to read from the Scriptures in the synagogue:

✚ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” Lu 4:18.

He was possessed of the Spirit, so full and abundantly overflowing, that John can write:

✚ “He (Jesus) grants the Spirit in unlimited measure.” John 3:34.

So we read in Heb 9:14 that it was through the eternal Spirit that the Lord Jesus Christ offered himself without spot to God.

Absolute power (symbolised by the seven horns) and absolute wisdom and knowledge (symbolised by the seven eyes) are his who died for us. Indeed the seven eyes of the Lord, run to and fro through the whole earth. Zech 4:10. John sees the slaughtered lamb come up to the throne, and take the scroll out of the right hand of him who sat upon the throne. (Rev 5:7.)

### **Verses 8-10**

When the Lamb takes the scroll, the four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders fall down before him. They all have harps and golden bowls full of incense, the incense being the prayers of the saints. The harp here is not the same as the harp known to us. The Greek word is kithara (lat ... cithara) from which we get the English word guitar. It was of a triangular shape. Josephus said that it had 10 strings. Music and musical instruments have always had a place in the worship of God. Here we see instruments employed in the very presence of God. How foolish to forbid the use of them, as some do, in the meetings of God's people here on earth, if heavenly beings employ them.

Notice too, the fact that the golden bowls contain the incense of the prayers of the saints. How precious are the prayers of the people of God. He treasures up all their intercessions. Later on, in Rev 8:3-4, we see an angel, just as the Great Tribulation is about to commence, standing at the heavenly altar with a golden censer. He is given much incense to offer up, together with the prayers of all the saints, upon the altar. The smoke from the incense and the prayers of the saints ascended up before the throne of God.

There are other Scriptures which show a close relationship, between prayer and the offering up of incense, incense typifying prayer in that it is:

1. Sweet-smelling, thus signifying that in which God delights.
2. It ascends up, thus signifying prayer as reaching up to the throne of God.

David prays:

✚ “Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” Psalm 141:1-2.

So when Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, ministered in the priest’s office:

✚ “His lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.” Luke 1:9-10.

The living creatures and the 24 elders now sing a new song addressed to the Lamb. We see in two other places song is described in the Revelation. In Rev 14:3, the 144,000 sing a new song before the throne and the living creatures and the 24 elders. No one can learn this song but this select company. Then in Rev 15:3, the martyrs of the beast, slain during the Great Tribulation, sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

Returning to Rev 5:9, John gives us the theme of the song the heavenly beings sing:

✚ “Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open the seals of it, for thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with thy blood (men) from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And thou hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

We need to take note here that the new song is sung by both orders of the heavenly beings, associated with the throne. They do not praise the Lamb for redeeming them, as the A.V. Incorrectly puts it, but for redeeming men, here on earth. The Rapture has not yet taken place, it is still future.

What is written on the scroll is a record of the wrath of the Lamb. A wrath which is near but has not commenced as yet. The great day of his wrath will only come when the sixth seal is broken. Rev 6:12-17.

Let us look at the salient points about this great song.

1. The worthiness of the Lamb to take the scroll and to open its seals is declared.
2. The Lamb is worthy because he was slain in order that he might purchase a people for God out of all humanity.
3. The price of that redemption was his shed blood.

4. Those thus redeemed were made a kingdom and priests unto God by the Lamb.
5. They will reign on earth. We read in 2 Tim 2:12:

✚ “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”

So also in Rev 20:6:

✚ “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Also in reading Rev 22:3-5, we see in the context that God’s servants, the saints, will reign for ever and ever.

### **Verses 11-14**

John now sees a vast host of angels around the throne, and the elders and the living creatures. He says that there are “myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” of them. They sing:

✚ “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

The Lord Jesus, who, as God, received worship before his incarnation, as the great creator, by whom the worlds were made, is now worshipped, additionally, as the redeemer. It is as the “Lamb that was slain” that he receives this great angelic acclamation. Let us look at what he laid aside, with respect to these qualities, so that he might redeem sinful men.

#### **1. Power**

He laid aside the independent exercise of power by becoming a man. He took upon himself the form of a servant, by being made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Phil 2:7; Rom 8:3. For a little while he became inferior to the angels, for the suffering of death, that is, so that he might die for sinners. The words in Hebrews 12:3-4, are very pertinent here:

✚ “Compare your experience with his, who was willing to endure so much hostility from sinners against himself, so that you may not become weary and despondent. In your struggle against sin you have not resisted so that it has cost you blood.”

#### **2. Riches**

Consider the poverty of the Lord Jesus Christ while here on earth. Paul writes:



✚ “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” 2 Cor 8:9.

By choice, he was born in a stable. Luke 2:7. His parents’ poverty can be gauged by the offering Mary brought to the temple at his dedication. Luke 2:22-24. We read in Lev 12:8:

✚ “And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”

To one who would follow him, Jesus said:

✚ “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” Lu 9:58.

When he died, his estate consisted of the clothes he wore. In his death he was buried in a borrowed tomb. Matt 27:57-61.

### 3. **Wisdom**

He was never called upon to lay aside his wisdom, but, in the days of his flesh, to abandon himself completely to the wisdom of the Father. It was the independent exercise of his wisdom rather, which was curtailed during his earthly life.

✚ “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever things he doeth, these things also doeth the Son likewise.” John 5:19.

Again:

✚ “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgement is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” John 5:30.

### 4. **Strength**

He became subject to the limitations of man. He hungered, Matt 4:2; he thirsted, John 19:28; he was weary, John 4:6; he slept, Matt 8:24; he wept, John 12:35. Paul says:

✚ “He was crucified because of weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God.” 2 Cor 13:4.

He was weak indeed, so weak and helpless that his enemies could arrest him, condemn him unjustly, and subject him to a cruel and ignominious death by

crucifixion. We need to remember that he willingly became “obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” Phil 2:8. Luke writes in Acts 3:18:

✚ “But those things, which God had showed before by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath fulfilled.”

Jesus said to Pilate:

✚ “Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above.” John 19:11.

## 5. Honour

While here on earth, the Lord Jesus was:

✚ “Despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Isa 53:2.

He was despised and we esteemed him not. The Jews said to the man born blind:

✚ “We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not whence he is.” John 9:29.

They said to him:

✚ “Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon?” John 8:48.

Jesus answers:

✚ “I have not a demon; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.” John 8:49.

We could examine many other Scriptures but, suffice to say, that, one day, we shall see him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one.” Heb 2:9.

## 6. Glory

He laid his glory aside, so that when men saw him, they saw one like:

✚ “A root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness, that we should have looked at him; possessed of no beauty, so that we should have been drawn to him.” Isa 53:2.

Just as the covering of badger skins, covering the tabernacle in the wilderness, did not present an attractive appearance, belying the beauty of that which was within,

so with the Lord Jesus. Ex 26:14. Once, on the mount of transfiguration, his disciples saw his glory (Mk 9:2-3) and Peter wrote concerning it:

✚ “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.” 2 Peter 1:16-18.

That he left his glory is implicit in his prayer in John 17:5 where he says:

✚ “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

## 7. **Blessing**

Paul writes to the Galatians (3:13) and says:

✚ “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

The Greek word translated blessing here is the word “eulogia” meaning “good speaking” or “praise”. Our English word eulogy is derived from it. In Gal 3:14, Paul uses it saying that the blessing of Abraham coming on the Gentiles, was the reason why Christ was prepared to become a curse for us. Now we see him in the Revelation being praised because of his redemptive work.

John now sees every creature in heaven, and on the earth, and underneath the earth, and on the sea, saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. The four living beings say, amen; and the 24 elders fall down and worship. Paul writes:

✚ “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Phil 2:10-11.

Again in Romans 14:11:

✚ “For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”

Also Isaiah writes:

✚ “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth

in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.” Isa 45:22-24.

Those who willingly submit shall find salvation, but, those who are rebellious will one day be compelled to bow to him, and to acknowledge his Lordship.


## **Chapter six verses 1-11**

### ***The Lamb breaks the first five seals, terrestrial visitations***

#### **The first seal ... the white horse ... the Antichrist verses 1-2**

The scroll was given to the Lamb so that he might break its seals and look at its contents. This he proceeds to do by breaking the first seal. John hears a sound like thunder as one of the four living creatures calls for the white horse to come. The rendering “Come and see” is incorrect. It is not addressed to John, but to the white horse here upon the earth. John looks and sees a white horse with a rider who has a bow. A crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.

1. The voice of the living creature sounds like thunder. We see here then the first move, on the part of God, to bring the church age to an end, and to visit wrath upon the ungodly. The thunderous voice presages wrath and shows mercy coming to an end.
2. The rider on the white horse is armed with a bow. It is of interest to note that he is not mentioned as having arrows. Rather an oddity for a bowman to venture forth without arrows, after all, a bow is only half that which is needed to conquer. This indicates that the bowman will not, indeed cannot prevail. He is doomed to fail long before he begins his quest.
3. We read in Rev 19:11, of another rider, also on a white horse. There are several things about the two riders which are different, indicating that they are different persons. The rider of Rev 19:11, is properly equipped for war. He does not have a bow, but has a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth with which to smite the nations. Isaiah speaks of the coming of Jesus Christ and says:

 “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” Isa 11:4.

4. The first white horse cannot come until summoned. It will only come when the voice of the living creature is heard at the breaking of the first seal. Paul writes in 2 Thess 2:7:

✚ “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of his coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” 2 Thess 2:7-12.

We see that the Antichrist, for the rider on the white horse is none other than he, cannot come until the God of heaven gives permission for him to do so, when the first seal is broken. Even then he can only begin to lay the foundation of his kingdom. He is hindered until the Holy Spirit filled body of Christ is caught up to meet the Lord in the air, only after that great event, will he be revealed. It will be logical to all that there must be an initial hidden preparation for the advent of the Antichrist before the church departs to be with her Lord. How vastly different the white horse rider of Rev 19:11-16. We will look at him in great detail later suffice to say that he leads the armies of heaven, all riding upon white horses, to the great battle of Armageddon

6. The rider of Rev 6:2, wears a crown, given to him by his master Satan who, later on, will give his authority for we read in Rev 13:2:

✚ “The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.”

He, however, only wears a single crown. The Greek word translated “crown” here is the word “stephanos”. A “stephanos” or laurel wreath was given to contestants who won in the Olympic games. It is used elsewhere in the New Testament of the crowns which will be given to believers, as rewards by the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 9:25-27; Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19-20; 2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:2-4; Rev 2:10.) Once the Lord Jesus wore such a crown, but the crown he wore was a crown of thorns. Matt 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5.

The rider of the white horse in Rev 19:11-16, wears many crowns. Here the Greek word is the word “diadema”. Vine writes:

✚ “Diadema is never used as stephanos is; it is always the symbol of kingly or imperial dignity.”

The differences between the two are so marked that there can be no doubt that one is a masquerader. It has been aptly said that Satan is the “ape of God”. As Satan opposes the Father, so the Antichrist seeks to usurp that which belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, namely, all earthly authority.

He goes forth conquering and to conquer. The very Greek word translated conquer

here in Rev 6:2 (nikao), is used again in Rev 13:7 where it says of the beast or Antichrist that:

✚ “It was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome (nikao) them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”

### **The second seal ... the red horse ... war verses 3-4**

When he opens the second seal, John hears the second living creature say “Come”. He sees a red horse come forth and the one sitting upon it takes away peace from the earth, so that they should slay one another, and a great sword was given to him.

Red has always been the colour of war, and the Scriptures have much to say about the increase of strife and warfare just before the Lord Jesus comes. The disciples asked Jesus:

✚ “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?” Matt 24:3.

One of the signs mentioned by the Lord is wars. He says:

✚ “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom:” Matt 24:6-7.

Mark expresses it somewhat differently:

✚ “And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: it must come to pass; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.” Mk 13:7-8.

And Luke writes:

✚ “But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.” Luke 21:9-10.

Then in Luke 21:25-28, we read:

✚ “Upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the earth ... but when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

The warning of Paul the apostle in 1 Thess 5:3 is very clear, when people say, there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape.” (R.S.V.)

### **The third seal ... the black horse ... famine verses 5-6**

When he opened the third seal, John hears the third living creature saying, “Come”. John sees a black horse, and the rider of this horse had a balance in his hand. A voice from the midst of the four living creatures says:

✚ “A choenix of wheat for a denarius and three choenixes of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and the wine.”

Vincent (Word Studies) says:

✚ “The judgement of this seal is scarcity, of which the balance is a symbol, representing the time when food is doled out by weight.”

In most of the third world, the green revolution has failed. The world is heading for a crisis when the population of the world will outstrip the food supply. A few bad harvests and millions will perish from starvation. Large areas of the Sahel in Africa have experienced dire famine conditions for a number of years already.

Concerning the denarius Vincent writes:

✚ “A denarius, the chief silver coin of the Romans at this time, and of the value of about 17 cents. We must remember to reckon according to the rate of wages in that day. A denarius was regarded as good pay for a day’s work. It was the pay of a Roman soldier in Christ’s time. In almost every case where the word occurs in the New Testament it is connected with the idea of a liberal or large amount.” (V.W.S. Vol 1. Page iii)

The choenix was about as much as our litre measure. Regarding a denarius as a fair wage for a working man for a day’s labour, conditions prevailing on the earth when the black horse comes forth are such, that, a man will have to spend a whole day’s wage to purchase a litre of wheat or three litres of barley. These are famine conditions, also foretold by the writers of the gospels in connection with the Olivet discourse of our Lord Jesus.

We read:

✚ “There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.” Matt 24:7-8.

Again:

✚ “There shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.” Mark 13:8.

And again:

✚ “And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall be from heaven.” Lu 21:11.

It was because of her sins that God used the same methods in dealing with Israel We read in Jer 24:10,

✚ “And I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.”

Again:

✚ “Thus saith the Lord of hosts; behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, among the nations whither I have driven them: because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the Lord.” Jer 29:17-20 (abridged).

God who used these methods when he uprooted Israel and scattered them, will use the same methods against the ungodly Gentiles prior to the Great Tribulation. Concerning the phrase, “Do not hurt the oil and the wine”, some see a command to the ravaging soldiery, responsible for the wars under the red horse, not to destroy the vines and olive trees which can grow untended, unlike wheat and barley, which require intensive labour. Others believe that there will be a total lack of these articles of luxury.

### **The fourth seal ... the pale horse ... death and Hades verses 7-8**

When he opened the fourth seal, John hears the voice of the fourth living creature saying, come. John looks and sees a pale green horse. The rider of this pale horse is identified as death, and Hades followed with him. Authority is given to them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and famine, and with death, and with the wild beasts of the earth. We read that this horse is green in the Greek text the word “chloros”, which means green being translated pale in the Authorised version. When flesh begins to putrefy, it takes on a greenish tinge in colouration. Death in the Bible is stated to be the work of Satan, and so, it appears as if, because men would not repent and believe the gospel, God allows the angel of death, riding upon this green horse, to reap a vast harvest of souls.

That none can die without permission from God is clear, for, there will come a time when men will seek death and will not find it, and will desire to die and death will flee away from them. Rev 9:6. That Satan desires to encompass the death of men, and that particularly before they are saved, should be clear to all. Once he has swept a soul from this earth scene he is satisfied, for he has a deadly hatred towards humanity, and seeks to



encompass the doom of as many as he possibly can. There is no salvation for him, and he would deny it to as many as he can deceive and destroy.

We read in Hebrews 2:14:

✚ “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power (Greek ... kratos) of death, that is, the devil.”

Before man disobeyed God, by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which, together with the tree of life, was in the midst of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9), Satan had no power over man. By yielding to Satan man placed himself in a position of subservience to the devil. The apostle Paul says:

✚ “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Rom 6:16.

Subsequently we see Satan, after man’s fall, having power to blind man to spiritual things, to afflict him physically and power to encompass man’s death ultimately.

Authority is given to death and to Hades over the fourth part of the earth. Should the fourth part be the most populous part, and there is no reason to doubt that this will be the case, then vast multitudes of people will perish before the great day of wrath even begins. The means used, so that death and Hades may gorge upon men is stated to be war, hunger, death and the beasts of the field. We read in Isa 5:14:

✚ “Therefore hell (Sheol or Hades) hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.”

Death, which seizes the body, and Hades, which seizes the soul, will be satiated, as untold numbers die as a result of the red horseman bringing war, the black horseman famine, and the pale horseman death. There are examples of wrath in the Old Testament showing us that what is described here, is quite feasible. We have only to read of the flood when:

✚ “All flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostril was the breath of life.” Gen 7:21-22.

The plagues of Egypt, culminating in the awful night, when all the firstborn of Egypt died (Exodus 12) are very similar to many of the things John writes about in the Revelation.

When David sinned in numbering Israel:

- ✚ “The Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time; and there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men. And when the angel stretched forth his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented of the evil, and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, it is enough; now stay your hand.” 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chron 21:12-16.

The hosts of Sennacherib suffered a similar fate. We read in 2 Chron 32:21:

- ✚ “The Lord sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria”

Further in 2 Kings 19:35, we read:

- ✚ “And that night the angel of the Lord went forth, and slew 185 000 in the camp of the Assyrians”

### **The fifth seal ... the martyrs under the altar verses 9-11**

The Lamb now opens the fifth seal and John sees, underneath the altar, the souls of those who were slain on account of the Word of God and on account of their witness. The word “testimony” or witness is the Greek word “marturia” from which our English word “martyr” is derived. These witnesses under the altar bore witness to the word of truth with their lives. John describes those who overcome in the war against Satan in Rev 12:11. He says:

- ✚ “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony (marturia); and they loved not their lives until death.”

How many of the Lord’s people have born witness in this way? Stephen was the first recorded martyr in this church age, and James, the brother of John, the writer of the Revelation (did John see James there?) was not long in following the road to martyrdom. Acts 7:59; 12:2. So likewise many Old Testament saints:

- ✚ “were stoned, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword.” Heb 11:37.

The saints killed in this way must number millions and millions. Here they await the consummation of God’s eternal purposes.

It is as well to remember, at this point, that when God commanded Moses to make a tabernacle in the wilderness, he said:

- ✚ “Make all according to the pattern shown thee in the mount.” Heb 8:5.

The tabernacle and all its furnishings served as copies and shadows “of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched.” Heb 8:2. We see the true tabernacle or

temple, the heavenly sanctuary of which the earthly was only a copy, many times in the Revelation. There are two Greek words translated “temple” in the New Testament. The first word is 'hieron' and it is used of the whole temple, including the various courts and enclosures, to which all Jews had access. This was the only part Jesus had access to in the days of his flesh. The rest of the temple was out of bounds to all but the sons of Aaron. The second word is 'naos'. This was the most important part of the temple (hieron), the holy of holies, where God dwelt. Now John never uses the word hieron in the Revelation but always the word 'naos', which occurs 46 times in the N.T. And 16 times in the Revelation, with 14 of these being the heavenly sanctuary. (Rev 3:12; 7:15; 11:19 (twice); 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8 (twice); 16:1, 17; 21:22 (twice).)

It is in this temple that the overcomers will be made pillars by the Lord Jesus Christ. Rev 3:12. The raptured saints will serve God day and night in this temple, and he that sits upon the throne will dwell among them. Rev 7:15.

When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the temple of God in heaven is opened, and the ark of his covenant is seen, followed by lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake and great hail. Rev 11:19. Angels come out of the temple, to reap the harvest of the earth. Rev 14:15, 17. Here we are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus in the parables of the tares and wheat:

✚ “The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.” Matt 13:39.

The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony is again opened in heaven, and seven angels come out of the temple, having the seven last plagues. The temple is filled with smoke, and no one can enter the temple until the plagues of the seven angels are finished. Rev 15:5, 6, 8.

A great voice from out of the temple, commands the seven angels to pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. Rev 16:1. When they had finished, a great voice comes from the temple, saying, it is done. Rev 16:17. Finally, we see God and the Lamb as the temple of the New Jerusalem Rev 21:22.

Part of the furnishings of the tabernacle here on earth, was an altar. So we see an altar in the heavenly temple. The Greek word for altar is “thusiasterion”. It occurs 23 times in the N.T. And eight times in the Revelation, with seven of these occurrences referring to the heavenly altar. (Rev 6:9; 8:3 (twice), 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7.) The souls of the martyrs are seen under the altar in Rev 6:9. An angel offers up much incense together with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne. Rev 8:3. (Let it be said here that the heavenly altar corresponds to the earthly altar of incense, which was in the Holy Place, just in front of the veil. The brazen altar has no corresponding altar in heaven, for it portrays Calvary, where the Lamb of God was slain on our behalf.). The angel takes fire from the altar and casts it into the earth. This is followed by thunders, sounds, lightnings and an earthquake. Rev 8:5.

When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, a voice from one of the horns of the golden altar, commands the angel to loose the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates. Rev 9:13. An angel having authority over fire comes out of the altar and cries to the angel with the sickle, saying, thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. Rev 14:18.

When the waters of the earth are turned to blood, John hears the altar (lit) saying:

✚ “Even so, Lord God almighty, true and righteous are thy judgements.”  
Rev 16:7.

The Ark of the Covenant is seen in Rev 11:19. It was here that the high priest sprinkled the blood on the earthly ark on the day of atonement. Lev 16:15-16. I believe that the Lord Jesus, as our great high priest after the order of Melchizedek, enters into the true sanctuary, not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with his own blood, to sprinkle it upon the heavenly Ark of the Covenant see here in Rev 11:19.

We read in Hebrews 9:23:

✚ “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”

There, sprinkled upon the heavenly mercy seat, in the presence of God, till this very moment, the blood of Christ can be seen, the never to be forgotten blood-price paid by the Lord himself for our redemption. Every eye in heaven can see the precious blood by which the Lord has sanctified guilty sinners like us, and given us eternal life. The witnesses under the altar have heard the Lamb commence the breaking of the seals on the scroll, and have seen the four horsemen come forth at the behest of the living creatures. They now cry out with a loud voice, when the fifth seal is broken:

✚ “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

They are aware of the fact that the end of the age is at hand, that God is about to pour out his wrath upon sinners on the earth. They are also aware of the fact that, when the great day of his wrath is come, they will no longer be unclothed, but clothed upon, death will have been swallowed up in victory. 2 Cor 5:4. Now God is going to avenge his own. We read in Rev 16:4-7, of the pouring out of the third vial upon the earth, and all the rivers and fountains become blood. An angel cries out when this occurs, thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.”

This passage of Scripture proves the fallacy of the teaching of soul-sleep. When the Bible says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor

device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol (Hades) whither thou goest” (Eccl 9:10), it does not teach cessation of existence. All it means is that there is an end to man’s period of probation, when death comes, and a waiting for the day of judgement.

The cry of the martyred saints from underneath the altar, shows that there is complete consciousness in the disembodied state between death and the resurrection. To each one of them was given a white robe, and they were commanded to rest a little longer, until their fellow-servants and brethren, who were still going to be killed as they were, should be completed.

There can be no doubt that, as the Lord pours out his spirit just prior to the day of wrath, there is going to be increased persecution for the revitalised church. We are already witnessing the persecution of true believers in communist lands. Nearly one half of men are subject to this evil system, and, where it holds sway, the church of Jesus Christ, is being persecuted, and his people are being martyred.

There is no guarantee that these conditions will not spread to the western world. As the world prepares for the Antichrist, there will be an increasing determination on the part of the wicked to cast off all restraint. With this we see also a great increase in witchcraft and sorcery. This will be accompanied with an increasing intolerance with those who advocate righteousness and godliness.

The phrase “a little time” is the English rendering of the Greek “chronon mickron”. The action desired by these martyrs is even at the very doors, and their wait will only be a very short one. Those things which were occurring upon the earth, as a result of the calling forth of the four horsemen were to run their course before the next step would be taken by the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The events initiated by the four horsemen would be contiguous, and would continue for yet a season, while the martyrs waited, for when the next seal, the sixth, was broken, the great Day of the Lord would begin.

### **The sixth seal ... four great events ... the Day of the Lord verses 6:12-8:17**

#### **Four great events**

1. Signs and wonders on earth and in the heavens (6:12-14)
2. Wicked recognise that the Day of the Lord has begun (6:15-17)
3. 144,000 Israelites sealed as servants of the living God (7:1-8)
4. The church in heaven. The Rapture of resurrected saints (7:9-17)

#### **1. Signs and wonders on earth and in the heavens (7:15-17)**

The Bible records many cosmic disturbances in the past, and tells of the fact that the greatest in human history is yet to come. Perhaps the greatest disaster in the past is that of the flood, in the days of Noah We have referred to the flood already

in these notes, but perhaps a closer look now would help to understand future events during the Day of the Lord.

There have been many attempts to disprove the universality of the flood. Many would have us believe that it was an event confined to the area between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Any person who accepts the deluge as an event which engulfed the whole world, is regarded as being a fool. There are many, however, who believe that the deluge was caused by cosmic disturbances, under the direction of God.

Genesis 1:6-7, (Amplified Ver.), records:

✚ “And God said, let there be a firmament (the expanse of the sky) in the midst of the waters; and let it separate the waters (below) from the waters (above). And God made the firmament (the expanse) and separated the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse. And it was so.”

Thus, prior to the deluge, there was a vast amount of water around the earth. Something caused this water to cascade down upon the earth in the days of Noah. There could not have been rain for 40 days by any means known to us now, which could have brought about the conditions described in Genesis 7 and 8. But if a heavenly body, composed of ice, at the intensely low temperatures that would prevail in outer space, passed very close to the earth, it would have been broken up, the ice would have fallen on the poles, and frozen the large animals which have been discovered in the glaciers of the northern hemisphere.

The temperature was so low that these animals were frozen solid as they were grazing, without them becoming putrefied inside due to slow penetration of the cold. This could have precipitated the waters above the firmament at the same time, thereby drowning the whole antediluvian world, with the exception of those within the ark. Bennett's comet was stated to consist of 90% ice, so there could undoubtedly have been another such a comet in the past.

Revelation indicates that during the Day of the Lord, fiery bodies, and not watery ones will be used by God to visit wrath upon this prodigal world. The Ice Age can only be explained if the ice came from a source outside this planet. Some of the plagues of Egypt, notably the seventh, can also be explained as being the result of a heavenly visitant.

We read in Exodus 9:22-24:

✚ “The Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.”

It would be well to remember here that hail or hailstones in the Bible are not necessarily composed of frozen water. They could be describing meteorites showering down upon the earth.

Such was the case when Joshua commanded the sun to stand still. This remarkable miracle occurred when Joshua fought against the five kings of the Amorites in the valley of Ajilon. We read in Joshua 10:11:

✚ “And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.”

We read also of the destruction in one night of the Assyrian army, which was encamped against Jerusalem. As God caused the sun to return by ten degrees, when he spared Hezekiah's life, lengthening it by 15 years, could not the cosmic disturbance which caused the sun's shadow to go back 10 degrees, also have caused the death of Sennacherib's army of 185 000 soldiers?

Describing the destruction of the hosts of Assyria in 2 Kings 19:35-37, the writer of Kings continues in 2 Kings 20:1:

✚ “In those days (when Assyria was humbled) was Hezekiah sick unto death.” The Assyrian army could have been destroyed in the same manner as the army of the five Amorite kings was in Joshua's day.

Now Peter writes:

✚ “For this they (the wicked) wilfully forget, that heavens were from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and through water, by the Word of God; by which means the then world, overflowed with water, perished: but the present heavens, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against a day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men.” 2 Peter 3:5-6.

Now John records six disturbances, which will occur when the sixth seal is broken.

#### A) **A great earthquake**

Earthquakes are mentioned in the Old Testament. There was an earthquake when God spoke to Elijah at Horeb, after he had fled from Jezebel 1 Kings 19:11-12. Then there is mention of an earthquake in the days of King Uzziah. Amos 1:1; Zech 14:5. God says:

✚ “Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.” Isa 29:6.

This is addressed to the nations who fight against Jerusalem in the last day.

We have the words of the Lord Jesus that, in the end time:

✚ “There will be earthquakes in divers places.” Matt 24:7; Mk 13:8; Luke 21:11.

The earthquake mentioned here is the first of five earthquakes mentioned in the Revelation. This one occurs at the breaking of the sixth seal, as the Day of the Lord is about to commence. Rev 6:12.

The next earthquake occurs after the breaking of the seventh seal, and before the first trumpet is sounded. An angel casts fire from the altar in heaven upon the earth and there is an earthquake. Rev 8:5.

The third earthquake occurs at the time of the resurrection of the two witnesses who have lain dead, in the city of Jerusalem, after the Antichrist has slain them. The same hour that they are raised and summoned to heaven, there is a great earthquake, which will destroy a tenth part of Jerusalem, and kill 7000 men. Rev 11:13.

The fourth earthquake occurs when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet. John says that the sanctuary of God in heaven was opened and the ark of his testament is seen. There will be lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake, and great hail. Rev 11:19.

The final and most devastating earthquake will occur when the seventh angel pours out his vial on the air. John records:

✚ “There was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.” Rev 16:18.

So, many earthquakes occur in desolate places today. Very few ever devastate more than a city and a few villages. But here the great city is divided into three parts and the cities of the nations fall. Isaiah writes:

✚ “The foundations of the earth tremble and shake. The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is violently shaken.” Isa 24:19-20.

Isaiah says the Lord will arise to shake the earth terribly. Isa 2:19, 21. God says:



✚ “Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.” Isa 13:13.

Joel writes, (Joel 3:16):

✚ “The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake.”

So also in Haggai 2:6:

✚ “Yet once more, 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.” See also Haggai 2:21.

No wonder that the writer to the Hebrews writes:

✚ “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 that cannot be shaken may remain.” Heb 12:26-27.

#### B) **Sun becomes black as sackcloth made of hair**

We turn again to Exodus, where we read:

✚ “And the Lord said unto Moses, stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt.” Ex 10:21.

Then we go to Isaiah again, who has so much to say about the Day of the Lord. He writes in Isa 13:10:

✚ “Behold, the Day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the earth desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the 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.”

In Isa 24:23 he writes:

✚ “Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun shall be ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.”

Joel writes:

✚ “The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” Joel 2:10.

Again:

✚ “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the Day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened and the stars shall withdraw their shining.” Joel 3:14-15.

Amos also writes:

✚ “And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.” Amos 8:9.

This group of Scriptures quoted above, correspond to the judgement of the angel which sounds the fourth trumpet in the Revelation (8:12) or the fifth vial, when darkness engulfs the kingdom of the beast. Rev 16:10.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ said much the same in the Olivet discourse, when referring to this period of time. We read in Matt 24:29:

✚ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the power of the heavens shall be shaken.”

Likewise in Mark 13:24:

✚ “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.” (v 24-25.)

Luke is very much briefer:

✚ “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” Luke 21:25-26.

We now look at Rev 8:12 where we read:

✚ “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.”

Also in Rev 16:10 we read:

✚ “And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness.”

From the foregoing Scriptures we see three times at least when both sun and moon as well as the stars are darkened.

1. Early in the tribulation when the fourth angel sounds his trumpet.
2. Late in the tribulation when the fifth angel pours out his vial.
3. Immediately after the tribulation of those days when the Lord Jesus returns.

There are three Scriptures where we read of the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood. We have not dealt with these verses, which all refer to one and the same occasion, but will deal with them under the next heading.

#### C) **The full moon becomes as blood**

There are only three Scriptures dealing with this event. The first in Joel 2:30-31 is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:19-20. The third occurs in Rev 6:12. Joel writes of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh and says:

✚ “I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible Day of the Lord come.”

Peter quotes and says:

✚ “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable Day of the Lord come.”

We read in Rev 6:12 that when the sixth seal is broken:

✚ “The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.”

Now both Joel and Peter tell us that this darkening of the sun, and the moon becoming like blood, will precede the Day of the Lord. In other words, the Day of the Lord cannot commence until the sun is turned into darkness and the moon is turned into blood. Up until that time “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Up until that time God will pour out the Holy Spirit upon all

flesh. This event then, is the terminal point of this present age. When it takes place the church age ends and the Day of the Lord begins.

D) **The stars of the heaven fall to the earth**

John writes:

✚ “The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind.”

We will see that this is but the beginning of such events. The stars are meteorites which fall upon the earth.

I believe that God will use some cosmic visitant, such as a comet, or perhaps a plurality of such-like bodies to cause the sun to be darkened, the moon to turn to blood, and the stars (or meteorites) to fall upon the earth. As has already been noted, this has already taken place in the past at the time of the Exodus and also when Joshua defeated the Amorite kings.

In the Revelation it happens more than once. When the first angel sounds his trumpet, when the tribulation begins, hail and fire mingled with blood falls upon the earth. Rev 8:7. When the second angel sounds his trumpet a great mountain burning with fire, is cast into the sea. Rev 8:8. Also in Rev 16:21, we read that hail, with each stone weighing a talent (75-100 lbs), falls upon the earth out of heaven.

The moon's pitted surface is an example of similar catastrophes in the past. There is abundant evidence that it has happened on earth in the historic past, and the Word of God assures us that it is most certainly going to happen more than once during the Day of the Lord.

E) **The heavens depart as a scroll when it is rolled together**

What is meant here is not clear. The atmosphere will remain as it is vital for life. The possible meaning could be that, in the violent shaking of the heavens, the earth could be turned upside down. Thus, if the earth had to roll, as it no doubt would were it God's command that it should, the north pole could end up in the place of the south pole, and vice versa. The heavens, that is the starry heavens, would indeed depart as a scroll when it is rolled together.

F) **Every mountain and island moved out of their places**

This is but a continuation of the catastrophes which have already occurred. The violent upheavals on earth cause the mountains to remove out of their place and islands to move and even to disappear beneath the waves of the sea. It is because of the fearful consequences attending all this, that so many will not interpret the Scriptures literally. Scholars say, “impossible” and then argue away the reality of what God says in his word that he will do. He says in Ezek 12:25:

✚ “For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass.”

2. **Wicked recognise that the Day of the Lord has begun (6:15-17)**

We see in these verses the universal recognition that the great Day of the Lord has commenced. There are seven groups of people named here, who are stricken with terror when these things take place. John begins with the kings, those who are the rulers of men, and ends with slaves, right at the bottom end of the spectrum. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9) and all human society is to be visited with wrath because they have sinned away the day of visitation. (Luke 19:44; 1 Peter 2:12.)

We see the seven categories of mankind mentioned here are as follows:

1. The kings of the earth.
2. The great men. (Greek megistanes ... next in order of rank after kings. The word occurs three times in the N.T. In Mark 6:21, we read that Herod, the king, on his birthday made a supper for his Lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee. It also occurs in Rev 18:23 where the merchants of Babylon are called the great men of the earth.)
3. The chief captains. (Greek ... chiliarchs used 22 times in the N.T. In the Greek the 'chiliarch' was the commander of 1000 men. It was used by the Greeks to translate the Persian word 'vizer'. It occurs in the passage of Mark cited above and is rendered high captain. They are third in descending order of importance in Rev 6:15.)
4. The rich men. No longer those who enjoy high office as rulers, but those men who believe that money is power. James has a sad tale of woe for these. He writes:

✚ “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. James 5:1-4.

If men would only heed the words of Jesus and lay up treasures in heaven. It is very significant that the Lord mentions his second coming in the discourse on riches in Luke 12. It was on the occasion when the man came to Jesus and asked him to command his brother to divide the inheritance

with him. Jesus said that a man's life does not consist of the abundance of the things that he possesses. He tells of the rich fool and his great barns, and gives examples of God's providing for his own. He ends by saying:

✚ “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Luke 12:34.

Then he straightway continues:

✚ “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and you yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord ... be ye therefore also ready, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.” Luke 12:35-40.

5. The mighty men. The Greek here is the strong men. But strength will not deliver people in the day of God's wrath.
6. The slave. His lowly estate did not deliver him. All need to be born again.
7. The free man. His freedom was of no value if he was not the Lord's bondman. How necessary it is to remember this in a day when the cry on every person's lips is freedom. True freedom is only possible when we serve God.

These seven categories of men seek to hide from God, for John writes, that they:

✚ “... hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne.”

They desire anything rather than to have to face God when the day of his wrath begins.

So man, in his sinful state, has ever sought to hide from God. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden “They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.” Gen 3:8.

God speaks of Israel and says:

✚ “I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell (Sheol) thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the

bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.” Amos 9:1-3.

Israel would not escape their due, neither will the nations when the appointed time is at hand.

✚ “They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.” Isa 2:19.

They shall:

✚ “Go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crevices of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.” Isa 2:21.

But it shall not avail them. They must now reap of the fruit of their wickedness. Paul warns:

✚ “Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Gal 6:7-9.

The reason for this cry of terror is that men recognise that the wrath of God is about to be manifested. Hide us, they say “from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath (the Lamb and the one who sits upon the throne) is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

The great day of their wrath is none other than the Day of the Lord spoken of by the Old Testament prophets frequently, but also mentioned in the New Testament. It would be pertinent at this stage, to see what is said about the Day of the Lord in the Scriptures.

### **The Day of the Lord**

Jesus taught his disciples to pray and say:

✚ “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”  
Matt 6:10.

For six thousand years the will of God has not been done, here on earth. Man has gone his own way. But this is going to come to an end. When the Day of the Lord begins, God will no longer let men do as they please.

We will see that firstly, he will visit wrath on the ungodly, secondly, he will establish his rule and authority on earth, and Christ will rule. A careful reading of 2 Peter will show that the Day of the Lord begins after the Rapture of the church, and encompasses the time of God's wrath, the period called the Millennium, and it ends with the commencement of the day of God.

We read in Isaiah 2:10-22 that the Day of the Lord is a day in which the Lord alone will be exalted. All the proud and mighty will be humbled in that day. The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low. Man will be reminded that he is a creature whose duty it is to glorify God.

There is a call in Isa 13:6-13, for men to howl because the Day of the Lord is at hand. There is a description of the terror that grips men, for that day is cruel both with wrath and fierce anger. God will make the earth desolate, and will destroy sinners out of it. God will cause the sun and the moon to be darkened. He will shake the heavens and the earth will move out of its place. Man's arrogance, pride and haughtiness will be caused to cease and men will be left few in number. It is with regard to this time that Jesus said:

✚ “The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Matt 13:41-43.

Isaiah gives further details in chapter 34:1-8. He summons all nations saying,

✚ “The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and all the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.”

He speaks of the sword of the Lord being bathed in blood, ending this passage by stating “for it is the Day of the Lord's vengeance.” The language here is almost word for word the same as the language used by John to describe the cosmic phenomena in Rev 6:12-14.

Then we read in Jeremiah 30:2-3:

✚ “Howl ye, woe worth the day. For the day is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen.”



Amos writes (Amos 5:18):

✚ “Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord. To what end is it for you? The Day of the Lord is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the Day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?”

It will indeed be a day of abysmal darkness. A time when God will give men up, he will allow a working of error, that they should believe the lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess 2:11.)

Joel the prophet has the most to say about the Day of the Lord. He says in chapter 1:15:

✚ “Alas for the day, for the Day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the almighty shall it come.”

Then in chapter 2:1-3, he writes:

✚ “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the Day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; and nothing shall escape them.”

He continues speaking in like manner and ends in 2:11:

✚ “For the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?”

The passage in Joel 3:28-32 has been quoted many times. It is the only Old Testament passage which gives the great sign of the sun being turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the Day of the Lord begins.

Then we read in Joel 3:12-14:

✚ “Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the

press is full, the fats 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.”

Joel says in chapter 3:16:

✚ “The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel”.

Jehoshaphat means “Jehovah is judge”. Thus this is the day when God will vindicate his holiness by pouring out of his wrath upon the ungodly.

Obadiah makes it clear that it is a day of retribution for he writes (verse 15):

✚ “For the Day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.”

There is also Zephaniah's graphic description of the Day of the Lord (ch 1:14-18),

✚ “The great Day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the Day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the Day of the Lord’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.”

Zechariah in his fourteenth chapter speaks of the coming of the Day of the Lord. He tells us that all nations will be gathered against the city, that the Lord will return to the Mount of Olives, of all the saints coming with him, of living waters flowing from Jerusalem, of the means whereby he will destroy those who come up against Jerusalem (verse 12.) He says:

✚ “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth.”(verse 9.)

Then God makes a wonderful promise in Malachi (4:5).

✚ “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the

fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

In the New Testament the term “Day of the Lord” is used five times. The first place where it occurs, it is a quotation from the prophecy of Joel. In Acts 2:20 we find Joel 2:28 repeated almost verbatim. It is this Scripture which tells us so clearly when “this present evil age” (Gal 1:4) will end, and that, when it ends, the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood. Then the Day of the Lord will begin.

Paul used the expression twice in his epistles to the Thessalonians. There was a misunderstanding about the Day of the Lord in Thessalonika. So Paul writes to them saying that he did not want the believers there to be ignorant about those who had fallen asleep in Jesus. In 1 Thess 4:13-18 he goes into great detail concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus for his people. We will not anticipate by going into detail here concerning events we will look at in the seventh chapter of the Revelation, but, passing on to chapter 5, we will note what Paul says about the Day of the Lord.

In 1 Thess 5:2 he writes:

✚ “For yourselves know perfectly (accurately) that the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day (the Day of the Lord) should overtake you as a thief.”

It would seem clear that there will be a short time, just before the Day of the Lord begins, when those who dwell on the earth but walk in darkness, will have reason to believe that a solution has been found to the problems that assail this world. It is at the very time that they (the ungodly) sigh with relief and say, peace and safety, that the earth’s darkest hour will engulf it. Those who know and serve the Lord Jesus will not be carried away and deceived. They will know that the Day of the Lord is near. They will not be deceived because they are not in darkness but understand something of the purpose of God.

In 2 Thess 2:2, Paul writes to the believers again and tells them that the Day of the Lord is not at hand, neither can it come, until certain events have transpired. Again, we will look at this part of Scripture in greater detail at a later stage.

In 2 Peter 3, the apostle, writes concerning the Lord and his coming, saying, that there would be those who would ridicule the whole idea of the Lord coming. Peter reaffirms the doctrine of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, and, like Paul, says:

✚ “The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.”

Peter does not go into detail concerning the Day of the Lord at its commencement but looks to what will occur when it ends.

We need to remember that God works to a plan. Paul says in 1 Cor 15:23:

✚ “But every man (shall be made alive) in his own order. (order ... Gk ... tagma ... rank.) Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then 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 (Jesus Christ) must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

The apostle is clear in his teaching. Christ is raised, then he comes and receives his own followers, living and dead, then he reigns subduing all his enemies, then he delivers the kingdom to the Father. When he delivers the kingdom to the Father the Day of the Lord ends, and the day of God (the Father) begins.

Now Peter tells us that the Day of the Lord (encompassing the Millennium) will end with the earth and all that is in it will be burned up. Then a new heaven and earth will take the place of the old.

In 1 Cor 5:5, Paul commands the Corinthians to commit the brother who was committing fornication to Satan:

✚ “For the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord.” (Jesus here is a gloss.)

There are five other Scriptures which refer to this time. Each one, however, is worded slightly differently. He speaks of the Corinthians as “Coming behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor 1:8.

Then in 2 Cor 1:14, Paul speaks of the Corinthians boasting in Paul and his fellow workers, even as they would boast in the Corinthians in the Day of the Lord Jesus. In Phil 1:6, Paul writes:

✚ “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

He also desires:

✚ “That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.” Phil 1:10,

✚ “Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” Phil 2:16.

All these Scriptures make it clear that it is during the Day of the Lord, that Jesus Christ is going to judge his people. For this reason fornication must be dealt with, discipline must be exercised so that erring brethren may be restored. His people must be blameless in that day, having been sincere and without offence. It is possible for he who has begun the good work in us will perform it until we see him face to face.

It will be apparent to all that once the Rapture has taken place, and the day of the wrath of God and the Lamb begins here on earth, the glorified believers will appear before the judgement seat of Christ in the heavens.

Going back to Revelation 6:17 we read that the ungodly end their awful cry with “Who shall be able to stand?” We are reminded of the writer to the Hebrews who wrote:

✚ “For if we keep on sinning wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” Heb 10:26.

Again he writes:

✚ “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Heb 10:31.

And yet we will see puny man hurling defiance against the living God in the Revelation, with his reckless folly culminating in the battle of Armageddon, when all such gainsayers will be destroyed by the breath of his nostrils.

### 3. **144,000 Israelites sealed as servants of the living God (7:1-8)**

The church is now no longer on earth. The Rapture has taken place and the church is now before the throne. When a witness seeks to describe that which he has seen, he could never be able to relate things which occurred simultaneously without doing so in some kind of sequence. By adopting a certain sequence in describing what he has seen, a witness does not necessarily imply that there was a sequence in time.

This is what we have here, when John describes what he saw when the Lord Jesus breaks the sixth seal. He of necessity must adopt some form of sequence to describe what he has seen. But all that he describes takes place as the seal is broken. He describes those things he sees on earth first, and then lastly, he describes what he sees in heaven.

John sees four angels, standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, to prevent the wind from blowing on the earth the sea, or any tree. Consider the might of these heavenly beings who can control the elements. How powerful angels are can be seen later in the Revelation when we will see an angel standing in the sun. Rev 19:17. John now sees another angel (the fifth) ascending from the east, having a seal of the living God. He cries with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to harm the earth and the sea, saying:

✚ “Do not harm the earth nor the sea nor the trees, till we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.”

When we read Rev 8, we see how, when the trumpets sound, the earth, sea and trees are affected when wrath is poured out upon the earth.

John now hears the number of those who are sealed by the angel and those who help him. He tells us that the number sealed are 144,000 out of every tribe of the children of Israel:

- ✚ 12 000 from Judah
- ✚ 12 000 from Reuben
- ✚ 12 000 from Gad
- ✚ 12 000 from Asher
- ✚ 12 000 from Naphtali
- ✚ 12 000 from Manasseh
- ✚ 12 000 from Simeon
- ✚ 12 000 from Levi
- ✚ 12 000 from Issachar
- ✚ 12 000 from Zebulon
- ✚ 12 000 from Joseph
- ✚ 12 000 from Benjamin

Now this is not the first time that God has sealed some of his people for the purpose of protecting them and keeping them. We read in Ezekiel 9. Ezekiel sees those men (angels) who have charge of the city drawing near, each with a slaughter weapon in his hand. But God first sends a man clothed in linen with an inkhorn at his side, to go through the city to:

✚ “Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.”

Then God commands that all the rest are to be slain.

✚ “Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity.” Ez 9:5

In the New Testament, we see that during this present evil age (Gal 1:4) God has also sealed those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb. We read in 2 Cor 1:21-22:

✚ “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

It is of interest to note that the word earnest, in the above passage, is the word “arrabon” in the Greek. It occurs only here and in 2 Cor 5:5; and Eph 1:14. In all three passages where this word occurs, the Scripture makes it clear that the earnest given to us by God is the Holy Spirit.

The next passage which speaks of the sealing of the believer is much more explicit, and leaves us in no doubt as to the fact that the seal of God is this very earnest of the Holy Spirit for Paul writes in Eph 1:13-14:

✚ “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, who is an earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

Of this word 'arrabon', Vine says:

✚ “Originally, earnest-money deposited by the purchaser and forfeited if the purchase was not completed ... in general usage it came to denote a pledge or earnest of any sort; in the N.T. It is used only of that which is assured by God to believers.” He ends, “In modern Greek arrabona is an engagement ring.” (vol 2, page 10.)

To end we read the words of Paul in Eph 4:30:

✚ “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

How blessed to know that the Holy Spirit is the down-payment made by God as evidence of his purpose to claim his own when he comes in his glory.

Concerning the 144,000 who are sealed in Rev 7:1-8, let it be noted that they are Jews or Israelites There is not one single Gentile in the whole company. Some would make them symbolic of the church but this is eisegesis not exegesis. When God speaks of the church in the book of Revelation he calls it by its name, so as not to confuse it with his earthly people the Jews, for we who are the church have no inheritance here,. Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who change our vile body that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is

able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Phil 3:20-21. This company called the church is seen in Rev 7:9-17.

It is also well to note that the 144,000 are an earthly company of people, and not a heavenly, at this stage. They have to be sealed for protection and for preservation from the horrors which will unfold once that which is written upon the sealed scroll begins to come to pass.

Without wishing to anticipate, it would be as well to look at Rev 14:1-5, where we see this company again, no longer upon earth, but now caught up to the throne of God. The only aspect dealt with in chapter 14 that I would like to discuss is the part in verse 4 where John says:

✚ “These were redeemed from among men, the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb.”

In 1 Cor 15:20 Paul writes:

✚ “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

Again in verse 23:

✚ “But every man in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

This word “firstfruits” then means that the person or persons to whom it is applied, takes precedence over all others. The 144,000 are not the firstfruits of this present evil age, but they are the firstfruits of the following age, the Day of the Lord.

There is a time coming when Jesus Christ will come suddenly, and he will remove all the dead in Christ from the grave, leaving the wicked dead behind. He will also, at the same time, remove all the righteous living from the earth, leaving the wicked living behind. The raptured believers will meet the Lord in the air and so shall they ever be with the Lord. 1 Thess 4:17.

At that moment there will not be a single believer upon the earth. All will have departed. From the time God begins to call men again, and there are those who will respond. The first to respond, the first to be marked as his own will be the 144,000. They are the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb after the Rapture has taken place.

It would be as well to note here that there are passages of Scripture, such as Matt 13:30; 13:41-43, where the Bible very definitely states that the Son of Man, the



Lord Jesus, will send forth his angels with the sound of a great trumpet, and they will gather the wicked out and the righteous will be left behind.

Because of these passages, some teach that the church will go right through the Great Tribulation, and cannot expect deliverance prior to beginning of the Millennium after the battle of Armageddon. Now the Bible, contrary to the opinions of some, does not contradict itself, for it was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21.

In fact there are Scriptures which speak of a removing of the righteous, and a leaving behind of the wicked. There are also Scriptures which speak of a removing of all the wicked, and a leaving behind of all the righteous. Those Scriptures dealing with the removing of the righteous, and the leaving behind of the wicked always make it clear that the righteous are removed by Jesus Christ himself, who leaves the wicked behind.

Jesus said:

✚ “If I go ... I will come again and receive you unto myself.” Jn 14:3.

The two men said to the disciples:

✚ “This same Jesus shall so come in like manner.” Acts 1:11.

Paul the apostle writes:

✚ “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.” 1 Thess 4:16-17.

The word harpazo is the Greek word translated “caught up”, and it is a very strong word. It means to seize violently. Let us look at the Scriptures where it occurs.

1. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Matt 11:12.
2. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. Matt 13:19.
3. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. John 6:15.
4. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. John 10:12.

5. And I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. John 10:28.
6. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no (man) is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. John 10:29.
7. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip Acts 8:39.
8. And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them. Acts 23:10.
9. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 2 Cor 12:2.
10. How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 2 Cor 12:4.
11. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1 Thess 4:17.
12. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Jude 23.
13. 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 12:5.

There are also the related words "harpagmos" translated "robbery" in Phil 2:6; and "harpax" translated "ravens" in Matt 7:15; and "extortioner" in Luke 18:11; 1 Cor 5:10, 11; 6:10.

Now it might seem unnecessary to deal with this word in such great detail, but it is important to understand its usage, as 'harpazo' is rendered 'rapere' in the Latin Scriptures, and it is from this word "rapere" that our English word "rapture" comes. It is often argued that the word "rapture" is not to be found in the Bible and is an unscriptural concept. This argument is erroneous, for the word is there if the detractors of its usage would care to look.

Coming back to our theme we see the righteous caught up or raptured when the Lord Jesus comes for them. The question arises as to the part played by angels in this great event. Are they employed by the Lord to carry us up on high? The

Scriptures dealing with this are very clear. The Lord is alone. He is not accompanied by his angels on this occasion.

In Luke 20:27-40, the Sadducees asked Jesus the question as to who would be husband to the woman, who had been married to them all, in the resurrection. Jesus said in answer to their question that:

✚ “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.”

Equal unto the angels! What need is there then for the angels ministry to carry us up on high, if we are equal unto them? (The word 'isangelos' occurs only here in the N.T.)

When the Lord Jesus has come and taken his own at the Rapture, there will not be a single child of God on the earth at that time. But God begins immediately with his calling out of men to be his children, by sealing the 144,000. This is why they are firstfruits unto God and the Lamb as we have already seen.

There will be those who will turn to God, not only from Israel, but also from the Gentiles during the wrath of God. It would be futile to speculate as to how many Gentiles will be saved during the tribulation. What the Bible does tell us concerning Israel is that God will, firstly, seal 144,000 from each of the twelve tribes.

Secondly, he tells us in Zech 13:8-9:

✚ “And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, it is my people: and they shall say, the Lord is my God.”

At the end of the Great Tribulation the Lord Jesus will return. Now the Scriptures which speak of the removing of all the wicked and the leaving behind of all the righteous, will be fulfilled. As the wicked are not transformed so as to possess glorified bodies, as the saints at the time of the Rapture were, angelic beings are used to sever the wicked from among the just.

We read in Matt 13:41:

✚ “The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall

cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (41-43.)

This fulfils Matt 13:30:

✚ “Let both (tares and wheat) grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers (angels), gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

That the righteous will be gathered as well is clear from Matt 24:29-31 where we read:

✚ “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Scripture is clear as to the fact that all who survive the Great Tribulation will be gathered together, to the throne of his (Christ’s) glory. They will be judged as to their worthiness to enter the millennial kingdom of Christ.

It is here, at this throne, that before him shall be gathered all nations, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Matt 25:32. It matters not how the Bible pictures those gathered, tares and wheat, bad fish and good fish, goats and sheep, the message is clear. All survivors of the coming holocaust will not automatically enter the glorious millennial kingdom.

We know that the Antichrist will have power and authority and a throne for 1260 days. Then the Lord Jesus destroys him with the brightness of his coming and sets up the throne of his glory. 2 Thess 2:8. Then we read in Dan 12:10-12:

✚ “Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished, and the Abomination of Desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1335 days.”

If these 1335 days refers to the period of time from the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation, it indicates a 75 day period, after Armageddon, the 1260<sup>th</sup> day, during which all survivors will be judged by the Son of Man.

Returning to the 144,000, there are some who argue that this cannot be literal. They say that the Jews are unable to determine which tribe they belong to. This is, of course, no great problem as far as God is concerned. He will preserve each tribe until the end, and he knows to which tribe each Jew belongs.

It is significant that the tribe of Dan is omitted, being replaced by Joseph. Some see this as indicating that the Antichrist will come from this tribe; others, that Dan is the particular tool of the Antichrist amongst the twelve tribes, as Judas was amongst the apostles. Others believe it is due to Dan having been the most idolatrous of the tribes. All this is speculation. The Bible does not state why Dan is excluded and it is vain to guess. What is clear is that there will not be one member of this tribe in all the 144,000 Israelites who are sealed. This, however, is not the end of Dan's story.

Ezekiel records the fact that, when the land is divided in the Millennium, and each tribe is allotted its portion, Dan takes precedence over the other tribes. So the tribe of Dan will be preserved in the time of the Great Tribulation. Of the one third of Israel which God preserves and purifies, Dan will compose a portion. Ezekiel 48:1.

It is of interest to note that the 144,000 are called “servants or slaves of our God.” Now it is clear that, at the present time, the church is the vessel God is using and every true child of God is his servant or slave. Even the Jew who accepts Christ as his Saviour is treated no differently to the Gentile. Paul speaks to the believer in 1 Cor 10:32 and says:

✚ “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.”

The fact that God specifically chooses and seals a Jewish company reveals that the church age has ended. We are reminded again of Rom 11:25-26:

✚ “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: the deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

Finally, it may be asked, how does God bring the 144,000 to know him as Lord? In Zechariah we read of the two witnesses described as two olive trees upon the right side of the lampstand and upon the left side as well. Zech 4:11. He asks:

✚ “What are the two olive branches which, by means of the golden tubes, are emptying (the oil) into the golden (bowl)?” Zech 4:12.

He is answered:

✚ “These are the two anointed ones (Heb ... sons of oil) that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. (v 14)

Now in Zechariah the primary reference is to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua, the high priest, but, prophetically the reference is to the two witnesses of Rev 11:4 where we read of the two as follows:

✚ “These are the two olive trees, and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.”

It is as a result of the ministry of these two men clothed in sackcloth that the 144,000 and also, ultimately, the rest of Israel come to know their Messiah.

#### **4. The church in heaven. The Rapture of the resurrected saints. (7:9-17)**

While so much has been taking place on the earth, something startling has transpired in heaven. John says that after these things already described, he saw a great multitude so vast and so great that no one was able to number it. This multitude came from out of every nation, and peoples and tribes and tongues. John records that this multitude is standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands. They cry out with a loud voice:

✚ “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.”

Then all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying:

✚ “Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.”

Here, for the first time, redeemed men and angels join together in heaven in the praising and worshipping of God. At last the angels see the culmination of the work of God which began with the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the twenty four elders now asks John two questions. This multitude who are arrayed in white robes and stand before the throne:-

1. Who are they?
2. Whence came they?

John answers the elder saying, “Lord thou knowest.”

1. These are the ones coming out of the Great Tribulation (ek tes thlipseos tes megales lit. “Out of the tribulation the great”), and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
2. 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.
3. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 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.

We return to the question asked by the elder, “Who are they?”

Now the favourite theory is that these innumerable saints are “Tribulation saints”. They are those who will come to know the Lord after the Rapture, an event placed between chapter three and four of the Revelation, who hold this view. Now while there will undoubtedly be those who will be saved after the Rapture, they cannot ever number so many as to constitute an innumerable host.

Then up to this point, the wrath of God has not begun. Both the wrath of God and the appearance of this vast company of blood washed saints, are related as occurring then the sixth seal is broken by the Lamb. If they appear in heaven when God’s wrath begins on earth, they cannot possibly be tribulation saints. We have seen that the sun is darkened and the full moon becomes as blood when the great and notable Day of the Lord starts. Since this is a time of divine wrath, the church age ends, the wicked recognise that retribution is at hand, the 144,000 are sealed and the Lord Jesus removes the church from the earth.

Now the word 'ek' is very frequently translated “from” as well as being translated “out of”. Bullinger says that it conveys the idea of motion from within. Thus the moment the sixth seal is broken the church is taken away from the earth for:

✚ “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess 5:9.

One of his promises to those who overcome is:

✚ “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Rev 3:12.

### **The coming of the Lord Jesus for his church ... the Rapture**

As has already been mentioned, the Bible teaches a coming of the Lord Jesus when he will remove the righteous from the earth and the wicked will be left behind. Subsequently, he will return with his angels, and the wicked will be removed whilst the righteous will inherit the (millennial) kingdom.

### **The Rapture as taught in the early church**

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the breaking of bread, he said

✚ “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” 1 Cor 11:26.

He thus reminded the believers that this ordinance was to last only till the Lord came for his church. We have seen that the Lord will come only when “the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.” Rom 11:25. Thus, the salvation of the last Gentile, needed to complete the church, will have to take place before the Lord comes. But when that last Gentile is added to the church, the Lord will return, and then God turns to Israel as a nation to save and cleanse them.

Now Paul speaks very plainly about the Rapture in 1 Cor 15:51-58. He says to the Corinthians:

✚ “I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

Not every child of God will die, but every child of God will be changed. Now this teaching is a mystery only up until the time Paul taught it. He goes beyond anything taught by the Lord Jesus. This is a new revelation. Now Jesus did not teach his disciples all they needed to know while he was with them. He said very plainly:

✚ “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. Jn 16:12-13.

Paul then tells the Corinthians that this change will take place in a moment in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. The Greek word translated “moment” in the passage is the word “atomos” from which the English word atom is derived. It is used only here in the N.T. And means “indivisible”. (from a ... not, and temno ... to cut.) It thus indicates the smallest possible measurement of time.

The word translated “twinkling” is the Greek word 'rhipe' and it means any fast movement such as the winking of the eye. So in the time it takes for a person to wink the eye, the dead in Christ will be raised, the living believers will be changed, and all will have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air.



All this takes place at the last trump. Now this is not the seventh trumpet which sounds in the Revelation. Paul says that it is “the trump of God”. It is the trumpet that closes this present evil age and ushers in the notable Day of the Lord. When the trumpet sounds all who love the Lord will be instantly changed from corruptible to incorruptible, and from mortal to immortal.

Another great passage on the Rapture is the part in 1 Thess 4:13-18; 5:1-6. Here Paul says that he would not have the believers to be ignorant concerning those believers who have died. Paul makes it clear that the living will not take precedence over those who have died in the Lord. He tells them that:

✚ “We that are alive, and that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep.”

It is the Lord himself who descends from heaven with:

### **1. A shout**

In John 5:25 we read, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”

Again, in John 5:28-29 we read, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done (poieo) good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done (prasso) evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

When the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ is heard, all must come forth, though not all at once, but as we have already seen elsewhere, “every man in his own order.” 1 Cor 15:23.

### **2. The voice of the archangel**

There is only one archangel mentioned in the Scripture, namely Michael Jude 9. In the Greek the reading is “the voice of an archangel.” Thus the voice of the Lord Jesus is going to be like the voice of an archangel

### **3. The trump of God**

Here again I must confess that I believe the “Trump of God” is called that, because the one who sounds it is the Son of God. The trumpet is used to summon the people of God. Thus at Mount Sinai:

✚ “It came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud.” Ex 19:16

✚ ... and Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God ...” Ex 19:17.

The feast of trumpets in Lev 23:23-25, points to the gathering of Israel in the Millennium to the land of Israel

We read in Isa 27:12-13:

✚ “And it shall come to pass in that day ... ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts of the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem”

Jesus Christ speaks of this regathering of Israel in Matt 24:31, where he says:

✚ “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect (Israel) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

So also in Mark 13:27. The above verse is clearly a reference only to living persons after the Great Tribulation, and those persons are all Jews. But at the Rapture the Lord himself with the trump of God summons his saints.

Note what Paul writes in 1 Thess 5:16-17. He tells us that the dead in Christ will rise first. We who remain and are alive shall be caught up together with them. Now the King James says that we will be caught up with the dead in Christ in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In the Greek there is no definite article accompanying the word for clouds and so this passage should read:

✚ “We are caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

It is clouds of believers who are caught up to meet the Lord.

It is as well to note that there is no indication of the Lord coming down to the earth at this stage. Rather he takes his people to heaven where they will appear before the throne of God as we have seen in Rev 7:9-17. So we see that in time the trump of God will sound when the sixth seal is broken in Rev 6:12.

Paul continues in 1 Thess 5 and says that:

✚ “Concerning times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that ought be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.”

He makes it clear that the beginning of the Day of the Lord and the Rapture are synonymous, and thus they will take place suddenly and unannounced. They come as a thief in the night. The thief does not send any advance warning of his coming. His whole purpose is to do what he does stealthily. So that day will come when men least expect it to come. We will see later that when the Lord comes to set up his kingdom at Armageddon, the exact day that this will happen will be known to men, at that time of human history.

It is concerning the unexpectedness of his coming that the Lord Jesus speaks in Luke 12. A certain man had come to the Lord and asked him to speak to his brother about dividing the inheritance with him. Jesus speaks at length as a result of this request, ending by saying:

✚ “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

The Lord Jesus then makes clear what the attitude of his own should be when he says:

✚ “Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.” Luke 12:35-40.

This portion of Scripture again emphasises the fact that the Day of the Lord will come unheralded and with unexpected suddenness. Those who do not know the Lord will be taken completely unawares.

In Luke 21:34-36, Jesus says:

✚ “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Any snare implies secrecy.

✚ “Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.” Prov 1:17.

It is of interest to note that the Greek word 'aiphnidios', translated “unawares” here in this passage occurs only once more in the N.T. And that in 1 Thess 5:3 where we read:

✚ “For when they (the ungodly) shall say, peace and safety; then sudden (aiphnidios) destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

Then most blessedly, Paul writes:

✚ “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” For ye all are sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest, but let us watch and be sober.” (5:4-6.)

✚ There is for us hope of salvation, that is, of deliverance from this time, for, “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” (5:9.)

Now Paul continues with this theme of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for his church in 2 Thess 1:4-10, and 2 Thess 2:1-13. We will look at the first passage to see what further information we can glean from the Scriptures.

The Thessalonian Christians were enduring many persecutions and afflictions because of their Christian faith. This was a manifest token of the righteous judgement of God in order that they might be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God for which they were suffering. Elsewhere we read that Paul and Barnabas,

✚ “Confirmed the souls of the disciples and exhorted them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:22.

Paul tells the Thessalonians that it is a:

✚ “righteous thing with God to recompense (or pay back) tribulation to them that trouble you (or cause you to go through tribulation.)”

Here the same Greek word “thlipsis” is used for trouble and for tribulation. Paul continues and says:

✚ “And to you who are going through tribulation, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, giving full vengeance (lit) to them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished

with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” 2 Thess 1:7-9.

All this will take place at the time when

✚ “He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” (1:10.)

Thus we see that the time of the Christian’s tribulation is in this present evil age. It is in the here and now that the church is going through Great Tribulation. But the tribulation that the church experiences is a result of the wrath of man. The tribulation which comes during the Day of the Lord is a recompense, on the part of God, and it is exacted on the wicked who have persecuted the church. When this occurs all the saints will be resting in the presence of God before the rainbow throne.

When we come to 2 Thess 2:1-13 we find Paul tells the Thessalonians not to be troubled by any means whatsoever, as to the fact that the Day of the Lord had come. This was their great problem. They were under the mistaken apprehension that they were living in the beginning of the Day of the Lord. Paul says to them that this is not so. He says:

✚ “Be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of the Lord is come.” 2 Thess 2:2.

He then tells them not to let any person deceive them by any means as that the Day of the Lord has come. For, he says, two things must first happen before that day is manifested. Paul says that the first thing to happen before that day can come, is that the 'apostasia' must first take place. It is only after the 'apostasia' has taken place that the “man of lawlessness” can be revealed. This man of lawlessness is the son of perdition. This is the Antichrist or the first beast of Rev 13. Thus the Day of the Lord could not have come as the “apostasia” had not yet taken place, nor had the man of lawlessness been revealed. Only when both these events have taken place, will men be living in that period of time known as the Day of the Lord.

We need to look at this word “apostasia” at this stage. I would like to record my indebtedness to Kenneth Wuest for much light on this word and this passage of Scripture. He writes that the generally accepted interpretation of this passage is that the “apostasia” is “the apostasy” or “falling away” (that is from righteousness and truth) as the word is translated in the King James

But there cannot be two apostasies or “falling aways”. I quote from the book “Prophetic light in the present darkness” by K. Wuest. Firstly he writes that the fact that the definite article precedes the word apostasia makes it apply to a

particular departure, one known to the writer and to the recipients of the letter. He says that the words “falling away” are the translators’ interpretation of what they thought the Greek text meant here, not a translation of the Greek word itself.

The word “apostasia” derives from the root word “aphistemi” which means “to cause to withdraw, to go away, depart, withdraw from.” He continues, “In a context where true and false doctrines are in view, it would mean to fall away from true doctrine, but the additional idea comes from the context, not the verb.”

The root verb ahistemi is found fifteen times in the New Testament. It is translated “depart” eleven times.

We look at these fifteen occurrences in the following paragraph.

- ✚ “And she (Anna) was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple.” Luke 2:37.
- ✚ “And ... the devil ... departed from him for a season.” Luke 4:13.
- ✚ “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” Luke 8:13.
- ✚ “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” Luke 13:27.
- ✚ “After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of taxing, and drew away much people after him.” Acts 5:37.
- ✚ “And now I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone. Acts 5:38.
- ✚ “They came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city ... and forthwith the angel departed from him.” Acts 12:10.
- ✚ “But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.” Acts 15:38.
- ✚ “But when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.” Acts 19:9.
- ✚ “Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman” Acts 22:29.
- ✚ “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” 2 Cor 12:8.
- ✚ “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.” 1 Tim 4:1.
- ✚ “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of truth, supposing that gain is Godliness: from such withdraw thyself.” 1 Tim 6:5.
- ✚ “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” 2 Tim 2:19.
  
- ✚ Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” Heb 3:12.

Thus Wuest writes concerning “aphistemi”:

✚ “The predominant meaning of this verb in the New Testament therefore is that of the act of a person departing from another person or from a place.”

The neuter noun “apostasion” occurs in three places in the N.T. namely Matt 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4 where it is translated “divorcement”. This is nothing other than the legal departing of one from another.

The feminine noun, with which we are dealing, occurs in Acts 21:21 and here in 2 Thess 2:3 (only twice in the N.T.) We read in Acts 21:21, “And they are informed of thee (Paul), that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.”

Here apostasia is translated “forsake” in which the idea of departure is inherent. Still quoting from Wuest he writes, “Liddell and Scott in their classical lexicon give as the second meaning of apostasia, “A departure, a disappearance”.

He writes that Tyndale (1534), Coverdale (1535), the Geneva Bible (1537), Cranmer (1539), and Beza (1565) understood the Greek word in this context to mean a departure.

Wuest writes that the context of the passage will contain the departure referred to by the apostle Paul. Thus we read in 2 Thess 2:1:

✚ “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him.”

This then is the apostasia or departure or disappearance being referred to by Paul. It is the departure of the church to be with the Lord, and Paul says that the Day of the Lord cannot come until the departure of the saints has taken place.

Then, after this has occurred, the man of lawlessness will be revealed. Then men will know that the Day of the Lord has begun. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he told them these things when he was with them. He then reminds them that some power is restraining the Revelation of this fearful being called the man of lawlessness and, in other Scriptures, the Antichrist and the beast.

Paul tells them three times, in verses 3, 6, and 8, that he will be revealed. The Greek word “apokalupto”, signifying to uncover is used. But, says Paul, some power is hindering his manifestation. He can only be revealed in “his time”. When his time comes all restraint will cease.

Paul then says:

✚ “For the mystery of lawlessness already operates only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.”

We see thus that the Day of the Lord will be at hand when the man of sin is no longer restrained. And the man of sin will no longer be restrained, when the restrainer is no longer in the midst. This passage is well presented in the N.E.B. where we read:

✚ “For already the secret power of wickedness is at work, secret only for the present until the restrainer disappears from the scene.”

The restrainer is without a doubt the church. Not that the restraint is exercised by the church. Rather, the person who restrains is the Holy Spirit, and he will continue to restrain until the church is taken out of the way. You see Paul is saying, as long as the church is on the earth it is in the way, and so the Holy Spirit restrains the mystery of iniquity from bringing about the Revelation of the man of sin. When the church is taken out of the way the Holy Spirit will no longer restrain the mystery of iniquity, and so the man of sin will be revealed.

Thus the Bible does not teach the removal of the Holy Spirit from the earth, but the removal of the church from the earth and the cessation of the ministry of restraint exercised by the Holy Spirit while the church is present on earth.

So, Paul says, the Day of the Lord cannot come until the church disappears, and the man of sin is revealed. And the man of sin cannot be revealed until the Holy Spirit ceases restraining the mystery of lawlessness (or iniquity).

And the Holy Spirit will not cease restraining until the church is taken out of the way. The great evacuation of God's redeemed must take place before the final scene is set for the pouring out of the wrath of God on the great Day of the Lord.

We are aware, of course, that throughout the ages the devil has been endeavouring to fulfil his plan. But he has always been prevented from doing so. Thus many of the evil men who have plagued this earth from time to time have, in a sense, been Antichrist, or have manifested the Spirit of Antichrist, but none of them have ever been the Antichrist

He can only come and be revealed “in his time”. That time will be determined, not by Satan, but by the living God whom we serve. There are many passages in the epistles which warn the believer of the fact that the Lord is coming and that he is coming without prior warning. Watchfulness is vital. Paul writes to the Romans (13:11-12) saying:

✚ “And this, knowing the season, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. The



night is far spent, and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”

Concerning the shortness of time Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7:29-31):

✚ “But this I say, brethren, the time is shortened, that henceforth both those that have wives may be as though they had none; and those that weep, as though they wept not; and those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those that use the world, as not using it to the full: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

The believer is to wait, not for the wrath of God, or for the Day of the Lord, but for the Lord Jesus to come. Thus we read in 1 Thess 1:10 that we are to:

✚ “Wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the coming wrath.”

Paul continues this theme of our waiting for Jesus in Phil 3:20 where he writes,

✚ “For our citizenship (politeuma) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

He also says to Titus (2:13):

✚ “Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

To the Hebrews he writes:

✚ “So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.” Heb 9:28.

That, as we wait, we can see the day draw nigh is evident for we read in Heb 10:25 that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as we see the day draw nigh.

The Bible testifies continually to the nearness of that day. Paul writes to the Philippians, (4:5):

✚ “Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”

We read also in Hebrews 10:37:

✚ “For yet a very little while. He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.”

So James speaks of those who have gathered together treasure in the last days. Surely there has never been an age when men have waxed rich as they have today. It is the age not of the millionaire but of the multimillionaire. He continues and says:

✚ “Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and the later rain. Be ye patient also, establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

And again:

✚ “Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the judge standeth before the doors.” (James 5:3, 7, 8, 9.)

Of course as far as the world is concerned they are totally unaware of the nearness of his coming. Peter writes and says:

✚ “Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the Word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men. But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” 2 Peter 3:3-10.

Jesus himself warns in the Revelation (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.”

### **God's plan for the ages**

Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:9-10 that God has made known to us the mystery of his will, which is, to sum up, or to gather together in one all things in Christ, in this dispensation of the fullness of times.

Thus all, Jew and Gentile, are gathered together in one body, the church, by the operation of God in quickening us together with Christ, raising us up together, and making us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Eph 2:5-7.

If we wish to have a part in all these purposes of God there are certain things which are needful. We need to have been “delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love.” Col 1:13. We have been “sealed unto the day of redemption” by the Holy Spirit, whom we are not to grieve. Eph 4:30.

The day of redemption is the day on which the Rapture will take place. Paul tells us in Eph 1:13-14 that firstly, we trusted in Christ, after we had heard the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation.

Secondly, after we had believed, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the earnest, or down payment, till the redemption of the possession. Christ will redeem that possession at the Rapture but we need to be ready when he comes to redeem it. With this in view, we will look at numerous Scriptures which tell us what we will have to be like, if we are to be ready. Thank God, that he does all that is needed to fit us for that day if we will only allow him to.

### **Be ye therefore ready for the Son of Man cometh ... Luke 12:40**

Paul writes to the Corinthians and thanks God “That in everything ye were enriched in him, in all utterance, and all knowledge, so that ye are wanting in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus, who also will confirm you till the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor 1:5-8.

The Greek word translated “confirm” means to establish or to make sure. Thus, Paul tells the Corinthians, the Lord will establish you, making you firm, so that you may be blameless at the Rapture. (Elsewhere we find the word 'unreproveable' used instead of blameless ... a better word.)

Paul writes to the Ephesians and tells them that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it:

✚ “... that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph 5:27.

Here we read that the Lord Jesus will present the church to himself. This will take place at the Rapture. Notice how he describes the church. No spot. No wrinkle. Holy. Without blemish. It is the Lord himself who will make us like this, if we will allow him to. There is a very pertinent warning in Eph 5:5 where Paul writes:

✚ “For this ye know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous person, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

Paul is supremely confident of the Lord’s ability to fit us, however, for he writes in Phil 1:6:

✚ “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform (complete) it until the day of Christ.”

The day of Christ is, of course, the day when the Rapture takes place. He continues:

✚ “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgement (perception): that ye may prove things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ.” Phil 1:9-11.

It is interesting to see that the word translated “sincere” is the Greek word “eilikrines”, which only occurs twice in the New Testament. Bullinger says it means, “Judged of in the sunlight, and so found to be genuine.” We will certainly be tested in the sunlight of the Lord. Only the genuine will pass the test. (See 2 Pet 3:1, “Stir up your pure minds ...” where pure translates eilikrines.)

Again, with the kingdom of God in view, Paul writes:

✚ “Ye know how we exhorted, and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” 1 Thess 2:12.

Then Paul writes in 1 Thess 3:12-13:

✚ “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”

We see the need here for love to abound in the life of the believer if he wants to be unblameable in holiness when the Lord comes. Again to the Thessalonians

Paul gives many practical instructions in the fifth chapter, rounding these instructions off by saying:

✚ “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly (or completely); and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess 5:23.

Paul, who has spoken of blamelessness three times in connection with the coming of the Lord, now relates that blamelessness to the whole man, not only the Spirit and the soul of man but even his body must be blameless. Paul in writing to Timothy says,

✚ “That thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in his own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings and Lord of Lords.” 1 Tim 6:14-15.

Timothy is exhorted to do all that the Lord Jesus has commanded his servants to do until the Lord returns. It is to be without spot. Here we have the word used by Paul to the Ephesians concerning the church, that it is to be a church “Not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Paul also says that the Lord’s appearing will be in due time. Thus the day of Christ will come when it is due, and it is the Father who has appointed that day for Jesus, when he was here, said:

✚ “But of that day and hour knoweth no (man) no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father.” Matt 24:36.

In the days of his humanity, that day was veiled even from the Lord Jesus for he says in Mark 13:32:

✚ “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father, take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.”

Perhaps one of the best known Scriptures concerning the power of Jesus Christ to keep is found in 2 Timothy where Paul, speaking of the first coming of the Lord says that he has abolished (or rendered ineffectual) death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Paul then says that he is appointed a teacher and preacher of this gospel and, as a result is being caused to suffer by those who will not believe, but, he says,

✚ “I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against (or to) that day.” 2 Tim 1:12.

Paul continues and says to Timothy:

✚ “If we endure we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also shall deny us.” 2 Tim 2:12.

We are reminded of the words of Paul to the saints at Colosse for he writes:

✚ “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven.” Col 1:21-23.

Here Paul stresses the fact that we are to endure, that we must not move away from the hope of the gospel. If we prove our steadfastness he will present us holy, unblameable, unproveable, in his sight. That is, when he sees us at the Rapture, he will present us, before the throne of God. None will be able to blame, as Satan does now when he accuses the brethren. Rev 12:10. None will be able to reprove. We shall be holy in that day, if we continue, and be not moved away.

It is of interest to note here that the Greek word “amomos” translated unblameable here is also translated without blemish in Eph 5:27 where Paul says the church should be holy and without blemish. But what should cause us to stand in awe that sinners like us can be presented thus before God is the fact that this word is used of the purity of Christ in 1 Peter 1:19 where we are told that we have been redeemed:

✚ “... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

The same word is used in Heb 9:14 where we read that the Lord Jesus offered himself without spot (amomos) to God through the eternal spirit. In Rev 14:5 it is used of the 144,000 who are said to be without fault (amomos) before the throne of God. We also read in Eph 1:4 that:

✚ “God the Father has chosen us that we should be without blame (amomos) before him in love.”

And when he comes for us, Jude says he will present us faultless before the presence of his glory. Jude 24. We read in 2 Tim 4:18 of Paul’s confidence in the Lord, for he writes:

✚ “The Lord will deliver me from every wicked work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Peter also speaks of the fact that God watches and guards his people for he writes:

✚ “Who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:5.

He continues:

✚ “That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which perisheth, though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:7.

He ends:

✚ “Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:13.

In his second epistle, Peter exhorts the believers to follow after certain virtues, ending by saying:

✚ “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:8-11.

Peter continues that they had not followed cunningly devised fables, when they had made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but had been eye-witnesses of his majesty.” 2 Pet 1:16. It was needful therefore to give heed to the word of prophecy made sure, (as opposed to cunningly devised fables), as to a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the day-star arise in their hearts. 2 Pet 1:19. The day dawn, of course, is the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus when he comes for the church.

The apostle John emphasises the need for us to abide in him. He writes:

✚ “And now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” 1 John 2:28.

There is the need for us to be pure if we would see him, and, this hope is a purifying hope, for John writes again:

✚ “Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” 1 John 3:2-3.

### **There will be judgement when he comes**

The question arises as to what happens to the church after the Rapture has taken place? There is an interval of seven years between the Rapture and the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Great Tribulation. Now it is during this time that the church is to be judged.

There is a great difference between the judgement of the saints and of the wicked. Paul writes in 1 Cor 3:11-15, telling us that no other foundation can be laid than that which is laid. That foundation is Jesus Christ. (3:11.) This is salvation. We must have the right foundation. If Christ is not the foundation on which we build, we will be eternally lost. But, he warns:

✚ “Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.” (3:10.)

He gives us the material that can be used, and it falls into two categories:

- 1) Enduring
  - ✚ Gold
  - ✚ Silver
  - ✚ Precious stones
- 2) Perishable
  - ✚ Wood
  - ✚ Hay
  - ✚ Stubble

Now Paul says our works as Christians are going to be tried by fire. The fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is, that is, enduring or perishable. 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: but he himself shall be saved. This is because, although he built with wood, hay and stubble, he did build on the right foundation. But, Paul says, he shall be saved through fire. (3:15.) This is scraping into heaven by the skin of your teeth.

Paul tells us to judge nothing before the time. Thus he reveals that there is an appointed time, when God will judge the church by Jesus Christ.

✚ “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart.” 1 Cor 4:5.



It is because the believer is to be judged that the church must exercise discipline. A certain man in Corinth was committing fornication of such a nature that even the unconverted Gentiles regarded with horror, and he was in fellowship in the assembly. Paul says:

✚ “Deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus.” 1 Cor 5:5.

Thus church discipline is primarily remedial. Let it be remembered that when someone is overtaken in such gross sin we must deal with them in the right spirit. There should be no self-righteousness on our part. Restoration should always be the objective. Paul writes:

✚ “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault (sin), ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Gal 6:1.

Committing to Satan, strange as it may seem, is, if it is done in the right spirit, an act of real kindness. It is no kindness to allow someone indulging in gross sin of any kind to remain in fellowship, because they are not in fellowship with the Lord, and the sooner that they realise it the better for them.

Paul writing in 2 Cor 5:1-10 speaks again of the judgement seat of Christ. This is the judgement of believers and is referred to as the Bema judgement as opposed to the great white throne judgement, where the wicked dead will be judged. He says,

✚ “For we must all appear before the judgement seat (Bema) of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (5:10.)

Writing to Timothy, Paul says:

✚ “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at the appearing of his kingdom.” 2 Tim 4:1.

It is when he comes for his church, that the living and the dead will be judged. If we give heed to what we are told to do by Scripture, we will not build with wood, hay and stubble on the perfect foundation God has provided. When the Lord judges his church it will be righteous judgement. Paul writes:

✚ “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” 2 Tim 4:7-8.

It would be as well to detail here the crowns which will be given to the deserving ones at the judgement seat of Christ.

- 1) The overcomer's crown. 1 Cor 9:25-27 (incorruptible crown)
- 2) The martyr's crown. James 1:12; Rev 2:10 (crown of life)
- 3) The elder's crown. 1 Peter 5:2-4 (crown of glory)
- 4) Lover's of his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8 (crown of righteousness)
- 5) Soul winner's crown. Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19-20 (crown of rejoicing)

### **Warnings and exhortations in view of the Lord's coming**

Paul writes:

✚ “Do all things without murmurings and disputings that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” Phil 2:14-16.

All reward Paul looked for was to see those whom he had won present in glory for he writes:

✚ “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.” 1 Thess 2:19-20.

Paul also warns Timothy of the conditions at the end of this evil age. He says,

✚ “This know also, that in the last days perilous time shall come.” 2 Tim 3:1.

Similarly in 1 Tim 4:1 he writes:

✚ “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.”

We have seen how this has come to pass and we need to continue steadfastly if we would enter in to that great and glorious event of all time, when the church, for the first time will be gathered together at the coming of Jesus. There is no time for us to rest from the battle we have been called to fight. But we have the wonderful words recorded in Rev 22:20:

✚ “He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

## **Chapter eight**

### ***The seventh seal, the Great Tribulation begins***

All that has gone before has been preparatory to the breaking of the seventh seal by the Lamb. The scroll, given to the Lamb in Rev 5:7, is now finally opened, all seven seals, which had so effectively sealed it that none could look on it, have now been broken by the Lord Jesus Christ. That which is written upon the scroll can now begin to be fulfilled.

All that lies ahead from this point of time is recorded on the scroll. All that now comes to pass lies after the Rapture. While the church will see “the beginning of sorrows” (Matt 24:8), what now transpires will be subsequent to the church’s meeting the Lord in the air.

Many startling events were ushered in by the breaking of the other seals, and, particularly, by the breaking of the sixth seal as we have seen. But the breaking of the seventh seal seems like an anticlimax. Let us read about it.

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

Silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. Why this hush in heaven? This is the quiet before the storm of the Great Tribulation. This seal divides time. What transpires before concerns this present age. What transpires after this seal is broken, concerns the Great Tribulation. Thus all heaven is silent as preparation is made for the wrath of God to be poured out on this rebellious planet.

We have seen that the wicked have recognised that the Day of the Lord is at hand for they have cried out, “The great day of their wrath has come.” (6:17.) Now the prophet Isaiah refers to this period of history when he writes:

✚ “For the Lord will rise up as on Mount Perazim, he will be wrath as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act.” Isa 28:21.

It is interesting to note that, in response to Joshua, when he went to do battle with the Canaanites, who were determined to destroy the Gibeonites for making a pact with Israel, that God caused the sun to stand still, and he cast down great stones from the heavens upon them.... And they died.” Joshua 10:11-13.

Now what is God’s strange work and his strange act? This can be nothing other than the pouring out of his wrath upon men. How God delights in showing mercy. He has exalted his grace. But men have spurned the mercy and the grace of God. They would not repent but continued in their wilful sin. The writer to the Hebrews has this to say about impenitence:

- ✚ “For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” Heb 6:7-8.

And again in the same Scriptures:

- ✚ “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” Heb 10:26-27.

The day of visitation for the Gentiles will end, even as it ended nationally for Israel when the Messiah was crucified.

Luke writes:

- ✚ “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now are they hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave within thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” Luke 19:42-44.

God, who sent the Lord Jesus to the children of Israel, allowed them to be carried away captive into all nations (Luke 21:24), and he will do the same in these present days because men have not heeded his call to salvation. We shall see God using similar means to punish men on earth to those he used in the days of Joshua

### **The Great Tribulation**

The Day of the Lord is now at hand. In the Old Testament, the prophets tell us a great deal about this time. We see here how that day is to commence. John tells us that seven angels stand before God, and they are given seven trumpets. They will sound these trumpets, and each trumpet will herald a new calamity for those men who have been left behind when Jesus came for his own.

Another angel, an eighth, comes and stands at the altar having a golden censer. Much incense is given to this angel in order that he might offer it, together with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne. John says that the smoke of the incense and the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angels hand. We see two altars here. The first corresponds to the brazen altar in the tabernacle.

Upon this altar there was a fire. So upon the earthly brazen altar there was a fire which consumed the sacrifices which the children of Israel brought to offer to the Lord. Ex 27:1-19. Here in Exodus we see the censers referred to as “firepans” (Ex 27:3). We see

the heavenly counterpart in Revelation of the earthly tabernacle. No wonder God told Moses:

✚ “See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown thee on the mount.”  
Ex 25:40; Heb 8:5.

The fire upon the heavenly altar speaks of the wrath of God which will burn and consume all that is hateful to his holiness, just as the fire on the earthly altar burnt and consumed the animal sacrifice.

Calvary was the place where the wrath of God was revealed against sin, for it was here that the fire of God’s wrath fell upon the Lamb of God when he was taking away the sin of the world. It was here that the Lord Jesus was “bruised” on our behalf. He was “stricken, smitten and afflicted by God.” Isa 53:4. We have a scene described in Lev 16:12 concerning the great Day of Atonement which is almost identical to the passage here in Rev 8:1-4.

Moses writes:

✚ “Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself; and he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: and he shall take the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.” Lev 16:11-14.

The incense, both in Leviticus and Revelation speak to us of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for us upon Calvary, for we read in Eph 5:2:

✚ “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.”

As God begins to pour out his wrath upon the wicked on the earth, we are reminded of the fact that we would have had to perish with them were it not for the fact that God has heard our prayers, when we cried out, “God be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13), and our cries have been heard by him wholly and solely because of our Lord offering himself up for us as a sweet-smelling savour.

We are also reminded here, that all those who are to endure the Great Tribulation, and will experience the wrath of God at that time, and, finally, his judgement when they will be cast into the lake of fire, could also have known the pardon and mercy we know. They need never have been left behind when the Lord Jesus came for his church. They could have been safe in the presence of the Lord together with us. But they did not avail

themselves of the blessed provision made for all men by our wonderful Lord. Thus, they will know God's wrath, instead of his love and mercy, because they would not heed the message of the gospel.

They will know the wrath of God because they have spurned the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, because they would not call upon him to save them from their sins. So Paul shows that the gospel ministers life to those who believe, but death to those who will not believe. He writes:

✚ “For we are the sweet fragrance of Christ unto God, among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the latter it is an aroma (wafted) from death to death – a fatal odour, the smell of doom; to the former it is an aroma from life to life – a vital fragrance, living and fresh.” 2 Cor 2:15-16 (Ampl.)

The fragrance of the knowledge of God (v 14) we see will minister life to us, if we believe. But, if we refuse to believe, it will minister death to us. John tells us in verse five that 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. Men have rejected the mercy of God and have chosen rather to continue in their rebellion against God. Now they will receive the reward of their doings. That which Jesus Christ died to save them from, will now be their portion. The consuming fire of God's wrath which the Lord Jesus endured on the cross will be their portion.

## **Verses 6-12**

### **The first four trumpets ... extra-terrestrial (celestial) visitations**

We read now that the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound their trumpets.

### **The first trumpet Rev 8:7**

The first angel sounds his trumpet and hail and fire mixed with blood were cast upon the earth. We read that, as the result of this:-

- 1) The third of the earth was burned up.
- 2) The third of the trees was burned up.
- 3) All green grass was burned up.

If we do not accept these statements of John as being literal, we lay ourselves open to a multitude of conflicting interpretations. It is due to the fact that men have spiritualised these portions of the Scriptures that so much confusion exists as to what is really meant in these passages.

God always says in clear, easily understood language, what his eternal purposes are. He does not endeavour to confuse us, but to enlighten us. He wants us to know. Thus the Bible is always to be interpreted literally, unless the writer of the portion under study makes it clear that it is a parable or symbol. Many have refused to interpret the Revelation literally because, they say, it would be too awful if it was to be taken to be literal.

So, when the first angel trumpets, one third of the earth and the trees, and all the green grass on earth will be burned up. This is how the Great Tribulation begins. Now we may well ask, "Where does the hail and fire mixed with blood come from?" The answer is very simple. God uses some heavenly body or bodies, of a fiery nature to accomplish his will and purpose. So some comet or wandering star or planet will be used by God. The hail will not be watery hail but will be solid particles. They will fall in great masses on the earth and the resultant destruction will be far greater than any atomic war could cause. At the same time deadly radiation will not make the earth uninhabitable.

We read of similar events in the Old Testament. In Exodus 9:23 we read:

✚ "And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt"

When Ezekiel describes the destruction of God he says:

✚ "I will rain upon him (Gog), and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone ..." Ez 38:22.

Now a great shower of meteorites entering the earth's atmosphere, would begin to burn due to friction. When Joshua commanded the sun to stand still:

✚ "The Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them ... and they died." Joshua 10:11.

It would take another large celestial body to prevent the earth from rotating upon its axis, and to bombard the earth with great stones so that:

✚ "They were more which died of hailstones than they when the children of Israel slew with the sword."

That the earth did stop revolving on its axis is clear for we read:

✚ "The sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." Joshua 10:13.

So when Hezekiah lay dying, God heard his prayer and spared him. As a sign, the “sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.” Isa 38:8. I am persuaded that some heavenly visitant, probably from outer space, approaches the earth and, when the Lord Jesus breaks the sixth seal, causes the sun to be turned to darkness and the moon to blood. There are also other signs such as a great earthquake, falling stars (meteorites), and every mountain and island being moved out of their places.

Now this cosmic visitant remains closely associated with the earth for some time and so there are recurring disasters. The one recorded here at the sounding of the first trumpet is only the first recurrence. There is a great similarity between the plagues in Exodus and Revelation. The first plague tells us of water turning to blood (Ex 7:19-25), the seventh plague tells us of hailstones with fire which “smote every herb of the field and break every tree of the field.” (Ex 9:22-26), while the ninth plague tells us of thick darkness which could be felt. (Ex 10:21-26.)

We will read later in the Revelation of the darkness which will come upon the kingdom of the beast (Rev 16:10) just as it happened in Egypt. The mention of blood so frequently in these plagues in Revelation could point to this heavenly body being red in colouration. It causes the full moon to turn blood red, the hail and fire in Rev 8:7 is mixed with blood and, in the sounding of the second trumpet the sea has a third part turned to blood. The King James does not have the part in verse 7 reading “The third part of the earth was burned up”, but the most reliable texts extant contain it. One wonders why some copiest deemed it necessary to omit it? Perhaps it was the result of unbelief when reading of the awfulness of the wrath of God.

One thing is certain, all that is written here will come to pass exactly as it has been recorded. This is not the only occasion that hailstones are recorded as falling in the Revelation. Similar phenomena occur in Rev 11:9 and also in Rev 16:21 where the hailstone weighs about a talent (96 lbs).

### **The second trumpet Rev 8:8-9**

The second angel trumpets and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood; 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. Here we see the following:-

- 1) One third of the sea becomes like blood.
- 2) One third of the sea-creatures die.
- 3) One third of ships are destroyed.

The surface of the moon, Mars and other planets without an atmosphere are all scarred by some past disasters. There is evidence that the earth, in the past, has also experienced similar disasters. The great flood of Noah is at least one such disaster. We see in the Revelation a future astral calamity. All is under God’s direct control. Nothing can happen



without his permission. Thus, the planet or comet responsible for what has happened so far continues to plague the earth.

What happens here is that a part of this heavenly body breaks away and, entering the earth's atmosphere, it begins to burn due to friction. Here is no small fragment but a large mass which appears to John as a burning mountain. We are all aware of the fact that the moon is responsible for the tides in the oceans, but we now know, by using laser light to measure it, that the moon also causes a land tide. The surface of the earth rises and falls 12 inches a day due to the gravitational effect of the moon.

Should a comet come too close to the earth the earth would begin to break it up, if it was smaller than the earth, while it would cause earthquakes, islands would also be affected as well as the mountain. If the earth tore a part of a comet away, it would be pulled down by the earth's gravitational pull, and, if large enough, would cause havoc on the earth. How large this chunk of rock will be we cannot say, but it will be mountainous. If it were to fall on the land surface it would cause untold damage but the fact that it fall into the sea does mean that the sea will cushion its impact.

### **The third trumpet Rev 8:10-11**

The third angel trumpets and a great star burning like a lamp falls from heaven. The name of the star is 'Wormwood' and John tells us:-

- 1) It fell upon the third part of the rivers, and onto the fountains of waters.
- 2) The third part of the waters became wormwood.
- 3) Many men died of the waters because they were bitter.

Now the star or portion of this heavenly body here dealt with is called 'Wormwood' or 'absinthe.' (Greek ... *apsinthos*.) More of the comet, or whatever else it may be, now breaks away. Again, due to the fact that it enters the earth's atmosphere, it appears as a great burning star. Now of 'Wormwood' the pictorial Bible dictionary has this to say, "A species related to our western sagebrush, and the source of an essential oil obtained from the dried leaves and tops of the plant. Absinthe, a liqueur, the continuous use of which leads to mental deterioration and even death, derives its flavour from this oil. From Lamentations 3:15, 17, we see that the plant is a symbol of bitterness. There is then, we see clearly, a very poisonous substance in this falling star, and, as it disintegrates to form dust, this dust poisons the waters upon which it falls, causing the death of many people here upon the earth.

### **The fourth trumpet Rev 8:12**

The fourth angel trumpets, 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 Greek word 'pleesso,' translated 'smitten' occurs only this one time in the New Testament, and it means to strike a blow.

We see how, under these trumpet judgements, the heavens are repeatedly affected. Whereas, previously, the sun was darkened and the full moon was turned to blood, here we see the entire starry heavens blotted out for eight hours. Likewise the sun and the moon are darkened for the same space of time. We see darkness come upon the face of the whole earth. Notice again how similar this is to the ninth plague in the land of Egypt We read in Ex 10:21:

✚ “And the Lord said unto Moses, stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was thick darkness over the land of Egypt in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days.”

With regard to the things which occur when the first four trumpets sound, notice that one third of the earth is burned up, that one third of the trees are burned up, that all the green grass is burned up, one third of the seas become as blood, one third of the sea-creatures died, one third of the ships are destroyed, one third of all the sources of drinking water (rivers and fountains) are poisoned so that many people die, and one third of the sun, moon and stars are affected, so that they do not give forth their light.

### **The eagle's warning Rev 8:13**

The four angels have sounded their trumpets and unparalleled disaster has ensued. Never before in recorded history have phenomena of this nature occurred for so long a period of time, nor affected so fast an area of the earth. In the face of all that has happened, can anything worse come to pass? We are made aware of the fact that these disasters are only the beginning of the wrath of almighty God.

John now sees an eagle (not an angel as in the K.J.V.) Flying in the mid-heavens, 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 about to trumpet.” Verse 13.

What is now about to happen is different from anything that has ever happened before. God allows us to see creatures he, in his everlasting love and mercy, has imprisoned, until this day and hour. They will be loosed on men because of their wilful sin of rejecting Jesus Christ.

## **Chapter nine**

### ***The fifth trumpet, the first woe Rev 9:1-12***

#### **Intra-terrestrial visitations**

The wrath of God poured out upon men under the first four trumpets, came from outside the bounds of the earth. God used some outside means to cause the fearful disasters recorded under the first four trumpets. The means God uses now proceeds from within the earth itself.

John writes:

✚ “And the fifth angel trumpeted, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit.”

That the star, referred to here, is a person is evident for the Scripture refers to the star as “He”. Here then is probably an angel for this could not be a human being, and angels are referred to as stars elsewhere in the Revelation.

### **The bottomless pit**

The interpretations of the bottomless pit are legion. The Scripture is the only court of appeal and we are left in no doubt here for the Bible is explicit when it deals with this subject. Translating the Greek literally we find that the angel is given the key of the shaft of the Abyss. Firstly let us look at this word Abyss which is the literal rendering of the Greek word ‘Abussos.’

The word ‘abussos’ occurs only nine times in the N.T. It occurs in the first instant, in Luke 8:31. We see the Lord Jesus arrive in the land of the Gerasenes which is opposite Galilee. Here he is met by a demonised man who, when asked what his name was, answered “Legion”, for many demons were entered into the man. These demons make a very strange request when they address the Lord Jesus, a request which is very much obscured by the rendering in the King James Version, which reads:

✚ “And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.”

What the demons really asked Jesus was that he would not send them into the Abyss. Now some demons and some fallen angels (assuming that there is a difference between them) are confined in this very Abyss. We look at two Scriptures, one in 2 Peter and the other in Jude. Peter writes:

✚ “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but hurled them down to Tartarus and committed them to dark dungeons to await their doom.” 2 Peter 2:4.

The word Tartarus is actually a verb and Peter says that God “tartarised” these fallen angels by confining them to pits of gloom.

Jude also writes and says:

✚ “And angels, who did not preserve their original rank but left their proper home, he has kept in everlasting chains under darkness, for the day of judgement.” Jude 6. (Williams).

Here in Jude the word translated ‘chains’ is the same word used in 2 Peter 2:4, also translated chains in the K.J.V. But rendered “gloom” above as it is more correct.

Now the ancients always referred to Tartarus as the lowest hell. In Greek mythology when Zeus defeated the Titans, led by Chronos, he confined them to Tartarus. Now not all the angels are confined. Some are free to roam around and their habitation is in the “heavenlies”. Paul speaks of the believer wrestling against “the spiritual hosts of evil in the heavenlies”. Satan is their leader and is called the “prince of the power of the air.” (Eph 6:12; 2:2.)

These demons then, were begging the Lord Jesus not to send them to the place where other spiritual beings who had rebelled against God, had been sent. Continuing our investigation of the word “abussos” we see it used for the second time in Romans 10:7, where we read:

✚ “Who will descend into the deep? That is, to bring up Christ from the dead.” Here again it is far better to read, “Who will descend into the Abyss?”

We note several interesting points here.

- 1) Jesus Christ went to the Abyss when he died.
- 2) With regard to the surface of the earth, it is a place one descends into.
- 3) To depart from it the direction is “up”.

We are left in no doubt that, when Jesus Christ died, he went to the Abyss. If the Lord Jesus went to the Abyss when he died, then the repentant dying thief also went to the Abyss, for Jesus said to him:

✚ “Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” Luke 23:43.

Before the Lord Jesus died, all men, righteous as well as the unrighteous went to the same place called Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the new. This is very clearly revealed in Luke 16:19-31 where we see a place of comfort, called Abraham's bosom, or Paradise, and a place of torment, and they were separated by an unbridgeable gulf. Abraham said:

✚ “Between us and you a great chasm has been firmly fixed; so that they that would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” Luke 16:26.

We see then that Paradise is in Hades as well as a place of torment. We see also that Hades is in the Abyss for Jesus went to the Abyss according to Paul, and to Paradise,

according to Luke, when he died. Now Matthew tells us an even more important fact for we read in Matt 12:40:

✚ “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

We can see from this that Paradise before the cross, the place of torment, and Hades are all in the heart of the earth. Thus the Abyss is also in the heart of the earth.

Now this word abussos is found seven more times, all in the Revelation. It is found three times here in Rev 9:1, 2, 11. The first verse tells us that there is a shaft, leading to the Abyss, and that it is not only sealed, but that there is a key which can unlock it. The shaft of the Abyss will be opened when the fifth angel trumpets. Opened, I believe, for the first time in human history and then there will really be “hell on earth”. Of those days John says:

✚ “Men shall seek death, and shall not find it: and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.” Rev 9:6.

Continuing with the theme of the Abyss, we see that there is an angel called “the angel of the Abyss”. His name is Abaddon in the Hebrew and Apollyon in the Greek. We will look at this person in detail later on, as we continue to investigate the first woe. In Rev 11:7 we read again of the Abyss, where we are told that the two witnesses will be killed, when their testimony is completed, by the beast from the Abyss. We will not linger here but would remark that the Antichrist will come forth out of the Abyss. Indeed, he is here already upon the earth, but will go into the Abyss and will then come up out of the Abyss.

This fact, that the beast or Antichrist will come up out of the Abyss or bottomless pit, is so important, that it is stressed again in Rev 17:8. Finally in Rev 20:1, 3 we read that, after the battle of Armageddon, Satan is finally cast into the Abyss, and is confined there for the period of 1000 years.

### **The shaft of the Abyss**

There is a shaft which links the surface of the earth to the interior or heart of the earth or, as it is called in the Bible, the Abyss. The word shaft is the translation of the Greek work “phrear”. It is translated “well” twice and “pit” five times in the N.T. Making seven occurrences in all.

In John 4:11, 12, the Samaritan woman tells the Lord Jesus that the well, known as Jacob's well, was deep. But there is a much deeper well or shaft. It is the shaft which gives access to the Abyss. We have the word “phrear” translated “pit” in connection with the Abyss in Rev 9:1, 2 (three times). Then in Luke 14:5, Jesus speaks of an ass or an ox falling into a pit (phrear) on the Sabbath day. As the Scripture makes it plain that the Abyss is in the heart of the earth, the shaft that leads to it must be almost the radius of the earth or nearly 4000 miles deep. This makes the translation “bottomless pit” very apt.

### **The key of the Abyss**

Those who have been sent to the Abyss cannot come back from there. This is because it has been sealed. It needs a key to open it. The Greek word “kleis” is translated “key” six times in the N.T. It occurs four times in the Revelation, once where the Lord Jesus is said to have the key of David, (Rev 3:7) and three times in connection with Hades or the Abyss. (Rev 1:18; 9:1; 20:1.)

When the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, he had the keys of death and of Hades. Rev 1:18. The Abyss is opened in Rev 9:1 to allow some of its denizens to come out to torment men, and, in Rev 20:1-3, Satan is chained and locked up in the Abyss for 1000 years. (See Rev 20:3 where shut up is the word “klio”.)

Satan is not in the Abyss now, nor is Satan synonymous with “Abaddon” or “Apollyon”. They are both fallen angels but they are not identical. Satan is the “prince of the power of the air” whereas “Abaddon” is the “angel of the Abyss”. Satan still goes as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, here upon earth. 1 Peter 5:8. He still has access to the throne of God as the accuser of our brethren. Rev 12:10.

### **The smoke from the pit Rev 9:2**

When the angel opens the shaft of the Abyss, John says that smoke, as the smoke of a great furnace issued forth so that the sun and the air was darkened. Again this is literal. If the Abyss is a definite place the smoke is a definite substance. We are assured in other Scriptures that this period of time will be a time of great spiritual darkness, without needing to wrest this passage to prove our point. It does not speak of the minds of men being darkened but the sun and the atmosphere.

We are aware of the fact that the interior of the earth is extremely hot. The material which issues forth from volcanoes is vivid testimony to the fact. When the Abyss is opened smoke from the hot interior blots out the sun and causes the atmosphere to become darkened.

### **The locusts from the Abyss Rev 9:3-5**

John tells us that out of the smoke, locusts came upon the earth. We note the following from Revelation concerning these locusts:

- 1) They came forth out of the smoke issuing from the Abyss.
- 2) They were given power (exousia ... authority) as the scorpions of the earth have power (or authority).
- 3) They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, nor any green thing nor any tree.

- 4) They were to hurt all men (anthropos) who have not the seal of God on their foreheads.
- 5) They were not to kill men. (That they are commanded not to kill men, indicates that they could do so were it permitted.) Their purpose is to torment men for the space of five months. John says that their torment was like that of a scorpion when it stings a man.

Now these locusts are very different in behaviour from natural locusts. Locusts would attack anything green and devour it, but these creatures from the Abyss will not do this. Let us remember at this stage that we saw, when the first angel sounded his trumpet, all green grass and one third of the trees of the earth burned up. These things have already experienced the effect of the wrath of God.

What happens instead is that the locusts attack men, and they sting them. The sting is like a scorpion's sting. It causes intense pain, a pain, however, which will not issue in death. They will continue to attack and sting men for a period of five months. Now this cannot be atomic war or the results of it. Atomic war, or any other kind of war for that matter, would cause at least one death in five months. But we will see that no one will die during this entire five month period.

### **Death not permitted Rev 9:6**

This is one of the most terrible verses in the whole of the Revelation. Men are subjected to the fearful torment of the locust creatures. For five months these creatures torment men and there is no escape for any except those who have the seal of God upon their foreheads. How discerning of the locusts. Atomic, or even conventional weapons of war are not as discriminating as this. We are dealing with sentient beings who can discern between two kinds of men. They will torment all men except those who are sealed upon their foreheads. And so for five months none will experience even the relief of death, if that is a relief as far as Godless men are concerned.

It is good to remind ourselves that death cannot take anyone without the permission of God. We have seen that Satan had the power (exousia ... authority) of death, but even Satan must have God's permission to execute sentence of death. Even the suicide will be restrained during these five months. No one will be able to commit suicide. The Greek is very clear here for John says, (lit):

✚ “In those days (the) men will seek (the) death and by no means will they find it: and they will long to die and (the) death flees from them.”

### **The locusts described Rev 9:7-10**

- 1) Their likeness was as horses prepared for war.
- 2) On their heads were, as it were, crowns of gold.

- 3) Their faces were as the faces of men. We see that facially, they had human features.
- 4) They had hair as the hair of women.
- 5) Their teeth were as the teeth of lions.
- 6) They had breastplates as breastplates of iron.
- 7) The sound of their wings was as the sound of many chariots of horses running to war.
- 8) They had tails like unto scorpions, and their stings were in their tails.
- 9) Their power (exousia ... authority) is to harm men for five months.


One thing that is certain is that these are not locusts as we known them. What are they then? All that can be said is that they are supernatural beings that they are sentient, that they have been confined in the Abyss probably because they are such awful creatures. John describes them to us, but, obviously, they are creatures that we are unfamiliar with. He thus endeavours, in word pictures, to give us some kind of an idea as to what they are like.

Let us remember that God has made many more creatures than those that we are familiar with. Many perished when the flood took place others have been imprisoned in the Abyss. Whatever order these beings belong to in creation, we do not know, but we do know that they, in their sin and rebellion against God, and, possibly because of their long confinement in the Abyss, are evil beyond compare.

### **Abaddon or Apollyon Rev 9:11-12**

Here we have the angel of the Abyss. He is, as has already been remarked, not the devil. But he is a powerful and evil angel whose names mean “destroyer”. He will lead the onslaught of these locusts on men. The fact that an angel leads the locusts indicates that they must be similar beings with whom Apollyon can communicate and over whom he can exercise power and authority.

We read in Proverbs 30:27:

 “The locusts have no king”.

These then are not the kind of locusts that we are familiar with. One thing we need to note carefully, and that is that we are told twice that the period of duration of the fifth trumpet and first woe is five months. See Rev 9:5, 10.

### **The first woe ends Rev 9:12**

John looks and sees what transpires under this woe and then he say, the first woe has passed away, and behold, there come yet two woes after these things. We will see that the next woe will be very different from the first woe in that, whereas the first woe saw death suspended, the second woe will see multitudes upon the earth perish.



## **The sixth trumpet the second woe Rev 9:13-21**

### **The voice from the altar Rev 9:13**

We are told now by the seer that the sixth angel sounds his trumpet and John hears a voice proceeding out of the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. When Isaiah saw the Lord in his wonderful vision, he cried out to the Lord:

✚ “Woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king the Lord of hosts.” Isa 6:5.

As Isaiah makes his confession of sinfulness, one of the seraphim flies to him with a live coal in his hands taken from the altar. He lays it on the prophet’s mouth and says:

✚ “Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” Isa 6:7.

But the very altar which provided the cleansing coal for Isaiah will call forth for wrath upon those who have spurned the love and mercy of God, and have trampled the blood of Jesus Christ underfoot.

For Isaiah, woe was averted, for these who have not confessed their sinfulness, and so have remained behind after the Rapture, woe is called forth, by the selfsame altar. The voice commands the sixth angel to loose the four angels which have been bound at the great river Euphrates. Now the Bible tells us that God has cast some angels into Tartarus and we believe it. It is certainly no more difficult to believe that there are four angels who have been bound in this particular locality.

### **The angels’ mission Rev 9:15**

John now tells us that the four angels are loosed which were “prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.” The meaning of this phrase is that there is a specific time, appointed by God when these four angels will be loosed, and these angels will be let loose at the very hour of the appointed day, of the appointed month, of the appointed year.

We notice the mission of these terrible beings. These angels, bound at the river Euphrates for so long a time, are set free, and are no longer confined or restrained. They will begin to bring to pass one of the most devastating punishments of time, for, John says, they will kill the third part of men. One out of every three persons alive at that time will die. Vast numbers of dead such as this will mean that the normal practice of burying the dead will be abandoned.

We have clear statements in the Old Testament of such a time coming on the earth. We read in Jer 25:33:

- ✚ “The slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.”

Similar passages occur in Zeph 1:17-18, where we read:

- ✚ “I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung.”

Even vast communal graves will not suffice to bury the dead. They shall be left to rot on the surface of the earth.

### **The supernatural army Rev 9:16-19**

We now are told of a vast army numbering 200 million; responsible for the death of one third of men. They are under the command of the four angels, just as the locusts of the first woe were under the command of Abaddon. They lead this vast host of supernatural creatures against humanity.

These beings are not human. They are not fighting at Armageddon. Armageddon lies in the future yet, being a battle between sinful men and the returning Christ. Where does this vast host come from? The only possible place that they can come from is the same place that the locusts came from, namely, the Abyss. Thus when the shaft of the Abyss is opened, not only the locusts of the first woe come out, but also the supernatural army of the second woe.

Lest men question the number John adds, I heard the number of them. This emphasis of the apostle's, makes it clear that this is a literal, single army sent forth, under the four angels, to consume one third of men from off the face of the earth. John now proceeds to describe the army of horsemen which he has seen.

- 1) They had breastplates of fire, of jacinth and brimstone. According to the I.S.B.E., the jacinth was a dark purple. Thus the breastplates were fiery red, dark purple and yellow in colour.
- 2) The heads of the horses were as the heads of lions.
- 3) Out of the horses' mouths issued fire and smoke and sulphur. John says that the fire and smoke and sulphur issuing out of the mouths of the horses will be responsible for the death of one person out of every three.
- 4) The horses' power (authority ... exousia) is in their heads and in their tails. Their tails are like serpents and have heads and with them they do harm.

To endeavour to equate these creatures with modern warfare, or with anything hitherto experienced by men, leaves out of reckoning the fact that the four angels bound at the river Euphrates lead this host. If they obey the orders of these four angels they must be similar beings.

Let us note well that in chapter 9:15, we are told that the four angels slay the third part of men, whereas in chapter 9:18 we are told that the third part of men are slain by the fire, smoke and sulphur from the mouths of the horsemen. Thus between them, the four angels and the 200 million horsemen sweep one third of mankind off the face of the globe.

### **The reaction of sinners Rev 9:20-21**

One would think that after such a devastating manifestation of the wrath of God that men would fall down in repentance, but men react like Pharaoh who, after each visitation of God in the time of Israel's oppression in Egypt, "hardened his heart". Despite the awful pain experienced by men for five months while they were tormented by the locusts, despite the fact that such vast numbers have died as a result of the second woe, men will not repent.

Of those who did not die as the result of all that has transpired, John tells us:

- 1) They repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold and silver and brass, and stone and wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.
- 2) Neither repented they of their murders.
- 3) Nor of their sorceries. We find an interesting Greek word here. It is the word "pharmakia" used three times in the N.T. In Gal 5:20; Rev 9:21; 18:23. Also occurring are 'pharmakus' (Rev 21:8), and 'pharmakos' (Rev 22:15). Pharmakos and pharmakus are both translated sorcerers, while pharmakia is translated sorceries twice (both times in the Revelation), and witchcraft once (in Galatians). The three words are all related to the Greek word 'pharmakon', which is non-occurring in the N.T. But which means "drug". The critical lexicon says of pharmakia, "The preparing or using of medicine (from which we get our English word pharmacy); then, the using of any kind of drugs, potions, or spells." In the light of the tremendous wave of drug addiction evidenced in the world today, the use of the word pharmakia in the Revelation is significant. There will not be a decrease in the use of drugs, rather, the usage of drugs will increase, and men will not repent of their use of drugs, even though God pours out his fierce wrath upon them.
- 4) Nor of their fornication. The English word fornication is nothing other than immorality. The great wave of pornography, filth and sexual license sweeping the world today is a fulfilment of the words of the Lord Jesus, who likened these days to the days before the flood and to Sodom and Gomorrah. In many countries the

flood tide of filth has reached such proportions that it has made the judgement of God inevitable. With the rising tide of sex madness, there has come an increasing disregard for the sanctity of the marriage bond. But even the wrath of God will not make men repent of their fornications.

5) Nor of their thefts.

Thus men are hardened in their sin and, the second woe being ended, the third woe or seventh trumpet will come to pass. This encompasses the whole of the last three and a half years of the Great Tribulation. We shall look at chapter ten of the Revelation where we see a pause between the second and third woe.

## **Chapter ten**

### ***The little scroll, wrath not ended but to intensify***

#### **Verses 1-2**

John now sees another angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, with a rainbow upon his head. His face was like the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. He had a little scroll in his hand, which had been opened. He set his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth.

The question that arises in our minds is “Who is this mighty angel?” Let us remember that the word angel is used not only of ministering spirits, but also of men, and, in the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord, who appeared to Gideon among others is identified with God in judges 6:11-21. From the description of the angel given to us here in Rev 10, there is a great likeness to the description of the Lord Jesus Christ in Rev 1:12-16. In addition, he has the little scroll in his hand. A scroll having been opened the Greek text tells us.

Now we know that the only person who was found to be worthy to open the scroll and look thereon was the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev 5:1-4.) Many of the commands that proceed from this angel can only come from deity. In fact the angel in chapter 11:3 speaks of the two witnesses as “my witnesses”. The fact that the Lord himself takes the stage at this juncture is indicative of the fact that we have reached an extremely important point in the dealings of the Lord with the wicked inhabitants of the earth.

We have in fact come to the end of the first three and a half year period and the beginning of the second three and a half year period ... a time when the Antichrist will assume absolute power, and God’s unmitigated wrath will be deluged down upon the world. The opened scroll has, of course, been partially fulfilled. All that has taken place already has been in fulfilment of what has been written on the scroll.

### **Verses 3-4**

John now informs us that the angel cried with a loud voice as a lion that roars. When he cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. John was about to write when a voice from heaven commands him, saying:

✚ “Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not.”

Sad to relate, the number of interpreters who have told us what the seven thunders are, are numerous. Their guesses range from the seven crusades to the papal anathemas during the reformation.

The plain truth of the matter is this: no one will know what the seven thunders uttered until they actually take place. So, until the Rapture has taken place, and half the tribulation has passed, the truth about the seven thunders will not be known or understood.

We can conjecture but that it is it will remain. Possibly the seven thunders presage such terrible events that God in his wisdom has not shared with us the meaning of the thunders. Again, they may mean something entirely different. What God chooses to reveal, he reveals. What he says is sealed will remain so.

✚ “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and unto our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deut 29:29.

### **Verses 5-7**

The angel now lifts up his hand (the best texts say his right hand) to heaven and swears by him who lives unto the ages of the ages, who created the heavens and the things that are in it, and the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there shall be time no longer: but in the days of the seventh angel when he begins to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. The gist of the angels' message is that there will be no more delay in the fulfilment of the mystery of God.

How clearly the Bible tells us that the reason for the lapse of time before God brings all things to pass is because of God's long suffering. He is not willing that any should perish but, rather, that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) Finally the day of reckoning must come. After the Rapture, men will still have an opportunity to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that there will be many who will turn to him as Lord and Saviour in the first half of the tribulation. But when the second half of the tribulation begins men will be required to do that which will seal their doom. So finally, the battle lines will be clearly drawn.

There will have been three and a half years for men to make their peace with God. They will not be part of the church but their place in God's eternal plan will be secure. All those who have maintained their rebellion towards God will now follow the Antichrist to the bitter end. Please notice that the thing to be fulfilled is "The mystery of God as he preached to his slaves the prophets." There are certain things which we must understand very clearly here, if we are not to be confused.

- 1) This seventh trumpet has nothing to do with the Rapture. As we have seen already, the Rapture takes place when the sixth seal is broken. The seven trumpets are sounded by seven angels. We saw these trumpet sounding angels standing before God in Rev 8:2. The Rapture trumpet is called the trump of God. Paul says:

✚ "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... with the trump of God." 1 Thess 4:16.

It is the voice of the Lord Jesus that utters the "word of command". The Greek word "kelusma" occurs only here. His voice will be like the voice of an archangel. The Lord Jesus himself will sound the trumpet that will raise the dead and summon the living believers to his presence. As we have already seen, the Lord alone comes for his church unaccompanied by any other beings. When Jesus left, he left alone, when he comes again for the church, he comes alone, "in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. We need also to note that the seventh trumpet sounds during the most terrible time in human history. The seventh trumpet and third woe transpire long after the church is standing before the rainbow throne. (Rev 7:9-17)

- 2) Concerning the phrase "the mystery of God", we need to note that there are many mysteries in the New Testament. To say that the mystery of God is the church is incorrect. The truth of the church was hidden from the prophets. They know nothing about it. The prophets were concerned with Israel. The mystery of the church (Eph 5:32) was totally unknown to the prophets. The fact that God was going to save the Gentiles and make them co-heirs with Israel was a divine truth revealed to the apostle Paul. The facts of the book of Acts are clear. The early Jewish church confined their message to Jews and Samaritans initially. It was only when God took a hand in the matter that Peter, reluctantly, went to the household of Cornelius. And let us not misunderstand the matter. If God had not poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost upon that household, Peter would never have baptised them. He wouldn't have dared. He was confronted in the Jerusalem assembly for having done so, as it is.

Now the mystery of God as he declared to his servants the prophets can by no stretch of the imagination, be the church. What then is it? It cannot be the Rapture either for the whole teaching concerning this fact was again revealed to the apostle Paul. He writes in 1 Cor 15:51:

✚ “I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.”

If we scrutinise the writings of the prophets, there is a constant theme in almost all of them concerning the end time. It has been mentioned that they have much to say about the Day of the Lord. The burden of the prophets is the fact that God is going to judge and overthrow the nations, visiting them with calamitous judgements, as the result of which, men will be left few in number upon the earth. At the same time Israel will be restored to full fellowship with the Lord and the Gentiles will serve them. This then is the mystery of God revealed to his servants the prophets.

The end-time wrath of God upon the Gentiles, the restoration of Israel, and the ushering in of a time of universal peace during which time the Lord himself will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Thus what John is telling us is this, that all these predictions of the Old Testament prophets will be fulfilled in the time when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet.

The fact that the angel stands with one foot on the earth and the other foot on the sea, is symbolic of the fact that the whole earth is going to be the subject of the outpouring of God's wrath. None will be exempted, for all the Earth with its inhabitants is in rebellion against the Lord. Notice that the Word of God says it will be finished. What God begins, God will finish. Every Scripture relating to future events must come to pass. God's eternal power will ensure their fulfilment in their entirety.

### **Verses 8-11**

John now tells us that the voice which he heard from heaven, spoke to him again telling him to go and take the little scroll which was open in the hand of the angel, standing upon the sea and the earth. John goes up to the angel, and says to him, “Give me the scroll.” The angel says to John, “Take and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.”

John takes the little scroll out of the angel's hand, and eats it up, finding it sweet as honey in his mouth, but, as soon as he had eaten it up, his belly was bitter. Then the angel says to John:

✚ “Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”

Jeremiah the prophet speaks of eating the words of the Lord. He writes:

✚ “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.” (15:16.)

So likewise Ezekiel writes:

✚ “And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. Moreover, he said unto me, Son of Man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of Man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.” Ezekiel 2:9-3:3.

The portion in Ezekiel is of particular interest, in that it records the Lord’s instructions to the prophet, during a vision similar to John’s. The whole of Ezekiel chapter one describes an appearance of the Lord, together with the living creatures. The roll that Ezekiel is told to eat, symbolises the message that he has to go and take to the children of Israel in their captivity. Verse 14 of Ezekiel chapter 3 is of interest in comparing this part of the Bible with the Revelation. It reads, “So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, and in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.”

The message of the Lord which Ezekiel was to proclaim to Israel was sweet in his mouth as honey because it was the word of the Lord. But it was a bitter message to have to proclaim. They were a rebellious house (vv 26, 27), and so the message was, of necessity, a denunciatory one. It was a message of wrath. John is in a similar position, only his message is a universal one encompassing all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth.

Already we have seen wrath outpoured such as has never happened before in human experience. The wrath of God and of the Lamb has been a reality. But what is written on the little scroll, opened by the Lamb, has only been partially fulfilled. We might ask ourselves, “Surely, in the light of all that has already happened, there must be an end to the fury and indignation of a holy God?”

Will any men survive upon the earth if this is to continue? The words of the angel reveal to us that, terrible as the events brought about by the sounding of the first six trumpets are, there is yet more to come. Men show no sign of repentance; rather, they are fully set in their rebellion and defiance of God. Yet, in spite of continuing wrath some men will survive to begin anew in the new world which is to come after the battle of Armageddon and so we see that the wrath of God is yet to continue. Men have treasured up wrath against the day of wrath and Revelation of the righteous judgement of God (Rom 2:5), and must now continue to drink of the cup of his fury.

Jeremiah says:

✚ “For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; “Take the winecup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And



they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I shall send among them.” Jeremiah 25:15-16.


Let us remember that the Word of God can only be sweet to us, if we know him and serve him. It was not sweet to the children of Israel, to whom the prophet Ezekiel was sent, but it was bitter in the extreme. So, while the little scroll was sweet to John in his mouth, its bitterness in his belly signified its bitterness to those to whom it was directed. His word will only be sweet to those who serve God. To all others it will be bitter indeed. And so the book proceeds to unveil the things which must come after the two woes described in Revelation chapter 9. There are several chapters now, however, which tell us something about the principal characters who are to occupy such prominent roles in the unfolding of the eternal purposes of God.

## **Chapter eleven**

### ***The two witnesses, the rebuilt temple***

#### **Verses 1-2**

John is now given a reed like a staff (or rod) and he is commanded:

 “Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those worshipping in it. But the court outside the temple leave out and measure it not, for it is given to the Gentiles (nations ... ethnos) and the holy city (Jerusalem) shall they tread underfoot forty and two months.”

We are now confronted with one of the wonderful facts of the future ... that is, the fact that the temple is going to be rebuilt. It would be as well to notice that there are two Greek words translated by the English word temple throughout the N.T. The first word is the word “hieron”. This word was used for the whole temple and it included the part of the temple described by the second word, namely, ‘naos’. The ‘naos’ was the inner sanctuary of the whole temple and it was out of bounds for all except the high priest. He alone could enter it once a year on the day of atonement.

The other priests could minister in that part of the sanctuary (‘naos’) which was called the Holy Place. The only part that a Gentile was allowed to enter was the court of the Gentiles, and the crime that Paul was charged with in Acts 21:28 was that he had “brought Greeks also into the temple (hieron), and hath polluted this Holy Place.”

Whenever the Lord Jesus Christ ministered in the temple it was always in that part called “hieron” in the Greek. He never entered into that part called the ‘naos’ for he was not of the tribe of Levi, and only that tribe was entitled to minister in the earthly temple. Whenever the word temple occurs in the Revelation it is always the latter word ‘naos’ which is used.

It occurs in Revelation 16 times.

- ✚ In Rev 3:12 the overcomer is told that he will be made a pillar in the temple of God. This refers to the future when all who have been caught up at the Rapture have been rewarded.
- ✚ In Rev 7:15 we have another reference to the heavenly temple where we are told that the glorified saints who have been caught up in the Rapture will serve God day and night in his temple.
- ✚ In Rev 11:1, 2 we have reference to an earthly temple (sanctuary) yet to be built.
- ✚ In Rev 11:19 we are twice told of this temple. It is the heavenly temple again and it is seen opened, and the Ark of the Covenant is seen in it.
- ✚ In Rev 14:15, 17 we see angels coming out of the heavenly temple in connection with the harvest of the earth when the great vine of the earth is harvested. It occurs four times in Rev 15:5, 6, 8 when the angels with the seven last plagues come out of the heavenly temple.
- ✚ In Rev 16:1 a great voice out of the heavenly temple sends the seven angels with their bowls to pour out the wrath of God upon the earth.
- ✚ In Rev 16:17 a great voice out of the heavenly temple, and from the throne says, "It is done." Thus the wrath of God is consummated.
- ✚ In Rev 21:22 John says that he saw no temple in the New Jerusalem for God almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

The Bible speaks of seven buildings which were set apart for the worship of God and thus designated as "temples".

- 1) The first is the tabernacle in the wilderness. The original place of worship and the place where God dwelt in the midst of his people. The details of this tabernacle were given to Moses and the details are recorded in Exodus 25-40.
- 2) The temple which was built by Solomon 1 Kings 6-8. This was the temple which was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar when he destroyed Jerusalem 587 B.C. David, who had desired to build the temple was forbidden. 1 Chron 17:4.
- 3) Zerubbabel's temple. Joshua and Zerubbabel encouraged the exiles to rebuild the temple. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah also urged the people to build. "The people say, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" Haggai 1:2-4.
- 4) Herod's temple. This was really an enlargement of the temple built by Zerubbabel. It was not complete in Jesus' day and had already been 46 years in building. John 2:20. Destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70. See Matt 24:2.
- 5) The temple mentioned here in Rev 11:1 of which we will say more later.

- 6) The millennial temple. Great detail is given concerning this temple by the prophet Ezekiel. The whole of Ezek 40 to 48 is devoted to the construction of this temple with many other details added.
- 7) The heavenly temple of which we have seen so much, and which we will see more of in the Revelation.

Our interest centres on the temple discussed under the sub-heading (5). This temple has as yet, not been built, but, that it will be built, is clear from more than one Scripture.

## **The tribulation temple**

1) We read the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew:

✚ “When ye therefore shall see the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the Holy Place, (whoso readeth, let him understand). (24:15.)

2) Turning to Daniel we read:

✚ “And he (the Antichrist) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Dan 9:27.

We see here that the Antichrist will make a covenant with some of the Jews for a period of seven years. After three and a half years, he will cause the sacrifice and offering to cease. All this necessitates the rebuilding of the temple, for Israel can offer sacrifices only in one place. The Abomination of Desolation, or the abomination who makes desolate is none other than the Antichrist. When you see him in the Holy Place, flee to the mountains, says the Lord Jesus.

3) What the Antichrist will do is clearly stated in 2 Thess 2:4:

✚ “He opposes and exalts himself so proudly and insolently against and over all that is called God or that is worshipped, (even to his actually) taking his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming that he himself is God.” (see Dan 11:36-37) (Ampl.)

4) We only need look at the Old Testament to see the meaning of the word abomination. Strong says of the Hebrew word, “disgusting, i.e. filthy; espec. idolatrous or an idol.” So all the heathen idols were termed an “abomination” in the O.T. We read of “Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites.” 1 Ki 11:5. “Chemosh, the abomination of Moab.” 1 Ki 11:7. “Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.” 1 Ki 11:7. “Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians.” 2 Ki 23:13. The Antichrist will be the greatest of all the abominations ever, for he will invade the Holy Place reserved for the Lord God alone.

That Holy Place will be in the rebuilt temple in the city of Jerusalem. The question arises as to whether the temple will be rebuilt on the original site? The answer to this is an unequivocal yes. This will require the removal of the two mosques which now occupy the temple site. Let us remember, however, the Scriptures which speak of the end-time being marked by, “Famines, pestilences and earthquakes in divers places” (Matt 24:7), and we shall see that it will be an

easy matter for the Lord to cause the present buildings to crumble in an earthquake. The Jews can then insist that a temple be built there instead. There are other means by which the way can be opened for the Word of God to be fulfilled than that mentioned above. All we need remember is that God is able to bring what he has foretold, to pass. Now the holy city will be trodden down or trampled by the nations for 42 months. The trampling mentioned in Rev 11:2 is yet future.

There is, of course, the age long trampling of the holy city mentioned by Luke who writes of the centuries between the Roman sacking of Jerusalem and the present time in Luke 21:24:

✚ “... and they (the Jews) shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”

The same word “pateo” is used here being translated “trodden down”. It is used in Luke 10:19 of the disciples being given power to tread upon scorpions and serpents. It is used twice more in Rev 14:20 and 19:15, of the treading of the evil vine of the earth in the winepress of the wrath of God. These other usages will enlighten us as to what will transpire during the 3½ years that the city is trampled by the nations. A time of dire oppression for Israel No wonder the Lord Jesus has prepared a place for them in the wilderness. Rev 12:14.

Nothing less than the survival of the Jews is at stake. Satan tried to exterminate them by making use of Haman (see Esther). He has tried throughout the ages to decimate the Jews Many of us remember the holocaust during the times of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi's. But God is faithful. This is the last great trial for Israel and what Pharaoh and Haman and Hitler failed to accomplish, will also fail in its accomplishment when the Antichrist attempts to do the same.

## **The two witnesses**

### **Verses 3-4**

John says the following concerning the two witnesses:-

- 1) I will give unto my two witnesses and they shall prophesy.
  - 2) They will prophesy 1260 days (42 months, 3½ years).
  - 3) They will be clothed in sackcloth.
  - 4) They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the Lord of the earth.
- 
- 1) In the King James the text says that God will give power to the two witnesses. There is no doubt that they will have power, as we shall see a little further along. The rendering given by the amplified Bible is the one I prefer, and it reads:

✚ “I will grant the power of prophecy to my two witnesses.”

This then is what is given to them, the power to prophecy. We have seen how the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel for a period of seven years. This covenant will be made as soon as the Rapture has taken place. In view of the place that this chapter occupies in the Revelation, just before the seventh trumpet sounds, I believe that what is written here goes back to the breaking of the sixth seal and covers the three and a half years during which the covenant between Israel and the Antichrist is operative. In other words, this chapter describes the ministry of the two witnesses, which will begin immediately after the Rapture, and which will continue until the covenant with Israel is broken by the Antichrist. As has already been stated, there will not be a single believer on the earth, just after the Rapture.

The work of God will need mighty ministry to turn some of mankind to their senses, and that ministry will be provided by the two witnesses. They will be responsible, under God, for the conversion of the 144,000 Jews, who will be sealed. Directly or indirectly, their ministry will also be responsible for the fact that there will be many Gentiles who will turn to God after the Rapture.

I have no doubt but that the two witnesses will direct the attention of men to the fact that the Rapture has taken place, emphasising the total involvement of God in the affairs of men. Their power will be absolute for the first 3½ years as we shall see, whereas the Antichrist only receives his power after the first 3½ years have ended. Their prophetic ministry will make a tremendous impact upon all who dwell on the earth.

- 2) As we have seen their ministry will last 1260 days, just as the Antichrist will have authority given to him for 42 months. It is during this time that men will be able to be saved. After this 1260 day period has elapsed, men will be required to receive the mark of the beast. Once the wicked have done this, there is no more hope of repentance.
- 3) They will be clothed in sackcloth. Here we find that they will be like John the Baptist who was clothed in a garment of camel's hair. Mark 1:6.
- 4) They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the Lord of the earth. The Lord of the earth is none other than the Antichrist. He is the Lord of the earth not by right but, because men would not receive the love of the truth and so be saved, God allows Satan to set up his seed as Lord of the earth and to endow him with power for a season.

We see this person confronted many times by the two witnesses. They will come into his presence as the representatives of the living God. And so, as Moses and Aaron stood before the presence of Pharaoh, and demanded that he let the people of Israel go; so the

two witnesses will stand before the Lord of the earth. All others entering his presence will, I believe, grovel before him, believing that he is their God.

The prophet Zechariah tells us something about these two men. He describes a golden lampstand and two olive trees. One is on the right side of the lampstand and the other is on the left side. The angel who talked to Zechariah says of the two olive trees which empty out oil:

✚ “These are the two anointed ones (Heb ... sons of oil) who stand before the Lord of the whole earth.” (Lord here is the Hebrew 'adon' ... sovereign or ruler.) Zech 4:14.

It is in this fourth chapter of Zechariah that we read:

✚ “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” (v 6.)

Thus Israel, which is represented by the lampstand, is spiritually awakened by the two anointed ones (sons of oil). The Holy Spirit working through these two men will awaken the elect of Israel to the truth of the Lord Jesus as their messiah. Thus they will realise that the Antichrist is their deadly foe, and they will flee from him to their place of safety.

### **Verses 5-6**

John now tells us four facts concerning the ministry of the two witnesses.

- 1) “If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.” As men are fully set in their hearts to do evil, there will, undoubtedly, be a fierce desire in them to destroy these two prophets, whose witness will “torment” them. (Rev 11:10.) Men will do all that they can to still the voices of these two men. We are told twice, “if any man wishes to harm them”, indicating a desire on the part of men to do so. We see how far men have departed from God when they regard the testimony of those who love God as being “torment”, for God will send these two men to testify or witness to men who are about to accept the Antichrist as their deliverer. (v 7.)

The manner in which those who oppose the two witnesses will perish is by means of fire, which will proceed out of the mouths of the prophets, and devour their adversaries. All who would hurt them will be destroyed in this manner. We are reminded of the occasion when Ahaziah, the king of Israel, sent a message to Baalzebub, enquiring as to whether he would recover from a fall he had had. Elijah intercepted the messengers, to tell them that the king would die because he enquired of the idol at Ekron. The king sent fifty men to take Elijah prisoner as he sat on top of a hill. Elijah called down fire upon them and they were consumed. 2 Kings 1:10. A second contingent of fifty men suffered a like fate. 2 Kings 1:12.

- 2) These have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy. We are again reminded of Elijah who prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. James 5:17. As the period during which the two witnesses prophecy is stated to be 1260 days or three and a half years, we see that what happened in the days of King Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) will be repeated during the time of the ministry of the two witnesses. So for the whole period of their prophecy there will be no rain. This will add to the misery of those men who will not repent and serve God, but rather follow the Antichrist in his wickedness.
- 3) “And have power over waters to turn them to blood.” Here we see another miracle which will be repeated many times during these men’s ministry. It was Moses who was sent by God to stretch out his rod over the waters of the land of Egypt, to cause them to turn into blood. Ex 7:19.
- 4) “And to smite the earth with all plagues as often as them will.” Here we see power given to these men to work many miraculous signs which will bring woe upon the men who dwell on the earth. We are not given details about the plagues which will come upon men by means of the power granted to the two witnesses, but they will no doubt be similar to the plagues used by Moses in the land of Egypt during the captivity of Israel

Who will the two witnesses be? Some say that they will be Enoch and Elijah and others, Moses and Elijah. The argument that it will not be Moses as he has already died once is not really valid. There are others who have died twice, such as Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, the widow of Nain’s son, Dorcas and Eutychus to name New Testament examples.

We read of Enoch:

✚ “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him.” Heb 11:5.

We see also that the passage just examined reveals a ministry identical to that of Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses duplicating miracles and signs which were evident in the ministries of these two Old Testament servants of God.

In Malachi we read:

✚ “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgements. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” Mal 4:4-6.



We see here Moses and Elijah linked together in this passage concerning the Day of the Lord. Now Jesus said, when his disciples asked him, “Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?”:

✚ “Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at naught. But I say unto you that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.” Mark 9:11-13. (See Matt 11:14; 17:10-12.)

Do these Scriptures prove that John the Baptist was Elijah? No. Certainly not. If this were the case then we would have to believe that reincarnation was possible. All these Scriptures prove is that Elijah was a prototype of John the Baptist. When John was born the angel who announced that birth beforehand said:

✚ “And he (John) will go before him (Jesus Christ) in the Spirit and power of Elias” Luke 1:17.

When asked, “Art thou Elias?”, John answered, “I am not.” John 1:21. But he was Elijah-like in his ministry to the people of Israel in that he called them to repentance. We see a clear association of Moses and Elijah in the New Testament. We read in all the synoptic gospels of Moses and Elijah appearing with the Lord Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. (Mt 17:3; Mk 9:4; Lu 9:28.) Luke’s account is interesting. He writes:

✚ “And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem”

It is interesting to note that two men in shining raiment appeared to the women at the sepulchre and said that Jesus had risen. Luke 24:4. Again, two men in white apparel spoke to the disciples at the Mount of Olives, just after the Lord Jesus had vanished from their sight. Acts 1:10. In both these instances the word men is the Greek word aner, meaning males. In view of their discussion with the Lord concerning his decease, it is quite possible that in both these instances, the persons were not angelic beings, as is so often supposed, but, in fact, Moses and Elijah.

The signs mentioned in the Revelation also points to them for fire destroys all opposers, and the heavens are shut, reminiscent of Elijah, while the waters are turned to blood, reminiscent of Moses. And so, just as Elijah said, “There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word”, the two witnesses will smite the earth as often as they will.

### **Verses 7-8**

John now tells us that, when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the Abyss will make war on them, overcome them and kill them. Until

their ministry is finished, no power can harm them. They are indestructible. God will preserve them until they have finished the work he has sent them to do.

Thus we see James taken by Herod and beheaded. Acts 12:2. But when he essayed to do the same to Peter and shut him up in prison, God sent an angel to free Peter. Acts 12:1-19. Peter had not finished his work and so no power could prevail against him. Now when the two witnesses are finished with their task the Antichrist will kill them.

Note where the Antichrist comes from. It is from the bottomless pit or Abyss that he comes from. We will look at this in chapter 13, suffice to say that we are clearly told here that Antichrist returns from the dead. The Antichrist is described here, as elsewhere in the Revelation as the beast. The Greek word “therion” means a wild beast. How true it is that man, apart from God, is like a wild beast in his behaviour.

We will look at the time when the Antichrist will ascend out of the Abyss later in chapter 13. These two men are killed and their dead bodies will lie in the open street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. We see how God views the city of Jerusalem because of all her sins and transgressions. Sodom and Egypt she is called. But thank God the day will come when Jerusalem will be purged from her sin and she will be cleansed from her iniquity. Isaiah says of that day:

✚ “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.” Isa 52:1.

And so these servants of God shall lie there in the open street, meeting their fate in the same city where their Lord was rejected by the mob who cried:

✚ “Away with him, crucify him.” John 19:15.

### **Verses 9-10**

For a period of three and a half days, the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies as they lie in the open street. They will not permit their bodies to be buried. Those who are now dwelling on the earth will rejoice over them and be glad, and they will send gifts to one another because these two prophets tormented those who dwelt on the earth.

And so there is universal rejoicing on the earth when the Antichrist kills the two witnesses. Everything that these two men have to say is torment to the wicked who hate them with such intensity that their death brings universal rejoicing and exchanging of presents.

We remember the words of the Lord Jesus who said:

✚ “Nevertheless I must walk today and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,

which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.” Luke 13:33-34.

### **Verses 11-14**

The rejoicing of men is short-lived however. After their three and a half days of jubilation, the Spirit of life from God enters into the two witnesses, and they stand up on their feet, and great fear falls on them that witness this. They hear a great voice from heaven saying, “Come up hither.”

They ascend up into heaven in a cloud and their enemies behold them. Thus, though the enemy may seem to triumph for a while, the ultimate victory belongs to God. We are reminded of other servants of God who endured for his name sake, many of them dying as a result of their faithfulness. They will all certainly obtain “a better resurrection”. Heb 11:35.

When the Lord Jesus ascended, forty days after his passion, he was seen only by those who accompanied him to the Mount of Olives, and this company consisted of believers only. But here all the enemies of the two witnesses behold them ascend on high. Perhaps the Antichrist himself is present when this occurs. At the same hour as they ascend, there is a great earthquake, in which a tenth part of the city is destroyed and seven thousand people die. The survivors of this earthquake are terrified and give glory to God.

It is of interest to note that the number of people slain, 7000, when Moses and Elijah are caught up to heaven, is the same as the number of Israelites who had not bowed their knees to Baal for we read in 1 Kings 19:18:

✚ “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him.”

Also note that this is the only time when those who are on earth give glory to the God of heaven. In every other instance we read that they repented not, or else that they blasphemed the God of heaven. (Rev 16:11.) Men have now reached the point of no return, and the final dealings of God with men, who have now accepted the Antichrist, are recorded in the Revelation for we read:

✚ “The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.”

If we go back to the ninth chapter of Revelation, we will see that the second woe was the 200 million horsemen who kill the third part of men. Thus the second woe ends, not only with one third of the population of the earth dead, but also with the death of the two witnesses at the hands of the Antichrist, and their subsequent resurrection and Rapture. Thus the events of chapters 9 and 11 of the Revelation terminate the second woe. The beast or the Antichrist will now be freed from all restraint and the events which now take place relate to the third woe or the last three and a half years of the Great Tribulation.

## **Chapter eleven**

### ***The seventh trumpet, the third woe***

#### **Verses 15-19**

The seventh angel now trumpets, and there were great voices in heaven, saying:

✚ “The sovereignty (kingdom) of the world has come into the possession of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” (William's N.T.)

Then we have the great refrain of the twenty four elders which is rendered literally to give the correct verb tenses as they are important. Thus we read, that the twenty four elders sitting on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying:

✚ “We give you thanks, Lord God almighty, who are and were, because you have assumed your great power and begun to reign. The heathen were enraged, but now your anger has come, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for you to reward your slaves the prophets and your people, great and small, who revere your name, and to destroy the destroyers of the earth.”

We need to note that the verbs in this passage refer back to something that has already taken place. John says:-

- 1) You have assumed (or taken) your great power and begun to reign.
- 2) Your wrath came (has come) and the time for the dead to be judged.
- 3) The same verb translated came applies to all else that is to transpire i.e. to reward his servants and to destroy those who have destroyed the earth.

The question arises as to when God assumed his power and began to exercise his authority as sovereign? When did the time come for the dead to be judged? The answer is simple, as the verb refers to something that has already transpired. It was when the Lamb broke the sixth seal for it is at the breaking of that seal that the people of the earth cry out:

✚ “The great day of his wrath is come.” Rev 6:17.

We see then that what the twenty four elders say in their praise and worship of God, refers back to the sixth seal, and does not look forward to what is yet to happen when all the events of the seventh trumpet begin to come to pass. John now sees the temple (‘naos’) of God opened in heaven, and the Ark of the Covenant was seen in the temple. And we see there will be lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and a great earthquake, and a great hail.

The Ark of his Covenant is seen in the heavenly temple. We remember that the tabernacle in the wilderness and all its furnishings, were made according to the pattern shown Moses in the mount. Heb 8:5; 9:4. Hebrews 9:4 tells us that the Ark of the Covenant contained “the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant.”

It was on this ark that the high priest of our profession, the Lord Jesus Christ, sprinkled his own blood. But men have spurned the Lord and his blood-offering. Not only would they not believe during the church age, but they have rejected the counsel and preaching of the two witnesses, and, like Saul with Stephen, were consenting to their death. Rather they rejoiced and made merry when they were slain by the Antichrist, because, what they had to say was torment to them. I do not suppose that the witnesses preached any other message than that which we preach today, namely, that men should find refuge and safety in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the ark, instead of being connected with mercy, calls forth for divine wrath upon those who are so utterly impenitent. And wrath is what the lightnings, voices, thunders presage, and the earthquake and great hail are but the beginning of the final wrath of God to be poured out upon all who dwell upon the earth.

## **Chapter twelve**

### ***The woman (Israel), the manchild (144,000), the dragon (Satan)***

#### **Verses 1-2 the first sign**

We read:

✚ “Then a great symbol was seen in heaven – a woman clothed in the sun with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was about to become a mother, and she cried out in anguish in giving birth to a child.”

Now we come to something in the Revelation which is not literal but a sign or symbol. This is not a literal woman but symbolises something else. The question is, what does she symbolise?

We need to look in the Scripture for our answer, and it is not difficult to find. God, on a previous occasion, spoke to a young lad who loved and served him. That lad was Joseph. God gave this young lad a dream. A dream, I believe, which would be of great comfort to Joseph when he passed through dark days in the land of Egypt. Foolishly, he told his brothers. We read in Gen 37:9-10:

✚ “And he (Joseph) dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun, and the

moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, what is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?"

Joseph's father was called Israel, and from him, and his twelve sons sprang the covenant people - Israel. And so, the woman in the Revelation is clearly the same people dreamed of by Joseph in his dream. In fact Israel is repeatedly referred to as the harlot wife of the Lord in the Old Testament. The interesting fact is that the woman is about to give birth to a child, she is already having labour pains.

### **Verse 3 the second sign**

John tells us that another symbol was seen in heaven. There was a huge dragon red as fire, with seven heads and ten horns, with seven diadems on his heads. Here we find the first time in the Bible that Satan is referred to as a dragon. Rev 20:2 makes sure that no one is in any doubt as to his identity.

### **Verses 4-5 the manchild**

John now tells us that the tail of the dragon drew the third part of the stars and cast them down to the earth. We have already seen an instance in the Revelation where an angelic being is referred to as a "star". The "star" who opened the shaft of the Abyss is referred to as a person in Rev 9:2.

The Bible tells us much about the devil and his fall. It is also apparent that there were other angels involved in his rebellion. As we have seen, some of these angels are confined in that part of the Abyss referred to as Tartarus 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. These angels were punished by God for doing what the people of Sodom did, namely, committing fornication and going after different flesh.

That all the angels who revolted against God were not confined is clear for there are still "the spiritual hosts of evil in the heavenlies." Eph 6:12. If we regard this Scripture in Rev 12:4 as an allusion to the original revolt of Satan against God, it would appear that one third of the angels of God rebelled at the same time, following the ringleader who was the anointed cherub who covered the throne of God. Ezekiel 28:14.

The red dragon now stands before the woman as she is about to bear with the purpose of devouring her child as soon as it is born. John now tells us that the woman brought forth a manchild, who is to shepherd all nations with a rod of iron, and this child is caught up to God and to his throne.

Who is this manchild? (lit. A son, a male.) There are many who see the manchild as being the Lord Jesus Christ, and they believe that what is described here refers to the birth of the Lord Jesus and the attempt by Satan, using Herod as an instrument, to destroy the

Lord shortly after his birth. This effort of Satan's misfired as God had already warned Joseph to flee into Egypt Matt 2.

While not ruling out the possibility that this might be the case, there are other factors which militate against this view. Firstly, we see that the devil, according to John, was going to do this in the time of the end, whereas Herod's attempt to kill the Lord was in the past. The woman depicted here is not the Virgin Mary, but symbolises Israel. Isaiah refers to this when he writes:

✚ “Before she travailed she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a manchild. Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” Isa 66:7-8.

Isaiah refers to the manchild here as “her children”. Now the Lord Jesus is constantly presented to us as the “Lamb” in the Revelation.

Nor can the manchild be the church as many would aver, for the church is not an all male body but is composed of male and female. But there is an all male company referred to in two other places in Revelation. We read in Rev 7:1-8 of 144,000 Israelites, sealed as the servants of God once the church has been caught up to the Lord in the air. Then we read of the same 144,000, who have been caught up to heaven, for they have finished their work on earth, and now they stand without fault before the throne of God. That they are all males is clear from Rev 14:4 where we read:

✚ “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.”

We saw that the third recorded event after the sixth seal was broken in Rev 6-7, was the sealing of this company so it is no wonder that John writes:

✚ “These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” Rev 14:4.

They are certainly not the firstfruits of the church age, but rather of the time following it. Here we venture into the realm of speculation, but the question does arise, precisely when will the devil endeavour to devour the manchild, who is then caught up to the throne of God?

I believe that it occurs when the Antichrist kills the two witnesses. As soon as these two prophets lie dead in the street of Jerusalem, Satan and his Antichrist will seek to kill the 144,000 who are then caught up on high. Then Satan will turn on the woman, Israel, to try and destroy her but he will not succeed in this either. It is interesting to note that the manchild escapes death by being caught up to God. This was certainly not the case with the Lord Jesus who died on the cross for our sins.

### **Verse 6 the woman's flight**

We now read that the woman flees to the wilderness where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. We will deal with this verse when we come to verse 14.

### **Verses 7-9 war in heaven**

The time has now come for Satan and his hosts, who have occupied the heavenlies from time immemorial, to be driven out preparatory to their final confinement in the Abyss, and then, the lake of fire. John tells us that there is war in heaven with Michael and his angels fighting against the devil and his angels. This verse bears out the interpretation of the stars, drawn down to the earth by the dragon's tail, as being the angelic followers of Satan.

Notice that this war in heaven is precipitated by Satan moving against Israel. He has tried to destroy the children of Israel many times, but now he is going to make his last attempt. Daniel the prophet says in this connection:

✚ “At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book.” Dan 12:1.

This great angelic prince, the only archangel mentioned in the Scriptures (Jude 9) now begins the battle which will mean Satan's defeat. He who once said, “The Lord rebuke thee” now overcomes Satan and his host for the Bible says that the dragon and his angels fought and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And so the great dragon was cast out, the old serpent, called the devil, and Satan was cast out together with his angels. The one who deceived the inhabitants of the earth is cast out of the heavens to the earth.

At this stage Satan realises that the end of his tenure is near. Since the time he appeared in the Garden of Eden in the guise of a serpent, he has specialised in deceit. His whole purpose has been to lead men astray. Now all this is about to end and this earth is on the verge of a new era, when Satan will not be able to tempt men or to lead them astray for he will be bound for 1000 years in the Abyss.

All this gives the lie to the teaching that the devil is now in Hades or hell, and, according to popular tradition, tormenting the souls of the lost. This casting out is different from the casting out we read of in John 12:31, where the Lord says:

✚ “Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”



The literal Greek says that the prince of this world will be “Cast outside”. (Cast out outside ... Panin.)

What Jesus said in John 12:31 was that Satan's power and authority was to be broken. His death on the cross would limit Satan in the Gospel age but his casting out from heaven would only take place later, when God's purposes concerning the church had been accomplished. See how often John repeats this word cast in this portion of the Scripture. Five times he tells us of Satan and his angels being cast out or cast down.

### **Verses 10-12 the devil's wrath**

John hears a loud voice in heaven saying:

✚ “Now is the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom become our God's, and the authority is become his Christ's: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night.”

Here we find a voice rejoicing at the fact that Satan's doom is now one step nearer. Prior to Michael making war on Satan and his angels and casting them down, the Bible makes it clear that Satan had access to the throne of God.

When the sons of God (angels) came to present themselves before the Lord, we read that Satan was with them. Job 1:6; 2:1. We can read in the opening chapters of the book of Job the slanderous accusations of the devil concerning God's servant Job. Likewise Jesus said to Peter:

✚ “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan begged earnestly for you, to sift you as wheat.”  
Luke 22:31.

John makes it very clear that these are not isolated incidents in the workings of the devil. No, for John writes, “The accuser of our brethren ... accused them before our God day and night.” Day and night, day and night, day and night. Satan does not need any rests and, while he is not omnipresent, he is ubiquitous. And he is constantly accusing the saints before the throne of God. This is why we need an advocate in heaven and our advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous.

No wonder then that John writes in 1 John 2:1:

✚ “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”

Be assured of this fact, that if any man sin, the accuser will be there to bear record of the fact that he has sinned. And so in heaven there is this glad rejoicing that the courts of heaven will never ever again be frequented by Satan. He is now on the way to his final place of confinement ... the lake of fire. For him the time has come to reap the result of a career devoted to the destruction of others. John now tells us how those who are accused by the devil are able to overcome him. They overcome him:-

## 1. Because of the blood of the Lamb

Because we are sinners, we can never, in our own strength, be victorious over the prince of darkness. We will always be defeated if we rely on anything else besides the blood of the Lamb.

“The arm of flesh will fail you,  
Ye dare not trust your own.”

We have already seen the power of the blood to cleanse us in two Scriptures in the Revelation. Jesus loved us and loosed us from our sins by his blood. Rev 1:5. We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev 7:14. We need to remember that Satan can only accuse us effectively if we are not walking in the light, that is, if we are not constantly dealing with sin as it may affect us day by day.

Sin will cause our fellowship with God to be broken, and will give the devil the opportunity to accuse us. It is for this reason that John writes in his first epistle:

✚ “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7.

The only grounds on which Satan can successfully accuse us, is on the grounds of sin that has not been dealt with. If we deal with sin promptly, confessing it to the Lord, and asking his pardon and cleansing for it, Satan cannot lay anything to our charge. Thus we need to keep short accounts with God.

This may have been the reason for Satan being allowed to sift Peter as wheat. We see his self assurance when he answers the Lord Jesus:

✚ “Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” Mt 26:33.

It was Peter particularly whom the Lord addressed for sleeping in the garden on the night of his betrayal, for he says to him:

✚ “What, could ye now watch with me one hour?” Matt 26:40.

Shortly after this Peter resorts to the sword. We read:

✚ “Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, put up thy sword into the sheath. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” John 18:10-11.

Peter's spiritual state can be gauged by the fact that he was carrying a sword. Thus his declension continues until, finally, he denies the Lord with cursing and swearing. Mark 14:71.

It is often the tragic experience of many believers that they follow a similar course of backsliding. How thankful we ought all to be for an advocate like the Lord Jesus who said to Peter "I have prayed for you," for he prays also for us continually and constantly that our faith likewise, fails not. What glorious comfort is to be found for all of us who believe in Hebrews 9:24 where we read:

✚ "Christ is entered ... into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf."

## **2. Because of the word of their witness (testimony)**

We are left in no doubt by the Word of God, as to the vital necessity to confess the name of Christ. The power of the spoken word is great. When the Lord Jesus ministered he "cast out the Spirits with his word." Matt 8:16. We read in Luke 4:32 that:

✚ "They were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power."

Later (verse 36) they exclaim, "What a word is this."

Now Paul says:

✚ "Let the word of Christ dwell in you, in all wisdom." Col 3:16

And John writes:

✚ "The Word of God abideth in you." 1 John 2:14.

What we have inside of us, we must give out, or express in words. Thus we read in Romans 10:8-10:

✚ "God's message is near you, on your lips and in your heart – that is, the message of faith that we preach. If you confess with your lips, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For we believe in our hearts and are put right with God; we confess with our lips and are saved." (G.N.)

The need to confess Christ as Lord and ourselves as his redeemed servants, is stressed in Heb 4:14 where we read:

✚ "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

Again in Heb 10:21-23:

✚ “And having an high priest over the house of God (the church); ... let us hold fast the confession of faith without wavering.”

Jesus said:

✚ “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Mt 12:34.

We need therefore, to continually give vocal expression to the fact that we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

### 3. **They love not their life even unto death**

When our trust is centred on the blood of Christ, and we give expression vocally to our belief and trust in him as our absolute Lord, we shall abandon ourselves so utterly to him that, even life itself, shall not be counted dear to us. So Paul says at Miletus:

✚ “Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.” Acts 20:24.

Still later he says at Caesarea, when Agabus had bound him with his own girdle to show that imprisonment awaited him:

✚ “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” Acts 21:13.

In Luke 14:26 we read the words of the Lord Jesus who says:

✚ “If any come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

There must be the willingness on the part of all who would overcome, to sell their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, should it be necessary.

Concerning the three means whereby we overcome the devil, Newell says, “The three elements of victory over Satan in any event are shown in verse 11:-

- 1) The ground of it – the blood of the Lamb.
- 2) The outward course of the victors – the word of their testimony.
- 3) The inward settled attitude of the victors – they loved not their life unto death.”

### **The accuser and the overcomers**

The work of Satan as the accuser of the brethren is of interest to all of us. The word accuser is the translation of the Greek word “kateegoros” which occurs seven times in the New Testament and is always rendered “accuser”. Jesus uses it when he addresses the woman taken in adultery. After the men who had brought her to him had departed, Jesus asked the woman:

✚ “Where are those thine accusers?” John 8:10.

It is used five times of the rulers of the Jews, as the accusers of the apostle Paul, after he had been arrested by the Roman centurion, Claudius Lysias. Acts 23:30, 35; 24:8; 25:16, 18. The Greek word translated “overcome” is the word “nikao”. It occurs 28 times in the N.T. And is translated overcome 24 times, conquer twice, prevail once, and get the victory once. It is a word that the apostle John uses repeatedly for, out of the 28 times it is used, John uses it 24 times.

- ✚ He uses it in John 16:33 where Jesus says, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”
- ✚ He uses it in his epistles where he says, “Ye have overcome the wicked one.” (1 John 2:13, 14.)
- ✚ Again, “Ye have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” 1 John 4:4.
- ✚ Then he uses it three times in 1 John 5:4-5 where he writes, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”
- ✚ Then the risen Lord, speaking to the seven churches, speaks to the overcomers seven times (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), making great and precious promises to them if they overcome “Even as he also overcame and sat down with his Father in his throne.” Rev 3:21.
- ✚ It is used of the Lamb prevailing to open the scroll (Rev 5:5) and of his overcoming the ten kings who serve the beast. (Rev 17:14.)
- ✚ Then it is used of the Lamb prevailing to open the scroll (Rev 5:5) and of his overcoming the ten kings who serve the beast. (Rev 17:14.)
- ✚ Then it is used of the saints overcoming the devil (Rev 12:11) and the beast (Rev 15:2) with the promise that he that overcometh shall inherit all things. (Rev 21:7.)
- ✚ It is only used four times of those who are hostile to God. In Rev 6:2 (twice) of the Antichrist going out conquering and to conquer; of the beast overcoming the two witnesses (Rev 11:7) and the tribulation saints. (Rev 13:7.)
- ✚ It is used in Luke 11:22 that the stronger overcoming the strong man, and spoiling his goods. This refers to the Lord Jesus triumphing over Satan.
- ✚ It is used of God in Rom 3:4, and Paul exhorts the Romans not to be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. Rom 12:21.

It is this word nikao which is to be found in the word Nicolaitans as we saw earlier on in the notes. It always entails victory. The American missile “nike” is derived from the noun

“nike” used in 1 John 5:4 and translated victory. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” A later form of the word, “nikos” is also translated victory in Matt 12:20, and in 1 Cor 15:54, 55, 57 where we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ gives us the victory over death. In all its forms then, this word almost everywhere in the Scriptures refers to the victory of the Lord and of his people over Satan and his minions.

There is now a call made to the heavens and those who dwell in them to rejoice in that Satan has been cast out of the heavens. This includes the church which has been caught up to the Lord Jesus, and now stands as a great multitude before the throne of God. Rev 7:9. Also included are all the elect angels of God who have warred for so long against the evil hosts of Satan in the heavenlies. Thus the heavenlies are purged of the powers of darkness, never to be invaded by them ever again.

It is interesting to note that in Genesis God speaks of his creation being “good” seven times. (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.) It is used with regard to his work on every one of the six days in which he wrought, except the second day. The work of God on the second day pertained to the “firmament” or the atmosphere, and, its omission here could be an indication of the fact that the air was already the domain occupied by the fallen angels.

Satan now comes down to the earth and can no longer gain access to the throne of God or, for that matter, the atmosphere. He is restrained to the surface of the globe. He recognises that the end, spoken of in the Scripture, is near, but he will never acknowledge defeat. Thus he is in a frenzy to destroy all who oppose him. He endeavours to destroy Israel, for, if he can succeed in this, all the purposes of God will come to naught. But this he will never be able to accomplish.

Thus the Bible says:

✚ “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

There is now to be a time of unparalleled woe upon the earth. The devil has only a short time. How long has he? The Bible tells us that he will only have another 1260 days to try and do all that he wants to do.

His wrath will be so great that the Scriptures describe this time as:

✚ “Affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.” Mark 13:19-20.

The Bible says:

✚ “As a snare shall it (that day) come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” Luke 21:35.

This woe is not to “the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea” as the K.J.V. says but literally it reads, “Woe to the earth and the sea.” So this lovely earth and sea are going to be marred and scarred, because of the wickedness of man. The destruction of the surface of the earth is going to be terrible, its whole surface is going to be twisted for Isaiah says:

✚ “The windows of the heavens are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble and shake. The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently.” Isa 24:18-19. (Ampl.)

### **Satan’s last effort to destroy Israel**

#### **Verses 13-17**

The church is now beyond the reach of Satan He can no longer enter the courts of heaven. The two witnesses are also beyond his reach as well as the 144,000. But the rest of the children of Israel will experience the full fury of Satan. The thirteenth verse reads:

✚ “When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child.”

The Jews have known many persecutions, some of which have come near to destroying them as a people. This will be the last of the great persecutions that Israel will have to endure, and it will also be the fiercest. Were Satan to have his way, not only all Israel, but also the entire human race would cease to exist, as the result of the things taking place on earth. But God will stop him short.

The Word of God says:

✚ “The two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman that she fly to the wilderness to her place.”

What are the means used by the Jews to escape from the wrath of the devil as he seeks to destroy them? Does the phrase “two wings of the great eagle” mean perhaps, that they will flee by means of planes? If we go to the Old Testament, we will see that this phrase speaks of divine aid in a time of need, and not the means whereby the need is met. We read in Exodus 19:4:

✚ “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.”

When will Satan begin to persecute Israel? I believe that the answer is to be found in Daniel and Matthew's gospel. We read in Daniel 9:27:

✚ “And he (Antichrist) shall enter into a strong and firm covenant with the many (Jews) for one week (seven years); and in the midst of the week he shall cause the

sacrifice and offering to cease (for the remaining three and one half years); and upon the wing or pinnacle of abominations (shall come) one who makes desolate; until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator.” (Ampl.)

Thus when the offerings have been made on the altar of the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem for the first 1260 days of the covenant period, the false prophet, who glorifies the Antichrist, will cause the offerings to cease and will set up the “abomination which causes desolation” in the Holy Place. We have already mentioned how the Antichrist will take his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming that he himself is God. 2 Thess 2:4. This will also involve the making and erection in the temple of an image of the beast (Antichrist) by the false prophet (second beast.) Rev 13:14.

We read in Rev 13:15 that the false prophet will have power to give life to the image of the beast, enabling it to speak and to kill all who will not worship it. Now Jesus warned the Jews in Matthew 24:15 about this time. He said:

✚ “When you see the appalling sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the Holy Place, (and) let the reader take notice and ponder and consider and heed (this); then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ... for there will be great tribulation.” Matt 24:15-22.

This then is what happens soon after the abomination is set up. Many Jews will have listened to the preaching of the two witnesses and the 144,000, and they will also have been reading both the old and New Testaments. Suddenly they will realise their danger. The Lord warns them to flee. There will not be time to go and gather their goods and chattels. They are to pray that this event will not occur in winter or on the Sabbath day.

They are to flee into the mountains. Which mountains are they to flee to? The Bible says they are to flee into the wilderness, thus the place will be the mountainous wilderness on the other side of the Jordan. The place Israel flees to is a place prepared of God, there to be nourished from the face of the serpent for a time, and times, and half a time.

This is the same as the 1260 days mentioned in verse 6. Thus we are told twice that the woman flees into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, to be nourished there for 1260 days. So, just as God kept Israel in the wilderness for 40 years after the Exodus, so will he keep them for 1260 days, after they flee from the face of the serpent.

Just whereabouts in the wilderness is the place God is reserving for the Jews, as a place of safety? We read in the prophecy of Daniel:

✚ “He (Antichrist) shall enter also into the glorious land (Israel) and many shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.” Dan 11:41.

These lands, comprising most of Jordan today, are generally wild, mountainous terrain, lying east of the Dead Sea. It is here that the ancient rose city called Petra lies. It was the



capital of the Nabataeans and lies in a basin surrounded by mountains and can only be approached by very narrow canyons.

Now Isaiah describes the Lord coming to punish the wicked at the end time in Isa 42:10-17. In this passage he says:

✚ “Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock (Petra) sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.” (Verse 11.)

Now there are no people inhabiting Petra at the present, yet, Isaiah says, when the Lord returns to punish the wicked at the end of the Great Tribulation, the inhabitants of Petra will sing and shout from the top of the mountains.

So Israel will find a place of safety on the other side of Jordan There God will nourish Israel from the face of the serpent. How will God nourish his people? I believe that, once again, there will be manna supplied from heaven and water out of the rock. For three and a half years the Jews will again, like Israel in the time of Moses the servant of God, enjoy the miraculous provision of God as he shelters them from the wrath of the devil.

John tells us now that the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. This language needs amplification if we are to understand what it was that John saw. Some would have us to believe that the flood, or better, river, that the serpent casts out, is to be understood as armies of soldiers, who will pursue the children of Israel as they flee, just as the armies of Pharaoh pursued Moses until the waters of the red sea drowned the Egyptians This could very well be the case, but I see no reason why we should not see the river as literal.

Satan has a great deal of power which he is not unwilling to use. On one occasion the Lord Jesus and his disciples took a ship to pass over the sea of Galilee to go to Gadara. While the Lord slept in the hinder part of the ship a great storm arose and the waves beat into the ship so as to fill the ship and cause it to sink. The disciple woke the Lord up and said “Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?”

We read then that the Lord Jesus arose, and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, peace, be still, or literally, “Be quiet, be muzzled.” Mk 4:35-41. There are those who see in this incident, an effort on the part of Satan to destroy the boat in which our Lord and his disciples were travelling. Is there warrant in the Word of God for believing that the elements can be controlled by the devil?

We turn again to the book of Job, where Satan has obtained God’s permission to afflict Job. God said:

✚ “Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only on himself put not forth thy hand.”  
Job 1:12.

We read further along in Job, as the devil begins to hurt Job:

✚ “And, behold, there came up a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” Job 1:19.

Here we see Satan bring up a great wind from the wilderness to slay the sons of Job. If he could do it in this instance he can do it elsewhere. Thus Jesus uses strong language, “Be quiet, be muzzled”, to cause the storm on Galilee to cease, because the storm had been whipped up by Satan. Now it is just as easy for Satan to cause a literal river of water to flow after the woman to cause her seed to perish.

The wilderness that Israel will escape to has very narrow approaches, with great towering cliffs shadowing narrow defiles, and a flood raging down these passes will cause great harm. In fact, a number of years ago, some tourists who were proceeding to the rose city of Petra, were trapped by a flash flood in one of the approaches, and a number of them were drowned. This is what I believe the devil will do when Israel flees into the wilderness to escape from certain death at the hands of those who seek her destruction. He will cause a flood of waters to rush down the narrow passes the Jews have been using in their flight to the wilderness.

Satan casts out water behind the woman (Israel) as a river, and the earth helps the woman. It opens up and the water, instead of bringing utter destruction to the Jews as they flee, will disappear harmlessly into the bowels of the earth. The literal rendering in the Greek N.T. is thus:

✚ “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.”

John now tells us that the dragon was enraged with the woman. His rage is the result of his having been thwarted in his endeavour to destroy the Jewish people. He then turns to make war with the rest of her seed. John writes:

✚ “The dragon ... went away to make war with the rest of her seed which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

We see here that not all the Jews who reject the Antichrist will be able to escape to the wilderness. Some will not be able to and the devil will turn on them and he will make war on them. What will happen to them? Some will be slain, and some will, I am sure, be enslaved by the Antichrist.

I believe that the Jews are converted to the Lord at this time. All who are not converted will accept the Antichrist But those who see through him, and realise that the Lord Jesus

Christ is their long looked for messiah, will do so at this point for we read two things about the Jews who will experience the full wrath of Satan as the result of their having failed to reach the place of safety:-

- 1) They keep the commandments of God. They are orthodox Jews
- 2) They have the witness (testimony) of Jesus. In other words, they have been saved through faith in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. All they will do now is to wait for his promised return.

Thus we see that these Jews who are converted to Christ, will experience conversion 1260 days before Armageddon, or in the middle of the seven year covenant that the Antichrist will make with Israel (Dan 9:27.) This rebirth of a spiritual Israel comes about as the result of the ministry of the two witnesses and the 144,000 servants of God (the manchild.)

This spiritual resurrection of the Jewish people is dealt with in Ezekiel 36:1-14. Here the prophet Ezekiel is carried in the Spirit (like John in the Revelation), and is set down in a valley with a lot of very dry bones. He is asked, "Son of Man, can these bones live?" He answers, "O Lord God, thou knowest." As the result of him prophesying upon the bones, they come together, and sinews, flesh and skin comes upon them. As he prophesies further, at God's command, the bodies come to life. The Lord then says:

✚ "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord." (Ez 37:14.)

The prophet Zechariah also refers to this national conversion of Israel in chapter 12:10, where he writes:

✚ "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

Thus the people of God are readied for the coming of the Lord Jesus, whom they will look forward to with great expectancy, once they are safe in the place prepared for them in the wilderness.

## **Chapter thirteen**

### ***The beast (Antichrist), second beast (false prophet)***

#### **Verse 1**

This first verse of chapter thirteen belongs to chapter twelve, and ends that chapter (that is, the first part of verse one.) The Greek does not read, “And I stood upon the sand of the sea”, but “And he (the dragon) stood upon the sand of the sea.” Thus the dragon, who has sought to destroy the Jews by using a river to drown them, now stands upon the sands of the sea to summon the Antichrist for the work that he has for him.

John says that he saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten heads and seven horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. We notice here the similarity between the beast and the dragon who has summoned him, for we read that the dragon that he had seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. (Rev 12:3.) The only difference is that the dragon had seven crowns whereas the beast had ten crowns.

We will see that the Antichrist is to the devil what our Lord Jesus is to his Father. Just as Christ is the express image of his Father (Heb 1:3) so the beast will mirror Satan. We will also see that, just as there is the holy trinity, the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so there is a trinity of evil. This trinity of evil consists of Satan who sets himself up against the Father, the Antichrist or beast who sets himself up against the Son, and the false prophet who sets himself up against the Holy Spirit.

Let us look at this beast. Firstly he is called a wild beast (therion in the Greek). Like a wild beast he will seek to devour and destroy.

Further we see from the Scripture that:

#### **1. He has ten horns.**

These ten horns speak of the ten kings, or kingdoms, or nations, or powers, who will give their power to the beast. John tells us in Rev 17:12-13 that the ten horns are ten kings who will receive power as kings one hour with the beast. The “one hour” is not literal but it means “for a short time”. We are told that the period in which they will have power is 1260 days or 42 months or three and a half years.

John says:

✚ “They have one mind, and shall give their power and strength to the beast.”

When we go to the book of Daniel we see these same ten kings spoken of. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in which he saw a great image with a head of gold,

shoulders of silver, thighs of brass and legs of iron. The feet were of iron and clay mixed. Speaking of the toes Daniel said:

✚ “In the days of these kings (typified by the toes) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.” Dan 2:44.

Daniel has a similar dream, only he does not see the four kingdoms as an image of various kinds of elements ranging from gold to clay, but as four rapacious beasts. The first beast was like a lion with eagle’s wings. Dan 7:4. This beast represents the Babylonian empire which was superseded by the kingdom described by Daniel as being like a bear. Here we see the Medo-Persian Empire which followed the Babylonian empire. Dan 7:5. Then there followed another kingdom represented by a four-winged leopard symbolising the Grecian empire, the third world power. Dan 7:6.

Finally, Daniel sees a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it: and it had ten horns. Dan 7:8. So just as the image had ten toes, likewise the last beast had ten horns. This beast represents the Roman Empire.

So we see from Daniel:

	<u>Image</u>	<u>Beasts</u>	<u>Kingdom represented</u>
1	head of gold	Lion	Babylon
2	breast and arms of silver	Bear	Medo-Persia
3	thighs of brass	leopard	Greece
4	legs of iron	terrible beast	Rome
5	feet (ten toes) of iron and clay	ten horns	kingdom of Antichrist

Daniel is given far more detail than Nebuchadnezzar is, for we read that he sees another little horn come up amongst the ten horns. This little horn plucks up three of the ten horns in Daniel's vision. He tells us that the little horn has “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.” Dan 7:8. This little horn is, of course, the Antichrist or Beast of Revelation 13. Here we see again the ten kings who will give their power to the beast. Initially, the Antichrist will rise to power by overcoming three kingdoms which are represented by the three horns plucked up by the roots. Finally, the remaining seven will also yield to him. Daniel says:

✚ “The ten horns out of the kingdom (Rome) are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.” Dan 7:24.

We will come back to this chapter in Daniel from time to time as we study the remainder of Revelation chapter thirteen, suffice to remark that both chapters clearly show that, in the latter days, the Antichrist will establish his kingdom in ten nations, existing at that time, but stemming from the old Roman Empire. It is possible that the European Union, initiated in Western Europe, was the beginning of this ten nation consortium.

## 2. He has seven heads.

What do the seven heads signify? We read in Rev 12:3 concerning the dragon that he has “seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.” Of the beast we read he has “seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns.” Rev 13:1. Thus we see both the heads of the dragon and the horns of the beast crowned. If the crowns signify that the ten horns are ten kings, the crowns on the ten heads must also signify kings or kingdoms.

John refers to these seven heads, in Rev 17:9-11 where we read:

✚ “The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 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. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.”

In the Old Testament the word “mountain” is often used to symbolise a kingdom. We remember the temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ how, when the devil tempted him, he showed him all the kingdoms of the world, saying:

✚ “All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.” Luke 4:6.

It is interesting to note that there have been five great empires which have exercised power in the Middle East. John says therefore that these five have lost their dominion and a sixth is now ruling. This sixth power will pass away and a seventh will take over for a little while, giving way finally to the eighth, that of the Antichrist.

Thus we see:-

1	Babylonia (or Egypt?)	These are the five that are fallen.
2	Assyria	
3	Babylonia	
4	Medo-Persia	
5	Grecia	
6	Rome	One is
7	European Union	Not come. When it comes, it must continue short space.
8	Kingdom of the beast	The eighth, but is of the seven.

Note: there are those who would make the first kingdom that of Egypt. I believe that the Scripture deals only with those nations which ruled over the part of the earth containing Babylon and the Holy Land, and so I opt for Babylonia rather than Egypt. There were two periods when Babylonia exercised power. The first time Babylon ruled was after the flood under Nimrod, her founder. After her power waned, Assyria became the dominant power until, Babylon rising, phoenix-like, overthrew Assyria.

The first five powers were already history in John's day. He was living under the Roman power, which was the sixth. In our day we see a grouping taking place in Europe, at the moment a grouping which is primarily economic but which could become a strong political union. There is already a common currency (the Euro) and a common police force is envisaged. When the complete political union of the ten nations, comprising this seventh empire, is complete, it must continue for a short while. It will indeed be a short while when compared to the empires which have gone before.

Then, finally, this seventh world power will yield its authority to the beast or the Antichrist as we know him. He is the eighth, but is of the seven because he will embody all the kingdoms which have gone before as we will see in verse 2, and also, because he will come out of the seventh.

### **3. On his heads the name of blasphemy**

Here we return to Daniel who wrote that he had "a mouth speaking great things." Dan 7:8. Again he writes:

✚ "He shall speak great words against the most high." Dan 7:25.

And again:

✚ "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of Gods, and shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done." Dan 11:36.

As we have seen in 2 Thess 2:4, he will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, sitting in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

## **The deathstroke verses 2-3**

John now tells us that the beast was like a leopard, his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. Thus he will embody, or sum up, much of the world empires which have gone before. The greatness of Babylon with all her deceit, the cruelty and vengefulness of Assyria, the swiftness of Greece, and the ponderous might and prowess of Rome But he will go far beyond them for he will the sum of all iniquity.

We read that the dragon will give him:

### **1. Power**

Power is defined as “the ability to act”. God is going to permit Satan to turn over the power to do as he pleases here on earth, to this dread being. What the Lord Jesus refused, when Satan offered it to him, will be seized by the Antichrist

### **2. A throne**

He will be a king. He will rule over the kingdoms of this world. All men will be compelled to offer him homage. Those who refuse will experience the full measure of his wrath. The four Hebrew children who refused to worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar were thrown into a fiery furnace. Dan 3:21. Even greater will the wrath of this “king of fierce countenance” be. Dan 8:23.

### **3. Authority**

Authority is defined as “the right to command and enforce obedience.” Thus we read four times in Rev 13 the phrase, “It was given to him.” (Rev 13:5, 5, 7, 7) It would be as well here to see what the Bible tells us about the Antichrist. The Greek word “antikristos” occurs five times in the New Testament. It is always used by the apostle John, and only in his first and second epistles. (1 John 2:18, 18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7.) Thus we read, “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.”

Concerning the word “antikristos” Vincent writes in his “Word Studies in the New Testament”:

✚ “Peculiar to John in the N.T. The absence of the article shows its currency as a proper name.” Further, “Antichrist, then, is one who opposes Christ, in the guise of Christ.” (vol 2, page 337.)

“The distinction between a false Christ (pseudochristos) and an antichrist (Antichristos) is that the former is a pretender to the Messianic office, whereas the latter is against Christ, not pretending to be Christ, but proposing to do the work of Christ. (Wuest)

Wuest says:



- ✚ “The distinction then, is plain. The Antichristos denies that there is a Christ, the pseudochristos affirms himself to be the Christ.”

John now writes:

- ✚ “I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.”

The word translated “wounded” is the Greek word “sphazo (sphatto)” which occurs ten times in the N.T. And again it is used only by John.

- ✚ It occurs twice in John’s first epistle (1 John 3:12)
- ✚ It is used eight times in the Revelation, being translated slain eight times, kill once, and wounded once.
- ✚ In four places it refers to the Lamb as the one who was “slain” (sphazo) for us. (Rev 5:6; 5:9; 5:12; 13:8.)
- ✚ It is used in Rev 6:4 of men killing one another when the red horse comes forth.
- ✚ Then, again, in Rev 6:9 it is used of the martyrs under the altar who were “slain for the Word of God”
- ✚ And in Rev 18:24 we read the blood of all the slain upon earth is found in Babylon

Vincent says:

- ✚ “The word occurs eight times in Revelation. And in seven of these it must be rendered slain or slaughtered. Professor Milligan rightly observes that the statement is the counterpart of that in verse 6, where we read of the Lamb as though it had been slaughtered. In both cases there had been actual death, and in both revival. The one is a mocking counterpart of the other. From this it is evident that the Antichrist, at some stage, is going to be killed. The whole meaning of the word makes this a necessity. How will he be slain? While we cannot say how he will die specifically, I believe that he will probably be assassinated.”

Somebody will kill the Antichrist at some time before the two witnesses end their testimony. His body will lie in some great cathedral, or other such public place. I feel that he will lie there for a similar period of time to that which the Lord Jesus lay in the tomb. Naturally, his soul will descend into the Abyss. After three days, Satan will be permitted to summon his soul back from the Abyss, to enter into his body. Great crowds will possibly be viewing the Antichrist's body when, suddenly, it will begin to stir. He will rise from the dead. Then he will, from that moment, have absolute power for 1260 days. His first act, after rising from the dead, will be to kill the two witnesses. Remember the verse which speaks of their death:

- ✚ “The beast that ascendeth out of the Abyss shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.” Rev 11:7.

Concerning his return from the Abyss we read in Rev 17:8:

✚ “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the Abyss, and go into perdition.”

Thus the Antichrist will mimic the death, and resurrection, of the Lord Jesus. Let us remember that others have, in the past, been allowed to return from Hades, and to re-enter their bodies to live again. A case in point is that of Lazarus who was raised from the dead after he had been dead for four days. Let us remember that Hades or Sheol was part of the Abyss which is, as we have seen, in the heart of the earth.

God is going to permit this man's soul to return from the dead, so that he might live again, in order that the Word of God might come to pass. John says that the stroke (plege) of death was healed (therapuo). Vincent points out that the word plege, translated deadly wound is better rendered “deathstroke”. His deathstroke is healed. Here the word therapuo, from which we get our English word therapy, is used. Therapuo occurs 44 times in the N.T. being rendered heal (38 times), cure (5 times), to worship (once), in the King James Bible.

Thus the Antichrist is restored to life again, for the brief period of 1260 days. From this point it is easy to work out the very day on which the battle of Armageddon will take place, and on which the Lord Jesus will return. It will be exactly 1260 days after the resurrection of the Antichrist. Looking at the Lord Jesus Christ, we see that he died for our sins on the cross of Calvary. He was dreadfully wounded. They crowned him with a crown of thorns. He was scourged until his very bones could be seen. Cruel nails pierced his hands and his feet. Laid in his tomb, his body saw no corruption. Acts 2:27.

His soul was not left in Hades. He returned from the dead and showed himself alive, by many infallible proofs. Acts 1:3. Now we preach this same Jesus raised from the dead. However, we concede that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus must be accepted by faith, as the Lord said to Thomas:

✚ “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen me, and yet have believed.” John 20:29.

At the most, only 500 brethren saw him at one time after his resurrection. 1 Cor 15:6.

I believe that with the Antichrist, many will see him rising from the dead. There will be those who, I am sure, will know what is to happen, and there will be television cameras trained upon his corpse. When he begins to stir all the world will see what is happening. And so all the world wondered after the beast and they believed in him.

### **War on the saints verses 4-9**

We now come to a time of open worship of Satan, This is what Satan has desired for many ages. We read:

✚ “They worshipped the dragon, ... and they worshipped the beast, saying, who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

Somebody had tried to make war with him and had failed dismally, for he rose from death itself. He is regarded as infallible by all the unsaved. He now opens his mouth to speak great things and blasphemies. He blasphemes God, and his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

Here we return to Daniel who wrote of the little horn:

✚ “He shall speak great words against the most high.” Dan 7:25.

Again in Dan 11:36:

✚ “He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods.”

John tells us that power will be given to the beast to continue for 42 months. So from the moment he rises, his time is limited. All that he wishes to do, he will have to do in this time, for he will not be allowed one day more than the time allotted to him. He will be given (the right to) make war on the saints, and to overcome them. These saints are not the church saints, who are now dwelling in heaven. He will blaspheme against them, but he cannot harm them for they are beyond his reach. But those Jewish and Gentile peoples who will not submit to him, but remain faithful to God, will become the objects of his hate and fury. He will make war on them and he will overcome them.

Daniel speaks of this as well for he writes:

✚ “I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the ancient of days came.” Dan 7:21-22.

He will only be able to make war with the saints until the Lord Jesus returns. Later we read again:

✚ “He ... shall wear out the saints of the most high.” Dan 7:25.

John now tells us that all those who dwell on the earth whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, will worship the beast. Man is now glorifying man and God is rejected. There is a solemn warning given now:

✚ “If any one has an ear let him hear.”

There will be few enough who will do this. The vast bulk of mankind will embrace this parody of God and will accord him divine worship.

## **A Godly remnant verse 10**

Rendered literally, this verse reads:

- ✚ “If any one is for captivity, to captivity he goes; if any one will kill by a sword, it behoves him to be killed by a sword. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.”

We see here the utter futility of resisting this man in any way. All who take up arms against him will be slain for their pains. The fact that we read this here indicates that there will be some who will not submit to the Antichrist tamely.

On the other hand we read of those who are for captivity, going into captivity. So there will be many who will resist the Antichrist, but not by resorting to physical force. They will remain true to God, but will submit to all the indignities that the beast will heap upon them. I am persuaded that those who do not resort to force of arms, will be enslaved. Great slave labour camps will be filled with such faithful ones. This time is going to call for two great qualities in God's people:-

- 1) Endurance. The saints will have to endure all kinds of hardship and torture for the name of the Lord Jesus. Some will be willing to die for his name.
- 2) Faith. The faith of God's people will have to burn brightly in this time. They will know that it will only be for a short season before Christ returns.

## **The second beast the false prophet verses 11-18**

We now come to the third person of the trinity of evil, namely, the false prophet. Just as the Holy Spirit exalts and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and not himself, this evil man will exalt and glorify the Antichrist, and millions will believe the lies he propagates. John writes:

- ✚ “I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”

There are two Greek words which are translated by our English word “another”. The first is the word 'heteros' of which Vine writes, “denotes another of a different sort”, while the other word 'allos' “denotes another of the same sort.”

In this passage John uses the word ‘allos’, indicating that the false prophet is another wild beast but of the same sort as the first wild beast, the Antichrist. The use of this word confirms the fact that the false prophet is as evil as the master whom he serves. The false prophet has two horns like a lamb, but, while he resembles a lamb in this respect, as far as his character is concerned, there is nothing lamb-like about him, for he speaks as a dragon.

We now look at the mission of this second beast:-

- 1) It exercises all the authority (exousia) of the first beast before it. As all the authority of the Lord Jesus is now exercised by the Holy Spirit, so the false prophet will exercise the authority of the Antichrist. He will speak and act on behalf of the Antichrist and, like him, he will be energised by the dragon.
- 2) He causes the earth and them that dwell on it to worship the first beast whose deathstroke was healed. He does not seek honour, or glory, or worship for himself, but for the Antichrist. As we will see later on, he uses extreme means to force men to worship the first beast. Thus all will be compelled to receive a mark to indicate their allegiance to the Antichrist.
- 3) He does great wonders so that he makes fire come down out of heaven onto the earth, in the sight of men. We are reminded of the miracles of Elijah who called down fire from heaven to consume the wicked captains of fifty. This is what James and John wanted to do when the Samaritans refused to receive the Lord Jesus for they said:

✚ “Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did?” Lu 9:54.

- 4) He deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs he performs in the sight. Thus the people of the earth are deceived by means of these miracles. We need to remember, even in these days, that not everything that is supernatural comes from God. We have clear warnings in the Word of God to be careful:

✚ “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the Spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1.

The miraculous is not necessarily of divine origin, it can be, and many times it is, Satanic in its origin.

- 5) He causes those who dwell on the earth to make an image of the beast or Antichrist. We read of the image of the beast ten times in the Revelation.

#### The image of the beast or Antichrist

This is the Abomination of Desolation which Daniel says will be erected in the Holy Place. Mark records the following concerning this:

✚ “When ye shall see the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (i.e. In the Holy Place), let him that readeth understand.” Mark 13:14.

We see the following facts concerning this image:

- ✚ It is made by the inhabitants of the earth, and not by the false prophet or Antichrist. They are exhorted to make it by the false prophet. Rev 13:14.
  - ✚ He had power to give life to the image. The Greek says, "It was given to him to give spirit (pneuma) to the image." In past times heathen idols were often used to dupe their worshippers. Many were hollow within, enabling the priests to speak from hidden chambers. There will be no fakery here. By means of power given to him by the serpent, the false prophet will do something never done before, he will enable the image to have life of some kind. Rev 13:14.
  - ✚ The image of the beast will be able to speak. Rev 13:15.
  - ✚ The image will have power to kill all who do not worship it. Rev 13:15. We see here a great deal more than was the case with the image erected by Nebuchadnezzar. He demanded worship for his image, but he had to ensure compliance with his edict. Dan 3. Here the image erected at the instigation of the false prophet will be empowered to exact its own retribution. All who will not render homage to it will find the image itself will have the power to destroy them.
  - ✚ All who worship this image will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and they will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Rev 14:9.
  - ✚ All who worship the image will be tormented for ever and ever: they shall have no rest day nor night. Rev 14:11.
  - ✚ There will be martyrs who will have gotten the victory over the image of the beast. The image will be responsible for their death but the victory will be theirs, for they stand before the throne of God. Rev 15:2.
  - ✚ A noisome and grievous sore will be the portion of those who worship the image of the beast. Rev 16:2. The two Greek words used here are 'kakos' (noisome) translated evil 39 times in the N.T., and 'poneeros' (grievous) also translated evil over 40 times in the N.T. Vince says of kakos, that is used "Of what is injurious, destructive, baneful, pernicious." Where poneeros is used in Rev 16:2 it means painful.
  - ✚ Here we read that the two beasts are cast alive into the lake for fire. The false prophet is termed the one who deceived those who worshipped the image. Rev 19:20.
  - ✚ Those who did not worship the image and were killed are raised from the dead and live and reign with Christ 1000 years. Rev 20:4.
- 6) Going back to verse 15, we see that the false prophet will give life to the image that men make, causing it to speak and to kill all who will not bow down and worship.
- 7) He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.

## The mark of the beast

This mark will be a literal mark. It will be placed where all men can most easily see it. The most prominent place is the forehead. Others will receive it on the hand most commonly used by men, the right hand. Once this mark has been received then all hope of redemption is passed. All such are doomed.

Of the word 'charagma' (mark) Vincent says, "The word occurs frequently in the apocalypse, and only once elsewhere." (Acts 17:29.) In actual fact it occurs eight times in the Revelation and always of the mark of the beast.

- ✚ It occurs twice in this passage (Rev 13:16-17) where we are told that all are to receive the mark if they wish to avoid the enmity of the Antichrist
- ✚ Then it occurs twice in Rev 14:9, 11, where God sends an angel to warn all men on the earth of the fearful consequences of worshipping the beast, or his image, or receiving his mark on their right hand or forehead.
- ✚ In Rev 15:2 we read of those who have gotten the victory over the beast, his image, and his mark. They stand before the throne of God.
- ✚ In Rev 16:2 the first bowl of God's wrath is poured out upon those who have the mark of the beast, and who worship his image. It occurs likewise in both passages (Rev 19:20; 20:4) where we saw God dealing with those who led men to receive the mark, and where he rewarded those who did not, and died for their faithfulness, by raising them from the dead to reign with Christ for 1000 years.

No man can buy or sell, save he has the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is the final coercion. No one can exist on the earth unless they are permitted to buy and sell. We need to buy our daily needs. We need to be able to sell, even if it is only our labour in return for a daily wage. No one may do this, unless they bear the mark of the beast. So all men will have to choose. For all who choose the mark of the beast, there is no turning back. They are eternally doomed if they comply. If anyone refuses to comply, then he, or she, will have to bear the consequences, which are martyrdom or enslavement.

John ends:

- ✚ "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."

Let us note here that the Bible says that it is the number of a man. It is not, therefore, a system, or country, or government. It is a man. Those who live in those days will need wisdom from on high if they are not to be deceived. Those who live in those days will need understanding too, if they are not to be led away into error. All who will want to know will find that God will meet their need. "The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Dan 12:10.

### The number six hundred and sixty six

It is interesting to see what Bullinger has to say about this number. He writes:

✚ “666 is therefore the triple number of imperfection – the number of a man – the number of things specially hateful to God, and which culminate in the perfection of wickedness, and which seem to peculiarly describe the man of sin.”

“The image of the beast is mysteriously like the image of Babylon in its numerical proportions – threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits – 66 – foreshadowing the union of the Antichrist and the false prophet; while in the 600 not seen in the image of Nebuchadnezzar we have the power of Satan assuming the fatherhood of God. Thus we have the trinity of hell, awful mimicry of the holy trinity.” (page 391, Critical Lexicon.)

## **Chapter fourteen**

### ***144,000 on Mt Zion, three angels testify, winepress***

#### **144,000 on Mount Zion verses 1-5**

John now looks and sees the Lamb standing on Mt Zion, and with him 144,000. They have his name (the Lambs') and his Father's name written upon their foreheads. John hears a sound out of heaven as the sound of many waters and as the sound of a great thunder. He says that the sound he heard was that of harpers playing on their harps.

The harp of the New Testament is very unlike the harp which we are familiar with. The Greek word kithara is the word from which our word guitar derives, and it occurs in 1 Cor 14:7; Rev 5:8; 14:2; 15:2. Of the kithara, Vincent says:

✚ “Kithara, harp, signifies an instrument unlike our harp as ordinarily constructed. Rather a lute or guitar, to which latter word kithara is etymologically related. Anciently of a triangular shape, with seven strings, afterwards increased to eleven. Josephus says it had ten, and was played with a plectrum or small piece of ivory.”

In Rev 5:8 we are told specifically that the twenty four elders each have a harp, and they sing a new song. In this passage the number of the harpers must be beyond counting for their sound is like many waters and like a great thunder. In Rev 15:2 we see the tribulation martyrs having the harps of God. Thus it would seem that all the redeemed will play on their harps and sing for the Greek word translated harpers is 'kitharodos' from the two words 'kithara' and 'odos' a singer.

It is wonderful that the Christian faith is the only one that has a song. The elders sing a new song and we read in Rev 14:3 that the 144,000 sing a new song before the throne, just as the tribulation saints who are martyred sing the song of Moses the servant of God and they sing the song of the Lamb. Rev 15:3.



We are reminded of the words of David the sweet Psalmist of Israel who wrote:

✚ “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”  
Psalm 40:1-3.

Of the song that the 144,000 sing it is said:

✚ “No man could learn that song but the 144,000, which were purchased from the earth.”

We see here then, the Jews who were sealed as the servants of God on the earth under the sixth seal, have now been taken up to be in the presence of God. Just as the church was raptured when God’s appointed time came, so these 144,000, when they have finished their testimony, will also be raptured. That Rapture takes place in Rev 12:5 where the manchild is caught up to the throne of God, for, as we have seen, the manchild and the 144,000 are synonymous. We now read that these men are all virgins. God has kept them so and for a good reason. That reason is that they might have singleness of purpose in their work during the first half of the Great Tribulation. Jesus says in Matt 19:12:

✚ “For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”

That is precisely what the 144,000 do. They are able to receive it (by God’s grace) and so they make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. Just as the church has its peculiar relationship to the Lamb, so, likewise these virgin men. They may follow us in order of time but take precedence over us in eternity. There can be no closer relationship than this of following the Lamb whithersoever he goes. What blessed nearness, what a precious position is theirs.

We read that these 144,000 were purchased from among men being firstfruit to God and the Lamb. It is one of the great facts of the Bible that, in every age, God has a company of his own people. He is never left without a witness. And, while there will be many more who will be faithful to God in this time of trouble, this company will be the first to turn to God in faith. Thus they are the first to believe on the Lord after the Rapture has taken place. There will be other believers who will come to trust in Christ, but only after the 144,000 have trusted.

We read concerning the firstfruits in the Old Testament in Exodus 23:19:

✚ “The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God.”

Thus God brings the firstfruit of the age following this present age of grace, into his house, Mount Zion. So, when the church age or the age of grace ends, and the full number of the Gentiles have come in, God's purposes with man continue. God begins immediately to call out others to serve him. This work of calling out others is started by the two witnesses. I believe the 144,000 are also engaged in calling men to God at the same time as the two witnesses.

In the Old Testament the firstfruits were the promise of the harvest that was to follow. Thus the use of the word firstfruit to describe the 144,000 indicates that they will be followed by others who will believe after they have believed. At the feast of firstfruits recorded in Lev 23:10-14 we see that the first sheaves to ripen are taken by the high priest, and are waved before the Lord. This is the promise of the harvest to follow. Many other sheaves will ripen and will bring glory to God in that time of tribulation.

John finishes by saying that in their mouth was found no lie and that they are unblemished before the throne of God. Thus these are described as being what God intends Israel to be in the Millennium, for we read in Zeph 3:13:

✚ “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”

Thus the nation Israel in the 1000 years of peace will be like these firstfruits, unblemished before God and their Father.

### **Three angels testify to men verses 6-11**

#### **The first angel**

John says that he saw another angel flying in the mid-heaven having the eternal gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying, fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgement came, and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

This gospel is the same gospel we have heard. It contains a call to repentance and a promise of forgiveness to all who believe. Men are about to receive the mark of the beast. The whole world is on the brink of the greatest deception every perpetrated on man. Thus God takes the unusual step of using an angel to give this final warning. All men will hear the voice of this angel. Many will give heed to him. All who do so will have to endure the wrath of the Antichrist but how much better to do this, than to endure the wrath of God for all the ages of eternity.

Thus use of the angel here is not only because of the fact that he will make all men, everywhere aware of the truth, but also because there are not many who will be able to do this task amongst men. The church has already gone to be with the Lord. The two witnesses and the 144,000 have also departed from the earth scene. Men who dare to warn others at this stage will incur the full blast of demonic wrath.

Notice the threefold nature of the gospel:

1. Fear God
2. Glorify God
3. Worship God

### **The second angel**

Another angel, a second followed saying, fallen, fallen, is Babylon that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. We will see much more about this evil city in Rev 17 and 18. It is pertinent to note here, however, that all opposition to God on earth has stemmed from Babylon. It was here that the Tower of Babel was built. The city itself was built by Nimrod who was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Gen 10:9.

There are many who see the hunting of Nimrod as being the hunting or snaring of the souls of men. He enticed them away from the worship of Jehovah. If the identification of Nimrod with Ninus is correct, then the sin that he was guilty of was the introduction of idolatry. Thus Nimrod and the city of Babylon are the source of that system which is so abhorrent to a holy God.

### **The third angel verses 9-11**

Another angel, a third, follows after the other two angels, saying in a loud voice:

✚ “If any man worship the image of the beast, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand”:-

- 1) He shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. In Psalm 75 the prophet writes and says:

✚ “For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.” (Ps 75:8.)

In the great passage in Jeremiah chapter 25 we read of the Lord sending the prophet to cause all the nations (peoples) to whom he is sent, to drink of the wine cup of this fury at my hand (v 15.) The passage deals with the end-time and all the kings shall drink of it (v 26). We see concerning the cup of fury is given to many to drink. Of those who refuse the Lord says:

✚ “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, ye shall certainly drink.” Jer 25:28.

Thus we see:

- A. Speaking of the wicked Job says, “He shall drink of the wrath of the almighty.” Job 21:20.

- B. So, likewise in Psalm 75:8 the wicked will drink of the dregs on the cup.
  - C. None who sin are spared for we read in Isa 51:17 that Jerusalem has drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury. Isaiah says, "Thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out."
  - D. In the passage dealt with above all nations shall drink of the cup of the Lord's fury, the final one to drink being the king of Sheshach. Sheshach is a symbolic name for Babylon and its meaning is "humiliation". As the last king of Babylon will be the Antichrist (for Babylon must be rebuilt as his capital), this foreshadows his humiliation and defeat at the hand of the Lord Jesus when he returns, after the Great Tribulation. Just how fitting it is that this should befall Babylon and her king can be seen by reading Jer 51:7 and Rev 17:4. All the trouble of this world has come from Babylon and her founder Nimrod who was motivated by Satan Jeremiah says: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that hath made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore are the nations mad." Jer 51:7.
  - E. We see that Edom will also drink of the cup of wrath. Jer 49:12.
  - F. The cup of God's wrath is called "The cup of astonishment and desolation" in Ez 23:33 and the prophet warns Judah that she would suffer the same fate as her sister, Israel (the ten northern tribes.)
  - G. Zechariah says that the Lord will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to the nations who besiege Jerusalem in the end-time. Zech 12:2.
  - H. All who worship the beast will drink of that cup. Rev 14:10.
  - I. We read again in Rev 16:19 of Babylon being made to drink the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
2. They will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. The doctrine of eternal punishment is not a popular one. We need to take heed, however, to the Word of God, which speaks repeatedly concerning this fact. The Lord Jesus himself, more than any other, warns of the fact that there is a place where the wicked will be confined. He tells us of what will occur when he returns to sit on the throne of his glory, in Matt 25:31-46. He speaks of the goats on his left hand. These are those who have followed the Antichrist during the tribulation. Together with him, they have been hostile to his brethren, the Jews. The Lord says, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (verse 41.) There is no need for any to go to this place for the Lord has provided a way of escape for men. Thus it is primarily for the devil and his angels. But all men who choose sin will also go there. Let us remember that there is a fire that can burn and yet it does not consume. (Ex 3:2.)
  3. The smoke of their torment ascends for ever and for ever. For them there will be no rest day or night for all the ages.

## **Patience of the saints verses 12-13**

John ends:

✚ “Here is the endurance of the saints, the ones keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

Here we see, again, those who do not bow to the beast, but are faithful to God. Conscious of the ultimate end of the followers of the beast, even though they triumph for a while, those who love the Lord in this awful time will be willing to endure. We are constantly reminded of the need, in every age, for the saints to endure or persevere. The Greek word “hupomonee” is, according to one writer, “the patience that waits for Christ.” 2 Thess 3:5. It occurs 32 times in the N.T. Of which seven are in the Revelation. Let us look at the occurrences in the Revelation.

1. John writes in Rev 1:9, “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience in Christ.”
2. The Lord says of the church at Ephesus, “I know thy patience.” Rev 2:2.
3. Again, in the next verse Rev 2:3, Jesus says, “Thou hast patience, and didst bear for my name’s sake, and hast not grown weary.”
4. Of Thyatira we read, “I know thy works, and the love and the faith and the ministry and thy patience, and thy last works are more than the first.” Rev 2:19.
5. Of the church at Philadelphia we read, “Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of the trial, which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them that dwell on the earth.” Rev 3:10.
6. Of the believers during the tribulation we read, “If any is unto captivity, unto captivity he goeth: if any shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” Rev 13:10.
7. Here in Rev 14:12 where we read again of the patience of the tribulation saints.

This sevenfold mention of patience is certainly not out of place in this book where we see the number seven, the number of perfection, recurring so often.

### **The dead who die henceforth**

There is going to be a great need for patience or endurance, for all who are faithful to God will have to endure for his sake. As we saw in Rev 13:10, many will be enslaved, while those who resist will be killed. It is during this time that many will be martyred. When Nebuchadnezzar erected his image, he ordered those who would not worship it, should be cast into the fiery furnace. Dan 3:6. We know that three Hebrews refused and the wrathful king ordered them to be thrown into a furnace heated seven times hotter.

Thus many will face martyrdom in the second half of the seven year tribulation period. No wonder John is commanded to write:

✚ “Blessed the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. Yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them.”

Here we see a world where the issues are going to be very clear cut. It will be, obey the Antichrist and so preserve your life (but lose your soul for all eternity), or to faithful to Christ and lose your freedom or, perhaps, your life (but keep it unto life eternal).

Thus there will be many who will die after the Rapture who will be born again believers. We will see later that they will be resurrected at the end of the tribulation, to reign with the Lord for 1000 years.

### **The harvest of the earth three more angels verses 14-17**

John now sees a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud, one like a son of man. The K.J.V. is incorrect where it says, “like the Son of Man.” There is no definite article in the Greek. (anarthrous.) The terms Son of Man occurs 89 times in the New Testament, 85 times in the four gospels (in the K.J.V. but only 85 times altogether in the R.V.)

Scroggie says:

✚ “Wherever it is used of Christ it has the article before both son and man, with one exception. (John 5:27.)”

Here in Rev 14:14 it refers, not to the Lord Jesus, but to an angel who in his appearance and likeness, looks like a human being. He has a golden crown (stephanos) on his head, and in his hand there is a sharp sickle. We are reminded of the parable of the wheat and the tares where the Lord Jesus says:

✚ “The harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels.” Matt 13:39.

Thus we have described here, that which will transpire when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with all his angels. That the one like a son of man is an angel is confirmed by the next verse which reads:

✚ “And another angel went out of the temple (‘naos’), crying to the one sitting 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.”

We need to go back to the book of Matthew here, and look at the thirteenth chapter, for here the Lord Jesus describes the end of the age, using the figure of a harvest, when a distinction is going to be made between tares or weeds and wheat. This parable is often used in gospel messages and is applied to the present time, whereas, in actual fact, the

parable has reference to the time immediately after the Rapture up until the Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That it does not refer to this age is clear for this church age will end with the removal of the saints, while the wicked will be left behind. When all spoken of in this parable is consummated, we find the wicked removed, while the righteous remain behind to possess the earth where the kingdom of God has come. Matt 13:43. Thus the harvest time will come when the harvest is dried, or ripe.

This harvest is so different from the one in which the church is now engaged. Of the harvesting which is now going on the Lord Jesus said:

✚ “The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into the harvest.” Luke 10:2.

To his disciples Jesus said:

✚ “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto eternal life: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.” John 4:35-36.

There are many who will not be brought in during this harvesting. Their awful cry once the true church is gone will be:

✚ “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” Jer 8:20.

This harvest of the wicked now begins for we read:

✚ “He that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.” (verse 16.)

Another angel comes from the sanctuary in heaven, and he also has a sharp sickle. It is interesting to note that the Greek word 'drepanon', which is rendered sickle in English, occurs eight times in the N.T. Once in Mark 4:29 and all the other seven times in this fourteenth chapter. (verses 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 18, 19.)

We have already seen how many words occur seven times in this book. Indeed, it is a book of sevens. We remarked previously that the word “patience” occurs seven times in the Revelation, and now we see the word sickle also appears 7 times. As has already been remarked, seven is the number of perfection. Thus this harvest will be done to perfection. None of those who have rebelled against God will be able to escape.

## **The vine of the earth verses 18-20**

Another angel (a third) comes out from the altar having authority over fire. He cries with a loud voice to the angel with a sharp sickle, saying:

✚ “Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.”

We are told by the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John chapter 15 that he is the true vine and we are the branches. But there is another vine revealed to us in the Bible. We read in Deut 32:32-33:

✚ “For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poisonous gall, their clusters are bitter; their wine is the (furious) venom of serpents, and the pitiless poison of vipers.”

It is this evil vine of the earth which is going to be reaped, and cast into the great winepress of wrath. We read:

✚ “The angel thrust in his sickle ... and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horses’ bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”

Let us note the following points here:

1. It is the vine of the earth. It has no place in the kingdom of God. Those who are grafted onto this vine are all enemies of righteousness. They have been the followers of the Antichrist, and will utterly perish from off the face of the earth.
2. It is cast into the winepress of the wrath of God. We see Isaiah speaking about this winepress in Isa 63:1-6. He sees someone coming from Bozrah who is glorious in his apparel. This can be none other than the Lord Jesus returning in triumph. Then he asks:

✚ “Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winfat?”

The answer comes:

✚ “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.”



He continues concerning this day of vengeance (Isa 61:2; 63:4):

✚ “I trod down the peoples in my anger, and made them drink of the cup of my wrath until intoxicated, and I spilled their lifeblood upon the earth.” (Isa 63:6. Amplified.)

It is a winepress of wrath. Men always tend to deny that God will execute wrath. However, we read of the wrath of God (and of the Lamb) ten times in the Revelation. (Rev 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1, 19; 19:15.) John, the great apostle of love says concerning those who refuse to repent and receive the Lord Jesus as Saviour that the wrath of God abides on them. Jn 3:36. It is the awful testimony of the Holy Scriptures, that if we reject the love and mercy of God, we will experience his wrath in their place. It is a sad fact that men today, and also those who will serve the Antichrist:

✚ “Treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath and Revelation of the righteous judgement of God.” Rom 2:5.

3. The winepress was trodden without the city. This can be no other event but that of the battle of Armageddon. The Scripture says it takes place without the city. We read in Zech 14:2-3:

✚ “I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ... then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.”

4. Blood comes out of the winepress up to the horses' bridles for the space of 1 600 furlongs or about 200 miles. This is destruction on a vast scale. But all nations have gathered to this battle. We will see more detail about Armageddon at a later stage. However, we need to identify the area where it will take place. We saw the Lord coming from Bozrah.

Starting with Bozrah we proceed through the valley of the Yarmuk to the Jordan valley to link up with the valley of Jezreel. It is a distance of 200 miles of narrow valley. It is here that the greatest slaughter of the ages will take place. Let it be remembered that the battle of Armageddon is not between the various nations of the world, but between the Lord Jesus and the unregenerate followers of the Antichrist and Satan

Let us remember the source of this vast outpouring of the wrath of God. The first angel comes out of the sanctuary in heaven. Likewise the second angel also comes out of the sanctuary while the third angel comes out of the altar in the sanctuary. It is here that the blood of the Lord Jesus was sprinkled on the heavenly mercy-seat. Here all men could have found mercy, had they desired to. But those who have rejected the love and mercy of God, and the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus, and have rather followed the beast will find that wrath will proceed from the very place where mercy could have been obtained, and the Lord Jesus, who could have saved them, will be

their opponent instead. There will be no survivors to this last great battle, for all will die who go up to fight against the Lord. None shall be left to tell the tale of Armageddon

## **Chapter fifteen**

### ***Triumphant tribulation martyrs, final wrath determined***

#### **The seven last plagues verse 1**

John now sees another sign in heaven, great and wonderful. There are seven angels having the seven last plagues. In them the wrath of God is finished or consummated, says John. That which had been recorded on the scroll, sealed with seven seals, and opened by the Lamb, is not almost all fulfilled. Very little remains. Details will yet be given us concerning the destruction of Babylon the great, but God's great design is hastening to completion. Thus John tells us that there are only seven more plagues to come, before all is consummated. And yet, as we read the next few chapters of the Revelation, we are awestruck as we see the immensity of the events which are yet to take place, leading, finally, under the sixth and seventh vials, to Armageddon again.

#### **The martyrs on the glassy sea verses 2-4**

John now sees the glassy sea (or sea of glass) but it is different from the sea of glass described in Rev 4:6, for here it is mingled with fire. This points us to the fact that those who we will be seeing standing on this sea, are the martyrs of God who have been faithful during the Great Tribulation. The fire speaks of the sufferings and the afflictions which have been theirs. They have had to stand faithfully during the most trying time in history, as far as the people of God are concerned. Their lot has truly been to pass through the fires of adversity.

We see:

1. That they have gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name. They have thus a glorious four-fold victory. It matters not that they have been slain because of their refusal to submit to the Antichrist. In slaying them, the beast has placed them beyond his power or ability to hurt and harm. They are now safe in the presence of the God whom they have loved, and to whom they have been faithful.
2. They stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. Their last days on earth were certainly not days of song. They have been hunted and hounded by the beast who has continually made war on the saints and overcome them. They have experienced trials such as none of God's people have ever experienced in any other age. Enslaved and killed by the beast, there has been no time for them to sing and to rejoice in this demonized earth. But now they can sing in triumph. They can take the harps of God,

and standing before him, they can sing, even as others have sung before in this wonderful book.

Vincent says the structure of the Greek here is peculiar and unique in the N.T. “Had gotten the victory over the beast” is lit. “conquered out of the beast” and Vincent says it signifies, not victory over, but “coming triumphant out of”. Thus we have the R.V. rendering, “that come victorious from the beast”.

3. They sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. There is a song of Moses to be found in the Old Testament. It was sung by this wonderful servant of God, when God had destroyed the pursuing hosts of Egypt in the Red Sea. His song is to be found in Exodus 15:1-19.

It is of interest to mark the occasion. It was the triumph of the people of God, (because of the faithfulness of God), over Pharaoh who had endeavoured to bring them back into captivity. Moses says:

✚ “The horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.” (15:19.)

Thus the song of Moses expresses the ultimate victory of God and his people over the enemy. This will be true too of those saints who prevail against the beast. Moses’ song was a song of triumph, and we see the tribulation martyrs triumphant over the beast.

The song of the Lamb is like the song of Moses. It speaks of the glorious victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over all the forces of Satan. The victory of Calvary, where the Lord triumphed over the principalities and powers, calls forth an even greater amount of praise from the people of God. We read in Col 2:15:

✚ “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

The whole theme of the saints on the sea of glass mingled with fire is that God and his saints will always triumph. The word song occurs five times in the Revelation. (5:9; 14:3, 3; 15:3, 3.)

4. They sing:

✚ “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints (the king of the nations.) Who shall not fear thee and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgements are made manifest.”

The works of God in preserving Israel from the wrath of Pharaoh, caused Moses to

sing his song. Likewise the works of God, works of wrath as in Egypt, cause the saints who have been martyred to sing God's praise.

Notice that the better texts say "king of the nations". He is the rightful king. The devil is a usurper and so is the beast who is seemingly so powerful. He leads the nations astray but they can never belong to him. They will be given to the Lamb by the Father.

✚ "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Psalm 2:8.

It is true that Jesus shall reign where e'er the sun doth his successive journeys run. Every nation will have to submit to him, and, as evidence of that submission:

✚ "Shall even go up from year to year to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." Zech 14:16.

Thus, as the saints sing, all nations indeed shall come and worship before him. Thus they give expression to that which is on the point of being fulfilled. They know that the ultimate victory is God's, and will be consummated when the seven angels have poured out their vials on the earth.

### **The heavenly temple opened verses 5-8**

The stage is now set for the seven angels who have the seven last plagues, to come into action. John sees the sanctuary of the (heavenly) tabernacle opened, and seven angels come out of the sanctuary having seven plagues. They are clothed in pure white linen, and their breasts are girded with golden girdles. Thus these angels wear garb that is similar to that which was worn by the priests who ministered in the earthly tabernacle. Exodus 28.

The purpose of these angels is so different from that of the priests ordained from amongst Aaron's sons. They are now going to vindicate the holy one by pouring out wrath upon the beast and upon all those men who have received his mark, or who have worshipped him and his image. One of the four living creatures now gives the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And now John says that the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power. No one could enter into the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were consummated.

This brings to mind two Scriptures in Hebrews, which speak of God in respect of this aspect of his character. Paul says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (10:31.) And again, "Our God is a consuming fire." (12:29.) How fearful a thing it is to fall into God's hands, will now become apparent to those men who have chosen to follow and obey the beast, rather than to obey the living God who sent his Son into this

world so that all men might freely obtain everlasting life through faith in his precious blood.

## **Chapter sixteen**

### ***Seven bowls of wrath poured out upon the earth***

#### **God's command to the angels verse 1**

No one can enter into the sanctuary while the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth. Now a great voice comes out of the sanctuary and speaks to the seven angels saying:

✚ “Go ye and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God upon the earth”.

There can be no longer any delay in the purposes of God. The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:20). So in this dispensation God has been longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9.) But now the longsuffering of God is ended and all that Scripture has said will come upon those who follow Satan and his follower, the beast, will surely come upon them.

#### **The first vial ... the first angel verse 2 boils**

The first angel pours out his bowl onto the earth and “horrible, malignant sores broke out on everyone who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.” This is only the beginning of the seven last plagues. They will increase in intensity and there will be no escape for those who serve the beast. There are those who would have us to believe that this is figurative language being used here. However, it is good sound interpretation to take all to be literal when it makes sense. Satan would love to deceive men, even now, as to the fact that God says what he means and means what he says.

What happened in the land of Egypt, when Moses delivered Israel by the hand of the Lord, was not figurative, but literal. We read:

✚ “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, take handfuls of ashes or soot from the brick kilns, and let Moses sprinkle them towards the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh ... and Moses threw them towards the sky; and it became boils erupting in sores upon man and beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of their boils; for the boils were upon the magicians and all the Egyptians” Ex 9:8-12. (sixth plague of Egypt Ex 9:8-12.)

We see that horrible malignant sores, just like those which afflicted the people of Egypt, now afflict the followers of the beast. If Exodus is literal then the Revelation is literal as well.

### **The second vial ... the second angel verse 3 blood**

The first angel poured out his bowl on the earth. Now the second angel pours out his bowl upon the sea. Thus the entire earth is going to feel the heavy hand of wrath upon it. The sea becomes as the blood of a dead person and every living thing in the sea died. Thus all that is in the oceans will die. This, I believe, is much more than the pollution that is threatening the life in the sea. It is an angel, and not man who will cause all life in the sea to die.

Note how much more severe this plague is, when it is compared with what occurs when the burning mountain plunges into the sea in Rev 8:8-9. There only one third of the creatures in the sea died. There is thus no dilution in the wrath of God as the end draws near. No, rather there is an intensification of his purpose to destroy sinners out of the earth.

Again, compare this with the record in Exodus where we read:

✚ “Moses ... lifted up the rod ... and all the waters that were in the river turned to blood. And the fish that were in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt” (first plague Ex 7:14-25.)

### **The third vial ... the third angel verses 4-7 blood**

The third angel poured out his bowl upon the rivers and fountains of water and they became blood. (just as Moses had done in the land of Egypt) We read in Exodus 7:24:

✚ “And all the Egyptians dug round about the river for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the river.”

Then John hears the angel of the waters saying:

✚ “Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shall be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and of prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.”

We are reminded of the word of the Lord Jesus:

✚ “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Matt 23:34-35.

God will recompense all those who have persecuted his children. Not one drop of the blood of the saints, will God not avenge.

The beast will, indeed, make war on the saints of God, and all who receive his mark will do likewise, but them will reap, even as they sow. Having shed the blood of the people of God, they will be counted worthy to be given blood to drink. John says:

✚ “I heard the altar saying, yes, O Lord God almighty, true and righteous are thy judgements.” (lit. V 7.)

Here we see the altar personified. It was here that the martyrs who cried out during the breaking of the fifth seal, were to be found. (Rev 6:9.)

It would be well to note here that all heaven is on the side of God as he pours out wrath on a wicked world. The angel of the waters cries out: “You are righteous in all that you are doing”, and the altar, inanimate though it may be echoes the angel’s cry. Remember that murder, or the killing of innocent victims, is hateful to God. The Scripture makes it clear that, one of the provisos of the eternal covenant made by God with Noah is that murder must be punished by the murderer forfeiting his life. Thus we read in Gen 9:5-6,:

✚ “And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

So unrequited murder cries out to God for vengeance.

✚ “For blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.” (See Numbers 35:30-34.)

The believer, in any age may not take it upon himself to execute vengeance on his persecutors, but God will indeed “avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them.” Luke 18:7.

### **The fourth vial ... the fourth angel verses 8-9 men scorched by the sun**

✚ “The fourth angel pours out his bowl upon the sun, and it is given to the sun to burn men with fire. And men were burned with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who had authority over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.”

We have remarked how the whole earth has been affected by the bowls which have been poured out by the first three angels. It was the earth, the sea and the rivers and fountains of water. Now the sun is brought into the picture, and is used by God to afflict those men who have chosen sin and Satan rather than to serve and obey God and the Lamb. God

rules this universe which he himself has made, and it will respond to his commands as he calls on it to afflict ungodly men.

When Deborah and Barak fought against Sisera, captain of the armies of Jabin, king of the Canaanites who oppressed Israel, we read:

✚ “They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”  
Judges 5:20.

There have been times in the past when God has used the heavens to war against men on earth. Not only in Deborah's day, but at the flood, at the Exodus, when Joshua fought against the Amorite confederacy, and in the days of king Hezekiah, when God destroyed the army of Assyria with a blast from heaven.

What is being described in this passage of the Revelation is no ordinary or extraordinary heat wave. It is not a case of men being sunburned but being seared and scorched by the heat of the sun.

Now this could come about by either of the following means:-

1. God could cause the temperature of the sun to rise considerably, and so to bring this judgement to pass.
2. It could be caused by the earth's orbit being altered so that the earth moves closer to the sun. We know that the temperatures on the planet Venus are so high that no life could exist there. Should the earth move several million miles closer to the sun the temperatures on earth would soar and what is described in verses 8-9 would become an awful reality. This is what will take place, rather than an increase in the sun's temperature.

Are there Scriptural grounds for believing that the earth will move out of its place? We read in Isa 13:12-13:

✚ “I will make a man more rare than fine gold, and mankind scarcer than the pure gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.”

We also read of men hiding from the Lord “when he arises to shake mightily and terribly the earth.” Isa 2:19, 21. We have already quoted these Scriptures as to what is going to happen when the Rapture takes place under the sixth seal. This whole period of time just prior to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish his millennial kingdom, is marked by great cosmic disturbances which will only end after the Lord himself sets his feet on the Mount of Olives. (Zech 14:4.)



There is a Scripture in Isa 24:6 which is very similar to this passage in the Revelation. It reads:

✚ “Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.”

That this scorching comes about as the result of a change in the orbit of the earth is clear as we read further:

✚ “For the windows of the heavens are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble and shake. The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently. The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall sway to and fro like a hammock; its transgressions shall lie heavily upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again.” (Isa 24:18-20.)

Thus the earth will be shaken out of its place (Isa 13:13) by God himself and the result will be terrible to behold. It is evident that, even in this time of trouble, God will preserve the Jews for we read in Joel 3:16:

✚ “And the Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel”

We see no change in those men who are still upon the earth. There is no evidence of sorrow or of repentance but, rather, men blaspheme God. Thus, as always, ungodly men lay the blame for their misfortune, not upon themselves for their disobedience, nor upon Satan, who has deceived and led them astray, but upon God.

### **The fifth vial ... the fifth angel verses 10-11 darkness**

The fifth angel pours out his bowl onto the throne of the beast, and his kingdom is filled with darkness, and men gnaw their tongues with pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pain and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

We notice again how similar this is to the ninth plague in the days when God used his servant Moses to deliver Israel from the yoke of Pharaoh. We read:

✚ “And the Lord said unto Moses, stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there might be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt ... and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” Ex 10:21-23.

Just as the darkness in the land of Egypt was literal, so this darkness in the kingdom of the beast will be literal. We are reminded again of what transpired when the Abyss was

opened. When the smoke from the shaft of the Abyss issued forth the sun and the air were darkened for it was like the smoke of a great furnace. Rev 9:2.

The explanation of this phenomenon is not too difficult to arrive at. Whatever has caused the earth to shake and to move out of its orbit will, shortly afterwards, cause the entire earth to be blanketed with darkness. This may be caused by great clouds of cosmic dust which will engulf the earth. This supernatural darkness is not something new for when the Lord Jesus Christ hung upon the cross it became dark suddenly from the sixth hour till the ninth hour. Luke 23:44-45.

It is as well to remark here that the sores which men were afflicted with under the first bowl have not yet healed. Men are still in pain and still have the sores when the fifth angel causes darkness to come upon the kingdom of the beast. There is good reason to believe that these plagues will follow closely upon one another, and that they will also be cumulative. Again, let us notice that men blaspheme God at this time. There is no place for repentance in their hearts, but they are fully set in their evil way.

### **The sixth vial ... the sixth angel verse 12 Euphrates dried up**

The sixth angel now pours out his bowl onto the great river Euphrates and its waters are dried up to make a way for the kings of the east. (lit. sun-rising.) We find now that the final stage is set for the great battle of Armageddon For the kings from the sun-rising to be there, the river Euphrates must be dried up. Thus the vast hordes from the east will have a much easier passage when they come to that last great battle.

How often one has heard the statement made that “the yellow races will rule the world”. It is averred that this is what the Bible teaches. When asked where the statement is to be found, the passage can never be produced. Let it be said here and now, that the Bible has never taught that the yellow races will rule the world. However, this passage could be the passage which has given rise to such a statement. What is clear here, is that all the Eastern nations will have an unobstructed passage, when they are summoned to the battle of Armageddon They will join with the nations subject to the beast, together with all other nations, to fight against the Lamb, as he returns to establish his kingdom.

What I do think is very clear, is that the nations of the East will act in concert and this may mean that the whole of Asia will ultimately come under the sway of China and its communistic philosophy as interpreted by Mao-Tse-Tung. John now sees three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

These are the Spirits of demons doing signs (working miracles) and they go forth to the kings of the whole inhabited earth to gather them to the battle of the great day of God almighty. And they gathered them together into the place called in Hebrew “Armageddon”.

Let us take note here of several very important facts:-

1. The unclean spirits come out of the dragon, beast and false prophet. We see here the nature of this evil triumvirate. They are thoroughly evil and their purposes are always hostile to God.
2. They are the spirits of demons. We see here that demons are spirit creatures. Just what place they occupy in the creation, we do not know. Some suppose that they are the disembodied spirits of creatures who lived on earth before Adam and Eve. They argue that, because these evil spirits or demons seek to possess or enter into bodies that they were once occupants of bodies and felt the necessity to dwell in a body. But all this is speculation. All we know is that they are part of Satan's evil empire, and that they obey and serve him. More than this we do not know.
3. They are like frogs and summon the kings of the earth to Armageddon Just like the croaking frog comes out of the slimy swamps and ponds of this world, so these unclean spirits come out of their wicked obscurity to croak out their evil summons to doomed humanity. Their message is plain and clear. Gather to the place called Armageddon in the Hebrew tongue.
4. The place called Armageddon There is such a place, and it is a place where decisive battles have been fought in the past. Armageddon or, more correctly, Har-Magedon is Mount Megiddo at the foot of which lies the valley of Jezreel and the Plain of Esdraelon, where the last battle of this age is to be fought. It was here that Deborah and Barak fought against the Canaanites and defeated them. Judges 5:19-20. It was here that Gideon defeated the hosts of the Midianites and the Amalekites with his three hundred men. Judges 6:33. Both these battles were won as the result of divine intervention. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, while Gideon used pitchers, flaming torches and trumpets to strike terror into the hearts of his foes. It was also here that Saul met his death at the hands of the philistines as we see from 1 Sam 31 and 2 Sam 4:4. It was here also that good king Josiah was killed in battle when he fought against the Egyptians 2 Kings 23:29-30. So here the Antichrist, the false prophet and all who serve them, will experience their final doom.
5. It is the battle of the great day of God Almighty. It is not a battle of east against west or of the white nations against the coloured nations. Rather it is the battle of man against the Lord Jesus Christ and the armies of heaven which follow him. The day on which the battle will be fought will be calculated to the day and the kings of the earth and their followers will be assembled together on the very day of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is why the demonic spirits summon men. It is because the very day and hour of this battle will be known, for it will be fought exactly 1260 days after the beast or Antichrist receives his power and authority. This is why it is not possible for the church to go through the Great Tribulation. The day when the Lord Jesus comes for his church is unknown and will come unexpectedly and unheralded. Thus, just to use an example, say that the beast receives his authority from the dragon on 30<sup>th</sup> June

1996 A.D. From that date it will be a simple matter to calculate the day on which Armageddon takes place.

There will be 184 days in 1996, 365 days in 1997, 365 days in 1998, and 346 days in 1999 making a total of 1260 days. Thus 1260 days from 30<sup>th</sup> June 1996 brings us to 12<sup>th</sup> December 1999. Thus if the beast should receive power on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1996 then Armageddon would take place on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1999 to the very hour.

On the hour, Jesus Christ with his heavenly host will come down upon the earth. Waiting on the plain of Esdraeleon and in the Valley of Jezreel will be a vast host of humanity. They have imagined, in the words of the Psalmist, a vain thing. (Ps 2:1.) They can no more hinder the Lord from coming, than what a fly could fly to the sun. In one moment the Lord Jesus Christ will destroy that vast host. There will not be one single survivor on that day.

Psalm 2:1-3 is very clear in the Amplified Bible. It reads:

✚ “Why do the nations assemble with commotion, and why do the people imagine an empty scheme? The kings of the earth take their places, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his (Christ) anointed one. They say, let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us.”

But God will hold them in derision, says the Psalmist in Psalm 2 verse 4. It will, of course, take some time to gather all nations to this appointed place. All this could not happen without God permitting it to happen. So we read in Zech 14:2:

✚ “For I will gather all nations to Jerusalem to battle ... then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.” (verse 3.)

In the Hebrew 'har' means “a mountain” and “Megiddo” means a rendezvous or assembly. Thus it is the mountain of rendezvous. Indeed, its name is apt, for here man will keep a rendezvous with God on that great day of battle. There is a solemn warning, sandwiched in the text here, of the uncertainty of the hour when the Lord Jesus will come for his church.

The hour of Armageddon is known 42 months before it takes place, but here we read,

✚ “Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

This warning is not addressed to the people of the world who are living during the Great Tribulation, but to us who live now, that we may not be taken unawares but that we will be ready.

There are other Scriptures which bear on this theme, which we would do well to read. The first in Matt 24:42-43 reads:

✚ “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.”

Notice that this Scripture follows immediately after the Lord Jesus had told his disciples that there would be two in the field, one would be taken and one would be left. Two would be grinding at the mill, one would be taken and one would be left. Matt 24:40-41.

There is a similar warning to be found in Luke 12:35-40. Here we are told to:

✚ “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.”

Paul warns in 1 Thess 5:1-4:

✚ “... for yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night ... ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief.”

So also Peter warns:

✚ “But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” 2 Peter 3:10.

We find a solemn warning on watchfulness in Mark 13:32-37. Telling his disciples that no man knows the day or the hour when the Son of Man will return, he warns:

✚ “Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you asleep. And what I say unto you I say unto all, watch.”

As we have seen many times before, it is vital for us to obey what Luke tells us in Luke 21:36:

✚ “Watch ye therefore, and pray ye always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

## **The seventh vial ... the seventh angel verses 17-21 great earthquake and hail**

The seventh angel pours out his bowl on the air and there comes a great voice from the sanctuary, saying, it is done. 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.

This earthquake is going to change the whole surface of the earth, twisting it into an unrecognisable shape. There is a warning of this to be found in the prophet Zephaniah He writes:

✚ “I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitants.” Eph 3:6.

Again we see the horrors of Armageddon in Zeph 3:8:

✚ “Therefore wait upon me saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”

The effect of this vast earthquake is vast. The great city (Jerusalem) was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. This is what Zephaniah sees. All the great cities of the world will be in shambles. All the buildings will lie in ruins. The cities will be cities of rubble, with no inhabitants to dwell in them.

Let us take note of the effect of this earthquake upon the earth:-

1. The great city was divided into three parts. There are going to be very great changes in the city of Jerusalem One thing that we are told is that the Mount of Olives is going to cleave in two. There will be a great East-West valley between the two halves of the mountain. The children of Israel will flee and, the prophet Zechariah says:

✚ “The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.” Zech 14:4-5.

Additionally, John tells us, that the very city itself is going to be divided into three parts.

2. The cities of the nations fell. All the great cities, as we know them today, will be utterly destroyed. Hitherto the earthquakes which have shaken the world, have usually taken place in sparsely inhabited places. Occasionally there has been an earthquake which has affected one of the towns or cities of the world, but hardly ever has more than a limited area suffered as the result of an earthquake. Now every city is

destroyed. Not only is this the case, but the entire earth suffers for, writing about this time Isaiah says:

✚ “The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities (witnesses), he regardeth no man.” Isa 33:8.

This utter desolation is one of the reasons why the Son of Man sends forth his angels to gather all who have survived the Great Tribulation, so that he may judge them at the throne of his glory, as to their worthiness to enter into his millennial kingdom. Matt 25:31.

3. Every island fled away and the mountains were not found. There are those who would have us believe that it took untold ages for the mountains to be formed. They rose ever so gradually out of the earth, finally to reach the heights they stand at today. Of course all this is pure supposition. Here we read that these same mountains will be thrown down in one day. Not only will this happen, but the islands of the sea are going to disappear under the ocean's waves. And all this is not going to take long ages to take place but, when the seventh angel pours out his bowl it is going to transpire.

In addition to all this we are told that great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the fierceness of his wrath.

As the next two chapters deal with the subject of the great judgement of God upon Babylon, we will leave our enquiries concerning Babylon, to a later stage. One important factor which we must stress here however is this - that God remembers. So many think that God forgets or will forget because he is so slow to manifest his power and judgement. This is the greatest error that men can be guilty of. God does not forget and he will recompense.

Now we are told in verse 21 that 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. There is a common error amongst many in believing that the hail spoken of here is the kind of hail that we are familiar with. In other words, frozen water. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Greek word used here is “kalaza” which occurs only in the Revelation. (Rev 8:7; 11:19; 16:21, 21.)

The word means “something let go, let fall”. In the Old Testament it was always used of divine judgement, usually in connection with some cosmic upheaval. This was the case in the land of Egypt when the Lord punished Pharaoh for not letting his people go. There is a great parallel between the record of the seventh plague of Egypt and what happens here. This was no ordinary hail and rain but was a meteoritic storm which caused untold destruction in the land of Egypt - see Exodus 9:18-35.

There was a similar visitation in the days of Joshua for we read:

✚ “As they fled from Israel down the slope of Beth-Horon to Aazekah, the Lord cast large stones upon them from the sky, and they died. More died from the hailstones than the Israelites killed with the sword.” Joshua 10:11.

Here we are told clearly that the hailstones were, literally, stones which the Lord cast down. We read of the destruction of Gog and Magog when they invade the land of Israel in these last days. God says:

✚ “I will pour upon him, upon his hordes, and upon all the nations in his train, floods of rain accompanied by hailstones, fire, and brimstone.” Ezekiel 38:22.

That God rained down no ordinary rain and hail is clear from Psalm 18:12-13:

✚ “Out of the brightness before him there broke forth through his thick clouds hailstones and coals of fire, the Lord also thundered from the heavens, and the most high uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire.”

Other phenomena similar to that in Revelation are described in this Psalm. We read:

✚ “Then the earth quaked and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled, they moved and were shaken, because he was indignant and angry.” (v 7.)

There can be no doubt that these hailstones, each weighing over 100 lbs, come from outer space.

## **Chapter seventeen**

### ***The scarlet-clothed woman, the harlot church destroyed***

We have seen much in the book of the Revelation about the dragon, beast and false prophet. As we have already noted, they are the satanic counterpart of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now we come to another satanic counterfeit, in this case, the harlot church.

There is the true church which is the bride of Christ. So also there is the harlot church which is, and ever has been, the tool of the devil. The origin of this harlot church is, of course, the city of Babylon. We read that one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls came and talked to John and said:

✚ “Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgement of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 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.”

How similar these words are to those of the prophet Jeremiah who wrote long before John and said:

✚ “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, making all the earth drunken; the nations drank of her wine, therefore the nations went mad.” Jeremiah 51:7.

Babylon has always been the instrument through which the devil has worked. Babylon, directed by Satan, has been the evil genius behind all that has directed men away from God. Thus the whole social, economic, political, and religious activities of men, are guided and controlled by Satan by means of principles which were first formulated at Babylon. It is particularly with the religious aspect of Babylon that this chapter is concerned with, while chapter eighteen deals with the political and economic and social aspects.

We notice that the kings of the earth and the nations or peoples of the earth have been guilty of committing fornication with the harlot church. It is clear from the Word of God that all men ought to serve the Lord, no, even more explicit is the word which tells us that God commands all men everywhere to repent. Acts 17:30. It was the fact that Israel played the harlot with the Lord, and went whoring after other Gods that caused the Lord to send them into captivity.

The prophet Hosea is but one who speaks about the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel when he says:

✚ “The Spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone awhoring from under their God.” Hosea 4:12-14.

How different from the true church of whom the apostle Paul writes:

✚ “I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2 Cor 11:2.

As we look at the people of the world, how true it is that most do not even desire to serve and obey the Lord. Many multitudes are religious, indeed, but the vast majority do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

### **The harlot church verses 3-5**

John is carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness where he sees a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast. The beast is full of the names of blasphemy and has seven heads and ten horns. The woman is clothed in purple and scarlet gilded with gold, precious stones and pearls. She has a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of

her fornication. Upon her forehead was a name written, mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

1. Where but in a wilderness or desert would such be found? No wonder the Lord Jesus said, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness." Matt 6:23. Indeed, to be deceived by the doctrines of the harlot church is to be in a wilderness together with her.
2. The woman sitting upon the scarlet coloured beast speaks of only one thing. That, initially, the harlot church will co-operate with the Antichrist when he is revealed. It will be remembered that the Antichrist cannot come until it is his time. 2 Thess 2:6. When his time comes the church of the living God, the bride of the Lord Jesus, will be caught up to be with the Lord forever. The harlot church will be left behind and will immediately begin to work with the Antichrist. The harlot church has ever behaved after this fashion. She has even tried to use the civil power to destroy those who are true witness of the Lord. From the very earliest days of the true church this has been the case and millions of true believers have been martyred by those who profess to serve the Lord but are instead totally unconverted and serve the interests of Satan. Thus, to begin with, the harlot will ride the scarlet coloured beast, but not for long.
3. The woman was clothed with scarlet and purple, and was decked with gold, and precious stones and pearls. The use of scarlet and purple was restricted to those who were wealthy and of royal lineage. Jesus was, mockingly, clothed in purple by the soldiers before they smote him and said, "Hail, king of the Jews". Mark 15:17. Scarlet and purple, as well as the other articles worn by the woman representing the harlot church, speak of wealth, power, worldly influence. How different from the true church which, individually and collectively, is seen as being clothed in garments that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.
4. She has a golden cup in her hands full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. We see in Jer 51:7 that Babylon has been a golden cup in the Lord's hands. The nations have drunken of her wine which has made them mad. We see the folly of those who turn away from the living God to serve dead idols. It is spiritual fornication to serve and to worship any other but the living God.
5. Written on her head we find mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. She is the mother of all the mystery religions. Only the initiates can participate. Once ensnared in the mesh of her falsities, it is difficult to escape. She is great in that all who are not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, have been deceived by her. She is the mother of harlots. Thus she cannot give rise to anything that is pure and holy. All her spawn are like her, harlots all. All abominations stem from her. As has been noted elsewhere, the word abomination always refers to the idol-Gods of the wicked. Thus all idolatry can be traced back to Babylon. Her name being written on her head identifies her, for it was customary for harlots to wear their names on their foreheads.

6. The fact that, initially, the harlot rides upon the scarlet coloured beast seems to indicate that she will be dominant until the beast is resurrected. How different she is from the bride of Christ who is subject to him. Eph 5:24.

### **John wonders Rev 17:6-7**

We are told that the woman was drunk from the blood of the saints and from the blood of the martyrs (witnesses) of Jesus. From the beginning this has been the case. Was it not Cain who slew his brother Abel? In 1 John 3:12 we read:

✚ “Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.”

The false has always persecuted the true. During the long ages of the church multitudes have been killed because they were not prepared to compromise the truth. It is no accident that the Greek word for a witness, 'martur' (also 'martus') was transliterated into English to become the word that speaks of one who dies for his faith in Christ. For long ages, to be a faithful witness, was to court death. When John saw the harlot he wondered with a great wonder. The angel says to John:

✚ “Why did you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carried her.”

### **The scarlet coloured beast Rev 17:8-11**

1. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the Abyss, and goes to destruction. What John says here is that the beast was or existed. When does he exist? We are dealing with prophecy here and John is looking down the long corridors of time. Thus when he says who the beast was, he is not saying that he lived in the past. Some, taking this verse, would teach that the beast or Antichrist will be somebody like Nero or Tiberius or Judas Iscariot or some such other person who once lived on the earth. This is not so. What John is referring to here is the Scripture in Rev 13 where he told us that the beast rose out of the sea and then he was slain. He is not refers to the fact that, as far as life on this earth is concerned, the beast actually died, and his connection with the earth was severed. And is about to come up out of the Abyss tells us that the beast will come back to life again but it will be only to go back to destruction or perdition.
2. They that dwell on the earth will wonder about the beast, all those whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. He will have the ungodly spell bound. This great imposter will deceive all those who will not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. How vital it is for us to have our names in the Book of Life. Only thereby will we be saved for all eternity and safeguarded from the Spirit of error that is abroad in the world today trying to deceive even the very elect of God.

3. John says:

✚ “Here is the mind of wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits.”

The seven heads are seven mountains. We see that there are a number of places in the Bible where the term mountain is used of a kingdom. To identify the city over which the woman reigns as Rome is not correct. The city is always Babylon but her influence has pervaded the whole Gentile world. Rome is but a part of it.

In the Major Prophets the word mountain is used synonymously for kingdom in many places. One example is Isa 11:9 where we read:

✚ “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

Another excellent example is to be found in Dan 2:35 where we read:

✚ “And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”

In Dan 2:44-45 we read:

✚ “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people, but it shall break and crush and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands...”

Thus we need to find out all about these seven mountains or kingdoms over which the woman has exercised power and authority. Remember, the woman has made the nations drunk with the wine of her fornication? We will include in our list an eighth, for we read of the beast that he is the “eighth”, and is of the seven. (v 11.)

1 Babylon

Babel was the beginning. It was here that Nimrod built his city. This city was to exert a universal influence on all the kingdoms that were to follow. Babylon was the mother of the kingdoms of this earth. It was here that idolatry began. It was here that the Babylonian trinity of Father, Mother and Son was first propounded.

2 Egypt

We are all familiar with the great works and glories of ancient Egypt. The pyramids and the sphinx, the great temples of Memphis and Thebes. Egypt was a great world power, and continued so for many years. She was the oppressor of Israel and, even when Israel occupied Canaan, continued to be at enmity with her. To this day Egypt is the enemy of Israel. She will be desolate for 40 years during

the Millennium because of arrogance (Ez 29:10-12) but will yet acknowledge the Lord and serve him. (Isa 19:21.)

3 Assyria

The Assyrians were akin to the Jews in that they were descendants of Shem. They were the cruellest of peoples and struck terror into the hearts of all the nations round about. They would skin their captives alive. Prisoners would be impaled before the citizens of a besieged city with the threat of similar treatment if surrender was not forthcoming. Vast numbers of conquered peoples were transplanted to other countries. This is the fate that befell the 10 tribes of Israel who were carried away captive by Shalmaneser who placed them in Halah and in Habor by the River Gozan and in the cities of the Medes. 2 Ki 17:6. The book of Jonah deals with the warning delivered to the great capital city of Assyria, namely, Nineveh. This city was so completely destroyed that for many centuries its site was not even known.

1 Babylon

We are told in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, that the next great Gentile power was Babylon again. Together with their allies, the Babylonians destroyed Assyria. They are represented by the head of gold in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2). It was Babylonia who was responsible for the carrying away into captivity of the kingdom of Judah. It would be well to note that Daniel saw a vision of Gentile world power just as the king of Babylon had dreamed a dream. (Dan 7). The only difference was that Daniel saw them as rapacious beasts. As these chapters were prophetic, they did not deal with the three Gentile world powers which had passed into history, but with present and future powers.

4 Medo-Persia.

The Medo-Persians were different from the preceding powers in that God used them to deliver Israel. Cyrus is referred to by name as their deliverer, many years before he was born. (Isa 44:28; 45:1.) It was during the time of Medo-Persian power that Haman tried to destroy the Jews, and it was Cyrus who permitted them to return to their land under Ezra the priest.

5 Greece

The Medo-Persians were overthrown by the Greeks. It was during the ascendancy of Greece that the Jews who returned to the land of Israel endured some of the most trying times in their history. Antiochus defiled the temple thus being the type of the Antichrist who will defile the temple during the Great Tribulation.

6 Rome was the last world power, typified by iron in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. They were the people of the prince that shall come (Dan 9:26) and it was during the time of Rome's ascendancy that the Lord Jesus Christ was cut off for our sins.

## 7 Kingdom of Antichrist

This is the last vestige of Gentile power, which will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus when he returns. Initially this kingdom will start off with ten kings or powers coming together. We see this kingdom very clearly in the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. He sees a great image of a man. The head is gold representing the Babylonian empire, the breast and arms are of silver representing the Medo-Persians, the thighs are of brass representing the Grecian empire, and the legs are of iron representing the Roman Empire. In its final stage this image, representing Gentile world power, degenerates into feet of part iron, part clay. (Dan 2.)

The ten toes represent ten kings in the end of the times of the Gentiles. Lu 21:24. We see these ten kings again in Dan 7 where the kingdom of Babylon is portrayed by a lion, Medo-Persia by a bear, Greece by a leopard, and Rome by a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly. Dan 7:1-8.

Thus we have:-

	<u>Image (Dan2)</u>	<u>Beasts (Dan 7)</u>	<u>Kingdom represented</u>
1	head of gold	lion	Babylon
2	breast and arms of silver	bear	Medo-Persia
3	thighs of brass	leopard	Greece
4	legs of iron	terrible beast	Rome
5	feet (ten toes) of iron and clay	ten horns	kingdom of Antichrist

We see the European Union as the forerunner of the kingdom of the Antichrist. The member states will surrender their power to the beast. Thus, the seventh world power will also be the eighth. The only difference between them will be that the Antichrist will persuade the ten kings to surrender their sovereignty to him. Foreseeing this, John writes:

✚ “These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.” Rev 17:13.

According to Daniel a little horn comes up among the ten horns of the dreadful beast of his vision. Dan 7:8. This little horn will pluck up three of the first horns by their roots. This indicates that three of the seven kings will be conquered by the beast or the Antichrist. This is further confirmed by the words of Daniel in chapter 7 verse 20:

✚ “I would know the truth ... of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had

eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.”

Daniel elaborates:

✚ “And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first (ten kings), and he shall subdue three kings. He shall speak great words against the most high, and shall wear out the saints of the most high ... and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. (Dan 7:24-25.) (3½ years, 42 months or 1260 days are 3½ times.)”

We are living in the days when the ten kings are coming together in preparation for their brief hour before they yield to the eighth or the Antichrist. From our scrutiny of the Scriptures we can see that, at the time of John’s writing, of the seven kings represented by the heads of the beast, five were fallen (Babylon, Egypt, Assyria, Medo-Persia and Greece), one was still in its heyday (Rome), the other (the seventh which will also be the eighth) had not yet come (in John’s day), but when he came, he would continue only a short space. (Rev 17:10.)

Thus the time of duration of this last Gentile world power will be short in comparison with the other world empires which have decayed and passed into history, for even the great power of John’s day is with us no more as a great power.

Now John tells us, the “beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.” (verse 11.) Thus his time is very short, only 3½ years, and, when his time is up, he will go into perdition. We see in Rev 19:20 how the beast and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire after the battle of Armageddon.

### **War with the Lamb verses 12-14**

John says:

✚ “The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.”

We have seen that Daniel tells us that the ten kings are the ten toes of the image of the king’s dream. They are also the ten horns of the dreadful beast of Daniel’s vision. Thus, in both these cases, they derive from the fourth kingdom, which is the Roman Empire.

Thus it is today, that we are seeing the coming into existence of a United States of Europe. There are more than ten powers in the E.U. though. Perhaps some of the smaller ones will be consolidated with others added. The final membership of this group of nations, however, will be ten.

They receive power. Let us remember that behind all this, God is in control. Thus we remember the words of the apostle Paul who said:

✚ “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”  
Romans 13:1.

Everything is not out of control. God has his hand on all, and everything that is happening, and that is going to happen, is permitted to happen by God himself. When they receive power it is but for one hour. This is how short their time will be in the sight of God. Only a brief tenure will be theirs and they will pass from the scene when God, in his mighty power, destroys all Gentile dominion. They have one mind says John, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. They have one mind and it is a mind which is hostile to God. This is not only true of them, but is also true of all unregenerate men. This is why the apostle Paul speaks in Romans 12:2 about a transformation brought about by the renewing of our minds. That this renewing can only come about by a work of the Holy Spirit is evident. The word translated renewing in the word 'anakainosis' only occurs here and in Titus 3:5 where we are told that we are saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

But these kings, having unrenewed minds which are hostile to God, have one mind, and that mind is evil, thus they willingly surrender their power to the beast, a power which he will use to lead countless millions on the path that leads to destruction. In their utter folly, these ten kings, together with the Antichrist, will make war with the Lamb. What utter folly this is, that men can imagine that they can contend with the almighty. Their destruction will be complete. John is brief here, all he says is:

✚ “The Lamb shall overcome them.”

Could there be any other outcome to their confrontation? Impossible! For he (the Lamb) is Lord of Lords and king of kings. Not only is this so, but he has those who have recognised him as such. Of them John says, “They are with him” and are “Called, chosen and faithful.” How blessed it is to be with him. This is why the Lord Jesus came to die. It is that all who believe on him might be with him.

1. They are called. This is a word that is so often used of the child of God. Writing to the Romans Paul says that they are “the called of Jesus Christ”. (1:6.) And again, he says:

✚ “All things work together for good to them that love God to them that are the called according to his purpose.” Rom 8:28.

We could continue thus for much longer but these will suffice to prove that the believer is “the called” of Jesus Christ.

2. Chosen. How blessed to remember the words of the Lord Jesus in John 15:16:



✚ “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”

Also Eph 1:4:

✚ “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”

3. Faithful. This is what the word had to say of the Lord Jesus himself right at the beginning of the book of Revelation. Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. And he called to his church saying:

✚ “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” Rev 2:10.

### **The harlot destroyed Rev 17:15-18**

John tells us that the waters which he saw were (according to the angel) peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. Over all of them the harlot had dominion. How true it is that the whole of our so called civilization derives from Babylon. We can even trace the giving of eggs at Easter back to ancient Babylon, for the Babylonian Goddess Ishtar (from which word our English word Easter comes) was hatched from an egg which fell on the river Euphrates from the heavens. Were we to continue to examine all we do and practice, we would find so much more that comes from that evil city.

The ten horns will hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. The apostate church's co-operation with the beast will not last long. When he claims all worship, demanding that men recognise him as their God, he will have the harlot church destroyed. This is the ultimate end of those who will not submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and serve him only. So all man's vaunted knowledge and wisdom, which today denies the truths of the Bible, will end. They would not serve God and now they will have to grovel before this evil man, and serve his master, the devil.

John says:

✚ “God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.”

Thus, because men would not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved (2 Th 2:10), God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie. (2 Th 2:11.) That lie is that the Antichrist is God. The woman that thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth. That great city is, of course, not Rome, but the city of Babylon from which Rome derives.

## **Chapter eighteen**

### ***The destruction of Babylon the great***

#### **The city doomed verses 1-3**

After this John sees another angel coming down from heaven with great authority. The earth was enlightened by the glory of this angel. This angel cries with a mighty voice,:

✚ “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.” The Greek here is very emphatic reading, “Fallen, fallen (fell, fell), is Babylon the great.”

#### **Babylon is to be rebuilt**

The passages referring to the destruction of Babylon contained in the Old Testament have never been fulfilled. Let us look briefly at the history of this city. The city was founded by Ninus who has been identified with Nimrod. The book of Genesis mentions the city as the first place to be built after the flood. We read in Gen 11:1-4 that as men journeyed from the east they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. The land of Shinar, of course, is the land between the two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Here they made bricks and they used bitumen to hold the bricks together. In some of the old buildings which have been excavated by archaeologists, these layers of bitumen-bound bricks have been exposed. Note what men said in Gen 11:4: “Let us build us a city and a tower ...” verse 8-9 tells us, “... they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name called Babel.” This was after “the Lord came down to see the city and the tower.” (verse 5.)

It is of interest to note that to the builders “Babel” meant “the gate of God” (Akkadian) but in the Hebrew it meant “confusion”. (Akkadian ... babilbabili ... gate of God.) We now go to Gen 10:8-10 where we read:

✚ “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, ... in the land of Shinar.”

He was not a mighty hunter of animals, as many erroneously suppose, for he hunted before the Lord. It was men who were the quarry, and Nimrod sought to draw men away from the Lord and his worship. It is evident that idolatry began in this ancient city, and the person who began it all was Nimrod with his evil wife, Semiramis. History records that he died a violent death with ancient traditions claiming that he died (or rather was executed) by Shem.

As we have seen, the city was the first world power in the prophetic earth. It was from here that civilization passed to Egypt. This is not to be wondered at, in view of the fact that, as men left the region of Ararat, where the ark came to rest, the first plain they would encounter would be that of Shinar or as we call it today, Mesopotamia.

There was a resurgence of the city after the Assyrian empire was overthrown. During this great period of Babylonian history, the famous hanging gardens were built for the king's wife who came from mountainous Elam. The city was captured by Darius the Mede after the drunken orgy of Belshazzar received a divine rebuke, the king having used the holy temple vessels.

Belshazzar was only regent, in fact the king was Nabonidus, this being the reason why he could only offer to make Daniel "third ruler in the kingdom." (Dan 5:16.) The city was not destroyed by the Medo-Persian army. They captured the city intact in fact. It became the capital city of one of the provinces in the Persian Empire.

With regard to the conquest of the city by the Medes and the Persians, Isaiah the prophet had written concerning Cyrus 150 years previously:

✚ "I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut." Isa 45:1.

These gates were in the river Euphrates and they were closed every night. The Medo-Persian army had dug a lake to divert the water of the river should the gates ever be left open. That is what happened on the night of Belshazzar's feast. The waters were diverted and the army entered the city on the river-bed. While Daniel was pronouncing the city's fall, the Medo-Persian army was already in the city.

Encyclopaedia Britannica says that, according to Herodotus, "the height of the walls was 335 feet, and their width 85 feet." A moat surrounded the wall. The clay which had been used to make the bricks for the wall was excavated from this moat. The river Euphrates divided the city in two parts. The wall extended down both sides of the river. There were twenty five streets which were intersected by the river. The gates were at these intersections. The city opened its gates to the army of Alexander the great, and he rested in the city for two months. Thus we see that the city was not destroyed by either the Medo-Persians or the Greeks. But the city did decay. However, even in the time of the Lord Jesus, the city was the home of about 100,000 Jews. The great Jewish academies in Babylon published the Babylonian Talmud in the city in the third and fourth centuries after the death of Christ. Peter was the apostle to the circumcision and he visited the city and wrote one of his epistles (first) there.

Thus we see that the city was never destroyed. There is still a village on the site of Babylon today. The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah concerning Babylon have never been fulfilled. Let us look at some of these prophetic Scriptures. In Isa 13 the destruction goes far beyond anything that has ever occurred in the past. What happens here is what happens when the Day of the Lord comes. Thus we read:

✚ "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldee's excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither

shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there ...” (Isa 13:19-22.)

Such utter destruction and desolation has never ever taken place yet in history. We have Isaiah say again:

✚ “Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her Gods he hath broken unto the ground.” (21:9.)

This is the verse quoted in Revelation 18:2, and it has never been fulfilled. Similar language is used in Isa 47, but we will look at this passage of Scripture at a later stage. Jeremiah has much to say about Babylon and her end. He writes (much the same as Isaiah):

✚ “As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord, so shall no man abide there, neither shall any Son of Man dwell therein.” Jer 50:40.

Jeremiah chapter 51 has much to say about Babylon. There is, of course, an immediate fulfilment of this Scripture, but there is also a future fulfilment The prophet calls out and says:

✚ “My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord.” (verse 45.)

Note how similar this verse is to the one in Rev 18:4. We could go on quoting Scriptures concerning the destruction of Babylon, but we have neither time nor space, and these are sufficient. One thing is sure, that this great city, founded by Nimrod and mentioned 260 times in the Bible, will one day be utterly destroyed by the Lord.

### **Babylon is to be rebuilt ... it will be the Antichrist's capital**

Zechariah is a minor prophet who has much to tell about the time when God will deliver the Jews. In his eighth vision recorded in Zech 5:5-11, he describes an ephah-like vessel. This is a symbol of trade, the ephah being the commercial measure of the O.T. This fits in with the description of Babylon in Rev 18 where we read of the destruction of her merchandise. (18:11.)

The vessel has a lead cover is lifted from the vessel and the prophet saw a woman sitting in the ephah-like vessel. The angel says, “This is wickedness” and thrusts the woman back into the vessel and he covers it. Zechariah then sees two women, and the wind was in their wings. They had wings like a stork (The stork was an abomination among the birds. Lev 11:10; Deut 14:18.)

These two stork-winged women lift up the ephah-like vessel between the earth and the heavens. Zechariah asks the angel, “Where are they taking the ephah-like vessel?” The angel answer the prophet, “To the land of Shinar to build it a house, and when it is

finished to set up the ephah upon its own base.” The K.J.V. Says that wickedness will have a base which will be built and established in the land of Shinar. (Zech 5:11.)

✚ This final wickedness, which will have a base in Babylonia, will be the beast. Thus the great centre of wickedness must once again be built and established on the earth. It may seem incredible that this ancient city will be rebuilt, but the Bible says it will. According to “The Star” newspaper of Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 1974, the city of Babylon is already being rebuilt. It is supposedly being rebuilt as a tourist attraction. It would never do, at this stage, to tell the world why the city is being rebuilt. Iraq has already allocated R40 million for the rebuilding, not only of the city, but also of the Tower of Babel.

This only is the beginning of expenditure. The Brazilians built a new capital Brasilia, from scratch in one of the most hostile environments of their country, far inland. They did not have the vast financial resources that the Arab nations can command today. And so, just as the temple must be rebuilt in Jerusalem, so Babylon will be rebuilt. This city will become the commercial capital of the world. We are already witnessing the immense sums of money being amassed by the oil-rich Arabs. Even the strongest of the developed nations are unable to cope with the crises created by the use of oil by the Arabs as a weapon to destroy the fledgling state of Israel. Ultimately all world commerce will be centred in the city which will become, not only the capital of the Antichrist, but also the financial hub of the entire world.

John continues:

“(Babylon) is become a habitation of demons, and prison of every unclean spirit, and prison of every unclean and hateful bird.”

This passage refers to conditions in the Millennium. Thus, while we read that Satan will be cast into the Abyss and chained there, this Scripture shows that Babylon will become the prison of the demons and evil spirits who do the bidding of the devil.

It is become a habitation of demons, a prison of every unclean spirit. The Greek word 'phulake', translated hold in the K.J.V. Is, according to Alford, “A place of detention, as it were, an appointed prison.” Thus we read in the Living Bible:

✚ “On that day the Lord will punish the fallen angels in the heavens, and the proud rulers of the nations on earth. They will be rounded up like prisoners and imprisoned in a dungeon until they are tried and condemned.” Isa 24:21-22.

That trial will only take place after the Millennium, at the great white throne.

The nations have committed fornication with her together with their kings, while the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. We can only guess today what rebuilt Babylon is going to do to win the favour of the merchants

of the earth. We can at least estimate now, how Babylon will enrich them, for with the vast oil wealth of the Arabs, Babylon will be able to offer men all that money can buy, and money will be used to do just that.

We see that the power of Babylon will be:-

1. Political.

The kings of the earth will be ensnared. All political power will be centred in Babylon, once the beast assumes power.

2. Economic.

The merchants of the earth will become rich through Babylon. Ultimately all economic power will be in the hands of the Antichrist. This is clear from the Scripture which tells us that no man will be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast. Rev 13:17.

3. Ecclesiastic.

This power will be wielded by the harlot church initially, and after its destruction, by the beast who makes the city his capital.

### **Babylon's doom pronounced verses 4-8**

John now hears another voice coming from heaven, calling:

✚ “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

We see in so many places in the Bible, that the people of God must come out from amongst those who will experience the wrath of God. In the passage in 2 Cor 6:14-7:1, we read:

✚ “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” (v 17.)

God is aware of the sins of men, and also of the evil, corrupting influence of Babylon, upon men. Her sins have reached to heaven. God knows and will punish her at the appropriate time.

Babylon will be rewarded or paid back for all that she has done. She will be paid back double according to all her works. Her cup will contain double. This is consistent with the Levitical law for we see in Ex 22:4, 7, 9, that there must be a double recompense made by the thief of anything that he has stolen. How much more should not Babylon be required to bear double for all the misery and woe that she has caused to the children of men.

We see here too the inexorable law of recompense being fulfilled. Paul says:

✚ “Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Gal 6:7-8.

How different the Spirit of Babylon is, to the Lord Jesus Christ. He glorified his father here on earth seeking no glory of his own. Even in his death, Jesus glorified God.

✚ “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.”

A study of Isa 47 will reveal the Spirit of Babylon We can only spare the space for a few quotations.

✚ “I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.” Isa 47:8.

✚ “But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children and widowhood: they shall come upon thee for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thy enchantments.” (47:9.)

✚ “Behold they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.” (47:14.)

Babylon’s plagues shall come on her in one day. They are death, mourning and famine. She shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. Thus God will finally and utterly destroy the city of Babylon, turning it into a prison of demons and unclean spirits until their time to be judged comes.

### **Great lamentation for Babylon verses 9-10**

There is great sorrow and lamentation amongst the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication with Babylon. They will weep and wail over her when they shall see the smoke of her torment. They will stand afar off when this happens, for fear of having the same happen to them as happens to Babylon. “Alas, alas,” they cry over that mighty city for in one hour her judgement is come.

### **The merchandise of Babylon verses 11-16**

John records a list of the merchandise of Babylon, saying:

✚ “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.”



The Bible is clear in its description of the destruction of the great mass of accumulated wealth, in these last days. James speaks concerning this and says:

✚ “Come on you wealthy, weep with loud wailings about the miseries that are coming upon you. Your hoarded wealth is become decayed and your clothes have become moth-eaten; your gold and silver are covered with rust, and their rust will be evidence against you. As fire that you have stored up for the last days, it will consume your flesh.” (5:1-3.)

Fire will destroy the delicacies that Babylon, and all that love her, have stored up in these end times. It is not accidental that the last commodity mentioned in the list of merchandise is the souls of men. How the souls of men have been lured away from God to serve Mammon. (Mammon is the common Aramaic word for riches.) Men have sought the things of this world, most of them not realizing that it will not profit a man to gain the whole world, never mind just a small part of it, and lose his own soul.

Man cannot serve God and Mammon (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13.) How much more profitable to serve God, for Mammon will be utterly destroyed when Babylon reaps her just reward. And thus we see that “in one hour so great riches is come to nought.” (18:17.)

In verses 15-16, John repeats the mourning of the merchants, standing afar off, 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.”

Thus men will ever esteem that which, in the sight of God is worthless, while neglecting that which God esteems and requires of men. Thus the vast economic cartels, the great multi-national companies will have their wealth destroyed.

It is important to notice that the world is going to be a very different place during the Millennium. There will be no vast cities with great manufacturing industries and the like. Instead we read:

✚ “They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.” Mic 4:4.

The millennial earth is always pictured as rural in its essence. There will be no vast commercial enterprises to grind the poor and needy. This economic dependence on man providing for his own needs from the soil himself will be accompanied by a great change ecclesiastically. The horrible system of idolatry will be utterly and completely destroyed. Thus we read that:

✚ “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14.



At the same time the political system will be entirely changed, for the Bible says:

✚ “The government shall rest on his shoulders (Isa 9:6)

And:

“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” (Isa 9:7.)

There is a misconception abroad today that the best form of government is the democratic form which we know today. This is not the case. The best form of government is, in fact, authoritarian. The trouble is that the only form of authoritarian government with which we are familiar, is that of evil men like Hitler and Stalin. But the authoritarian rule of the Son of God is coming. His power and authority will be absolute in that day for, “He will rule the nations with a rod of iron.” When Jesus came we see how he had to cleanse the temple of those who had made his Father’s house, a house of merchandise. John 2:16. Of the Millennium it is written:

✚ “There will be no more grasping traders in the temple of the Lord of hosts.” Zech 14:21.

### **Sorrow because of the destruction of Babylon verses 17-19**

John now tells us that in one hour is so great riches come to naught. We have already remarked that this phrase is repeated (three times) in this chapter. Let us compare these three passages:

1. In verse 10 we read, “For in one hour is thy judgement come.”
2. In verse 17 we read, “In one hour so great riches is come to naught.”
3. In verse 19 we read, “In one hour is she made desolate.”

It is of interest to note that the Greek word “ereemoo” is translated “come to nought” in verse 17, and “desolate” in verse 19. It only occurs twice elsewhere in the N.T., namely in Matt 12:25 and Luke 11:17.

There are several kindred Greek words in the N.T. But by far the most interesting is the word “ereemos” which occurs in Matt 24:15 and Mark 13:14 where we find the phrase “the Abomination of Desolation”, and in Luke 21:20 where the Lord Jesus gave signs to show that the “desolation” of Jerusalem was nigh. If we remember the utter desolation of Jerusalem when it was taken by the Roman legions of Titus in 70 A.D. And of the utter desolation which the Antichrist will bring, we will have some idea of the meaning of the word. Thus we are reminded three times of the judgement on the city of Babylon which will bring about her desolation forever.

How aptly this is mirrored by the prophet Jeremiah who writes:

✚ “And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant.” Jer 51:37.

And again:

✚ “Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass by.” Jer 51:43.

All those who trade with Babylon will now stand afar off when they see her destroyed. They cry when they see the smoke of her burning, saying, “What city is like unto this great city?” Let us remember again that Babylon has never experienced this kind of judgement. All her conquerors preserved Babylon and all she experienced was genteel decay. It is rebuilt Babylon which will know the complete fulfilment of what is written concerning her utter destruction.

They cast dust upon their heads and cried, weeping and wailing:

✚ “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.”

As always, the emphasis of men is always on the material. They were made rich by her, therefore they bewail her demise! It is no wonder that our Lord warns us:

✚ “... lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matt 6:19-21.

Men’s hearts are fixed upon this great city because they esteem the treasures of this present evil age. Let us who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ remember the injunction of the apostle Paul who said:

✚ “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Col 3:1-2.

### **Command to rejoice verse 20**

This verse is slightly different in the Greek text so we read from Panin's version:

✚ “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and (ye) the saints, and the apostles, and the prophets; for God hath judged your judgement on her.”

It is well to note the Scripture here includes “the saints”, that is, all those who have been redeemed. Thus we see all heaven, which encompasses the innumerable myriads of heavenly beings, together with the saints, apostles and prophets called upon to be glad at Babylon's destruction.

Writing to the saints at Ephesus, Paul says:

✚ “Ye ... are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner.” Eph 2:19-20.

Thus the entire church is included in this call to rejoice, and rejoice indeed we must, for all the persecutions endured by the church, all the false doctrines against which the church has striven, have originated from the ancient citadel of wickedness and iniquity. How meet it is then for us to rejoice when God overthrows our great foe of the ages. Thus, turning to Jeremiah again, we read:

✚ “Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the Lord.” Jer 51:48.

John says, “God hath judged your judgement on her.” Just what is meant here is not too easy to determine. However, it seems to me that what God is saying here, is that he will put into effect the judgement that the redeemed deem Babylon to be worthy of.

### **Babylon is utterly forsaken verses 21-24**

A mighty angel now takes up a stone like a great millstone, and casts it into the sea, saying:

✚ “Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”

John now enumerates the things that shall no more be experienced in Babylon. All these things pertain to everyday living. Thus he says:

1. The voice or sound of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee. What a large place music occupies in the lives of men and women. Music speaks of happiness, of merriment, of rejoicing. Thus we read that, when the earth falls under the wrath of God at the time of the Great Tribulation:

✚ “The mirth of tablets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.” Isa 24:8.

2. And no craftsman, of whatever craft he may be, shall be found any more in thee. Thus all who toil, labouring with their hands, will be absent from the site of Babylon
3. And the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee. Bread has always been an important part of man’s diet. Thus those who minister to the physical needs of men will not ply their trade in the city, for it shall no more be there.
4. And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee.

5. And the voice of bridegroom and bride shall be heard in thee no more.

Thus we read in Jer 25:10 concerning the judgement of God upon Israel:

✚ “Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of millstones, and the light of candle.”

If God so dealt with his own people who were disobedient to him, how much more will not Babylon be made to experience the wrath of God for all the evil she has been guilty of? Thus, we see that there will be no more merriment in Babylon, no more making of the things we need for everyday life, no more providing of the food man needs to exist, no more light speaking of the time in the evening when men gather round a light to read, to enjoy fellowship with other men, no more of the marrying or giving in marriage of young men and women, and this is the very basis of human society, the beginning of new homes to take the place of the old. All will cease and a wilderness will supplant the city of Babylon.

And the reason is because Babylon, by her sorceries, has deceived all nations. As has been noted in our studies, the word “pharmakia” used here means, basically, “enchantment by drugs”. Thus Babylon has enchanted men by using the drug of religion, and men have been willing to have a form of godliness, but to deny the power thereof. (2 Tim 3:5.)

It is a sad fact that religion has done more to deceive and destroy men than any other means available to Satan. Many would speak of Christianity as a religion, but this it is not true. Christianity is nothing other than life. How truly did the apostle Paul remark of the Athenians:

✚ “I perceive that in all things ye are very religious.” Acts 17:22.

This is true of Babylon. The city was full of temples. The basis of all false worship - that of Father, Mother and Son, comes from Babylon. The Babylonians were, indeed, very religious. But they did not know the one and only true God. Thus James writes:

✚ “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” James 1:27.

The religion of Babylon is impure and adulterous, weaning men from God to serve idols and demons. It is defiled before God. Most people are unaware of the drunkenness, sexual license and depravity associated with the religion which is Babylon's evil legacy to the world. No wonder John ends:

✚ “In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon earth.”

Babylon has ever hated the Lord and his people, seeking to subvert those who love the Lord, and, failing this, to still their voice, when they, by word of testimony and holy living, expose the wickedness and depravity of Babylon.

## **Chapter nineteen**

### ***Marriage supper of the Lamb, the Lamb and his army***


#### **Praise in the heavens Rev 19:1-5**

After these things John hears a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, hallelujah; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power are our God's: because true and righteous are his judgements, because he hath judged the great harlot, she that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. Again they say, hallelujah, and the smoke of her torment goeth up for ever and ever. The 24 elders and four living creatures fall down and worship the God that sitteth on the throne, saying, amen, hallelujah. With this a voice comes forth from the throne saying, praise our God all ye his servants that fear him, the small and the great.

We see here the jubilation of those who dwell in heaven, when the great harlot city of Babylon is destroyed. The wonderful Hebrew word 'hallelujah,' which means "praise to Yahweh" is only found four times in the N.T., all four times in this chapter (vs 1, 3, 4, 6). Thus will all the host of heaven rejoice and be glad when the citadel of opposition to God here on earth, is consumed.

#### **The marriage supper of the Lamb Rev 19:6-10**


This portion of the Scripture begins with great rejoicing at the advent of the marriage supper of the Lamb. John hears a great multitude saying:

 "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us rejoice and be glad, and give honour unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

#### **The time of the marriage supper**


We need to go back a little to look at the Rapture of the church. As we have seen, this will take place when the sixth seal is broken by the Lamb. Rev 6:12. As soon as the dead in Christ and those who live and remain until his coming are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, are all in the presence of the Lord, they will be taken to stand before the rainbow throne. Rev 7:9.

While the events of the Revelation, subsequent to chapter seven are taking place, the saints will have to be judged. We have neither time nor place to look at the judgements now, but let us note a few facts concerning the judgement of believers.

1. This judgement will take place as soon as we are in the presence of the Lord.
2. There will be no question of the eternal destiny of the believers being at stake, for only the redeemed of the Lord will be taken up at the Rapture.
3. What will be determined at this judgement will be the rewarding of those who belong to God. Thus we read in Rom 14:10:  
 “We shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ.” And again, “So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom 14:12.)

All those who appear at this judgement have the right foundation, which is Christ (1 Cor 4:11) but what will be determined will be whether one has built upon that foundation with wood, hay, or stubble, on the one hand, or gold, silver, or precious stones on the other hand. Paul tells us that every man’s works are going to be tried by fire to see what sort it is. Those whose works endure will receive a reward but those whose works are burned up will suffer loss. They will be saved but so as by fire.


Speaking of this judgement of the believer, Paul writes in 2 Cor 5:10:

 “For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

This judgement is called the Bema-judgement to distinguish it from the judgement at the throne of his glory (Matt 25:31), which concerns those who survive the Great Tribulation; and the great white throne judgement (Rev 20:11) which concerns the wicked dead, at the end of the Millennium. The duration of this judgement is from the Rapture until the marriage supper of the Lamb. In other words, as soon as the Bema-judgement is completed, the marriage supper will take place. We see that this coincides with the end of God’s wrath upon Babylon.

Thus, for almost the entire duration of the Great Tribulation here on the earth, the raptured saints are being judged by their Lord and master, the Lord Jesus, in the heavenlies. Before we can proceed to the marriage supper of the Lamb, all who love the Lord Jesus will have been rewarded, or will have suffered loss, according to their deeds subsequent to salvation.

The bride is now ready for the consummation of all the purposes of God. We need at this point to ascertain just who and what the bride is. There are differences of opinion here, as indeed there are concerning most of the Scriptures, but to me the only possible explanation of the bride is that it is the church. Just as Israel, in the Old Testament, was repeatedly portrayed as the wife of the Lord, so in the New Testament the church is called the bride of Christ, and her relationship to him is likened to that of a wife to a husband. Thus we have Paul saying in 2 Cor 11:2:

 “For I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

Writing to the Ephesians concerning the relationship of wife to husband, Paul says:

✚ “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph 5:31.

He continues:

✚ “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Eph 5:32.

Thus the marriage relationship is used by Paul to illustrate the relationship of the church to Christ. John continues:

✚ “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.”

Here again we are reminded that the great multitude before the throne in Rev 7 are all arrayed in white robes which have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Also we read in Rev 3:5:

✚ “He that overcometh shall be arrayed in white raiment.”

John said in verse eight that the “Fine linen is the righteousness of the saints” and so we read in Isa 61:10:

✚ “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.”

Thus we can be left in no doubt that the wife of the Lamb is that great company of men and women, who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus, and who constitute his church. John is now told to write:

✚ “Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, these are the true sayings of God.”

How blessed indeed we are to be called to this great marriage supper. We are invited, not because of any works which we have done, but purely by the grace of God. It is because God loved us and sent his Son to die for us, that we are privileged to be there. There is a parable told us in Matt 22:1-14 where Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who bid many to the marriage of his son. Jesus said that they made light of the invitation and shamefully entreated his servants and some they slew. The king was wrath and caused the city where the murderers dwelt to be destroyed. Then the invitation was given again, this time to those in the highways. The king came in and found a man at

the feast who did not have a wedding garment on. The Greek word 'ou' is translated 'not' here. The king now asks him, "Friend, how camest thou hither not having a wedding garment?" Here 'not' is the Greek word 'me'. This word indicates that it was by deliberate choice that he did not have a wedding garment. He was cast out and Jesus ends by saying:

✚ "For many are called, but few are chosen."

Thus there are many who are called to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The gospel is the offer of pardon and forgiveness to men. But they will not avail themselves of the wedding garment which God offers to them. Without that wedding garment, which is of course the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints, none can partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Many are called, but so many reject the call of God. Few are chosen, and those few are the people who will trust in the cleansing blood of Christ. Thus if we would be at the marriage supper of the Lamb we must be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus. There is no other way whereby we can be called to it.

John now tells us that he fell at the feet of the person who was speaking to him, but was rebuked being told:

✚ "See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus."

It is noteworthy that John is rebuked for endeavouring to worship a created being. This gives the lie to all those who would ascribe worship to any other but God. "Worship God," John is told:

✚ "... for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy."

Thus the purpose of all this prophecy is to tell us about Christ and what he is going to bring to pass.

### **The Lamb and the armies of heaven Rev 19:11-21**

John now sees 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. Earlier on in the Revelation, we saw a white horse, also ridden by a person. There was no such clear statement concerning the rider in that case, and, we saw that the rider there was none other than the Antichrist. Here, however, the Scripture is clear as to the character of the rider. He is called "Faithful and True."

There are a number of Scriptures where the Lord Jesus Christ is called faithful. We read in 1 Thess 5:24:

✚ "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it."



Then in 2 Thess 3:3 we read:

✚ “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil.”

Then we read in 2 Tim 2:13:

✚ “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.”

Concerning Christ we read in Heb 2:17:

✚ “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.”

In Rev 1:5 the Lord Jesus Christ is called “the faithful witness”. We are so often forgetful of the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus. O, let us never forget the Scripture that says, “He is faithful that promised.” Not only is he faithful, but he is able to do all that he has promised.

Then he is also true. What a contrast there is between the Lord Jesus and the Antichrist. To follow him is to know the truth. He said of himself on a certain occasion:

✚ “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”  
John 14:6.

He is described in John 1:14 as:

✚ “The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Standing before Pilate, Jesus said:

✚ “Thou sayest that I am a king, to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

But the Lord Jesus Christ is not coming now to save and to deliver. This he did at his first coming. Now he is coming to make war. Thus he will be manifested to destroy sinners from off this earth. How different the Lord will be when he comes to execute the judgement of God. His eyes were as a flame of fire. Nothing will be hidden from the searching eyes of the Lord, for, indeed:

✚ “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” Heb 4:13.

On his head were many crowns. The Greek word here is 'diadema'. This was usually a velvet crown used by royalty. As he is king of kings, it is meet that he should be crowned with many crowns. Our English word diadem is derived from the Greek word. He had a

name written that no man knew but himself. There is much that we know about the Lord Jesus. But all that we know about him is what the Word of God tells us. There is so much that we do not know about the Lord.

Being the eternal one, there is so much we can never know, unless it pleases him to reveal it to us. Thus we read in John 21:25:

✚ “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”

Thus while we know the Lord as Jesus, there is that concerning him that we can never know. It is forever hidden from creatures. Praise God that he has revealed to us as much as he has of himself. He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood. We are reminded of Isa 63:3, where we read:

✚ “I have trodden the winepress alone ... and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.”

The blood-sprinkled garments speak of the fact that these are days of vengeance. In fact, the Bible has much to say about this day of vengeance.

### **The day of vengeance**

Isaiah 34 is a chapter which has much to say about the end-time. Here the Lord speaks about his sword being filled with blood, and his indignation being upon all nations. The passage is prophetic of the time of Armageddon, and the prophet speaks of it being the Day of the Lord's vengeance. The theme continues into the 35<sup>th</sup> chapter where we read of his coming to deliver Israel:

✚ “Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.”

In Isa 59:17 we read:

✚ “For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.”

In Isa 61:2 we have already noted that this passage, which was quoted by the Lord Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, is not quoted in its entirety, Lord omitted to portion:

✚ “The day of vengeance of our God” for it was yet to be fulfilled, whereas the other part was fulfilled at that time. Luke 4:21.

In 2 Thess 1:8 we read of the Lord coming in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They will be

punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Thus the day of vengeance is that day when the Lord will lead the armies of heaven down to earth to destroy the Antichrist and his armies at Armageddon.

Note in Rev 19:13 how specific the Word of God is. The person clothed in garments dipped in blood is none other than the one whose name is called the Word of God. We are left in no doubt as to who is described by this name. In the first chapter of John's gospel the Lord Jesus Christ is called "the Word" four times (John 1:1, 1, 1, 14). Just as our word is the expression of ourselves, the Lord Jesus is the expression of God, for all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily. Col 2:9. Thus this is no mere angelic being here. Much of what has been described thus far in the Revelation, concerning the wrath of God, has been executed through the angels who do God's bidding. But now the Lord himself appears on the scene. It is he who will lead the heavenly armies.

This great truth was spoken of by Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who said:

✚ "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed." Jude 14-15.

We read:

✚ "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

Thus, the whole heavenly multitude descend upon the earth to rid it of the beast and all those who have been deceived by him. The earth will indeed be cleansed of sinners at this time. John says:

✚ "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."

God says in Deut 32:41:

✚ "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgement; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me."

We see this captain of the host of the Lord with a drawn sword in Josh 5:13. That this person is none other than the Lord is clear from the fact that Joshua worships him, and is commanded to loose his shoes from his feet. Gideon uses it as a battle cry against the Midianites His soldiers cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" Jud 7:20. David chooses "the sword of the Lord" as his punishment for numbering Israel. 1 Chron 21:12. In Isa 34:6, we see the sword of the Lord filled with blood, and the place of sacrifice is Bozrah. This is included in the area where Armageddon will be fought. Isa 63:1. Isa 66:16 is very expressive of this sword executing judgement in the end-time. We read:

✚ “For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.”

In Isa 11:4 we read the prophet’s words:

✚ “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

Paul, in 2 Thess 2:8, describes this as follows:

✚ “And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

He shall rule them with a rod of iron. This refers to the time of the Millennium. There will be no soft velvet glove when the Lord rules the earth. His rule will be absolute. We are inclined to regard authoritarian rule askance because we have seen it abused by wicked men like Hitler and Stalin (not to forget that the rule of the Antichrist will also be authoritarian.) But when the Lord Jesus rules the earth with a rod of iron, his rule will be holy and righteous. He will tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God. These will indeed be days of vengeance. Men have sown the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind. John says:

✚ “On his vesture (garment) and on his thigh a name written, king of kings and Lord of Lords.”

We have here a Hebraism expressive of excellence. There never has been, nor will there ever be a king like the Lord Jesus. Also it expresses the truth concerning the future, when, during the Millennium, all who rule and execute authority, will be subject to his authority as king of the earth.

John now sees 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. We see here the angels are of such a nature that they can even stand in the sun. When we consider the tremendous temperatures obtaining on the surface of the sun, we know that nothing of this creation, which is normally visible to us, is capable of withstanding such heat. The promise of the Lord Jesus Christ is that we will one day be equal unto the angels. Luke 20:36. We will also, in that day, be able to do things of this nature, without being consumed.

The birds flying in the mid-heaven are summoned to the supper of the great God. The Greek word translated mid-heaven here only occurs in two other places in the N.T. (8:13; 14:6; 19:17.) The word means, properly, the meridian, the highest point in the heavens which the sun occupies at noon: not the space between heaven and earth (Vincent). This

part of the sky is the habitat of the birds of prey, such as vultures and eagles. By this time they will have multiplied enormously upon the earth, feeding on the carrion of hundreds of thousands of corpses, for multitudes will have perished thus far, due to the wrath of God being manifested.

The supper of the great God is vastly different from the other supper mentioned earlier, that is, the marriage supper of the Lamb. That is a joyous event, whereas this is the culmination of the wrath of God, when there will be:

✚ “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the Day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” Joel 3:14.

The many peoples who come down to Armageddon will all be slain. There will be no survivors. All will perish, who presume to come to this battle to fight against the Lord of hosts. In the two great passages in the book of the prophet Ezekiel (38 & 39), we have a similar passage relating to the invitation to the birds to feed upon the hosts of the wicked.

In Ezekiel it is at the time when Gog and Magog are destroyed. There are those who see, in these two chapters, a reference to Armageddon as well, identifying Gog with the Antichrist. Personally, I must confess that this is not how I understand this part of the Word of God. Without being dogmatic, I prefer to understand this O.T. Passage as referring to Russia and her allies.

Before Armageddon, and even possibly before the Great Tribulation, this atheistic nation of soviet Russia, will invade the Holy Land and will be supernaturally destroyed. This will be a warning to men concerning future events, and the folly of rebellion against God. The reason for believing this is that in Ezek 39:4 we read that God will “fall upon the mountains of Israel” whereas Antichrist with his armies will perish in the plains of Esdraelon. (also the valley of Jezreel). God says:

✚ “I will give thee to the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.” Ezek 39:4.

And, again:

✚ “Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel” Ezek 39:17.

The language in Revelation and Ezekiel are very similar. John says:

✚ “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, bond and free, both small and great.”

It is as well here to note that this is called the great supper of God and not the supper of the great God as in the K.J.V. Thus all classes of men are to be found at this great battle, and they will provide carrion for the birds and beasts to feed upon. Now John says:

✚ “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.”

We have already remarked upon the fact that, as the 1260<sup>th</sup> day of his authority draws near, the beast, knowing that the Lord Jesus will come as soon as that day ends, summons the armies of the earth to come to do battle with the Lamb. We have seen that these armies are summoned by means of demons, sent by the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon. Rev 16:13. Men have made war upon one another from time immemorial. We have seen that one of the signs of the near return of the Lord Jesus is “nation rising against nation.” Matt 24:7. But now the time has come when all who dwell upon the earth will sink all their differences. Now they will gather for war once more, but not to slay and destroy one another. This battle will be different from all battles that have gone before for now men gather to do battle with the Lamb.

They do not desire the Lord to return. Thus they gather in an effort to hinder or impede the purposes of God. They gather to make war on the Lamb and his army coming down from heaven. How can puny man ever think that he can prevail against God? How can he ever dare to take up arms against the God who formed him? Against the one who died upon the cross to save men? Yet men do this very thing. No wonder the psalmist says:

✚ “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”  
Ps 2:4.

John tells us:

✚ “The beast was seized 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. The two were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

This is the end of the road for these two who have deceived men, and damned countless millions to a lost eternity. Remember, that these two evil personages are men themselves, who have sold themselves utterly, to do the bidding of the devil. They have served him faithfully, but he is unable to deliver them from the Lord. Truly it is folly to serve Satan, and do the things that are pleasing to him.

Alive or living when they are taken, they are cast into the lake of fire. Who takes them? One of the humblest members of the heavenly army could do this, although we are not told expressly who fulfils this task.

They are cast into the lake of fire. We would profit at this stage by examining the places, spoken of in the Word of God concerning the places men go to after death, and the places of punishment that men can and will go to, if they refuse to serve God.

### **Sheol, Hades, Gehenna, Tartarus, Paradise, Abraham's bosom, the lake of fire**

Concerning Sheol and Hades we will not say much as we have looked at the subject earlier. Briefly, let it be said that Sheol and Hades are synonymous, the one being the Hebrew word, and the other the Greek word, for the place that the souls of the dead go to - in the old dispensation for all, and in the new dispensation, for the ungodly.

It was composed of Abraham's bosom, which is where the righteous dead went, before Christ died, and the place of torment, where the wicked dead went. Lu 16:19-31. Abraham's bosom was the Old Testament Paradise to which Jesus and the penitent robber went. Luke 23:43.

Sheol is rendered grave incorrectly in over thirty places in the O.T. This is largely due to the fact that the translators found it hard to understand the concept of the righteous going to Sheol or Hades. They did not fully understand the fact that, until Christ died, all had to go there to await his victory.

There are two perfectly good words for the grave, in the Hebrew "queber" and in the Greek "mnemeion", without wresting with the Scriptures to try to prove that Sheol and Hades mean the grave. Since the Lord Jesus rose again, all who die in the Lord go to the new Paradise which is upwards, and not downwards. 2 Cor 5:6-8; Phil 1:23.

Tartarus is the place where the fallen angels who intermingled with human beings are confined. 2 Peter 2:4. This leaves us with Gehenna and the lake of fire. Here again different terms are used to describe the final abode of all the wicked, for Gehenna and the lake of fire, are one and the same place. Gehenna is used twelve times in the N.T. (Mt 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; Jas 3:6.) The term "lake of fire" is used only in the Revelation, and it occurs six times. (Rev 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8.) We are told in Rev 20:14 that to be cast into it, is the second death. This means eternal separation from God. There can be no return from the lake of fire.

The warnings in the gospels about Gehenna are very clear. The one who is able to cast one into it, is to be feared. Luke 12:5. The beast and the false prophet will not come back for the judgement of the great white throne, and, finally Satan and all the wicked dead will end there. Going back to Rev 19:21 we read:

✚ "The remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh."

There will be no survivors. None will return from Armageddon with tales of the battle, except the people of the Lord:

✚ "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Isa 11:4.

Isa 30:27 reads as follows:

✚ “Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: and his breath as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity.”

Thus, finally, God’s kingdom comes on earth.

## **Chapter twenty**

### ***The dragon bound for 1000 years, Great white throne***

#### **Satan bound verses 1-3**

John now sees an angel coming down from heaven with the key of the Abyss, and a great chain in his hand. This angel laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him 1000 years, and cast him in the Abyss, and shut him up and sealed him there, that he should no longer deceive the nations until the 1000 years are finished, after which he must be loosed for a little while. We do not know when this great cherub began his career of sin and rebellion against God.

In Isa 14:12-15 we are told about his desire to be exalted above God. Five times we read of Satan saying “I will” in this passage, ending with “I will be like the most high.” In Ezekiel 28:11-19 we are told more about Satan He is called the “anointed cherub that covereth”. This would seem to indicate that, like the four living creatures of the Revelation, he, at some time in his existence, guarded the throne of God.

The prophet says of Satan:

✚ “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”

The reason for his fall? We read:

✚ “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty.”

We do know that Satan had already become God’s traducer, long before the creation of man. The Eden spoken of in Ez 28:13 is not the Eden of the book of Genesis, but some primeval, heavenly place. In this passage we are told twice that Satan is a created being, therefore he is dependant upon God. So he who was “perfect in beauty” and “perfect in wisdom” fell from the wonderful place he occupied, as a servant of God.

His course since then has even been downward. Now an angel lays hold on him after the battle of Armageddon and binds him with a chain and casts him into the Abyss, sealing



him there for 1000 years. So the Abyss, which was opened when the fifth angel sounded his trumpet (Rev 9:1), is now sealed again, only now Satan is prisoner there as well.

As has already been remarked, Satan is not Abaddon or Apollyon, the angel of the Abyss. He has, until his defeat at the Revelation of Jesus Christ, ever been the prince of the power of the air. Eph 2:2. Describing the final defeat of Satan, Isaiah says:

✚ “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell (Sheol), to the sides of the pit.” Isa 14:15.

Let us remember that Sheol or Hades is in the Abyss where Satan will be bound. We know that all the other fallen beings who do the bidding of Satan, will also be imprisoned, for we read in Isa 24:21:

✚ “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days they shall be visited.”

Thus, all the wicked spirits that are in the heavenlies, will be confined in the Abyss for the same period as Satan, namely, 1000 years. Thus, for 1000 years, the earth will be free of all the hosts who follow Satan. Man will be left alone, as far as outside influences are concerned, and truth and truth alone will prevail. Man will be subject only to good influences. There will be no such thing as idolatry, or any other form of religion which deviates from true Revelation from God. Yet, even under these ideal conditions, we will see that man will be a failure, for the real source of his trouble is within his own heart.

Notice the fourfold description of the devil.

1. **The dragon.** The word dragon occurs only in Revelation, where it occurs thirteen times. Twelve of these times it refers to Satan, once it is said of the false prophet, that he spoke as a dragon. (Rev 12:3, 4, 7, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2.) The number thirteen in the Scripture is the number of sin and rebellion. The dragon has figured largely in the stories of the nations. People as diverse as the Welsh and the Chinese speak about this so-called mythical creature. Its existence in literature, is evidence of the fact that the dragon has, for a long time, been associated with the devil. The dragon has always been feared and revered in many ancient cultures.
2. **The old serpent.** This was the form in which man first encountered the devil. As the old serpent we are carried back to the book of Genesis where, in chapter three we find the serpent tempting the woman, eve, and causing her to disobey God. Let it be said here that this serpent who induced eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the devil himself. The fifteenth verse makes it clear that the serpent would bruise the heel of the coming deliverer (the seed of the woman), but that the woman's seed would bruise his head. Here we find the first prediction of the ultimate defeat of Satan

3. **The devil.** This is the Greek word used to describe the personage called Satan. It comes from the word “diaballo” to throw over, hence, accuse, malign (Critical Lexicon). Thus this name describes his character as the traducer, the calumniator, the accuser. We have seen him as the accuser of the brethren. Rev 12:10. But he is the same towards God. He told Eve that God forbade the fruit of the tree from them, because he did not want them to be as God. This was a lie. God desires us to be like him, but this cannot be achieved through disobedience to God. Rather, it comes about by submitting to God and obeying him. Satan will never ever say anything good about God or about those who serve him.
4. **Satan.** This word in the O.T. Comes from a primitive root which means to attack or to oppose. Satan is the great opponent of God. He organised the rebellion which took place in heaven, when he drew one third of the stars (angels) with him. He instigated man’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden. He will oppose God until he can no longer do so. Even now we are told “the mystery of lawlessness” is working. 2 Thess 2:7. We are aware of the way in which he tried to tempt the Lord and failed. No wonder we read in 1 Peter 5:8 that the devil is our adversary.

For 1000 years Satan and his hosts will be incarcerated in the Abyss. Then, we are told, he must be loosed for a season. The question arises as to why Satan should be let loose ever again? Let us remember that, when the Millennium begins, it will begin with those who have survived the judgement at the throne of glory (Mt 25:31.) At this throne the Son of Man will determine the worthiness of those who survive the Great Tribulation to enter into the kingdom of God here on earth. Here Matthew is unequivocal:

✚ “The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Matt 13:41-43.

Thus, when the Millennium begins, it will begin with only those who are righteous. That is why Daniel says:

✚ “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.” Dan 12:12.

After Armageddon there will be a 75 day period during which the survivors will be judged to determine their worthiness to enter the millennial reign of Christ. Those 75 days will bring us from the 1260<sup>th</sup> day, when Armageddon takes place, to the 1335<sup>th</sup> day, when the Millennium begins. These remnants of men will multiply upon the earth. Over 1000 years, with no war, plenty and abundance everywhere, a lengthened lifespan, etc, the earth will once more teem with men. All the nations will be ruled with a rod of iron. They will all be subject to the Lord Jesus as the king of the earth. They will be compelled to go up to Jerusalem every year, to worship the king and to keep the feast of tabernacles. Zech 14:16.

There will be no one to rally the forces of evil, for many will only yield feigned obedience. That which is flesh is flesh. And while the men and women who survive and replenish the earth are righteous, their offspring will not necessarily be the same. Many of their descendants will be true believers and will serve the Lord; others will appear to do so, but will be rebels within their hearts. Without a rallying point they will not come out into open opposition. Thus, to separate the righteous from the wicked, and to get the wicked to declare their true allegiance, Satan must be loosed for a season. He will provide the rallying point. The unregenerate will flock to him and will follow him in his final attempt to defeat the purposes of God.

### **First resurrection completed the gleanings verses 4-6**

John now sees thrones and seated upon them those to whom judgement was given. He sees the souls of those who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, nor received his mark upon the foreheads or right hands. And they lived again and reigned with Christ 1000 years.

Thus all those who were martyred during the Great Tribulation are resurrected after the battle of Armageddon. They do not remain dead for 1000 years, but are changed into the likeness of Christ, just as the dead in Christ were changed at the time of the Rapture. We have seen in 1 Cor 15 that each one is going to be resurrected in his own order. (Greek ... tagma ... rank.) That order is thus:-

1. Christ the first fruits
2. The dead in Christ at the Rapture
3. The tribulation martyrs after Armageddon

Thus, with the resurrection of the tribulation martyrs, the first resurrection is complete. These resurrected martyrs live and reign with Christ together with all the saints of previous ages who have been resurrected.

The Bible is specific:

✚ “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

There are many who would deny that there is going to be a Millennium. Some aver that there will be no Millennium, others claim we are living in the Millennium, and others again, that the Scriptures which speak about a Millennium, refer to the reign of Christ now in heaven. All these kinds of theories undermine the truth of the Word of God. If God cannot be trusted to mean what he says, then we are indeed in a parlous state. There are many Old Testament Scriptures which tell us about the time when the Lord will rule this earth. By no stretch of the imagination can these promises ever be regarded as having been fulfilled. Neither can they be dismissed as not being literal but spiritual in their intent.

We can only look at a few passages as there are so many. But what we look at should suffice to convince any honest enquirer as to the fact that the Millennium will be literally fulfilled here upon the earth in the not too distant future.

### **The Millennium**

1. There will be no war in the Millennium. He will teach men his ways, and his law will proceed from Jerusalem Isa 2:2-4.
2. The glory of the Lord will rest upon the city of Zion. Isa 4:2-6.
3. The creation will be at rest. The animal kingdom will be docile, beasts of prey living with domesticated animals peacefully. Isa 11:1-16; 65:25.
4. The earth will be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14.
5. Israel, Egypt and Assyria will know and serve the Lord in that day. Isa 19:16.
6. God will destroy the face of covering cast over all people, and death will be swallowed up in victory. Isa 25:6-9.
7. God's trumpet will summon Israel; they will be gathered one by one, to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem Isa 27:12-13.
8. The Holy Spirit will be poured out and the land will bring forth plenty. Isa 32:15.
9. The wilderness and the desert shall blossom like the rose. The ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs. Isa 35:1-10.
10. Kings and queens shall nurse the offspring of the children of Israel. They will bow down to them with their faces upon the ground. Isa 49:17-26.
11. The nation and kingdom that will not serve Israel will perish. Isa 60:12.
12. The waste places will be built and the Jews will be the priests and ministers of the Lord. Isa 61:4-6. (See Exodus 19:6.)
13. A new covenant will be made with Israel Jer 31:31.
14. The Jews will dwell in their own land and they will be God's people and he will be their God. Ezek 36:27-28.
15. David will rule over them. This he will do on behalf of the Lord Jesus. Ezek 37:24.
16. God's sanctuary will be in the midst of them forevermore. Ezek 37:26.

17. A river will flow out from under the eastern threshold of the rebuilt temple. The waters of the Dead Sea will be healed by the waters of this river and fishermen will catch fish there. Ezek 47:1-12.
18. The land of Israel will be re-divided amongst the twelve tribes. Even Dan will receive his portion, and that before any of the others. Ezek 48.
19. Israel will be healed of her backsliding and will grow as a lily. Hos 14:4-9.
20. Jerusalem will be holy in that day. A fountain (river) shall come forth out of the house of the Lord. Joel 3:16-21.
21. The plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed. Amos 9:11-15.
22. No more war, but every man under his vine and his fig tree. Mic 4:3-4.
23. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies. Zeph 3:13.
24. Ten men shall take hold of the skirt of a Jew because God is with them. Zech 8:22-23.
25. The Lord shall be king over all the earth. Zech 14:9.

We have only selected a few passages, and yet what a wealth of detail we are given here. Surely if there were no earthly kingdom of God coming, why did the Lord teach his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven?" Mt 6:10.

There have been 6 000 years of human history up till now. This must be followed by the sabbatical thousand years. If there were to be no literal thousand years of peace, why does John mention this period of time six times in the Revelation?

- ✚ Thus John says Satan will be bound for 1000 years. (Rev 20:2.)
- ✚ Satan will be in the Abyss till the 1000 years are completed. (Rev 20:3.)
- ✚ The martyrs of the tribulation will reign 1000 years with Christ. (Rev 20:4.)
- ✚ The wicked dead are not resurrected until the 1000 years are completed. (Rev 20:5.)
- ✚ Those who take part in the first resurrection will live and reign with Christ for 1000 years. (Rev 20:6.)
- ✚ When the 1000 years are expired Satan will be loosed out of his prison. (Rev 20:7.)

If these statements are not to be taken literally, then language no longer has any meaning whatsoever. But they are literal and all that God has promised concerning his earthly people, Israel, must be fulfilled. No wonder Paul says:

✚ “A hardening (insensibility) has (temporarily) befallen a part of Israel (to last) until the full number of the ingathering of the Gentiles has come in, and so all Israel will be saved. As it is written, the deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob And this will be my covenant – my agreement – with them when I shall take away their sins.” Romans 11:25-27.

Now these martyrs join their fellow-believers of the previous ages to live and reign with Christ. They are now in possession of the same kind of life and bodies as those resurrected earlier. But those who are privileged to enter the reign of Christ on earth, are still mortal, and not immortal as those who have taken part in the first resurrection are. It will be shown later that the glorified saints, as opposed to the earthly saints, will inhabit the New Jerusalem during the thousand years.

In Rev 20:5 John tells us that the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Thus all the wicked dead remain in Hades and the grave until the 1000 years are completed. The Scripture in John speaks of the Lord raising up his people “On the last day”. Some would teach a general resurrection of all at the same time. (Jn 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 7:37.) This teaching is not in accordance with Scripture. The last day for the righteous is clearly the consummation of this present age, whereas the last day for the wicked dead is the consummation of the age which is to come. I.e. The 1000 years.

Hear the words of John:

✚ “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him 1000 years.”

Thus, there will not be one single ungodly person resurrected in the first resurrection. Only those who know him will come forth to live and reign with him. The second death will have no power over those who rise in the first resurrection. The second death is spiritual death. We will see later what the second death entails. Notice that those who rise in the first resurrection are called priests of God and of Christ. This fact is stated three times in the Revelation. (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6.) This fact is also attested to by Peter who says that we are a holy priesthood (1 Pet 2:5), and a royal priesthood. (1 Pet 2:9.) How blessed to think that we shall minister to our God for all the ages.

### **Satan loosed Rev 20:7-9**

John tells us that when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. How long he will be at large we are not told. Of course, it should be self-evident that God commands him to be set free for a season. He could never ever enjoy liberty again, except at God’s specific command. As we have seen, God allows him to be set free so that he can gather those who are unconverted to his banner. Man will thus have been

tried under the most perfect of conditions - that of universal righteousness and peace, and many will be found to have failed.

Satan is granted time enough to gather all his followers, and they are not few. He goes out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth. Gog, and Magog are gathered together and we are told “the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.” Gog and Magog is the name for the people who peopled Russia (Ezek 38 & 39.) Thus this last attempt of Satan will be spearheaded by the nation which today advocates a militant atheism. That does not exclude other nations however. Gog and Magog are merely at the forefront of the hosts of Satan. We do not know if any of the fallen angels will be set free with Satan, as the Bible is silent as to this fact. John tells us that this vast host went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them. Thus the final army of Satan, similar to the one raised to fight Armageddon, will be utterly annihilated by God pouring down fire from heaven above.

### **Satan’s final doom Rev 20:10**

In this verse we are apprised of the final doom of the devil. We see his downward course traced clearly in the Bible:-

1. Originally created by God, he was the anointed cherub that covered. He was perfect until iniquity was found in him. It is of interest to note that sin began, not here on earth as many might suppose, but it began at the very throne of God, where Lucifer, the creature, coveted the throne of God. He was cast out of the mountain of God as profane. Ezekiel 28:11-19. This is what the Lord Jesus refers to when he tells his disciples:

✚ “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” Luke 10:18.

In its context, the Lord is warning the disciples about the sin of pride. They are to rejoice that their names are written in the Book of Life, and not because the Spirits were subject to them, a rejoicing which could lead to them being filled with pride. Of course the occasion when the Lord Jesus saw Satan fall as lightning, was when he was cast out of the mountain (or kingdom) of God, as profane.

We need to emphasise that this casting out of Satan did not mean that he no longer had access to the throne of God. He no longer abode in heaven. He became the prince of the power of the air. Eph 2:2. That he had, and still has the right of access to God, can be clearly seen from the book of Job and also the Revelation where he is cast out onto the earth and can no longer act as the accuser of the brethren. (Job 1:6; 2:1; Rev 12:9-10.)

2. Satan is next seen in Genesis 3:1-15, where he tempts eve to disobey God. She, after yielding to Satan, tempts her husband, who also partakes of the forbidden fruit. Here we find sentence pronounced upon the serpent. The seed of the woman (who would

be none other than the Lord Jesus), would bruise his head. Thus sentence is pronounced upon the devil.

3. The next stage in the defeat of Satan was when the Lord Jesus Christ, who triumphed over him in all his temptations, finally broke his power, through his death upon the cross. He said:

✚ “Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” John 12:31.

We are aware of the fact that Satan is a defeated foe, because of the victory of Christ at the cross. However, Satan is not yet restricted in his activity because of his defeat. His power is trammelled, but he is still able to deceive and blind men who will not believe. Satan could have been dealt with immediately, had it been in the plan of God. But God’s eternal purposes decreed otherwise.

4. The next step in Satan's defeat is still future. This will come to pass when Michael and his angels cast Satan and his angels out of the heavenlies, and onto the earth. Satan will then be earthbound and will have great wrath, knowing that he has a short time. Rev 12:12.
5. After the battle of Armageddon, Satan is seized by an angel, bound by him, and cast into the Abyss where he will remain for 1000 years. Rev 20:3.
6. He is allowed to emerge from this prison for a brief season, to lead the wicked in their final rebellion. Rev 20:7-9.
7. Finally, he is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night forever. Thus the final victory is assured as far as God and his people are concerned, not that the issue was ever in doubt, for how can the creature ever imagine that it can prevail against God? Thus the evil triumvirate will remain in the lake of fire and brimstone for ever and ever. All Satan's angelic servants will also be there for, we are told by the Lord Jesus himself of the “everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt 25:41. What will be the fate of the wicked dead at this time? The answer is to be found in the remaining verses of Rev 20.

### **The great white throne Rev 20:11-15**

There is still the matter of the wicked dead to be decided. While for Satan and his angels there is no scriptural evidence that they were ever included in God’s plan of redemption, for man provision was made. We can only conjecture as to why God provided a way of salvation for man and not for the fallen angels. Perhaps it is because of the superior status of angels compared to man, perhaps to the fact that their transgression was of a greater degree because they dwelt in the presence of God, whereas man was removed from God, dwelling as he did upon the earth.



But for those men who remain persistent in their sin and rebellion, who will not avail themselves of the love and mercy of God, there awaits an identical fate as to that suffered by the devil and his angels. They will be sent to the same place which, as Oswald smith so aptly calls it, is the madhouse of the universe. John says:

✚ “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.”

We have already seen a throne in the Revelation, the rainbow throne of Rev 4:3. As has been already noted, that throne is a throne of mercy. But now there can be no mercy, for this throne is the place where the wicked are finally consigned to the place that they have themselves chosen for their eternal abode.

We must be careful not to confuse this throne with:-

1. The throne of his glory. Matt 25:31-46. Here the living Gentile survivors of the Great Tribulation will be judged. There is no question, at this stage, of the resurrection of the wicked to face judgement, although the judgement here is also final, for those who are classified as goats, will go into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. These people will not be resurrected.
2. The Bema judgement called the judgement seat of Christ. 2 Cor 5:10. Here the saints will be rewarded or will suffer loss. This takes place after the Rapture.

The great white throne speaks of the absolute holiness of God. This will be the standard of judgement used. Absolute righteousness is demanded. None will be able to measure up to what is required. There can be no doubt as to who will be seated on this throne.

✚ “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son: that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” John 5:22-23.

How tragic it is that the one who could have been the Saviour of all who stand before him at the Great White Throne, has now to sentence them to eternal separation from the presence of God. We note here that the heavens and the earth flee away from the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. How awful the face of the Son of God as he sits upon his judgement throne. We know that:

✚ “The heavens ... shall perish ... they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shall thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.” Heb 1:10-12.

So the heavens and the earth now flee away from the face of the Lord, that a new heaven and a new earth might take their place. This event takes place at the end of the Day of the Lord or the Millennium, after the final judgement of the wicked dead. This is the event referred to by Peter who writes:

✚ “The Day of the Lord will come in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:10-13.

Isaiah the prophet also speaks of the new heavens and the new earth which will be eternal. Isa 66:22. The heavens in these Scriptures are not the starry heavens, but the atmosphere of the earth, which will, somehow, be ignited and burn. The earth will be renovated by fire, or, as we read in Hebrews, it will be changed.

One of the differences between this present earth and the new earth is that, in the new earth, there will be no more sea. Rev 21:1. John continues:

✚ “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.”

All the wicked dead will be raised to face this judgement. With God there is no respect for persons, thus the small and the great will have to give account of themselves. They will be judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works. Thus, just as rewards for the saints are according to works, so punishment will also be according to works. But the tragedy of this all is that the wicked are lost forever because they have rejected the prince of life. Thus he who could have saved them, is finally their judge.

The Book of Life is opened. There will be no miscarriage of justice here. The absence of the name of the person from the Book of Life is verified. Thus the wicked are lost because their names are not found in the Book of Life. And their punishment is meted out to them according to their works. All three of the synoptic gospels record the fact that Jesus said the Pharisees would receive the greater condemnation because of their hypocrisy. John says:

✚ “The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”

God will have an accurate record of all that every man has ever thought or done. In the human brain the complete record of all thoughts and deeds will be found. There will be no argument possible for the record will be complete, and all will have to concur with the judgement of God, that it is righteous and true.

✚ “And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death the lake of fire.”

Notice the fact that the Bible speaks of death and Hades as two separate entities. We read a little earlier on the fact that “Death and Hades” delivered up the dead that were in them. The Bible is clear that death is that which affects the body, whereas Hades is the place to which the soul and spirit of the wicked is consigned. At death the separation of the body on the one hand, and the soul and spirit on the other hand, takes place. The evil doctrine that the soul sleeps after death is wholly unfounded in the Scripture. It is the body that sleeps, not soul and spirit.

Now death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire. Thus, after the second resurrection, that of the wicked dead, death and Hades will be no more. This presupposes that death is finally vanquished forever. This is, of course what the apostle Paul says in 1 Cor 15:25-26:

✚ “For he must reign (Millennium), till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

Thus, once all the enemies of God have been dealt with after the millennial reign of Christ, (this includes Satan, the fallen angels and the wicked dead), death will be forever vanquished. Death will indeed be swallowed up in victory. 1 Cor 15:54.

Where is the lake of fire? The Bible does not tell us. We are told where Hades is, that is in the heart of the earth. But we cannot say where the lake of fire is, so all attempts to define its location are futile. We will have to wait until the time of these events, before we may know.

The second death. This is the final separation of the wicked, whether they be angels or men, from the presence of God. We are told that the presence of God cannot be escaped even in Hades. Ps 139:7-8. But his presence will be discernible in the lake of fire. This is the awful truth about the final state of the wicked. Eternity alone without even the presence of God. Utterly forsaken. John ends:

✚ “Whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Thus the one thing that stands between sinful man and a lost eternity is the Lamb’s Book of Life. Our name’s written in it - and we will be found around the rainbow throne of God. Our name’s absent from it - and an eternity in the lake of fire, enduring the second death. And the choice is ours to make.

## **Chapter twenty one**

### ***The new heaven and the new earth, the New Jerusalem***

#### **The new heaven and the new earth Rev 21:1-8**

John tells us now that he 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 (v 1). As we have already seen, the heavens and the earth flee away from the face of the one who sits upon the white throne. Both Peter and Isaiah spoke of this new creation, which has now finally come to pass.

These three passages (2 Peter 3:10-13; Isa 65:17; 66:22; Rev 21:1), are explicit, leaving us in no doubt about the future program of God when the day of God is at hand. Thus we read in Isa 65:17:

✚ “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

We also have the word in Heb 12:27:

✚ “And this, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain.”

One feature of the new earth is that it will have no more sea. In the very nature of the language used, it would seem as if God is going to create a complete new heaven and earth, this time without any sea. As we look at the other planets, we are aware of the fact that only God could have made the present earth, so that it would be able to sustain human life. Thus the new earth will also be fitted for those who will inhabit it, during the day of God. We are reminded of the words the Lord Jesus himself used when he said:

✚ “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word will not pass away.” Matt 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33.

John now sees the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (v 2). Here we are reminded of the words of Jesus who said:

✚ “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” John 14:2.

We are also told concerning Abraham, that:

✚ “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Heb 11:10.

Continuing the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says concerning those who have confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth:

✚ “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” (11:16.)

Again we read in Heb 12:22:

✚ “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,”

And, finally, in Heb 13:14:

✚ “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

All these Scriptures make it clear that the New Jerusalem is a literal place. It is being prepared in heaven, but one day it will descend from heaven to rest on the new earth during the day of God. This heavenly Jerusalem is not to be confused with the millennial Jerusalem. During the Millennium, Jerusalem is also going to be transformed, but it will not be like the New Jerusalem. The description of Jerusalem given us by the prophet Isaiah in Isa 60:11-22, appears to be the New Jerusalem, as the language used is much the same as that used in the Revelation. Ezekiel in chapter 48:15-35 gives some description of the city of Jerusalem during the Millennium.

John now hears a great voice out of the throne (K.J.V. heaven) saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them (v 3). How God has worked to this end, that the people of God might have their God dwelling in their midst. Thus it was that he dwelt with Israel in the wilderness. When his presence rested on the tabernacle, Israel camped, when his presence lifted, they moved to the place where, once more, the Shekinah glory waited for them, that, after the tabernacle had been erected, his presence might once more abide upon it. Exodus 40:30-38.

It was during the time when Israel was judged by Eli that the wife of Phinehas, Eli's son, named her son Ichabod, saying, “The glory is departed from Israel” (or, “Where is the glory?”) Thus there came a time when the glory of God departed from Israel, because of their sin and disobedience. But God has always desired the fellowship of his creature, man. Thus he sent Jesus to reconcile man to himself, and those men thus reconciled, will one day enjoy the wonderful presence of God, dwelling in their midst in the New Jerusalem.

John tells us:

✚ “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.”

Thus all that pertains to the curse will be done away with. The redeemed of the Lord will experience none of those afflictions that have been the lot of man since the disobedience of Adam and Eve, brought the curse down upon this creation. Let us remember that sickness, sorrow, pain and death are all part of the awful consequences of man's disobedience to God when he hearkened to the voice of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Thus John says:

✚ “He that sat upon the throne said, behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, write: for these words are true and faithful.”

God's Word is faithful and true. Thus what he has promised here will come to pass. All things will be made new. Nothing of the old creation will be carried over. Thus he who made the heaven and the earth and then placed man on the earth, has now recreated us in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10), and will finally create a new heaven and a new earth for us to dwell in for all eternity.

Thus God says to John, “It is done” (or “It has occurred”). Thus, all that God has promised is spoken in the past tense, as if it had all been fulfilled already. Speaking of himself God says:

✚ “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

Here is a gracious promise from God himself. If any man desires to possess all that God promises here, it is so available. God gives freely. There are no strings attached to the promises of God. Eternal life is freely given to all who will come and receive it from God as his loving and merciful provision for a lost race. But we must be thirsty. Thus we are reminded of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said:

✚ “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Matt 5:6.

We are reminded of Rev 7:17 where we read:

✚ “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.”

We read:

✚ “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful (cowardly), and unbelieving, and the abominable (properly ‘defiled with abominations’), and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

Firstly, we look at the wonder promise of God to those who overcome. The word “nikao” which occurs 28 times in the N.T. And 17 of these are in the Revelation. The word means to overcome or conquer. God’s promise to those who overcome or conquer is that they shall inherit all things. Thus does our God provide bountifully for all who are victorious. Concerning this inheritance Peter says that it is:

✚ “... incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” 1 Peter 1:4.

And when we see what we need to do to be overcomers, we find that, even here, all provision has been made for us by God for we read:

✚ “They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” Rev 12:11.

God promises to be our God if we overcome, and we shall be his sons. Thus does he receive those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus for their salvation.

Secondly, we look at those who will be cast into the lake of fire, thus experiencing the second death. We find the Bible mentions eight classes of people.

### 1. **The fearful.**

It may seem awful that to be fearful will cause a man to be lost. The word translated fearful here is the word “deilos” meaning cowardly or timid and it only occurs in Matt 8:26; Mark 4:40; Rev 21:8. We need to remember that fear of man, and of what he can do, prevents many from accepting the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Thus fear keeps vast numbers of people from availing themselves of God’s loving provision for us. That fear is linked with lack of faith is clear from the other two Scriptures where the Greek word is used. We read in Mark 4:40:

✚ “And he said unto them, why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” No wonder Jesus warns us, “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.” Luke 12:4-5.

There have probably been more people who have been lost because of fearfulness, than for any other cause. Too afraid to stand up and be counted on the side of God. Afraid of ridicule, afraid of losing friends and family, afraid of losing position, afraid of offending men. The fears that can hinder men from entering the kingdom of God are legion.

### 2. **The unbelieving.**

The Greek word “apistos” is found twenty three times in the N.T. Being translated unbelieving (5 times), that believeth not (6 times), which believeth not (once),

unbeliever (4 times), faithless (4 times), infidel (twice), thing incredible (once). Bullinger says of the Greek word, “faithless, used of one who refuses to receive God’s revelation of grace.” Thus this class of person is marked by hostility to the truth, unlike the previous class who are too afraid or timid to believe.

3. **The abominable.**

Here we find the Greek word is the word “bdelussomai”, used only here and in Rom 2:22, “Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?” It is related to the word “bdelugma” translated “abomination” always and occurring six times in the N.T. (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 16:15; Rev 17:4, 5; 21:27.) An abomination is an object of disgust and it is used of the Antichrist's image which is set up in the Holy Place. The word in Rev 21:8 means to be an object of disgust or an abomination. In Luke 16:15 we read:

✚ “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

Thus I would regard the abominable as that class of people who esteem that which is particularly hateful to God.

4. **Murderers.**

The Greek word here is “phoneus” - a murderer - occurring seven times in the N.T. (Matt 22:7; Acts 7:52; 28:4; 1 Pet 4:15; Rev 21:8; 22:15.) We read in Gal 5:19-21:

✚ “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

5. **Whoremongers.**

Here the Greek word is “ pornos ” used ten times in the N.T. And translated fornicator (five times, 1 Cor 5:9, 10, 11; 6:9; Heb 12:16) and whoremonger (five times, Eph 5:5; 1 Tim 1:10; Heb 13:14; Rev 21:8; 22:15.) The word denotes a man who indulges in fornication or one who is sexually loose or immoral. This would cover all sexual immorality.

6. **Sorcerers.**

Here the word is “pharmakos” or “pharmakeus”, and the word means one “devoted to magical arts, especially one who uses drugs, potions, spells and enchantments.” This would include all who are involved in the occult, but, particularly, those who today are involved in the drug scene. Much of the drug-taking of today is occasioned by the desire to have trips into the world of fantasy where, I believe, the powers of darkness are able to manipulate those thus deprived of their reason through drug-taking.



## 7. **Idolaters.**

We are aware of the fact that idolatry embraces many more than those who bow down to worship idols. We are told that “covetousness is idolatry”. However, idolatry is a very real thing, in its primary sense, even today. We are not sure as to how and when idolatry began. Certainly there was no suggestion of it immediately after the flood.

Hislop in his “Two Babylons” intimates that the whole system of idolatry began at Babel, and that the instigators and propagators of this evil system were Nimrod and his wife Semiramis. Whoever the human instruments were, they were only the tools of Satan and his minions. We have seen how it is the second beast in Rev 13, who says to those who dwell on the earth that they should make an image of the first beast. He then compels those who dwell on the earth to bow down and worship the image. The apostle Paul makes it clear that, behind every image, there lurks a demon. Speaking of idol-sacrifice he says, “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God.” 1 Cor 10:20.

Romans 1:19-32 gives us the details of the horrible beginning and development of idolatry. Thus the apostle says three times, “God gave them up”. V 24, 26, 28.

8. **Liars.** God hates liars and lies. We are left in no doubt where lies come from. In John 8:44 Jesus said to the Jews, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Thus, lying is evidence of the fact that Satan still controls, if not the whole then certainly part of the life of the person. Col 3:9 warns:

✚ “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man.”

We freely acknowledge that we once did the very things that cause these people to be cast into the lake of fire, but Christ has redeemed us, and has set us free. May God help us to live Godly, righteously and soberly in this present age.

## **The city of God ... New Jerusalem Rev 21:9-11**

John tells us that one of the angels who had one of the vials or bowls which contained the seven last plagues, came and spoke to him, saying:

✚ “Come I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

John was carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and was shown the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It had the glory of God with the light of a precious stone, even a jasper stone, clear as crystal. The city of New Jerusalem

is called the bride or wife of the Lamb because it is the abode of those who are his people.

Thus, during the Millennium, it will most probably revolve around the earth like a satellite. Thus, while the survivors of the tribulation will multiply and replenish the earth, the glorified saints will dwell in the New Jerusalem, the place which the Lord Jesus has gone to prepare for them. The nations will see the New Jerusalem as it circles the earth, but only in the day of God, when God creates a new heaven and a new earth, will the city come to rest on the earth. That the city is not literally the wife of the Lamb should be obvious to all.

The relationship of wife to husband cannot exist between the Lamb and an inanimate object. The relationship exists between the Lamb and the inhabitants of the city, for they, after all, constitute the city. The city has the glory of God, for the glory of God abides within it. God and the Lamb are the temple of the city. (v 22.) This is why the glory of God can be seen in the city. The light of that glory was like the jasper stone. We have already seen in Rev 4:3 that “He that sat (upon the throne) was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.”

Concerning the jasper Vincent says, “The last of the twelve stones in the high priest’s breastplate (Ex 28:20; 39:13), and the first of the twelve enumerated in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:19.) ... according to Rev 21:11 it represents a crystalline brightness. Thus the city will be pervaded by the glory and brightness of the majesty of almighty God. Truly, he who “dwells in the light which no man can approach to” (1 Tim 6:16), will cause his glorious light to shine forth from the city of God. The light of the city will then be the light of God himself, and that light will shine forth and illumine, not only the city itself, but the very earth itself will be bathed in the light of the glory of God.

### **The city’s wall, gates, foundation Rev 21:12-15**

When we come to the description of the city, its measurements and its composition, I believe that we are to take all that is said literally. Thus we see the following concerning New Jerusalem:-

#### **The wall**

John tells us that the city has a wall great and high. Details of the wall are given in verse 17. We read:

✚ “He measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.”

If we take the cubit to be 18 inches, the wall will be 216 feet high. Thus its height is not very great when compared with the height of the city itself. The wall of the city also has twelve foundations, and in them are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Thus the twelve apostles of the Lamb will not only be seated on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, their names will form the foundation of the city of God. We read

in Hebrews that Abraham sought a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Heb 11:10; Matt 19:28.) Little could he have known that the foundations were to be twelve men who would spring from his own loins.

### **The gates**

The city will have twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels. On the gates are written the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. There are three gates each on the north, south, east and west. These gates are large gates making the city easily accessible to all who are redeemed. Notice, however, that the city has walls founded upon the twelve apostles, gates named after the twelve tribes. We need to remember that the Gentiles have been graciously grafted in to the blessings and promises made to faithful Abraham and to his seed. We need also to bear in mind the fact that, throughout the Millennium, Israel is going to be the head of the nations. She will undertake the propagation of the good news, she will be the servant of God here on earth as he ever intended her to be.

### **The city its measurements Rev 21:16-17**

The city lies foursquare. The length and the breadth are the same as is the height. The Greek stadia is almost the equivalent of the English furlong. Thus the city will measure, roughly, 1 400 miles long, 1 400 miles wide and 1 400 miles high. Some see the New Jerusalem as taking the form of a cube but, more probably, it will take the form of a pyramid. A city of these dimensions is so vast that many stumble and try to argue that the Scripture is not to be interpreted literally here. If this is not literal, it would be very difficult to explain why the Holy Spirit went to the length of giving the actual figures of measurement of the city. What could this be figurative of? Certainly we know of no such city, and its size causes the mind of man to reel, but this is no reason to reject its literal existence. Thus, the city of New Jerusalem is described to us, fulfilling the words of the Lord Jesus who said "In my Father's house are many abiding places."

### **The city its materials Rev 21:18-22**

The wall of the city was of jasper. We come again to this precious stone with its scintillating beauty, a purity and light which causes the Holy Spirit to use it to describe the likeness of the glory of God. Of this then, the walls of the city will be built. When we consider the wall, 5600 miles in circumference, and at least 200 foot high, it is startling to see how much jasper will be needed to complete the wall.

The city itself is built of pure gold, like unto clear glass. When we consider the effort that man put into mining just a small quantity of gold, and of how highly he prizes it, we can only wonder at the prodigality of God in the use of building material. And yet, what is gold to God? He can make it as easily as he can make the sands of the sea, or the waters of the sea for that matter. God could have constructed all the planets of pure gold had he so desired. What is it to him to obtain the gold to build his city with?

The foundations of the wall were garnished with all manner of precious stones. As we have already been told that the foundation of the wall is the twelve apostles of the Lamb, each of these twelve precious stones must represent one of these men. Thus we have the jasper, the sapphire, the chalcedony, the emerald, the sardonyx, the sardius, the chrysolite, the beryl, the topaz, the chrysoprasus, the jacinth, and the amethyst. We can only guess as to what these stones signify. We are reminded of the fact that the breastplate of the high priest contained twelve stones which were representative of the twelve tribes of Israel. We look at the precious stones in the foundation here:-

1. The jasper.

We have already seen that this stone expresses a crystalline brilliance. It occurred in the breastplate of the high priest, and, as we are told in Ez 28:13, was one of the precious stones which covered Satan before his fall.

✚ “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold.” Ez 28:13.

Here we see six of the precious stones used in the foundation of New Jerusalem, were ascribed to being the covering of Satan in the primeval Eden of God.

2. Sapphire.

According to Vincent the sapphire mentioned here was what we call lapis lazuli, our sapphire being represented by the biblical jacinth. Speaking of Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah says:

✚ “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.” Isa 54:12-13.

When the Lord appeared to Jeremiah he wrote:

✚ “And above the firmament that was above their (the cherubim) heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.” Ez 1:26.

3. The chalcedony.

Only here in the Bible. According to Bullinger, a gem including several varieties, one of which is like a cornelian. The agate belonged to the same family. The gem came from chalcedon and, according to Vincent, is still called the copper emerald.

4. The emerald.

Fourth in the high priest's breastplate, and fourth in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Ex 28:18; 39:11). It is also mentioned as part of the covering of Satan Ex

28:13. In Rev 4:3 the rainbow around the throne of God is said to be like an emerald. The emerald was green in colour.

5. The sardonyx.

According to Vincent “The most beautiful and rarest variety of onyx.” Onyx is mentioned in Ez 28:13 in connection with Satan's covering. According to Vincent the early Greeks made no distinction between the onyx and the sardonyx. According to Gen 2:12 the onyx stone was to be found in Havilah. Onyx stones were to be brought to Moses for use in the tabernacle. Ex 25:7.

The names of the children of Israel were to be engraved on two onyx stones, to be worn on the shoulder of the high priest's garments. Ex 28:9; 39:6. It was the second last stone to be found on the breastplate of the high priest. Ex 28:20; 39:13. In Ex 35:9, 27 we see the people obeying Moses and bringing the onyx stones to be used for the ephod and breastplate.

6. The sardius.

The same as carnelian. It was the first on the breastplate and the sixth in the foundation of New Jerusalem Also covered Satan Ez 28:13. (see Ex 28:17; 39:10; Ez 28:13; Rev 4:3; 21:20.) Generally the sardius was a red stone.

7. The chrysolite.

Lit a gold-stone. Supposed to be a yellow to greenish-yellow form of olivine. The mineral is a silicate of magnesium and iron. (pict. B. Dict.)

8. The beryl.

This is found on the breastplate of the high priest. (Ex 28:20; 39:13.) It was tenth in order on the breastplate. In the Song of Solomon 5:14 it is used to describe the hands of the Shunamite's beloved. It is used to describe the colour of the wheels in Ex 1:16. These wheels were part of the cherubim associated with the throne of God. See also Ez 10:9. Also associated with Satan's covering in Eden Ez 28:13. In Dan 10:6 we are told that the man (an angel) who appeared to Daniel had a body like the beryl. Supposed to be similar in nature to the emerald with a colour like the greenness of the sea. (Vincent)

9. The topaz.

This stone was used on the breastplate of the high priest (Ex 28:17; 39:10), where it was the second stone. It covered Satan in Eden as well. (Ez 28:13.) It was found in Ethiopia Job 28:19. It is not to be confused with the modern topaz, and was predominantly yellow in colour. It is quartzitic in nature.

10. The chrysoprasus.

Only mentioned here in the Bible. Comes from the word for gold and the word for a leek. Its colour was a translucent golden green. According to Pliny it was a variety of the beryl.

11. The jacinth.

In Rev 9:17 the breastplates of the horses are described as being “Of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone.” In the breastplate of the high priest we read that the seventh stone was a ligure. Ex 28:19; 39:12. In the R.S.V. this is translated jacinth. There is much disagreement as to what this gemstone really was.

12. The amethyst.

The ninth stone on the breastplate of the high priest. (Ex 28:19; 39:12.) A purple to blue form of quartz. Generally agreed upon that the Bible stone is the same as our amethyst of today.

The twelve gates of the city were twelve pearls. The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. Thus does John see and describe the city being prepared for us. God uses the choicest materials available in the universe. We see a great similarity between the description of the city of New Jerusalem and the primeval Eden where Satan walked amidst the stones of fire.

**The city, holy, and closed to evil Rev 21:22-27**

John tells us that he saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. We are reminded of the fact that, when he was on earth, the Lord Jesus referred to his body as the temple.

✚ “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John 2:19.

We are assured that in this age of grace that our bodies are temples. So Paul says,

✚ “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” 1 Cor 6:19.

So also in 2 Cor 6:16:

✚ “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Now, however, God and the Lamb are in the midst of their people. Thus no longer is there any need of a temple. There will be a temple in the Millennium on earth, but New Jerusalem will have no temple. We read:

✚ “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.” V 23.

This verse does not say that there is no sun or moon or stars for that matter. It tells us that New Jerusalem will not need the light of the sun or of the moon. They will still be there, but their usefulness, as far as the city is concerned, is nil. Where the light and the glory of

God is resident, there is no need for creature light. God far outshines any of the suns that he has created. Thus those who dwell in the city will look to God for the light that they need.

Paul was blinded when he saw the Lord, and John fell at his feet as one dead. We have seen that God dwells in light unapproachable. That glorious light will come down and abide in the city of New Jerusalem.

✚ “The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of earth do bring their glory and honour into it.” V 24.

We see that there will be a close relationship between the city and the millennial earth, for what is written here refers to the time before the coming of the day of God. Those who are saved will walk in the light of it. The fact that there are still kings upon the earth indicates that we are dwelling upon millennial truth here. This is not yet the eternal state. Thus men will bring their homage to the Lord in this city. As David will be reigning in earthly Jerusalem over Israel, so the Gentiles will have rulers who will rule them. They will bring their tribute to the Lord in the New Jerusalem for that will be his abode.

The gates of the city will not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there (v 25). It will be an open city. The gates are open wide. There will be no night there. Outside the city, upon the earth there will be day and night, but the presence of Almighty God and of the Lamb, ensures that the city is always full of light. We are told that:

✚ “They will bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it.” (v 26). It is my firm conviction that, throughout the Millennium, the saints who have taken part in the first resurrection will dwell in the city of New Jerusalem. They will have contact with the people of the earth, governing the millennial earth for, and on behalf of the Lord with a rod of iron.

Thus there will be the need for the city to be in such a position that the saints will be able to move freely between the earth and the New Jerusalem. The glory and the honour of the nations will be brought into the city. I believe that verse 27 shows not only that the city will be visible and accessible during the Millennium, but that there will be unsaved people upon the earth who will not have access to the city. Thus we read:

✚ “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

To me it seems that there will be such upon the earth. Those who lie and work an abomination. They will not be allowed access to the city. Only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life can enter the city.

It would be as well to mention here that there are those who do not see the New Jerusalem as having any contact with the earth during the Millennium. Only after the

coming of the new heaven and the new earth do they see any such contact. They rather see the situation as being this:- that the camp of the saints (Rev 20:9) is separate from the New Jerusalem, and that it is here that the saints will dwell until the coming of the day of God. This “camp of the saints” will be above the city of Jerusalem, during the Millennium. I would not like to be dogmatic about it, as the Scripture is purposefully vague here.

## **Chapter twenty two**

### ***The river and tree of life , Jesus is coming quickly***

#### **The river of life Rev 22:1-2**

John says:

✚ “He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bear twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

In the millennial Psalm 46, we read:

✚ “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the Holy Place of the tabernacles of the most high.” V 4.

There is no doubt that there is a river which will flow out of the sanctuary of the millennial temple. Ezekiel tells us of this river in chapter 47 of his prophecy. The river issues out of the eastern threshold of the temple. After flowing 4 000 cubits, the river is so wide and deep that it cannot be crossed. There are many trees growing on the banks of the river and, according to Ezekiel, the trees shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for medicine. So we read also in Zech 14:8:

✚ “And it shall be in that day that living waters shall go out of Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.”

These passages refer to the city of Jerusalem during the Millennium, whereas the verses in Rev 22:1-2 refer to the New Jerusalem, which will only descend upon the earth during the day of God, that is, upon the new earth which is not of this creation.

We see also that the tree of life, forbidden to man after Adam's sin, is now freely available. It would be foolish to try and tell what the fruits of this tree contain, or why the leaves should be able to heal the nations. We will have to wait that day to understand.



### **God present there Rev 22:3-5**

John now tells us that there will be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. Thus fellowship is once more restored between man and God. What God ever intended man to enjoy is now his portion. How dreadful that man believed the devil's lie, in the Garden of Eden Satan tried to destroy the fellowship that existed between God and his newly-made creature, man. He succeeded for a while, but only for a while. God reversed the seeming victory of the devil, and man, in the New Jerusalem, will enjoy far more than Adam and Eve ever lost.

There will be no more curse. Let us remember that the curse came because of sin and disobedience. But now, with sin forever dealt with, the curse having been born by Christ upon the cross, the curse is no more. The very thorns that the cursed earth brought forth, were rudely thrust upon our Saviour's brow, when he was engaged in the task of removing the curse, that the blessing of God might be man's portion. Thus God can once more walk with man as he did in Eden, and man's blessing is complete. We read:

✚ “His servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”

Our service will not end here, but will continue throughout the ages of eternity. How wonderful to think that we shall never lack opportunity of serving the one who has redeemed us from sin at such an infinite cost. We shall see his face. We are reminded of the Scripture in Ex 33:20 where God, replying to Moses who had asked, “Show me thy glory”, said “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” So God said:

✚ “Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft in the rock, and I will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.” Verse 21-23.

But there is a day coming when, in the words of the hymn writer, “Face to face will I behold him.” His name shall be in their foreheads. We have seen, when the Antichrist lays claim to the whole man, he wants his mark upon the foreheads or right hands of men. Thus by bearing his name in our foreheads we declare to all creation that we are his, and his twice over, for he not only created man in his image and likeness, but he came down to the earth, took upon himself the form of man, and then redeemed man from all his sin, that he might once more belong to God. Thus for all the ages the evidence of God's ownership will be there for all to see.

John writes:

✚ “There shall be no night there; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

As has already been remarked, there will still be a sun and moon and stars, but they will not be needed, as they are now. Their light becomes superfluous, for the light of the city will proceed from God. He will illuminate the city with his own glory.

We read they shall reign for ever and ever. The question arises as to where we will reign? And over whom will we reign? We cannot say now but one day we will know. Suffice to accept what God tells us now, and wait for the day when it will be fulfilled for the finer details.

### **Conclusion the Lord comes quickly Rev 22:6-21**

John says:

✚ “These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the Spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants what must come to pass with speed.”  
(lit)

We can plan our future according to what is written here. Faithful and true. What God revealed to John will surely come to pass. How blessed to think that the God of the Spirits of the (Old Testament) prophets showed us his plans for the future, things which will come to pass with speed. Indeed, in these present days, there remains only a little while, before all things that are written will be fulfilled.

We read the promise of the Lord Jesus:

✚ “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

We are told by the Lord that he is coming quickly three times in this final chapter (verses 7, 12 and 20.) Perhaps it has seemed a long time for us, but it has not been a long time with God. But the time is drawing to a close in our time and generation. We are seeing the fulfilment of so many of the Lord’s signs of the end. Truly, he is coming quickly.

Just as there is a special blessing on those who read the Revelation (v 3), there is a special blessing to those who keep the sayings of this prophecy. Let us notice here that John calls it a prophecy. It is not history. Most of what is written here is yet to come to pass. Let us observe the things that are recorded and keep them faithfully.

On hearing and seeing these things, John is so overcome that he falls down at the feet of the angel who reveals them to him, to worship him. The angel is the one of Rev 21:9, one of those bearing the bowls containing the final wrath of God. Immediately he is restrained by the angel’s words:

✚ “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them that keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”

We are reminded of the fact that it is God and God alone who is to receive worship and honour. All worship directed to Mary, or to so-called saints (as distinguished from Bible saints who are only fellow believers), or even angels is forbidden. God alone is worthy of worship and honour.

John is told not to seal the sayings of the prophecy because the time is near (v 10). This is where the Revelation of Jesus Christ differs from the prophecy of Daniel who was told:

✚ “Shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end.” Dan 12:4.

Much of Daniel only becomes intelligible in the light of the Revelation. It was not meant to be understood then, but now. Thus, the two books complement each other, and, taken together, give a clear understanding of events in the latter days.

### **Words of warning**

John writes:

✚ “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.”

The word unjust is better translated unrighteous. Thus we have a contrast given to us here:-

✚ Unrighteous ... righteous  
✚ Filthy ... holy

We are what we chose to be. Thus we read concerning those who are holy, “Who is holy, let him be made holy still.” (lit) Vincent says the passive voice is used thus “Let him be made holy still.” We cannot be holy through our own efforts but when we hunger and thirst after righteousness we will be made righteous and holy.

The same applies to the ungodly for we read (lit) “Who is filthy, let him be made filthy still.” (passive voice.) Just as God works in the believer that which is well pleasing in his sight, Satan will lead those who obey him, deeper and deeper into the morass of sin and disobedience. Thus men are being fitted all the time for the place where they will spend eternity. God is purifying his people, whereas Satan is making his people filthier. No wonder Peter warns us:

✚ “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” 1 Peter 2:11.

As we submit to the Lord he will perfect us day by day, fitting us to dwell with him forever in the place that he is preparing for us.

## **Rev 22:12-21**

John now records the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ:

✚ “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be.”

As has already been noted, this is the second time in this chapter where the Lord’s return is spoken of as imminent. We are reminded of the Scripture in Heb 1:37:

✚ “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

We need, as Christians, to guard against the attitude of the evil servant of Matt 24:48:

✚ “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The Greek word for reward is “misthos” which occurs 29 times in the N.T. We find it in Matt 5:12, Luke 6:23, where the Lord Jesus tells his disciples that when they are reproached and persecuted for the Son of Man’s sake, their reward will be great in heaven. It is also used in Rev 11:18, where we read that the time is come to reward God’s servants the prophets. It is the word used particularly of the saints who will be judged at the Bema judgement or judgement seat of Christ. We read in 1 Cor 3:14 concerning our building upon the foundation which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ:

✚ “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.”

Thus, the coming that is spoken of in Rev 22:12 is that of the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of the Rapture.

We read in verse 13, “I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” The phrase also occurs in Rev 1:8, 11; 21:6, making four occurrences. (K.J.V.) Christ is the sum of everything. He is not only the beginning and the ending, but also everything in between. When we go to the beginning, we find Christ there, calling all creation into being, when we go to the ending we find him there making a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Before all ages and unto all ages, Jesus Christ was, is and ever will be the second person of the Godhead, through whom God has wrought all things. We find the better versions render verse 14 as follows:

✚ “Blessed are they that wash their robes that they might have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

This reminds us of Rev 7:14 where we read concerning the great multitude which no man could number, that they “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Thus, the only qualification necessary to enter the city and have access to the tree of life, is to have our robes washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can provide the righteousness which we all require to enter into the New Jerusalem How blessed it is and how thankful ought we not all to be that “the blood of Jesus Christ his (God’s) Son cleanseth us from all unrighteousness.”

1. Concerning the tree of life, we read in Gen 2:9:

✚ “And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

Because man disobeyed God and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God drove him out of the Garden of Eden, and set cherubim with flaming swords to keep the way of the tree of life:

✚ “lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.” Gen 3:22-24.

Thus to prevent sinful man from eating of the fruit of the tree of life, and then living forever in his sinful state, God barred all access to the tree. But the promise of the Lord Jesus to those who overcome is stated in Rev 2:7:

✚ “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

Thus will we once more have access to the tree of life and we will live forever, because of the provision of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. We will have access to the city of the New Jerusalem Those whose robes have been washed, will enter into the city through its gates, for it is here that the Lord Jesus has prepared a place for us. But:

✚ “Outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers (fornicators), and murderers, and idolaters, and whoso loveth and maketh a lie.”

Thus nothing that defiles will enter into the city of God. All are excluded who have not been cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus. There will be many there who were dogs, and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and liars, but they will have been cleansed from all their sins, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as the only difference between the households of the Israelites and the Egyptians was the blood of the Passover lamb upon the doors of the Israelites' houses, so the only difference between the saved and the lost is that the blood of Christ has cleansed those who have believed on him from all their sins.

We read:

✚ “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.”

Thus when we read this book, we are to take note that it is the word of the Lord. He said on another occasion:

✚ “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.” Luke 21:33.

Thus all that is recorded in this book of the Revelation will most certainly come to pass. Jesus is the root and offspring of David This is why the Lord Jesus was called a Nazarene It was a term of contempt and meant in the Hebrew a sprout or a shoot. Thus we read in Isa 11:1:

✚ “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch (netzer) shall grow out of his roots.”

But he who was “despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3), is now king of kings and Lord of Lords. He is the bright and morning star. According to Vincent the star was the ancient emblem of sovereignty, thus speaking of the kingly authority of the Lord Jesus.

We now read the great invitation of the Lord.

✚ “And the Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The invitation to participate in this glorious provision of God for all men is manifold:-

1. The Holy Spirit invites all men to come. This invitation is to forsake sin, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, and enter into eternal life, which confers on all who have it, the right to enter the city of New Jerusalem and eat of the tree of life.
2. The bride also echoes the call of the Holy Spirit, saying “Come”. The bride is the church, the bride of Christ. Thus all who are part of the bride, i.e. All true believers, will invite sinners to find that which they have found.
3. All who hear are to say come. Thus all who hear the voice of the Spirit and the bride are also enjoined to echo the invitation.

4. He that is athirst is to come. We are reminded of the words of Jesus to the woman at the well:

✚ “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well springing up into everlasting life.” John 4:14.

5. Whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life. Thus God excludes nobody. Men are not saved because they do not wish to be saved, and not because God does not desire their salvation.

John now gives a terrible warning:

✚ “I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

What is written in the Revelation is to be accepted as it is. We have no right to alter or to change anything that is written. It will come to pass exactly as God has recorded here.

We may not add to it. In fact, when we have read it, it is hard to see what man dare add to this fearful record of God’s wrath against those who would not believe. So many would love to take away from it - to explain it all away. To do so will incur God’s displeasure. Those who do this can have:

1. Their names removed from the Book of Life.
2. Their portion taken away from the holy city.
3. Loss of the blessings recorded in the prophecy.

To add to it will mean that the plagues written in this book will come upon those who do so.

In ending, John writes:

✚ “He which testifyeth these things saith, surely, I come quickly.”

Here is the final warning concerning the nearness of the Lord’s return. May we all echo the words:

✚ “Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

May our hearts cry out to him to come to receive us, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. John ends with the benediction:

✚ “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Truly, as we see the things written here begin to come to pass, we need the grace of our Lord to keep us faithful and true to him in all things.