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An Exposition of Revelation

By Harold Camping

All Scripture text is from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

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A free subscription to the quarterly *New Life Digest* magazine can be obtained from Family Radio upon request (see information for contacting Family Radio under “Background Information” at the end of this book). May God richly bless you as you read this important study of Revelation.

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**Introduction**

The Book of Revelation is difficult to understand and, as a result, it has indeed been widely misunderstood. More often than not, though, it's because the reader, or the expositor, has depended on his own understanding to interpret or rationalize the symbols used by God in this last book of the Bible. To avoid being similarly snared, we should follow the strict principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture – in other words, letting the Bible interpret itself.

As you read this serial, therefore, you will find many fresh insights into the Word of God, insights that are fully supported by Scripture. You will also be thrilled to discover that Revelation is not nearly as incomprehensible as you may have thought, and that every truth it conveys is in full harmony with the rest of the Bible.

Most importantly, you will almost surely develop a much deeper appreciation of the awesome glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of His amazing mercy and grace, His holiness and justice.

Revelation is a book that has intrigued scholars down through the ages. It has the potential of bringing to us an enormous amount of truth. However, Revelation is not easy to understand in itself. But because in this book God uses symbols extensively to reveal truth. To learn what God is telling us, we must realize that we are wholly dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit and that the Bible is its written word.

When we come to those passages that are especially difficult to understand, therefore, we need to go to the rest of the Bible for help, remembering that Revelation relates to the entire Bible and that the Bible is one cohesive whole. In short, guided by the Holy Spirit, we must compare spiritual things with spiritual words (I Cor. 2:10-13). This is the principle I shall be following throughout this expository.

**Revelation 1**

**Lesson 1 for Revelation 1:1-7 ~ "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"**

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

In this opening verse, God tells us twice that He is the one who is responsible for our standing before Him, and that we have to answer to Him for all our actions. In verse 1, He has also declared that the wages of sin is death, and the death that God has in view is eternal damnation. That decree has put man in an absolutely hopeless situation because, since Adam’s fall, all men have become sinners.

Wonderfully, God has provided a way of escape through the Lord Jesus Christ. He died for the sins of those who would believe on Him. This is the Good News. The whole Bible, therefore, focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Unto Jesus. To whom has God given this revelation of Jesus Christ? The Lord Jesus Christ. But why has God given the revelation to Jesus, who Himself is the eternal God? Because Christ came to this earth as the suffering servant; He came completely obedient to God. In fact, the Bible says He even learned obedience from the things that Christ suffered to the point of death (Heb. 5-8). Christ Himself made this remarkable statement recorded in John 12: “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (v. 49). It underscores the absolute submission of Christ to the Father.

For those He had chosen to save, God had worked out His whole salvation plan before time began so that, in principle, Christ was the Lamb that was slain from before the foundations of the earth. Yet, there had to come a point in time when Christ emptied Himself of His glory to become a human being. And it was in this God-man role that Jesus was given by God the revelation which He is to give to us.

Jesus, who is the Word, came to personify that Word when He became flesh (John 1:1-14). We thus read in Hebrews 1: “God, who at sundry times [different times] and in diverse manners [various manners] spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son… (v. 2). The Bible thus declares that the Gospel is what the triune God gave unto Jesus Christ to show unto us. This is the chain of communication for the proclamation of the Good News.

Things to come. Further in verse 1 we read, “things which must shortly come to pass.” By itself, this statement suggests that Revelation has to do only with future things. But in verse 19, God tells us that the book also covers “the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” Taken together, the two verses indicate that while Revelation deals with the past, present and future, its focal point is on things to come.

Remember, the Book of Revelation was written in the first century, some 1,900 years ago. It was going to discuss things which were then in front of our Lord’s face, things which He had done, things which He was doing, and things which were coming to pass. The Bible thus declares that the Gospel is what the triune God gave unto Jesus Christ to show unto us. This is the chain of communication for the proclamation of the Good News.

Verse 2 continues, “…and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Remember in verse 1 we read that God gave unto Christ the things which must shortly come to pass, and Christ in turn gave these to His servants? So the Apostle John not only bears record of the Word of God, which is the Lord Himself. The Apostle John is also the person who was present when the Lord ascended back into heaven.

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

John was uniquely qualified to bear record of the Word of God, which is the Lord Himself. The Apostle John was present with the Lord during His three-and-a-half years of ministry on earth, so he was among the few who heard in person the gospel preached by Christ Himself. He was also present when Jesus was tried, crucified, and buried. And after Jesus had risen, he was present when the Lord ascended back into heaven.

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Baptist who is to come as a messenger: “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.” But the second half clearly refers to Christ: “and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.” Yes, Christ is the messenger who brings us the magnificent covenant of salvation.

That is indeed the one who is bringing a message to John can be more clearly seen from verses 10 and 11: “[1 John] was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.’” Christ, of course, is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.

We thus find that the second clause of Revelation 1:1 sets forth the same line of communication for the proclamation of the Good News. This whole verse emphasizes that the revelation of God moves from Him through the Lord to His servants.

Before we leave verse 1, I would like to comment briefly on two more words. First, the word “signified” in “He sent and signified it” indicates that the message was to be sent through signs, visions and parables. God is saying to the readers that they would have to be taught the truth using the dramatic truth in parabolic language.

Secondly, the “John” to whom the message was given is evidently the Apostle John, since there is no other John in the Bible whom it might have reference to. John the Baptist had already been beheaded. The Apostle John was a very humble and modest person. When he wrote the Gospel of John, he never used his own name; he simply spoke of himself as the apostle that Jesus loved. Here, too, he did not specifically identify himself.

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

The first principle to be derived from this verse is that we do not have to read the Word. We can read it ourselves, or it can be
read to us by others. There is no limit to how much time we can spend on reading the Word, or how much blessing we can derive therefrom. Secondly, we must hear the Word. Why is it that some people can read the Bible, but the Word does not become saved? Because they are not hearing the Word in a spiritual sense; they hear only in a physical sense. Unless God has opened their God's grace. Not only when we have become saved. And we have become saved only when Christ has softened our heart so that there is an earnest desire to be obedient to the Word of God. Verse 3 ends with: “for the time is at hand.” When John the Baptist came to preach, he said, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” Later, Jesus started His earthly ministry by proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. What did they mean by those statements? Well, the kingdom of God is made up of all believers. Because Christ had come to head up His kingdom, the time had also come for that kingdom to expand with people from all over the world becoming saved. So, God is emphasizing that Today is the time for salvation, the time to enter that kingdom. If we are not saved now, we will not be saved in eternity. Incidentally, the word “prophecy” in this verse, refers to all the revelation of God, the whole Word of God. Why? Because we are told to keep the words which were written in the book of Revelation. 1:4. John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne. This verse begins by telling us to whom the Book of Revelation was addressed. Every statement in the Bible has an immediate person or group of people to whom it is directed. In the New Testament, it might be a letter to a church or an individual. In the Old Testament, it might be a discourse to ancient Israel or such nations as Egypt or Babylon, or it might be a statement to Abraham. In the Book of Revelation, the Book of Revelation was written – in the first instance – to the seven churches that then existed in Asia. We must remember, however, that while God chose to write the Bible in this fashion, the message nevertheless is to every human being. That’s why blessed are those who read, hear and keep God’s Word. Why was this particular message addressed to these seven churches? I believe it’s because they represent the whole New Testament Church. The number seven in the Bible, if it has any spiritual significance, represents perfection. And the perfection of God’s plan for the churches is nothing less than the Church coming into the body of Christ all through time – particularly after Pentecost. And Asia, being outside of Israel, represents the ‘utmost parts’ of the earth. Grace. In the next phrase, we see what God desires for those who are going to be included in His church: “Grace be unto you, and peace.” Simply stated, grace means unmerited favor. But the word “grace” can naturally mean the whole message of salvation; it represents God’s entire salvation program. To paint the picture in the proper setting, we have to realize that the human race has sinned and is in need of the Gospel message to glorify God. Made in the image of God, man was the zenith of God’s beautiful creation at the beginning of time. Yet mankind rebelled against God and went their own way. God’s first command to man was, “But of the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” The death that God had in view was eternal damnation. Since Adam’s fall, therefore, God’s justice demands that the rebellious human race should be swept into eternal damnation. But God then offers man salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. But man is so perverse that in spite of the Gospel, nobody seeks after God (Rom. 3:11). Even when God comes to us with the possibility of reconciliation, not one of us wants to be right with Him (v. 10). Still, God in His grace decided to save some of these sinners. But to save them and still keep His perfect justice, it was necessary for God to take on a human nature and bear the punishment for the sins of those who have come to save, so that they will never be threatened with eternal damnation. More than that, He opens our spiritual eyes and ears so that we see our sins and begin to cry out to God for mercy. He gives us a new heart and a renewed soul so that there is an intense desire to live for Him, and He promises that we will someday receive a resurrected spiritual body so that we will be completely without any blemish. Yes, grace encompasses all of that and a lot more. Peace. The word “peace” speaks of the same salvation plan, but from a different vantage point. Whereas grace paints the whole picture of our rebellion and our undeserving condition, peace presents us (before we were saved) as those who are at war with God, those who are slandering the things of God, and the Prince of Peace, comes with the peace treaty so that we might be at peace with God. Grace and peace, then, is what God desires for all the churches. Where does this grace and peace come from? “From him which is, and which was, and which is to come.” This interesting set of words is speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ. We know this because verse 8 identifies the person with that description as the Alpha and Omega. It reads, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come.” In verse 9, the list of attributes that the Lord Jesus Christ possesses is added. He has endured hell for our sins and He is the Prince of Peace, comes with the peace treaty so that we might be at peace with God. Peace, then, is what God desires for all the churches. Why are we told again that grace and peace are from Jesus Christ, since verse 4 has already said so? In the last verse, Jesus was presented as the God who is from everlasting to everlasting. Here, He is presented as our Savior. The name “Jesus” means Savior. Matthew 1:21: “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” And the name “Christ” is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word “Messiah.” It stands for the one who was to come as the Anointed One, the king who would rule. The next few phrases call attention to the Lord’s three-fold office – as prophet, priest and king: The Prophet. To start with, Jesus is described as “the faithful witness.” A witness is one who can testify from personal knowledge to something that has taken place. Because Jesus came to earth in visible form and was crucified, buried and resurrected in a visible way, He Himself has become the perfect testimony that the promised salvation program from God is true and trustworthy. If you ever wonder whether the Bible is really the Word of God, you should find most reassuring the fact that the Lord came to earth as a human less than 2,000 years ago, exactly as the Scriptures had prophesied. That historical event confirms that the Bible is absolutely trustworthy. Thus, Jesus is the faithful witness of the grace of God. The Priest. As “the first begotten of the dead”, the Lord is seen here in His role as the priest. We know from Hebrews 4 that Christ is the “great high priest” who “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”. And from Hebrews 7 we learn that He is the perfect priest because “He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood” and “He ever liveth to make intercession for God’s people.” You see, the priests of the Old Testament made animal sacrifices to atone for man’s sin. But Christ came to offer up Himself as the Lamb of God, allowing Himself to be crucified on the Cross, because He was the Lamb of God. Let’s look at Colossians 1:15-18: “[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every
creature. For by him were all things created...and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

This emphasizes that Christ is not a created being in any sense; He is before all things. Yes, Jesus is the King of Kings. The conception in the womb of Mary merely marks the beginning of His incarnation as a human. And because all things were created by Him and for Him, God considers Him the firstborn of every creature; the One entitled to inherit all things from God.

Moreover, just as He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8), He was, in principle, reigning through the whole time before He began. And thus, He is the first begotten of the dead. And His death and resurrection qualified Him to be the head of the church.

The King. Verse 5 continues, “and the prince of the kings of the earth.” Immediately, we think of Christ being the King of kings, the Lord of lords. He is the prince of Kings because He raises up kings and puts down kings.

But I think there is another, more important meaning to that phrase: Who are the kings of this earth that God is particularly interested in? The people who have been saved. A passage that describes believers as kings is verse 15 of Isaiah 66. Chapter 66 talks about the sending forth of the Gospel into the world. It reads, “So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told

Isaiah 52, a chapter that talks about the sending forth of the Gospel, to intercede for the unsaved, to help build the church and to complete the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mystery. In verse 6 we see the interesting phrase “God and his Father”. The Lord Jesus, of course, addresses God the Father. But here it speaks of God and His Father; this then is one of many verses in the Bible clearly indicating that Jesus is God. Some people reading this conclude that there are two Gods — God the Father and God the Son. Others, including the Holy Spirit, say there are three Gods. But the Bible teaches that while there are three persons, there is only one God. How can there be three persons in the Godhead and yet there is just one God? This is a mystery our finite minds can never understand. So, we simply accept it by faith, knowing that the Bible is true and trustworthy. One thing we know from this verse is that Jesus Christ is eternal God.

Verse 6 ends, “to him shall be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” The mystery stays with us. Note that the pronoun him is singular although it refers to “God and His Father”. There are two persons mentioned in this verse, yet there is just one God. It is true that the Bible teaches that there are three persons, there is only one God. The phrase “for ever and ever” emphasizes that there is an eternity, and the word “amen” means “So be it; this is the absolute truth.”

1:7. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

Note the interesting way God develops this. In verse 5, He talks about our salvation through Christ; in verse 6, our evangelizing the world to God’s glory; and here in verse 7, His coming with the clouds. Meaning: Once God has completed His work through Christ, the Lord Jesus will return to judge the world.

We see this very clearly in Revelation 14:14,15: “And I [John] looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’”

Here, we see Jesus coming with the clouds of glory to harvest the earth. What will He do with the harvest? Verse 19: “And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the fruit of the earth from the earth: and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.” Casting into the great winepress of God’s wrath is a figure of speech to indicate eternal separation from God. Woe unto the unsaved when He comes.

The phrase “every eye shall see him” means that no one will escape the coming of the Lord. No man, woman, child, or animal will escape. He will come in the clouds of glory. Again, it’s impossible for our finite minds to comprehend this, but we know that with God, all things are possible.

But what about the dead? Since the earth began, billions of people have already died and are in their graves. Will they see Him, too? Yes, they will. We read in John 5:28,29: “For the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

The saved. As verse 7 continues, God divides the people of the earth into two groups: the saved and the unsaved. The first group, described in verse 7, is the unsaved. They have been made kings and priests strictly by God’s grace. God makes this clear in Ezekiel 36:32, “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.”

Verse 15:6. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

This passage teaches that all praise and glory go to Him and His Father, who loved us while we were sinners and, in His love, washed away our sins with His own shed blood. Indeed, had Christ not done that, we would surely spend eternity in hell since there was none other that could save us.

We know that from Isaiah 63:4,5, “For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore my own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.”

Priests. Verse 6 then tells us that we have been made “kings and priests” unto God and His Father. This is another wonderful promise of God’s forgiveness and blessing for those who came before Him with their sins. While Christ is the Great High Priest, we believers are priests also because we intercede before God on behalf of those who are unsaved. We pray for them and witness to them. This is a dominant role that God gives to every believer.

Remember, we are saved not for our own sake, but for God’s. The Bible makes this clear in Ezekiel 36:32, “Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.”

Now, notice verses 15-17: “And the kings of the earth, which have had their power, and their friends, gathered themselves together to the place of the Name of the tabernacle of the testimony, to war against him that sat on the throne, and against his servants, and against his multitude of saints, which dwelt under the tabernacle of testimony: And the angels who had charge of the Tabernacle of God’s presence, will say, ‘The nations have gathered and have come against the Lamb, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. They have gathered and have come, to fight against those who are on the throne, and against the Lamb, and against his servants, and against his multitude of saints, which dwell under the tabernacle of testimony.’ And the Lord Jesus will return to judge the world. The only day when a fountain was opened to cleanse us from sin was when Christ went to the cross. The fountain was the fountain of His blood.

Thus, both “the house of David” and “the inhabitants of Jerusalem”, whose sins and uncleanness are to be washed by that fountain, symbolize that “the word ‘amen’ means ‘So be it; this is the absolute truth.’

Verse 6 ends, “to him shall be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” The mystery stays with us. Note that the pronoun him is singular although it refers to “God and His Father”. There are two persons mentioned in this verse, yet there is just one God. It is true that the Bible teaches that while there are three persons, there is only one God. The phrase “for ever and ever” emphasizes that there is an eternity, and the word “amen” means “So be it; this is the absolute truth.”

The unsaved. “And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” Here, God is saying that all the other peoples of the earth, those who remain, will believed, will also be saved. We read a similar statement in Matthew 24:30, which also speaks about the second coming of Christ: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and 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.”

The reason why Christ’s return will make the unsaved wall and mourn is explained in Revelation 6. Verses 12-14 read: “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” This describes that the universe is falling apart, it is the end of time.

Now, notice verses 15-17: “And the kings of the earth, which have had their power, and their friends, gathered themselves together to the place of the Name of the tabernacle of the testimony, to war against him that sat on the throne, and against his servants, and against his multitude of saints, which dwelt under the tabernacle of testimony.”

Judgment Day. Here is the culmination for the unsaved. When Christ returns, it will be the day...
of God’s wrath. He comes in judgment. Those who are unsaved will stand guilty before Him. At that time, no one will be able to face Him and stand under His wrath. The peoples of the earth will fall there, and even the will cry.

The last words of verse 7, “Even so, amen” mean this is indeed so. It is a way of underscoring the statement that Judgment Day is coming.

Lesson 2 for Revelation 1:8-20 ~

"Vision of Christ in Heaven"

1:8. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,” saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come in verse 4.

Almighty. The last word in this verse, “Almighty,” requires some explanation. This name for God is used nearly fifty times in the Old Testament. For example, we read in Exodus 6:3, “And I appeared unto Moses, unto Aaron, and unto all the elders of Israel, saying, Behold, I come down out of Egypt to make you a nation and a people.” In this verse, God is explaining that the name means “I am not known to them in the beginning.”

In the Greek alphabet, Christ is using this phrase to underscore that He is preeminence in everything. We have already discussed the meaning of the statement “which is, and which was, and which is to come” in verse 4.

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complete the salvation of all those who shall have become saved. The apostle John says that the voice of God is behind him. At this point, he is a picture of an unsaved person. We do not look at the Lord Jesus, but away from Him. We try to get as far away from Him as possible. But when God calls us, we turn from our sins and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. (We'll read in verse 12 that John turns and sees Him.)

1:11. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

We've already seen that "Alpha and Omega" and "the first and the last" both underscore that God is preeminent in all things. He is before all things and goes on to everlasting. And now, in this infinite God commands John to write what he sees in a book. What book is John to write in? The only book that God has been writing for over 1,500 years – the Bible. And John is going to be its very last contributor.

Did you ever stop and think how amazing it is that God, the Creator and Sustainer of this world itself. The letter is not being written for us. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. This figure of a candlestick comes from the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 43:1, 2, it says, "And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon the waist, where the curious girdle was girt about the paps with a golden girdle..." It means book. But it is a book that has no peer. It is the only book that was written by the highest of high priests. The letter is not being written for us. It is being written for all the nations that will ever come to the earth. But instead of trusting what it says, man has been misusing, mistreating, misquoting, misinterpreting and mistranslating the Holy Bible. Do you realize against God is man that no matter how plain the Bible is, he concludes that what God declares cannot be.

Thank God that He has graciously saved us and enabled us to know that the Bible is the Word of God, the only source of truth. May we always treat it with reverence.

Seven churches. The apostle John is to send the written word to seven named churches. Those churches are all located in Asia Minor, an area that today is Turkey. Outside of national Israel, Asia Minor was then on the very forefront of the world itself. The letter is not being written to the church in Jerusalem because when John received the Revelation, Jerusalem had already been destroyed by the Roman armies.

Why seven churches? Seven is the number the Bible generally uses to represent perfection. God used it to set the number of days in a week. And we are able to read that John's vision of the seven golden candlesticks is like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

We see here the intimate relationship existing between Christ and His church. He walks amidst the seven candlesticks. So if the church that you belong to is reasonably true to the Word of God, Christ walks in your presence.

The verse says "like unto the Son of man" and not the "Son of God" because Jesus is eternal God who had to become the Son of man in order to be our Savior and the head of the church.

Garment. But are not here that God is clothed with a garment. Psalm 104 tells us something about what that garment is: "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment..." (v. 26).

The Lord Jesus is clothed with honor and majesty. Because He has become our Savior, He is worthy of all honor and respect and adulation. Jesus is also the light of the world. He is the very essence of truth, that which can bring us salvation. We believers are light-bearers, but the light that we bring is the very light that is God Himself.

The Son of man is clothed down to the foot. It means that there is no naked spot on God. The Bible uses the state of nakedness as a picture of sins being exposed before God. After Adam and Eve had rebelled against God, they suddenly discovered that they were physically naked and were ashamed. Though they tried to cover themselves with a few fig leaves, they could not escape realizing who they were, or what they did. Similarly, when the Lord Jesus was on the cross, He was naked. It was a dramatic picture of His standing naked before God, laden with all of our sins. But now at Judgment Day, Christ is clothed with a garment down to His foot. Having resurrected and ascended back to heaven, He is now clothed with honor and majesty.
unsaved people of the world. They are sat upon, or ruled by, the great harlot, who is Satan himself.

But how can the voice of God be like the sound of all the choirs of angels? In order to better understand, we need to look at other Scriptures. In Ezekiel chapter 43, a chapter that prophesied Christ’s coming, we see the phrase “many waters” brought up. This is in relation to the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. Here again, the phrase “many waters” is related to the voice of God.

The clue. The seeming contradiction is resolved by Psalm 18, where we read, “He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.”

When the Bible says that Christ’s voice is like the sound of many waters in Revelation 1:15 and Ezekiel 43:2, therefore, it means that His voice is coming with judgment to condemn people to hell. And Revelation 17 is stressing the fact that the unsaved upon whom the great harlot sits – the unbelievers over whom Satan rules – are in many waters because they are subject to eternal damnation.

We thus begin to see the two-fold purpose of Christ’s coming on the last day: as the Savior. He will complete the salvation of the saved, and as the Judge, He will condemn the unsaved to hell. This matches exactly what we read in John 5:28,29: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

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

Verse 20 of Revelation 1 tells us, “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” Does this mean that every church has a particular angel like Gabriel that is identified with it? Is God holding that an angel in His right hand as He comes down in judgment to earth? No, that does not identify with anything else in the Bible at all. But remember we’ve learned earlier that the Greek word for “angel” can also be translated “messenger.” The latter is more appropriate for such a word. Christ has set up the church to be God’s messenger that brings the Gospel into the world. That is why it speaks here of each church as being a messenger.

Right hand. Next, we wonder why are the seven stars, the seven messengers of the church, in God’s right hand. “Right hand” in the Bible signifies the will of God. A church or a congregation of God as it serves as His messenger by His authority.

Remember Ephesians states that after Christ was raised from the dead, He sat down at the right hand of God (1:20)? And that we believers have been raised with Christ and are seated in the heavenlies with Him (2:6)? So, we are also at the right hand of God. We reign and rule with Christ under the will of God.

Here in verse 16, therefore, God is saying that when Christ returns, all those who have been in churches that have been faithful to Him will rule and judge with Him. This is in line with I Thessalonians 4:16, where Christ will come back with believers. It also harmonizes with I Corinthians 6, which states that we will judge angels and men.

You see, although the physical bodies of believers that have died are in the tombs, their spirits have gone to be with Christ. They will come back with Him on the clouds of glory on the last day. Here in verse 17, when Christ returns, He has in His right hand seven stars.

Two-edged sword. Then the next phrase says, “out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” A sharp two-edged sword is the name God’s judgment. We read in Revelation 19:15, “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

To get a picture of this two-edged sword, though, we have to go to Hebrews 4:12, which reads, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

There, God equates the Word of God with a sharp, two-edged sword. This is why Christ is portrayed as having a sword coming out of His mouth. The Word of God comes out of the mouth of Jesus, and penetrates into the very essence of our being. That the sword has two edges emphasizes that it cuts both ways. It cuts to salvation, but it also cuts to damnation.

The sun. We also read that “his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” The sun is shown in the Bible as a symbol of God’s glory and power. The sun is identified with God’s mighty power. Revelation 1:16 tells us that God’s glory and power are shown in the sun. That is why it is said here of Christ that His countenance is like the sun shineth in His strength.

This particular dramatic statement is concluded in the middle of verse 18 with the word “Amen,” meaning truly, verily, it is so, this is truth, you can depend on it. God assures us that He is about to judge those who have been saved.

The keys. Then, in the closing phrase of verse 18, we read, “and have the keys of hell and of death.” Before we were saved, we were condemned to hell. Now we have the keys to hell and death. We who have been saved are no longer subject to eternal damnation because Christ opens the door for us to escape that punishment forever. We are liberated from the second death. In Matthew 16, Jesus says, “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail.” He has the authority and the power to open those gates. God has the keys of hell and death.

Christ also has the keys to the first, physical death. We’re going to die physically, but that’s not the end for those of us who have been saved. We will be resurrected in a glorified spiritual body. All the vestiges of our former life will be gone. We will have a perfect body in which we will live eternally with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Christ has the key to lock up Satan as well. We read in Revelation 20 that “an angel came down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.” And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. The angel is the messenger who is Christ Himself and the bottomless pit is hell.

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

Here we have a grand statement of the things we are going to read about in the Book of Revelation. Notice the parallelism that exists in this statement to that of verse 8. There Jesus describes Himself this way: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” By the parallelism, God is identifying the Gospel with Himself. Christ is from the past. He is the ever-present one, and He is forever in the future. And so the Gospel, also, is in the past, it is in the present and it is in the future.

What has John seen? He has seen the grace of God in his own life. He has seen the action of the Gospel in his day as he has lived with the Lord Jesus Christ. John has seen the fulfillment of every promise of the Old Testament. He has seen the establishment of the person of the Lord Jesus. We can therefore expect the Book of Revelation to make reference to the Gospel as it has worked out in the course of the history of mankind. We are going to find references to Christ’s coming as the Messiah.

New universe. But it also says, write “the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” Remember, the context in which the Apostle John is standing is Judgment Day, as if that were in the present. So we are going to see lots of statements in Revelation that deal with Judgment Day and the events that immediately surround it.

Of course, what comes after Judgment Day are the destruction of this universe by fire and the creation of the new heaven and earth where righteousness dwells. We are going to find statements in this new universe forever with the believers. That is the future which the Lord is telling John to write down.

As we go deeper in the Book of Revelation, therefore, we can expect to see God’s whole plan of salvation. We are going to be reminded of how much God has done in the past, the antecedents of Judgment Day. We are also going to learn a lot about Judgment Day itself. And we are also going to look at what happens after Judgment Day on into eternity.

1:20. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden
Lesson 3 for Revelation 2:1-11  

Messages to Two Churches  

2:1. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars, which are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches; and the seven spirits which are sent forth unto the seven churches are the seven Spirits of God. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy faith; and the manner of thy works. Nevertheless I have a few things against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 

2:2. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience; and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. In “I know thy works, and thy labour”, we are put on notice that everything that happens in our congregation is known by God. He knows, for example, whether or not we are faithful to His Word and obedient to His commands, and whether or not our pastor is preaching the true Gospel from the pulpit. He knows when we change the rules He has laid down in the Bible and substitute them with our own. Nothing escapes His knowledge.

Patience. God does have some good things to say about this church at Ephesus. It’s about their ‘patience’. This word ‘patience’, which we will use frequently, is translated patience in many places. It is the same word used in Hebrews 12:2, where God talks about Christ having endured the cross.

A congregation as well as individual believers, has much to endure. The world slanders and reviles us. Even loved ones and friends let us down. And we ourselves fall into besetting sins and must endure the chastisements of God. God puts all this in our lives to help us grow in faith.

To live with this, we have to learn to be patient. And Romans 5:3 tells us how such patience, or endurance, is not only a fruit of the Holy Spirit’s work within us, but also a fruit of our relationship with Christ. 

False apostles. There is one area, however, where our patience should come to a rapid end. That is implied in the next phrase, “and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” God commends the church at Ephesus for not having accommodated those that are evil and for not allowing them to gain a foothold among them.

If Peter 2:1 warns, “But there were false prophets also among the people even as there shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies.” We should never be so naive as to think that nobody is in the teaching church, everyone among us is a child of God. We must be on the lookout for those within the congregation who bring in heresy, or doctrines that are contrary to the Word of God. Note that these “liars” call themselves apostles. The word “apostle” literally means a messenger, a sent one – someone who serves as Christ’s ambassador proclaiming His gospel. Everyone who considers himself a minister of Christ could call himself an apostle. We don’t call ourselves apostles today, however, out of deference to the Twelve and the Apostle Paul, who considered only two men as qualified to do the signs and wonders and works of power as the Lord Jesus Himself did.

Here at Ephesus, there were people claiming that they were the Word of God to bring the Gospel. But, after having listened to them, the congregation found that they were not true to the Word of God. They were tried and found to be liars. The Lord was pleased with the Deceived by Satan. Do all those who preach another gospel purposely lie and have no integrity of any kind? Not necessarily. Jesus says in Matthew 7:22-23, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

You see, while these workers of iniquity are liars, they themselves were convinced that they were telling the truth. Why would they be arguing with God at the Judgment throne. The problem was that they had been deluded by God (II Thes. 2:11) or deceived by Satan. They were preaching a wrong gospel without knowing that they were lying.

This is very much happening today, of course. Many who are teaching doctrines that are not based on the Bible alone and in its entirety constantly claim to be ministers of the Gospel. But most pastors are reluctant to evaluate the work of a fellow pastor and pass judgment as to whether or not that individual should continue in the ministry.

2:3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and has not fainted. This is an impressive statement to the church at Ephesus. Twice in two verses, Christ talks about its congregation as being an important attribute of this congregation. The church at Ephesus was hardly a perfect congregation, but where there was something to be complimented, Christ had to say so.

The last phrase of verse 3 declares, “And hast not fainted.” The word “fainted” is translated in Hebrews 12:3 as “be wearied.” This church at Ephesus was not “be wearied.” It was a congregation where the work of the Lord Jesus was being done. God complimented them for not having become wearied.

2:4. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Frequently when a congregation comes into being, those who are involved are filled with zeal and desire to be faithful to the Word; they are careful in their choice of the pastor and elders; and they are eager to send forth the Gospel.

But as the church grows, the ideals of the founders are somehow forgotten. Practices that are not as God-glorying as they should gain headway in the church. Certain doctrines that are not true to the Bible are tolerated. And the desire to carry out the Great Commission gives way to other considerations.

Self-examination. Look at our own congregation. Are we still as zealous for the Word of God as our first love? Are we being obedient to Christ as we were when we first started? Or have we gradually changed in our efforts to become more popular, to increase the membership, or to placate those who don’t want to hear certain doctrines? Has our church started tolerating various sins and bringing in unbiblical, worldly practice because it is popular in another congregation?

Every congregation has to stand very carefully, making sure that it is as faithful as possible to the Word of God, both in doctrine and in practice. We should not lower our standards because we are in another congregation. Every congregation that is to stand in the face of God has its own standards that are to be set by God’s Word, and denominations may be doing, we have to answer to God for our own actions.

There is a direct parallel to the individual believer’s life. If we live our life by consensus, then we are apt to go down a wrong path. The bottom line is not what other people do, but what the Bible says. If we consistently put obedience to the total Word of God and our priority, then the Lord will not say of us, “This I have against thee, thou hast left thy first love.”

2:5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. 

We’ve learned from earlier verses that the Lord Jesus was with amongst the candlesticks and has seven stars in His right hand, and that the seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches. Why does He call them stars? One reason is that Christ Himself is called a star. We read in Revelation 22:16, for example, “I Jesus have sent mine angel [messenger] to testify unto you these things in the church. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” He is called a star because He is the light of the world. The stars bring light in a world of darkness. (Christ is also called the sun, as we saw in verse 16, where the countenance of Christ was as the sun shining in His strength.)

Believers are called stars in the Bible, also. We find in Daniel 12:3 this statement: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” We are called stars because we also are the light of the world. It is a reflected light, to be sure, because it comes from the Lord Jesus.

The church. Going back to verse 20, we see that the seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches. The church is that which shines the Gospel into the world. God the Holy Spirit works through it to evangelize the world. The seven churches represent every congregation faithful to the Word of God that will exist throughout the New Testament period. Seven are the number of perfection and completeness. The seven stars represent the whole body of believers that will come into being throughout the New Testament period.

The last phrase of verse 20 reads, “and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” Remember we saw in our study earlier in this chapter that the church is said to be a candlestick because they are the light of the world. God has entrusted the light of the Gospel to us so that we might send it out into the world.
Why would God issue such a dreadful warning against this church at Ephesus, where there are so many God-glorying things going on? True, they have lost their first love; they are not as faithful and vibrant as the church was at the beginning. But it would stand head and shoulders above most other congregations.

The answer is implicit in the fact that God uses the word “repent” twice; He emphasizes the importance of turning around. You see, the Lord knows the path of sin. Once a congregation starts down its path, accepting practices and doctrines that are too bad at first, it will end up deeper and deeper in apostasy. Sin breeds sin. And as true believers leave the congregation in response, the remainder will be even more apostate. That’s why repenting is so urgent.

Worse yet, when God sees an unrepenting congregation persistently heading down a path of sin, He will blind them so that they will sin even more. God did this with the nation of Israel. He was patient with them for a long time, but they kept rebelling against Him. Finally God said to Isaiah (6:9), “Go to these people and teach them, and they will not understand because I have blinded them and closed their ears.” So it is with New Testament congregations.

Great apostasy. In fact, the Bible says that as the end time approaches, the church will become more apostate. We see this in Matthew 24:24 vividly: “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” The elect are the true believers. They are found where the true gospel is normally proclaimed. But now, because their church has become overrun by false prophets, they could be deceived, if it were possible.

We are already witnessing this happening today. In more and more congregations, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has been turned into social or fleshly ministering. It has been turned into gospels that are patterned after the desires of men rather than the will of God.

2:6. But this thou hast, that thou hast kept the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Now, Christ has one more good thing to say about this church at Ephesus. They hate something that Christ also hates. It is the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

We can’t tell exactly who the Nicolaitans were, so we don’t know precisely how to understand this. But we can at least draw some tentative conclusions. In verses 14 and 15 of this chapter, God addresses the church at Pergamos, Christ equalizes this church with the Nicolaitans. In connection with the activity of Balaam of the Old Testament, God says that these Nicolaitans are equivalent to Balaam’s corrupting the Israelites.

2:7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

What does the first phrase “He that hath an ear, let him hear” mean? Don’t we all have ears? Of course, we do. But we can never hear what God has to say to us unless God opens our spiritual ears to hear. In other words, we cannot and will not hear unless God has saved us. Only when He saves us does He give us a new heart and a desire to do His will. We then listen intently to what He says through His Word because we want to obey.

Thus, through the instructions given to these seven churches, God is telling those within our congregations who have truly been born from above to look for good practices or doctrines in their church that are contrary to the will of God, they should be concerned. As individual church members, of course, we cannot communicate another member. But we can pray that God might open the hearts of our church leaders, talk to them about what we see, and show them from the Word where they have wandered.

Even so, during the final tribulation, the period that shortly precedes the last day, little can be done to stop unbiblical practices and doctrines from proliferating. Most churches will keep going down the wrong path. The abomination of desolation will indeed be standing in the holy place. Then, as Matthew 24:15 warns, we must rely all the more on the Bible to find truth.

Overcomers. The next phrase is, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life.” This word “overcome” is translated from the Greek word nikao, which means to be victorious, or to conquer.

How do we overcome? How do we conquer? Not by our own strength or ability. We read in I John 5:4, 5, “For 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?” In other words, we overcome when we have become saved. The same truth is found in Romans 8:37: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loves us.”

Who loves us? The Lord Jesus Christ. So, through Christ, We are more than conquerors.

Later on, when we get to Revelation 6, we will see that the rider on the white horse goes forth to conquer. That is the Lord Jesus Christ sending forth the gospel into the world. He has conquered sin and vanquished Satan. That is why He can stand as those who have vanquished Satan.

Conquering Satan is also implicit in I John 2. We read in verse 13, “I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”

Because we have overcome Satan, the wicked one, we can go to the gospel church and conquer his kingdom. We never have to fear him.

God may allow Satan to persecute us, but all those whom God plans to save will be saved.

Tree of Life. Now, what does “I give to eat of the tree of life” mean? The Lord Jesus Christ is the tree of life. He is the one who confers immortality. After Adam and Eve had sinned, they were driven out of the garden of Eden lest they eat of that tree that was planted therein and live forever. But now, as the Lord Jesus says in Revelation 2:7, “He that hath an ear, let him hear” what the Spirit saith to the churches. And verse 14 reads, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.”

Because we have overcome Satan, the wicked one, we can go to the gospel church and conquer his kingdom. Therefore, if we are in heaven, we eat of the fruit of that tree.

In Revelation 22:2, God speaks again about that tree of life: “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bore every tree of every kind of fruit, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” And verse 14 reads, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

Later on, when we study that verse in greater detail, we will see that those who have eaten of the tree of life enter into the city of God through the gate which is the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the evidence of our having entered into the city of God is that we want to be obedient to Him.

Paradise. This tree of life is in the midst of the paradise of God. Where is paradise? There are only three places in the Bible where the word “paradise” is one of them. Another is in II Corinthians 12. In verse 2, the apostle Paul speaks of his having been caught up into “the third heaven.” We are quite sure that he could not mention that. Then in verse 4, he says he was caught up into paradise.

Finally, remember the thief on the cross was told by Jesus: “Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise?” Now, when a Christian dies (that thief died a believer), he leaves his body and goes in his spirit essence to be with God in Heaven. Paradise is therefore there.

So, in Revelation 2:7, God is saying that those who have overcome— that is, those who have been saved— eat of the tree of life which is in heaven. They partake of the Lord Jesus Christ and are nourished by Him and the gospel. It is a statement of God’s beautiful care over those who belong to Him.

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

God is now addressing the church at Smyrna, although all of the statements He makes apply to everyone of us as well. Again, God underscores His preeminence. He is the first and the last. He is the living One. He is the One everlasting.

We must always keep this fact in mind. While we have been adopted as sons of God and have become joint heirs with Christ, we are still the creature, and Christ Jesus is always eternal God, the Creator.

This statement also stresses that there is everlasting life because Jesus has risen. He is the one who brings us into resurrection because He was dead and now is alive.

2:9a. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich).

Again, God begins His message by driving home the point that what goes on in every congregation is not only deeply concerned with everything we do, but is intimately aware of every trial or tribulation we undergo.

But why do we have to suffer tribulation? As a church or as a Christian, should we enjoy all kinds of wonderful blessings? Indeed, Ephesians 1:3 states that in Christ, God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavens. But on this earth, we are just strangers and pilgrims.

Christ suffered. When Jesus was on earth, He was under tribulation. He was reviled, misunderstood and slandered. He suffered because the kingdom of light He came to proclaim and head up is totally antithetical to the
kingdom of darkness, the world ruled by Satan. The world hated Him and caused Him much suffering.

Now, we are to complete Christ's sufferings. We read, in 1 Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Just as Jesus suffered as He came to the gospel, we now suffer from the world because the world despises us. But wonderfully, God says, "I know thy works and tribulations". God has not abandoned us. That the Lord knows about our tribulation is a comfort to us.

Poverty. God says He also knows about the poverty of the church at Smyrna. Physical poverty is in view here because He, referring to the church's spiritual wealth, says in the next phrase, "but thou art rich." Materially, this was a poor church.

The churches of Macedonia were also poor, and God also has some good things to say about them: "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us..." Romans 15:28

The tribulation may develop right within our own congregation. Because of man's sinful nature and Satan's efforts to undercut the church, misunderstandings and divisions will arise. Tribulation will arise when even good things, such as the church's spiritual wealth, says in the next phrase, "but thou art rich." Materially, this was a poor church.

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A famine was in the land and there was great suffering. To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God. (Is 29:15) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blaspheming? (To blaspheme means to talk rebelliously and deceivingly against God.) Is God blasph
Back in Revelation 1:16, we saw that Christ, standing at Judgment Day, had in His right hand seven stars and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. He is the two-edged sword of the Word of God. It uncovers our sins, causing us to cry out for mercy and become saved, but which also condemns the unsaved on Judgment Day to eternal punishment. In identifying Himself to this church as “the sharp sword with two edges”, the Lord is emphasizing that He will come back to judge. And the reason why He is using such threatening language can be seen in the next few verses.

2:13. I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days when Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

The Lord Jesus is talking about Satan again. In the message addressed to the church at Smyrna, He condemns those who say they are Jews but are in fact “the synagogue of Satan”. Here, He starts by saying that “thou dwellest...where Satan’s seat is.”

In the Bible, to be seated means to reign. We read about the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation 21:22-23, where “The Lord God is in the midst of her; and the glory of the Lord shone round about her; and her light was like a precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”

The ultimate reward God freely gives us.

2:14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen; repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee suddenly, as a thief, and will have war with that wretched congregation.

The Lord is reminding this church that they have left the love of Christ. When we love Christ, we will fight to remain faithful to Him, even in the face of persecution. This church had once been faithful to Christ, but now they have grown cold in their love for Him. The Lord is warning them to repent and return to their first love, or else He will come quickly and remove them from their position as His people.

2:15. Nevertheless I have a few things against thee, because thou hast left my way, and hast followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, for he taught his children to stumble.

2:16. But I have not found thy name written in the book of life; therefore are thou slain among them that seek the soul of the righteous for his sake.

The name of this church is not written in the book of life because they have forsaken their faith. They have followed the way of Balaam, who sought the soul of the righteous for his sake.

2:17. And I will kill her children with death, and will make her for a habitation of devils.

The Lord is warning this church that He will destroy her and make her a дом for devils.

2:18. But thou hast a few names only in Balaam’s book, as he himself was a true prophet, and heredity of the congregation of God’s people.

The church at Pergamos has a few true believers, as indicated by the fact that their names are written in Balaam’s book. Balaam was a prophet who sought the soul of the righteous for his sake, but he was ultimately punished by God for his actions.

2:19. Remember therefore the height from whence thou art fallen; how art thou come to this end, and how I have changed thine heart and made thee to return.

The Lord is reminding this church of their previous faithfulness and how they have strayed from the path of righteousness. He is calling them to repent and return to their former state.

2:20. And if thou wilt not keep the ways of my commandments, to walk in my paths, thou shalt fall surely; and I will come upon thee suddenly, as a thief.

The Lord is threatening to come quickly and destroy this church if they do not repent and return to their faith.

2:21. And the end of the mystery of God shall be brought to pass with all his people.

The Lord is reassuring the believers that the ultimate purpose of God’s work will be fulfilled with all His people.

2:22. Look therefore unto thy own works; and if there be any that doth bear fruit, they may have life; and they shall walk by my ways, and be multiplied.

The Lord is encouraging the believers to look inward and examine their own works. If they find that they have been faithful, they may have life and walk by His ways, and be multiplied.

2:23. In the same manner of things as these are written unto the seven churches, so be ye also. And he that readeth, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The Lord is encouraging all the churches to listen to the message addressed to each of them.

doctrines, faithful church leaders will simply say, “Don’t trust that man. He is not qualified to be listened to.” But when a pastor, a noted Bible teacher or a seminary professor makes statements that are contrary to the Word of God, he often goes unchallenged. The Bible tells us to obey those who rule over the congregation, and implies that we should follow our leaders, even when we disagree with them. So, when such a person comes with a false doctrine, most people in the congregation just take for granted that he knows what he is talking about and therefore slavishly follow along.

Nevertheless, in James 3:1, God warns, “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall be judged” (KJV). In this verse, God tells us that if we should lead any of these little ones astray, it would be better that we be cast into the sea with a millstone hung about our necks. Those who bring wrong doctrines are going to find their eternal lot in the lowest hell. To be a Bible teacher is thus quite a serious matter.

2:15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Remember, when we wonder at a church at Ephesus, we are told that one of the seven deacons that had been appointed along with Stephen and Philip was a man by the name of Nicolas? Although we cannot be absolutely certain, there is high probability that the one started the heretical doctrine of the Nicolaitans mentioned in this verse. The word Nicolaitan directly identifies with the name Nicolas. If so, it would match what we read in II Peter 2, where it says that false teachers have arisen from among you. In some churches, deacons have the responsibility of teaching. And Nicolas, having been appointed to a deacon, must have won over the trust of the leaders and members of the congregation. He was in a position to secretly introduce false doctrines.

But whether Nicolas was responsible or not, we do know that the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was antithetical to the truth and Christ hated it. It was described in II Peter 2 as damnable heresies that lead to damnation, rather than eternal life.

Apostate church. Can this happen today? It not only can, but it is happening. The Bible teaches that toward the end of time, when nearly all of the elect will have become saved, God will begin to close the era of the New Testament church, just as a new era will dawn. The churches of the Old Testament church. He will increasingly allow false prophets and teachers to dominate denominations and congregations.

By the time Christ returns – in other words, by the time when all of God’s chosen people have at last received salvation – the prevailing corporate church will have largely become apostate. Oh yes, there will always be a church here and a church there that remain faithful to the teaching of the Bible. But most congregations will then be presenting gospels other than the true one, and many of them will be feasting upon error.

We wonder how could a true church of Jesus Christ turn apostate? Well, it takes place gradually and insidiously as church leaders begin to rewrite rules and doctrines to suit what they want, or what they think is more popular than that which the Bible declares. The congregation goes along because they trust their leaders, or because they prefer the new rules over the old ones.

Take, for example, the question of marriage and divorce. As recently as 40 or 50 years ago, there was no divorce and remarriage in the typical Southern Baptist church, in virtually every denomination, rules have been set forth to permit them. Other changes involve the role of women in the congregation and doctrines on the rapture and the nature of salvation.

Some of the church leaders that are responsible for this sad state of affairs do not even realize that Christ has handed them what He has done to His church. They have been deceived by Satan.

Satan in disguise. In II Corinthians 11, God talks of Satan masquerading as an angel of light, and his ministers transforming into ministers of righteousness. Jesus, of course, is the true messenger of light. In other words, while these pastors and teachers are convinced that they are serving the Lord Jesus Christ, they are in fact emissaries of Satan.

These false teachers vindicate their doctrines by getting many people to follow them, by causing the truth to be disparaged, and by exploiting others with made-up stories. We read in I Peter 2:23, “Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned [deceptive] words make merchandise of [exploit] you.”

God, through His warning to the church in Pergamos, is thus telling us not to take for granted as truth all the doctrines taught by even respected pastors or Bible teachers. He has given us the Bible, and that is as laymen, always search the Scriptures and test what we are taught against His Word.

2:16. Repent, or else I will come unto thee with sword of the mouth. When we find teachers in our congregation who are not faithful to the Word of God, what are we to do? This verse tells us to repent. And what does it mean to repent? Isaiah 55:7 says, “Let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord.” Repentance is the forsaking of sin and turning to the Lord.

How does a congregation repent? Rulers of the church, unless they themselves are the problem, must order the one preaching false doctrine to stop and, if he persists, excommunicate him. Remember, excommunication is never done to hurt someone. It is a means to bring one back to truth and be saved.

Unfortunately, church discipline is hardly practiced. That’s because implementing it requires much patience and effort. But if a church is to avoid apostasy, it must order the one preaching false doctrine to leave.

How can a person repent? How does a congregation repent? Repentance is the forsaking of sin and turning to the Lord.

Repentance is the forsaking of sin and turning to the Lord. When we find teachers in our congregation who are teaching that which is contrary to God’s Word, we as laymen should counsel and exhorted. But if a church is to avoid apostasy, it must order the one preaching false doctrine to leave.

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suffer the wrath of God for our sins in order to satisfy God’s perfect justice. For that reason, no unsaved person can expect to escape the wrath of God on Judgment Day.

2:19. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. As we go on with this message, we will see why God uses such stern language to introduce this letter. But He has some good things to say to this church first.

He tells them that He is aware of their "charity" (an old English word that means "love"), their faith and patience, and the way they have served Him. He also tells them for the growth in their ministries, the last being more than the first. In many ways, then, this congregation has grown in grace.

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

Nevertheless, this church has among them a woman whom God likens to the Jezebel of the Old Testament. That Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, the king of the northern nation of Israel back in the days of Elijah. She was a wicked woman. One of the first things she did was to seek out and kill the prophets of the Lord. She also caused Ahab to worship other gods and commit sins. In 1 Corinthians 1:25 records that Ahab "did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up".

God was so angry at Jezebel that He eventually had her thrown from a wall and eaten by dogs so that nothing was left of her to be buried. In the Old Testament, not having a proper burial was a symbol of a person who was under the extreme curse of God.

In God’s eye, evidently, Jezebel was the very essence of wickedness. Not only was she herself rebellious against the Lord, she also "stirred up" Ahab into worshiping false gods and committing grievous sins.

Woman teachers. The Lord is using the symbol of Jezebel to warn the Thyatira church for allowing a woman to teach in their church. This is an outright act of disobedience. In 1 Corinthians 14:34, God declares flatly that women are to be silent in the churches. To underscore it, He says in the next verse that if women want to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home. And in 1 Thessalonians 2:12, the Lord further reiterates the point, saying, "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man."

Note that God says this woman "calleth herself a prophetess", implying that she is a self-proclaimed prophetess. In the New Testament era, any woman believer is a prophetess. But although this woman claims and believes that she is a believer, the Lord indicates that she is not really saved. The fact that she wants to teach also attests to that.

Spiritual harlotry. God faults the Thyatira church leaders not only for allowing her to teach, but for letting "her seduce others to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols". In other words, just as Jezebel made Ahab worship other gods, this woman is enticing people in that church to follow other gospels.

Whenever we misrepresent others than that of the Bible, we are committing spiritual fornication. And whenever we accept heretical doctrines over what is taught by the Word of God, we are eating spiritual things sacrificed unto idols.

2:21. I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. God is patient, however. He gave this woman a chance to repent, but she has refused to do so. Meanwhile, the fact that this woman is still teaching in the congregation means that the leaders of the church have been equally disobedient. They, too, have refused to repent.

You might wonder how could this woman and those who have been22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Figuratively, the word "bed" is used in the Bible in two senses: it may mean a bed of affliction or a place where adulterous activity goes on. And both senses apply here. Punishment is coming to the woman, and she will get deeper and deeper into the sin of spiritual harlotry. This is one of those passages in which God uses such stern language to introduce this letter. But He has some good things to say to this church first.

Note that God is addressing not just the church in Thyatira, but "the rest in Thyatira" as well. Meanwhile besides this church, there are other Christians, or perhaps even other congregations in the city.

There are those who contend that there shouldn't be different denominations within the body of Christ. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ recognizes here that not all believers in the City of Thyatira are necessarily in the church of Thyatira.

Actually, even before Jesus went to the cross, He had revealed this truth. We read in Luke 9:49 that the Apostle John came to Jesus and said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us with us." John did not think someone outside the apostolic band should engage in the work of Christ. But Jesus said unto him, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is on our part." The fact is, there is no perfect church or denomination. Minor differences in Scripture interpretations are inevitable. As long as these denominations earnestly seek truth from the Word of God, their differences should be limited. It is heretical, of course, for any denomination to misrepresent major biblical doctrines, especially the doctrine of salvation by grace. But that's another separate matter.

"The depths of Satan" in this verse refers to hell. Although Satan still rules in the hearts of unsaved men at present, he has been consigned to hell as a result of Christ’s victory on the cross. Thus, Revelation 20:3 pictures Satan as already being in a "bottomless pit". Those who have "known the depths of Satan, as they speak" are, therefore, those who preach the false doctrines or gospels of the hell-bound Satan.

Living for Christ. The thrust of verse 24 is that upon the faithful believers, God will not put any other burden. Other than what burden? Certainly not any burden in connection with salvation. It has to do with the burden of living for Christ.

Many like to think that everything will go well with them once they become Christians. But in reality, our problems usually mount after we have begun to put our trust in Christ. For one thing, Hebrews 12:7 reminds us that because we are now God's children, He will chastise us from time to time. He does it to strengthen our faith and to increase our dependence on Him. In fact, verse 8 warns, if we are not disciplined, then we are not really His children.

Also, the more obedient we are to God, the more we will be looked upon with disdain by others. We live in an alien world. Jesus says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation. But to him that suffereth for mine name’s sake, I will give him a crown. But if ye suffer wrongfully, happy are ye. For they verily do reward you as traitors, which do not err. For they know not the hope of your faith which is in heaven, who now suffer for it. (Romans 8:17-18)"
of glory? Of course not. But effectively, Christ comes to every person at the moment of his death. When a believer dies, according to 2 Corinthians 5:8, his soul leaves his body and goes to be with the Lord. For the unsaved, the dead body goes to the ground, and the soul goes to a place of silence (Psalm 115:17), where there is no consciousness of existence (Rev. 20:5). Then, the next thing he consciously knows is that he has been resurrected on the Last Day and is standing before God for judgment.

So, the Lord is exhorting all believers to be faithful till they die or, in the case of the very last generation on earth, till He literally returns on the clouds of glory. Of course, only believers are able to endure and hold fast because they are strengthened by God Himself. Those who cannot endure but fall away were never saved to begin with.

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

As we learned earlier, to overcome means to be victorious. To keep the works of God is to do the will of God. And again, "to the end" means to the end of each believer's life, or the end of the world, whichever comes first. Thus, God is promising each believer that He will give him power over the nations. The word "power" means authority. In other words, we who have put our trust in the Lord will be given the authority to judge the nations.

This same truth is found in 1 Corinthians 6, where we read, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Nay, howbeit, in this life shall we not judge? Nay, but in that which is to come?" (1 Cor. 6:2,3). These are remarkable statements. We not only will not come into judgment when Christ returns, but will instead take part in judging the unsaved.

2:27. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

When a potter smashes an imperfect vessel with a rod of iron into shivers, or tiny little fragments, it can never be put together again into a whole vessel. This is the figure God uses when He is judging His world on the Last Day. The unsaved will be condemned to hell forever. Never again will they be reconstituted as a person who can live with the joys and blessings of this life. Jesus Himself has been given by the Father the authority to judge. So, we will be judging with Him by His authority. He is the only one worthy to receive this power. And "He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and treadeth the winnowing floor of the fierce ones, and the wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. 19:15).

2:28,29. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The morning star that every believer will receive is the Lord Jesus Christ. In Revelation 2:26, Jesus declares, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." You see, the morning star is the first star that rises when the night is passed. And Christ is the one who came with the light of the gospel to bring an end to the darkness of sin.

The closing statement of this message is the same as that of the last few letters. It emphasizes that what God is saying to the church of Thyatira is, in fact, for the ear of all people.

Revelation 3

Lesson 5 for Revelation 3:1-13 ~~ "To Churches in Sardis and Philadelphia"

3:1. Unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: these things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

We have seen in Revelation 1:4 that the term 'seven Spirits' has to do particularly with the perfection of the Holy Spirit in evangelizing the world, and in verse 20 that the seven stars refer to the messengers of the seven churches.

Thus, the Lord is stressing here that He is the One who has sent the Holy Spirit to evangelize the world and commissioned the churches to send forth the gospel. And with the statement "thou art dead," He is showing His displeasure with this congregation's failure to carry out its duty.

Once again, God says "I know thy works." He knows exactly what is going on in every single church.

Empty facade. Haven't you heard people say how lively such and such a church is? Typically, that church is considered lively because it has lots of programs and activities going on. Conceivably, the church in Sardis was something like that. But the Lord is saying here that a church that looks alive can in fact be spiritually dead.

To understand that, we need to recognize first that whether a church is alive or dead has nothing to do with the number of its Sunday school classes, the size of its choir, the popularity of its pastor, the scope of its mid-week activities, or the "fellowship" and love that exist among its members. Rather, a church is alive only when it is doing the work of the church. Why?

And we are to crucify the flesh and its desires (Gal. 5:24). When a church ceases to teach the whole Word of God faithfully, it is not doing its work; it is dead.

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

What does it mean to be watchful? Let's read Ezekiel 3:17: "Go, set thy heart toward heaven; and the word shall be towards the house of Israel; and thou shalt shew the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou speak not the word to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way from turning from his way, and he doth not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

You see, having been appointed to be Israel's watchman, Ezekiel must warn that nation of the inevitable judgment that persists in apostasy. If he fails to warn them, God will not only condemn Israel, but will hold Ezekiel responsible. Likewise, God has commissioned the church to warn the unsaved world of eternal damnation, as well as to proclaim the Good News of salvation through Christ. If we fail to do so, God will hold us accountable. By our disobedience, we prove that we ourselves are not really saved.

Yet, most preachers and evangelists today are presenting only half a gospel. They talk about the love and mercy and grace of God, but seldom, if ever, talk about the judgment for the unsaved. When they do, they skip over it as fast as possible. How can anyone know why he needs to be saved if he doesn't know that he is under the wrath of God and is subject to eternal damnation?

Greatest revival. "You can't scare people into heaven," they argue. But do you remember the greatest revival recorded in the Bible? It was in the wicked city of Nineveh. Preached to by the reluctant prophet Jonah, the entire city repented and became saved. How did Jonah preach to them? Did he say, "God loves all of you, Ninevites, so why not make a decision and invite Him into your heart"? No, he simply said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4).

The fact is, the leading edge of the gospel is that God will destroy mankind because of sin. Romans 1:18 declares, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Unless we bring the whole counsel of God, we are a dead church.

The remainder. Wonderfully God is patient. He has not yet given the church in Sardis up. He tells them to "strengthen the things which remain." Which things? That they go on doing all the things they knew they needed to do. What church that could be strengthened? As I noted earlier, they have not begun to follow false gospels. So, they still have the Word of God and the mandate to send the gospel to all nations. By strengthening these basics, they can yet become a vibrant church.

But the strengthening had better come soon. This verse goes on to warn that what's left is "ready to die." God is so displeased with its ministries that He is ready to let this church die. "For I have not found thy works perfect before God," He states. The word "perfect" in this phrase would be more properly translated "full" or "complete." God knows that no church on earth can be perfect. He is saying here, "I have not found your ministries fully or completely carrying out your responsibilities before God." That is, if you do not follow the work I assigned to you.

The one truth that shines through brightly through these two verses is that we mustn't play church. A Christian church is not a social club. Instead of giving what the members want, it must do what God's Word assigns to it.

3:5. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

God is giving this church a chance to repent. The church was presumably started by some of the original apostles, who had no doubt given them whole counsel of God. “Go back now,” Christ tells them, “we will check things out which you have received and heard. Hold firmly onto what you originally learned.”

Today, we can check out the whole counsel of God ourselves. We have the completed Bible, the entire written Word of God. And we, too, must remember what we have learned from the Scriptures, holding fast to every truth and obeying every command.

Thief in the night. To those who “shall not watch” — that is, those who fail to warn the unsaved of the coming wrath of God — Christ warns, “I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know the hour in which I come to thee.” (Luke 12:39-40) Jesus talks about His coming as a thief. He inevitably refers to His return on Judgement Day. In retrospect, we know that for the church in Sardis, that day would be at least 1,900 years away. How, then, could Christ say that He would come to them as a thief? As we learned from our last study, the answer is that for every person, the moment of death is tantamount to the time of Christ’s return.

God obviously is not suggesting in any way that He would rob anyone as a thief. The point He wants to put across is this: If a person knows that there is a thief in his neighborhood and that he might be robbed in the night, he would lock his doors and windows and take other precautionary measures. In other words, he will be prepared for the worst. Similarly, God wants us to be prepared for His return.

Thus, we read in Luke 12:37-38: “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall set him over all his substance. But unto which servant will he say therefore, Go, serve thy master with discretion and caution? And he will answer him, Lord, when thou camest in, thou didst not know me.”

Those who have not defiled the holy garments, Christ assures us here, “for they are worthy.” We know, of course, that Christ is speaking to the church of Philadelphia. Later on, when we get to Revelation 3, we will read a beautiful song of praise. Verse 12 there describes a scene in which all those in heaven are saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

The Lamb, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the work He did at the Cross as the sacrificial Lamb of God, He alone is worthy. Those who are in Christ are considered worthy only because, by God’s grace, Christ’s worthiness has been counted for them.

3:5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. Similarly, only because our Lord’s victory and righteousness have been gloriously counted to us that we believers shall “overcome,” that is, shall be victorious, and shall be clothed in the white raiment of Christ’s righteousness.

The next statement — “and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life” — has caused much confusion among many Christians and has resulted in some grossly erroneous doctrines. It seems to suggest that we could lose our salvation. But it is not possible. Too many passages in the Bible emphasize that once we are saved, we are always saved.

The confusion disappears, however, once we understand that in the Bible, God speaks of the book of life in two ways: one from the vantage point of creation, and the other from the vantage point of redemption.

Creation view. From the creation vantage point, God loves all men. He loves His creation, which was “very good” when it was created. And this is what God has in mind when He says in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world [the kosmos that He created], that he gave his only begotten Son…”

But God is holy. He cannot possibly love sin and sinners. Nothing is more true than true! Christ had to be absolutely holy. Only those whom God had chosen from before the foundation of the earth to be saved and not be written with the book of life. Hence, unless they have been redeemed from the blood of Christ, their names will have to be blotted out.

That is what God is talking about here in Revelation 3:5. By promising “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life,” Christ is saying that the names of the remnant chosen by grace will remain in the book of life, the book that is looked at from a creation standpoint.

But God also speaks about the book of life from the redemption vantage point. With Jesus being the Lamb that makes atonement, it is His book, and thus, it is different. It is not possible, that book is called the Lamb’s book of life. It has in it only names of those whom God elected to be saved. Later on, we will find in Revelation 17:8 that the book speaks of the names of those whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.

Confession. Verse 5 ends with: “But I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” Jesus has earlier alluded to this in Matthew 10:32. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” What does confessing before men mean? It can be found in John 1:2: “And if any man [any believer] sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

The Lord is pictured there as an attorney declaring to God the Father that all those for whom He died on the Cross can no longer come under the wrath of God. The penalty of their sins has been fully paid. Effectively, God is indicating that once we have become saved, the whole Godhead knows that we never can come into condemnation.

The angels. What do angels have to do with our salvation? For one thing, we learn from Hebrews 1:4 that “Christ is also both高于天上的诸军。Other than that, we don’t know how they are involved. But we know that they are used by God in a definite way in our salvation.

We also read in Luke 15:10, “Likewise, I say unto you, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” It sounds as though the angels are closely watching the whole salvation program in action. And when one becomes saved, there is joy among them.

Moreover, talking about our salvation plan, God says in Ephesians 3:10,11: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The principalities and powers identify with all the angelic hosts, whoever they are. As God’s pre-ordained salvation program is carried on by the church, they can see the manifold wisdom of God in action, and rejoice.

3:6. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. The closing verse of this message is the same as that of the previous four messages. It reminds us that what God has to say here is to be heeded by all those who have been given spiritual ears to hear. And that means all believers.

3:7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, no man openeth. God begins by identifying Himself as “He that is holy.” The word “holy,” in its broadest sense, means to be set apart for the service of God. In the Old Testament, for instance, the vessels in the temple, as well as the Levites, were holy because they were set apart for the service of God. But when it refers to Christ, the word is to be understood in its most exquisite, comprehensive and pristine sense. Jesus is absolutely holy.

Christ is also “He that is true.” Truth is something man is always searching for. Scientists, for example, study the stars of the heavens and fossils in the rocks in a constant effort to determine where we came from. And
philosophers throughout the ages have kept trying to figure out what life is all about. But because man is a finite creature and his thoughts are tainted by sin, he can never come to truth on his own.

Jesus is the omniscient God. He is true; He is the truth. And through the Bible, He reveals those truths that He wants us to know. The most important of these truths is that man is under the wrath of God, and that only in the Savior Jesus Christ can we escape spending eternity in hell.

But the Word of God also gives us all kinds of other important facts. We learn from the Bible, for example, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; that there was a worldwide flood in Noah’s day (which explains how fossils came about); and that sin is the reason why there is so much suffering in this world.

Because Jesus is truth, we can, and indeed we must, trust His Word with all of our hearts. We may not understand everything we read in the Bible, but we accept it all by faith.

Isaiah 22. By introducing Himself as having the key of David, Christ ties us back to Isaiah 22. Speaking of a man called Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, Isaiah 21:22, “After he clothed him with thy robe, and strengthened 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.” At once, we can see that this historical person was a figure of Christ. Remember Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful…The everlasting Father.”

Who is the house of David? Strictly speaking, it is the line of David, whose literal descendants are the historical nation of Israel. But the Word of God also gives us all kinds of information about spiritual Israel. And because we are in Christ and Christ is of David in this context represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Referring to the Messiah, for instance, Jeremiah says, “But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them” (30:18). So, the house of David are the believers.

Putting aside the second half of Isaiah 22:22 for now, we read in verse 23, “And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house.” God is prophesying here that this Christ would be fastened like a nail in a certain place, and He would be a glorious throne to His father’s house after His resurrection and ascension. Total dependence. Verse 24: “And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of small quantity, that stand upon the altar of his father’s house.” Here we have a very negative statement. It is not against the church of Philadelphia, to be sure; God has nothing but good things to say of this church. But it is warning concerning those who claim to be believers of whom God is speaking. The two belief’s underscore the importance of what He has to say.

Remember when we looked at the church of Smyrna, we read in Revelation 2:9: “I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” We learned that those in the congregation who come will be able to stand for judgment. Christ, of course, is the Judge. We will be the judges with Him. At that point, and in that sense, the unsaved of the world will come under our authority. This is a comforting promise. In the church, those of us who are faithful to the Word are frequently ridiculed or even persecuted by others who want to bend the rules and commands of God. Here, God is reassuring us that while things may look bad now, those people also come under our authority on Judgment Day. They will find out to their utter dismay that the ones they’ve persecuted are the ones Christ has loved.

3:10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation; for thou art found perfect “here” in thy patience. We live in a world that is an enemy of Christ. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, Ephesians 6:12. Christ is the ruler of all spiritual darkness of this world. Hence, we will encounter many difficult situations. We also have to face all kinds of physical, financial and other problems. Life is not easy. But with God’s strength and knowing that Christ loves us and cares for us, we can endure.

Because we endure, God promises, He will keep us from “the hour of temptation.” This promise has been quoted in many, many books on eschatology as a proof text showing that the church will be raptured before the final tribulation. “You see,” they would say, “God promised that He will keep us from the hour of temptation.”

Subtle substitute. To the unsuspecting reader, the argument indeed sounds convincing. The fact, though, is that all these books have subtly substituted the word “tribulation” for the word “temptation” in this verse. Unfortunately, these two words are very different. Tribulation or affliction is from the Greek word thlipsis. It is never translated anywhere in the Bible as temptation. And the word “temptation” in this verse is from the Greek peirasmos, which is never translated affliction or tribulation. In fact, its verb form is translated “try” later in the same verse.
So, “the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try [peirazo] them that dwell upon the earth” is referring to Judgment Day. In other words, God is reiterating that believers will not come into judgment on the Last Day

To be sure, it is God’s expressed command that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which is written, ‘As ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’” (Mt. 25:40) But whereas the unsaved will appear before Christ and will be found guilty on Judgment Day, believers in Christ already stood before the judgment throne of God. Why? As our sin substitute, the Lord Jesus was found guilty by Pilate and paid the penalty due us on the Cross.

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

Christ could truthfully tell the church in Philadelphia almost 2,000 years ago that He would come quickly because, as we learned earlier, for all practical purposes He comes to everyone at the moment of his death. God then tells the church of Philadelphia to hold fast to the crown of eternal life that they have. Reading this verse by itself, one might draw the conclusion that a believer can lose his salvation. That, of course, is not what the Bible teaches. God is telling us here to make sure that we are truly saved.

You see, most members of a congregation consider themselves to be the kingdom of God. They call themselves Christians and assume that they have the crown of eternal life. But if we are not truly saved, that crown is but a figment of our self-delusion. Only those who are saved will hold fast to their crown.

3:12a. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.

To overcome is to endure. We read in Matthew 24:13, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; and the gates shall be saved.” This verse parallels the structure of the one above. It teaches that only a truly saved person can and will overcome and endure.

What does it mean to be a pillar in the temple? In the New Testament, God speaks of His body as a temple. We read in Ephesians 2:20:21: “And [ye] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” In a properly designed building, every single pillar constitutes an important structural member. It brings the load it carries to the foundation on which the pillar rests. Similarly, the temple of God would not be complete until all the pillars are in place. The Lord is thus saying that every Christian has an important role to play in His kingdom, and also that everyone whom He has elected to save will be saved.

And every believer will indeed be saved eternally. God will give him the strength to endure, and will hold him fast. The child of God “shall go no more out” from the temple.

3:12b. And I will write upon him my new name, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him a new name.

Every human needs a name to distinguish him from others. But God has no such need, because He is the one and only living God. Therefore, He does not have a name like you and I have. God uses many names in the Bible, however, to reveal attributes on Him.

In the context here, though, “the name of my God” encompasses all the attributes as well as the actual essence of God. So, to have the name of God written on us means that we are identified with everything that God is, also means that He owns us.

Holy City. God talks about the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21, which begins with the beautiful statement, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” Verse 2 then reads, “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Later, verse 9 declares that the bride is “the wife of the Lamb.” Therefore, this is the whole body of believers. Note that the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God. It stresses that our salvation is a gracious gift that comes entirely from God in heaven, not from us. We contribute nothing to it.

The promise of a new name here has the same meaning as that of Revelation 2:17. There God says, “And I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

3:13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

This, of course, is the same closing as that of the last five letters. God reiterates that what He is telling this church here is for all believers.

Lesson 6 for Revelation 3:14-22 "To the Church in Laodicea"

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

“Amen” is originally a Hebrew word that has been transliterated into Greek and English. It means “truly, most assuredly, absolutely, or trustworthy.” When Jesus said, “Verily, verily I say unto you,” “the verily” in that phrase is this word “amen.” So, it means “Truly, truly I say unto you.” He uses that expression to call an important truth to our attention. The very essence of truth is God’s trustworthiness. Hence, He’s the Amen.

Jesus next calls Himself “the faithful and true witness who has the key of David, who is able to open and to shut, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Rev. 3:7) He is the author of all the books of the Bible. They are His witness of God. As II Peter 1:21 tells us, the Holy Spirit moved “the holy men of God, to write” to us what they knew of His witness. “The word” in this verse would be more literally translated as “the Witnesses.” The Holy Spirit moved the Witnesses of God. In this verse, He is telling this church here is for all believers.

3:15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

A spiritually cold congregation would, of course, be the exact opposite. For that reason, it is not likely to be looked upon by others as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those in the congregation who have any spiritual sensitivity at all would readily recognize its apostasy and warning.

But the fact that this church is lukewarm is so abhorrent to the Lord Jesus that He is ready to vomit it out. Why? We get an idea of the problem in the next verse.

3:17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

This is a proud and complacent church. They pride themselves that they have been richly blessed by God presumably because the church has managed to enjoy much increase in membership and activities. This is typical of many congregations today, especially those that emphasize the so-called health and wealth gospels, those that features signs and wonders that purportedly make people feel good, and those that have changed the Sunday worship service to no longer be more than an elaborate entertaining program.

The growth of these churches is the success story of our day. Because they are so well-off financially, they are looking for members, and they don’t expect them to contribute as well as by themselves, as being rich. Boasting an ever-growing budget, they keep adding to the programs they offer and keep building new facilities which they need. Contrary to what God’s blessing is synonymous with material wealth, they think that they lack nothing. But God tells them here that they are in fact spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, and they do not even know it.

Most people in their congregation are not even saved. You see, by God’s standards, the unsaved, no matter how wealthy and healthy they currently are, are actually spiritually bankrupt; only believers are rich and prosperous.

This is the problem with congregations that are more concerned with increasing membership than presenting the whole counsel of God. When churches “sweeten” the gospel to make it more appealing to men, many are bound to be misled into believing that they are born-again Christians whereas in fact they remain spiritually bankrupt.

3:18a. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich;

This is Christ’s antidote for the lukewarm church. We get an insight into what God means by gold from verses 6 and 7 of I Peter 1: “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of that gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

The gold that God tells this lukewarm church to buy is the midst of trials that God uses in the Lord Jesus Christ. God reiterates this truth in Zechariah 13, where He typifies those who are to become saved under the fraction one-third. He says of them in verse 9, “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.”

You see, to strengthen their faith and to conform them into the image of Christ, God refines all of His chosen with trials and tribulations. When a congregation has faith enough to hang its whole existence on what the Word of God teaches, patiently endures trials and tribulations, and diligently proclaims the Gospel to all nations.

A spiritually cold congregation would, of course, be the exact opposite. For that reason, it is not likely to be looked upon by others as a church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

instead of trying to win the praise of men, it will cease to be lukewarm.

Buying faith? But how does one buy gold, or buy faith from God? Without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is God's way of picturing salvation by grace. Isaiah 61:3, 6: Buy, and take ye life without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Wine and milk in this context is a figure of salvation. God is saying, in effect, "Why spend money and labor to buy things that have no lasting value? Why not buy something of everlasting value from me without money and without price? Just come to me with a humble and repentant heart, and listen to what I tell you." 3:18b, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. When we are unsaved we stand spiritually naked before God with all of our sins exposed. Before Adam and Eve sinned, they were physically naked but were not ashamed. But after they had rebelled against God, the first thing they did was to try to cover their physical nakedness; they tried to hide from God. That physical shame they felt was a picture of their spiritual shame. To cover their spiritual nakedness, therefore, the Lord teaches the church in Laodicea that must become saved by clothing themselves with the white raiment of Christ's righteousness. They have to acknowledge deep in their hearts that they are sinners who deserve to go to hell, and that only with Christ as their Savior can their spiritual nakedness be covered.

3:18c. and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. What is this eye-salve? Do you remember that when Jesus came on the scene He spoke of Himself as the light of the world? And remember He healed many a blind man. To a blind person, all is dark; all is black. But once his eyes are opened, and he can see light, he can differentiate the ugly things from the beautiful things that are around him. Similarly, an unsaved person is so spiritually blind that he cannot see the ugly reality of his sins and horror of eternal damnation. Nor can he see the beautiful reality of Christ being his personal Savior by faith. Because the Lord Jesus is the light of the world, He is the eye-salve that the unsaved need to put on to see. Without God's power and will, he will never be born-again. He will always be physically blind and spiritually dead. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved). We became saved entirely out of God's mercy and grace. He quickened us, that is, He made us alive, even when we were dead in sin. That God alone is the one who does the saving is echoed in many places in Christ Jesus. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, and will sup with him, and he with me. Then, we read this reassuring statement in verse 11: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." In our individual lives, things sometimes go badly. We are overwhelmed by all kinds of troubles and problems. But God brings things into our lives for many reasons, not the least of which is to humble us into realizing how helpless we really are and to increase our dependence on God. This can be true of a congregation as well. This church in Laodicea thinks that it has everything going for it and has thus become complacent. Because God has not given up on it yet, He indicates that He will visit them in order to bring them to repentance.

3:20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. This is perhaps one of the most badly misunderstood verses in the Bible. The context here is that because so many in the church at Laodicea are not really saved, God holds out the possibility that yet some of them might come to Christ. But with this verse, many theologians teach that God comes with an offer of salvation to every person, but for the individual to become saved, he has to make a free-will decision to invite Jesus into his heart. This kind of teaching – that God has no control over whom He is to save – is altogether at odds with the salvation by grace that the Bible repeatedly emphasizes. To help us better understand Revelation 3:20, let's read Ephesians 2 starting from verse 1: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. An impossibility. This passage declares that all the people who have become saved were spiritually dead. Like the rest of mankind, they were followers of Satan. Being spiritual corpses, there was no way they could on their own invite Christ in when Christ knocked at the door of their hearts. How, then, did they become saved? Verses 4 and 5 explain, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)." We became saved entirely out of God's mercy and grace. He quickened us, that is, He made us alive, even when we were dead in sin. That God alone is the one who does the saving is echoed in many passages, including John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Now, let's go back to Revelation 3:20, where God says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Notice the next phrase reads, "If any man hear my voice..." Who can hear Christ's voice? Anybody can hear Christ's voice. Anybody can hear the Lord. Anybody can hear the Word of God. This is why we talk about a spiritual ear. So, in this verse, those who can hear His voice are those who have been given a spiritual ear by the grace of God. Supping together. Then God indicates in verse 20 that He will sup with us and that we will sup with Him. This is typified by the Lord's Supper where Jesus sat down with His disciples and He broke the bread and said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:24). When you have become a child of God, we are in communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are supping on Him; we are sitting down with Him. The Lord Jesus is there feeding us with His Word. This finds its highest fulfillment when we receive our glorified bodies on the last day and come into heaven. Later on in Revelation, the Bible talks about it in Chapter 21, using the figure of the marriage feast of the bride and the Lamb. 3:21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. We have looked at the phrase "To him that overcometh" many times in Revelations 2 and 3. We are overcomers because Christ has overcome on our behalf. We are walking in His shoes. Then it says, "...I will grant to sit with me in my throne." To understand that, let's read Ephesians 1:20,21: "[his mighty power] which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Here, the Bible declares clearly that because of what Christ did at the cross, He has been given authority over everything, not only in this world, but in the age to come. The age to come is eternity, while this world is the world we are in. So, right now Christ is reigning as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Don't be misled by those who say that Christ will yet set up an earthly kingdom and reign for a thousand years in Jerusalem or some place else on earth. Co-rulers. But will believers really be sitting in Christ's throne? Yes, indeed. This is confirmed by Ephesians 2. Earlier, we looked at the first five verses. Now, notice verse 6: "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." God not only saves the elect, but He makes them to sit with Him in the heavenly places. Where is Christ seated? At the right hand of God. When we become saved, therefore, we are also seated at the right hand of God. To be seated, remember in the Bible, is a figure to indicate that we reign. Our throne is at the right hand of God. True, physically, we are still down here on this earth. That is because God has commissionned us to represent Christ as His ambassadors on this earth. Our job, therefore, is to send forth the gospel to all nations and let the world see God working in us through our life-style. We reign in the sense that, together with the Holy Spirit, we can plunder Satan's house and bring the lost sheep of Christ back to their home in the kingdom of God. 3:22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. The last verse of Revelation 3 is the same verse that has been repeated now for the seventh time. God is stressing the fact that all the instructions He has given to this church are for every congregation and every believer throughout time to hear and heed.
Lesson 7 for Revelation 4:1-11 ~~ "The Heavenly Throne"

Last day. In John Chapter 6, for instance, God makes it abundantly clear that it is on the last day that Christ will raise up all those who have died in Him. He does this in truth in that chapter as many as four times, in verses 39, 40, 44 and 54. "The last day" means, of course, literally the very last day of this earth's existence.

We know from John 12:48, moreover, that the world will be judged also on the last day. Jesus says, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him [the unbeliever] in the last day." Since the world will have to be judged, their resurrection will also be on the last day. Hence, believers and unbelievers will be raised simultaneously.

This is exactly what both John 5:28,29 and Daniel 12:2 declare. The reason all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth, some to the resurrection of judgment and everlasting shame, and some to the resurrection of everlasting life, in short, there’ll be one resurrection but two destinations.

Arbitrary. To decide that the final tribulation does not apply to the church just because the word "church" does not appear after Revelation 3 is arbitrary. If that principle were followed, then the all-important statement that Jesus made to Nicodemus — "Ye must be born again" — would also have nothing to do with the church, since the word "church" does not appear in the entire Gospel of John. For that matter, neither does the word "church" appear in I and II John, I and II Peter and Titus. Yet, I believe all these books are addressed to the church.

Actually, God repeatedly speaks of the church in Revelation, but, as He does with almost all statements in that book, He uses figures of speech. He speaks of it, for example, as a great multitude of the redeemed from every nation (7:9), the two olive trees, and the two candelsticks (11:14), those who refused to worship the image (13:15), those in whose mouth no guile is found (14:5), those whose names are written in the Book of Life (20:15), and many, many more.

In the spirit, Revelation 4:1,2 really has nothing to do with the rapture of believers. First of all, John went up alone; no other believers went with him.

Secondly, he went into heaven. In contrast, at the time of the rapture, believers will be raised to meet Christ in the air. According to Jesus, as He speaks of it in John 14:1, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be." In other words, He was not caught up in the body.

Finally, when the apostle Paul talked about his having been caught up to the third heaven in II Corinthians 12, He confessed that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body. But here, John makes it clear that he was "in the spirit." In other words, he was not caught up in the body.

4:3. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

He sat on the throne was like a jasper and a sardine stone. The sardine stone, I believe, is like today's ruby. I am not sure what jasper would be equivalent to in our day. But both are obviously very precious and are used here by God as tokens figures of His magnificent glory. Moreover, these are two of the stones that appeared in the ephod that was on the breastplate that the High Priest wore. On that breastplate were twelve stones signifying the twelve tribes of Israel. They were a beautiful picture of the glory of ancient Israel, which, in turn, typified the glorious Israel of God that we are.

Why is there a rainbow round about the throne? Let's look at the only other place in the Bible, Genesis 9, where God spoke of a rainbow. This is the context: Mankind had become so wicked that God decided to wipe out the entire world with a devastating flood, saving only Noah and his family and animals in the ark. Immediately after the flood, God blessed Noah and his sons.

The promise. Then, in verses 8 to 17, we read: God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl of the air, and of every beast of the earth with you; and with every living creature that is upon the earth, and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and you and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant with you, and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Everlasting. At first glance, the rainbow seems to be just a token of God’s promise that He will never destroy this earth again with a flood. But verse 16 says that the covenant is everlasting, suggesting thereby that the extent of the covenant is more than the apparent promise.

Actually, this Hebrew word for "covenant" also means "testament" or "will." You see, God has made a testament in which He has certain commitments concerning the world and the human race. Among other places, we read about it in Genesis 17 and in Hebrews 8, which in turn underlines the covenant promised in Jeremiah 31.

God made this will before the foundation of the earth. In it He named all who were to be the inheritors of the grace of God. The beneficiaries include Jesus Christ, as well as all those who are to be saved. Therefore, the Bible calls believers joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Of this will or testament, we read in Hebrews 9:17, "That is in force only when the one who made it has died. Hence, our salvation is dependent on the death of Christ.

The creation. Besides providing salvation to His elect, God also committed Himself in that covenant to create a new heaven and a new earth to replace the current ones, which will be destroyed by fire. In Romans 8, God talks about the whole creation groaning in pain, waiting to be delivered from its bondage, in Short, that’s why John 3:16 says that “God so loved the world [that is, the kosmos, the creation] that He gave His only begotten son.”

In essence, He made to Noah, God included “every living creature of all flesh” along with humans. Does this mean that there will be a resurrection of animals too? Not really. Unlike man, who is made in the image of God, animals
believers. Note that they are clothed in white 
both Old Testament and New Testament 
number of 24 here to represent the fullness of 
Instead of just 12 elders, I believe God uses the 
when we become saved, we are seated together 
Lord was sitting on a throne ruling over all 
in the presence of God. 

present with the Lord. Hence, the 24 elders are 
teaches that to be absent from the body is to be 
fullness of all believers in heaven. The Bible 
foundations. It has a wall 144 cubits, that is 12 
about the 144,000, comprising 12,000 from 
to signify the fullness of whatever He has in 
Revelation 4:3 goes on to say that the rainbow 
world by fire and cast all the unsaved into hell, 
this generation shall not pass, till all these 
judged 
before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of 
4:6. And before the throne there was a sea of glass 
4:4. And out of the living creatures went forth 
voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. 
Tying all this together, we see here in 
the Judge to judge the nations, as well as the 
clouds of glory, He will come as the lightning 
his land. For how great is his goodness, and how 
as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon 

All-seeing God. These living creatures have eyes 
before and behind. Whenever the Bible 
talks about many eyes, or eyes all around, it 
almost always refers to God Himself. Revelation 
5:6, for instance, states that the Lamb had 
seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God 
forth into all the earth. 
In Ezekiel 1, God speaks of four living 
creatures. Beside each of those living creatures, 
it says in verse 15, was a wheel. And of those 
whales, we read in verses 18-20: "As for their 
whirlwinds of the south ... And the Lord their God shall save them in 
that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be 
as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon 
land. For how great is his goodness, and how 
great is his beauty! 
from east to west. Remember we read in 
Matthew 24:27 that when Christ comes on the 
clouds of glory, He will come as the lightning 
that shines from east to west? That Christ will 
return as lightning that goes from east to west 
is to underscore that He is eternal God. He is 

That language clearly shows that the four 
living creatures are not some unknown heavenly 
being, but a representation of God Himself. It 
highlights the fact that our God is all-seeing; His 
sight penetrates the very heart of man. 
Incidentally, whenever God uses the number 
four symbolically, it signifies universality. God is 
everywhere present. 
4:7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the 
second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a 
face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a 
Eagle. 
This verse gives added evidence that the four 
living creatures are a representation of God, 
particularly as He comes in the person of the 
Lord Jesus Christ. The creature was like 
a lion, and the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, is 
"the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David", 
who, as we will read in Revelation 5:5, is 

God. A picture of this love is described in 
this context, the eagle represents the love of 
Savior. 

The third living creature had the face of a man. 
In the Old Testament, a calf, as well as a lamb, an 
oxen or a turtledove, could be offered as a 
sacrifice. And the calf was the once-for-
all perfect sacrifice. The figure of the calf, a 
working animal, stresses the fact that Christ 
took upon him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7). 
The third living creature had the face of a man. 
This is a picture to the predestined to 
go about it until He came and made all things 
new. He would not have come and made all things 
new, if He had not gone through the crucifixion and 
resurrection. The third living creature had the face of a man. 
In the New Testament, when the Messiah 
comes, it will be a man. And when He comes, He will look like a man. 
But one thing we know for certain, the one who will come 
will come with a body, and He will be a man. 

Visions of God. Actually, Ezekiel 1 makes it 
quite clear that the four living creatures represent 
God. The opening verse declares that 

of Revelation, the color white signifies the purity, the 
holiness of salvation. Remember 1:18? "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be 
as white as snow." The raiment signifies the robe 
of Christ’s righteousness with which we are 
covered.

and round about the throne, were four 

do have an eternal soul. And God declares 
in 1 Corinthians 15:50, “flesh and blood cannot 
inherit the kingdom of God.” But the Bible uses animals to represent the 
creations. These animals are the highest form of the 
creation outside of man. So, God speaks of 
His promise to recreate this universe by talking 
about His covenant with the animals. This 
kind of figurative language appears in many places in 
the Bible. 

A commitment. Because of this covenant, the 
rainbow God set in the clouds has far greater 
significance than just promising not to flood 
the world again. Reason to carry out His 
commitment to save all His chosen people who 
are scattered throughout time, God has 
obligated Himself not to wipe the world out every 
time man has sinned. This is why the Lord Jesus 
returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.” 
This passage identifies lightning with God. In 
Job 37:2-5, both thunder and lightning represent 
the voice of God. “Hear attentively the noise of 
his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. 
He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning 
unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth: he 
thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will 
.img width="233" height="233" src="https://kubvenh04l1rlf5m.12331233.s3.amazonaws.com/2023/10/31/2611/1377971.png"/>&lt;img src="https://kubvenh04l1rlf5m.12331233.s3.amazonaws.com/2023/10/31/2611/1377971.png" width="233" height="233" /&gt;&lt;/p&gt;&lt;p&gt;The Bible often speaks of God in terms of 
lightning and thunderings. For example, in 
Ezekiel 1:13-14 we read: “As for the likeness of the 
world, it was as a candle, and the living 
burning coals of fire, and like the appearance 
of lamps: it went up and down among the living 
creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire 
were the lamps that went forth: and the living 
creatures went up and down among the 
Great is his beauty! In 
Matthew 24:27 that when Christ comes on the 
clouds of glory, He will come as the lightning 
that shines from east to west? That Christ will 
return as lightning that goes from east to west 
is to underscore that He is eternal God. He is 
compassionate; He is not finite. He will come as 
the Judge to judge the nations, as well as the 
Savior to complete the salvation of those who 
have been saved. 
Tying all this together, we see here in 
Revelation 4:5 that God rules from 
His throne as the King of all of Lords. From 
Heaven He upholds this world by His power. He 


of God’s grace.

picture of a precious stone to underscore the 
glorious character of God’s grace.

And round about the throne were four 
and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; 
and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 
In the Bible, and especially in the Book of 
Revelation, God often uses the number twelve 
to signify the fullness of whatever He has in 
view. In Revelation 7, for instance, we will read 
about the 144,000, comprising 12,000 from 
each of the twelve tribes of Israel, who will come to 
realize that it is a picture of the fullness of all believers, which, 
of course, number far larger than a literal 
144,000.

When we get to Revelation 21, we will see 
the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, being a 
city 12,000 stadia long, 12,000 stadia wide and 
12,000 stadia tall. It has 12 gates and 12 
foundations. It has a wall 144 cubits, that is 12 
times 12 again. We are going to find that all of 
these 12s signify the fullness of all believers. 
Here in Revelation 4, God talks about 24 elders, 
or 12 plus 12 elders. These elders represent the 
fullness of all believers in heaven. The Bible 
teaches that the church on earth is to be 
present with the Lord. Hence, the 24 elders are 
in the presence of God.

All believers. Earlier in verse 2, we saw that 
the Lord was sitting on a throne round the 
throne which are the kings of all the 
Heavens. Revelation 1, we learned that the 
seven spirits represent the perfection of the 
Spirit of God, who sees the heart of man and 
who goes forth to evangelize the world. But why 
does it say here that the seven lamps of fire 
burning before the throne are also the seven 
Spirits of God? 
That’s because the Holy Spirit, while He saves 
God’s elect by applying the gospel to their 
hearts, is also the One who convicts the 
unsaved of the world. Calling Him the 
Comforter, Jesus told the disciples just before 
He went to the cross: “It is expedient for you that I 
go away and send you the Holy Spirit, which will 
not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto 
you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world 
of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, 
because he believeth not; Of righteousness, 
because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of 
judgment, because the prince of this world is 
directed” (John 16:7-11).

4:6. And before the throne there was a sea of 
glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne,
what is to follow in that chapter is "visions of God" that the prophet saw. Verse 26 then speaks of God sitting on His throne: "Above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a man, and the likeness of the 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."

Finally, the closing verse of that chapter declares: "And I saw no man: for the appearance of the glory of the Lord had taken away."

As we saw earlier, rainbow is a picture of the covenant of grace.

**Sparkling feet.** Describing those four living creatures, Ezekiel 1:5-11 states:

Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces; and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was as it were a calfs foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had one face to another, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

Notice that their feet "sparkled like the colour of burnished brass". In Revelation 1:15, you may recall, it says this of Christ: "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." As we learned then, it's a reminder that Christ endured hell fire for our sins.

4:8. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is come.

This verse says that each of the four beasts has six wings, whereas Ezekiel 1 describes the four living creatures as having four wings each. Is the Bible contradicting itself? Remember, these are simply word pictures of God, not how He actually looks. God is not four kind of being other than God Himself. No one can stand above God.

**Covered face.** Notice further what the six wings of these creatures were used for. With two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. Back in Exodus, God had to hide Moses in the cleft of the rock so that when He appeared before Moses, He would not destroy the man who stood in the way of His holy presence. The Bible often uses different word pictures to express the same thing.

"Worship is He. We are unacustomed to this kind of self-praising. That is because we humans cannot glorify ourselves; there is nothing that we can do about it. God is the fountainhead of every kind of perfect glorification that properly goes on within the Godhead.

So, in both Revelation 4 and Ezekiel 1, God is giving us word pictures showing the glory of God. Without rest, therefore, these four living creatures say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The last part again emphasizes that Christ is from everlasting to everlasting.

4:9. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever, and ever, Just as God glorifies God, God also gives thanks to God. If I were to go around giving thanks to myself, it would be a bit of egomaniac. It would be foolishly sinful. But for God to give thanks to God Himself is the most perfect matter. Under God’s divine plan, the Lord Jesus Christ had to empty Himself of His glory to become flesh and, bearing our sins, to endure the awful wrath of God as our substitute. In total obedience and righteousness, Christ did precisely that.

By doing so, the Lord Jesus has glorified God the Father. Now, as the everlasting Lamb of God sitting on the throne, He is being thanked by God for His perfect obedience and righteousness. It is the answer to Christ’s prayer in John 17 that the Father would glorify Him with the glory He had before the world was.

4:10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever, and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, As you will recall, the four and twenty elders represent the Old Testament believers and New Testament believers together. We fall down and worship the eternal God. And we cast our crowns before the throne. These are the crown of victory, the crown of righteousness. Under God’s divine plan, the Lord Jesus Christ had to empty Himself of His glory to become flesh and, bearing our sins, to endure the awful wrath of God as our substitute. In total obedience and righteousness, Christ did precisely that.

That God glorifies God Himself is also dramatically shown in John 17. In verse 4, Jesus prays, "I have glorified thee on the earth..." Note that Jesus Christ, who is God, has glorified God the Father. What continued in verse 5, "And now, O Father, glorify me thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. Here. He asks God the Father to glorify Him, God the Son, worthy is He. We are unacustomed to this kind of self-praising. That is because we humans cannot glorify ourselves; there is nothing that we can do about it. God is the fountainhead of every kind of perfect glorification that properly goes on within the Godhead.

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

What we get to Revelation 5, we’ll develop more fully the word "worthy" as it applies to the Lord Jesus Christ. But in this verse, God is being praised for having created all things. He created the heavens and the earth, of course. But He is
still creating. He creates as every human comes into existence, as every animal is born, and as every seed germinates.

There is another wonderful aspect in which God created man... He creates a new life in the heart of every believer. He makes us a new creation and gives us eternal life. I believe Revelation 4 has this spiritual aspect particularly in view. Repeatedly, this chapter points to the work of Lord Jesus at the cross.

For His pleasure. We read here that “for thy pleasure they are and were created.” Believers, we know, are created and saved for God’s pleasure. We read in Ephesians 1 that He “hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...according to the good pleasure of his will.”

But this verse says here that all things were created by God and for His pleasure. That would include the people who are not among the chosen. Never having become saved, they will all be condemned to hell on Judgment Day. Are they created for His pleasure also? Yes, the Bible declares.

To be sure, God says in Ezekiel 33:11 that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. And Jesus wept when He saw that Jerusalem would not respond to the gospel. But these must be viewed in the light of God’s creation. He is grieved by the fact that mankind in general and Israel in particular have rebelled against Him.

But looking objectively at the whole creation and salvation program of God, we can see that everything that unfolds is decidedly in full accordance with the good pleasure of God. If God wanted to save every human being, He could surely have done so. He is sovereign. But somehow, it is His good purpose and pleasure to provide salvation to just a remnant chosen by grace.

Power and mercy. That is it indeed pleasing to God that He judges the unsaved can be seen in Psalm 76:10: “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee. The wrath of man refers to the unsaved. The wrath of man refers to the unsaved man who is in rebellion against God. It shall praise God, and we wonder why. In Romans 9, God gives us some helpful insight into this question. Verse 22 reads, “What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.” From that, we can infer that God plans to pour out His wrath upon the unsaved to make known His power. Of course, His justice and holiness will also be manifested.

In verse 23, the rhetorical question continues, “and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.” You see, if everyone were saved, we, the remnant chosen by grace, would never know the riches of God’s love, God’s mercy, God’s grace, and God’s Supreme Sacrifice in giving of His only begotten Son to die for our sins.

But through the creation and limited salvation plan, all the wonderful attributes of God will come into full and startling view not only before us, but before the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, wherever they may be. Surely, all things are and were indeed created for the pleasure of our Holy God.

Revelation 5

Lesson 8 for Revelation 5:1-14 ~ “The Lamb that Was Slain”

5:1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

The term “right hand” in the Bible often signifies one’s will. So, when we learn from Ephesians 1:20 that Christ has been sitting at the right hand of God and has ascended back to heaven, we know that He has been ruling from heaven, carrying out the will of God. It says here that the book the Apostle John sees is in the right hand of Him that sits on the throne. That book must therefore associate closely with the will of the victorious Christ.

What book could that be? It is God’s salvation plan. That is what it is written within and on the backside of the book. This is the person’s absolute and comprehensive; it is complete in every detail. Nothing is to be added nor is any modification needed.

Even before the foundation of the world, God chose all those whom He would adopt as His children to inherit the eternal Kingdom of God. He wrote the name of every one of them in the Book of Life and spelled out exactly when and how each of them would be saved.

The book that John sees is sealed with seven seals. It is so perfectly sealed that only the person who is uniquely qualified may open those seals and carry out that salvation plan. The seven seals are a guarantee from God that He will surely save every one that He has named in the Book of Life. Not until the last of the elect has received salvation will He return to judge and destroy this sin-cursed world.

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

Here again, the word “angel” should have been translated “messenger” (both are from the same Greek word). This is why in the vision was Jesus, who is not an angel. We know the verse is talking about Jesus because He is identified by the same phrase in Revelation 10:1: “And I saw another mighty [from the same Greek word as “strong”] angel [or messenger] come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.”

Only the Lord Jesus fits that description. Remember we learned in Revelation 4 that the rainbow is a picture of God’s covenant of grace. And when Jesus was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration, “his face shone like the sun?” That in the face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. Only the Lord Jesus fits that description.

In Revelation 5:3, we read, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to take the seal thereof?”

5:3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

Given those requirements, what this verse says is not at all surprising. There isn’t a single human being who is sinless. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, the Bible declares (Rom 3:23); there is none righteous, no, not one (3:10).

Moreover, even if there were an absolutely sinless man, he could not at best pay for the sins of one other individual, not all the elect. To atone for all the sins an absolutely sinless man, the Savior must be able to endure the wrath of God poured upon a multitude of people. No one except God Himself can go through that.

But not only was there no man who was worthy to open the book, no one was worthy even to look upon it. This is a holy book; this salvation plan reflects the perfect justice, the supreme mercy, and the absolute righteousness of God. How could any sinner look at it without being consumed?

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

We can well understand why the Apostle John wept much at this point. If no one could put God’s salvation plan into operation, then he would remain in his sins. If no one were qualified to be the Savior, then he could not be saved; he would have no hope.

You and I would weep too. Blessed are they who mourn, Jesus says. Once convicted by the Holy Spirit, we begin to recognize our sinfulness and our spiritual emptiness. We know only too well that in ourselves there is no hope of any kind. We realize that we desperately need a Savior.

We would mourn also because we know that no human being can be our savior. Although the Bible implies that we should be our brother’s keeper, the fact nevertheless is that men will not and cannot save the souls of their fellow humans.

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

Here is the good news, the gigantic promise that God gives us. We don’t have to weep in our sins. Behold, the Lord Jesus Christ has prevailed; He is worthy to open the book and loose the seals. He is qualified to be our Savior.

The reference to the Lion of the tribe of Judah goes back to a prophecy God made through Jacob in Genesis 49. Verse 8 there reads: “Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise [Christ came forth from the tribe of Judah]; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies [Christ would impose His will upon the world and Satan]; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee [all believers would worship Him].

Now, verse 9: “Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?” This is speaking of Christ being a lion who is able to get its prey, the lion who vanquishes Satan. Revelation 5:5 thus teaches that in Christ, this prophecy of Genesis 49 has been fulfilled.

Root of David. The next phrase, “the Root of David” refers to the fact that Christ has fulfilled yet another Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. This one is recorded in Isaiah 11:1,2: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his

roots; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.”

Jesse was the father of David. So, his root would also be the root of David. Hence, verse 10 reads, “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious.”

Promises fulfilled. All this alludes to Christ. This fact is reaffirmed by Isaiah 53:2, which reads, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground.” Isaiah 53 is that wonderful chapter in which God promised that the Messiah would come. Christ is the root of David, He is the fulfillment of these prophecies.

Unfortunately, there are those who teach that Isaiah 11 has to do with some future earthly kingdom that Christ will return to set up for 1,000 years. They have failed to realize that Christ is the promised root of David and that He has already been the ensign of the people for nearly 2,000 years. As the gospel goes out into all the world, Gentiles have indeed been turning to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible itself called attention to this fact. Because more and more Gentiles had begun to come into the body of Christ, God quotes in Romans 15:9-11 several Old Testament passages to show that His many promises to save people from the Gentiles are starting to be fulfilled. Then quoting from Isaiah 11:10, He says in verse 12, “And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.”

Yes, the root of David has prevailed by going to the cross. He is worthy and qualified to open the book and to take the seven Spirits of God. His plan of salvation will be carried out in every detail.

5:6. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

The vision John saw now gives us a clearer picture of the throne; it focuses especially upon a lamb that had been slain.

Notice first where the Lamb is standing – in the midst of the four living creatures. The throne is that which reflects the full glory of God. He stood also in the midst of the four living creatures. They, as we learned back in Chapter 4, represent God Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the Lamb is standing in the midst of the four and twenty elders as well. They are a representation of all believers.

Imagine, believers of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb has seven horns. In this verse, the Lamb represents Christ identifying Himself intimately with His people. The seven Spirits, as we learned back in Revelation 1:4, represent the divine perfection of the Spirit of God. And, as we have seen, the Lamb’s seven eyes depict in particular the Holy Spirit’s activity in evangelizing the world. He has been sent forth into all nations to convict men of their sins.

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

Having prevailed by going to the cross, the Lamb is worthy to take the book and carry out the salvation program written therein. As the right hand signifies the will, so Christ came to faithfully do the will of God, which required that He emptied Himself of His glory to come to earth and to die on the cross for our sins.

Even to Christ, the prospect of enduring the wrath of God was horrifying. Remember how agonizing Jesus was at Gethsemane? His sweat was like great drops of blood. But though He asked if the Father would take that cup from Him, He said, “nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36). The Lamb did the will of God faithfully.

5:8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

It’s understandable that the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb; they are humble and grateful for what He did. But why do the four living creatures fall down too? Haven’t we learned that they are a representation of Christ? Why should God worship God? To complicate matters further, we read in the next verse that these living creatures, along with the four and twenty elders, were singing a song of praise, thanking the Lamb for having redeemed them by His blood. Could God even worship God?

Harps. Before making any hasty conclusion, let’s look first at the way the elders and the living creatures worship. First, we see that they have harps. In the Bible, God uses the harp as a musical instrument that accompanies the singing of praises to God. In Psalm 33:2, for instance, we read: “Praise the Lord with the harp; sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.”

David was a skillful harpist, as well as a good shepherd and a good king. When he played the harp, the evil spirit would leave Saul (1 Sam. 16:23). Now, David is a great type of Jesus because Christ is our shepherd, our king and the one who has freed us from the evil spirit. It’s not surprising, therefore, that the four living creatures have every one of them a harp.

Next, we see in verse 9 that the four living creatures, as well as the four and twenty elders, are singing a song of praise. Does God sing? Yes, indeed. On the evening of the last Supper, remember, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn before they went to the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:26).

Garden. More, in Zechariah 3:17: “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is holy; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will exult over thee with singing.”

Notice why God sings: “He will joy over thee with singing.” The Lord is rejoicing over the fact that His chosen have been saved, that God has done His work of salvation. He rests in His love; that is what peace is. In verse 10, God sings praises because He rejoices in what the Lamb has done. That’s the very same reason why the four living creatures, which represent God Himself, are worshipping God here. The whole scene focuses on the atonement effected by the Lamb that was slain; and God rejoices over what the Lamb has done.

But why would God indicate that He was saved, redeemed by the Lamb’s blood? That’s because Christ identifies Himself intimately with His people. Remember what He said to Saul on the road to Damascus? He asked, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is I, Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” In Matthew 25:40, He said to the sheep on His right hand, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.”

Prayers of saints. Revelation 5:8 goes on to say that the living creatures and the elders have golden vials (or bowls) full of odours (or incense), which are the prayers of the saints. This is a figure lying back to the temple in the Old Testament. When offerings were made to God then, there was incense burning. That incense, this verse tells us, is a picture of the prayers of the saints. We are seeing in worshiping God in a way that is a sweet fragrance to Him.

Jesus, of course, also prays to God. The Gospels record many accounts of the Lord praying. For instance, He got a whole night in prayer. Why does God pray to God? Why does God worship God? Why does God glorify God? All this interaction within the Godhead is a mystery, for our finite minds can never fully understand.

But the point is that God is indeed typified by these four living creatures. God does pray to God, and God does worship God, especially because Jesus was the one who made it possible for God’s magnificent salvation plan to unfold.
5:9. And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book: and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.

Notice that the four living creatures, along with the four and twenty elders, are saying, “[Thou] hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.” Before we go on, let’s look further at this matter of God redeeming God. I noted earlier that one reason why God praises God for having redeemed God is that Christ identifies Himself intimately with every person. He regards whatever done unto “one of the least of these my brethren” as having been done unto Him.

But God also did redeem Christ. We know that to be so from Psalm 69, among other places in the Bible. This is a messianic Psalm, as evidenced by verse 21: “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” The prophecy was fulfilled, of course, when Christ was nailed to the cross (Matt. 27:34). In that context, we read this prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 18: “Dive nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.” You see, He was praying to God to redeem His soul.

In Psalm 16, another messianic Psalm, we read in verse 10: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer him to see corruption. Indeed, God did not leave Jesus in hell nor allow Him to see corruption. When Christ had paid for our sins, God redeemed Him.

All this explains why the four living creatures in Revelation 5:9, though they are a representation of God, are nevertheless praising God for their redemption.

A new song. “They sang a new song,” it says here. What new song? One place we can find the answer is the opening verses of Psalm 40: “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. And 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.”

People all over the world sing. On the radio, we can hear all kinds of music and all kinds of songs. But when we are saved, a new kind of singing bursts forth from our lips. It is singing in praise of God. These are our praise and incomprehensible salvation that He has provided. It is a song that the unsaved would never know and could never sing.

And so, they sang a new song, saying, “Thou art worthy to take the book: and to open the seals thereof.” The “Thou” there, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ; and the book is God’s salvation plan. Christ is the only one that is worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof. Why? Because “thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us by thy blood.” The focal point of this praise is God as our redeemer, the Savior who shed His blood for our salvation. All nations. By his blood, Christ has redeemed to God people out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. That’s a most reassuring statement. Had Jesus come only for national Israel, you and I would not be saved, since most of us are Gentiles.

But even from before the foundation of the earth, it has always been God’s plan to save a people for Himself out of every nation. God is not a national God. He promised Abraham, “This is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations” (Gen. 17:4). There is to be a remnant chosen by grace coming from every people.

Note that the people saved came out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. The four words really mean the same thing. But God uses this language to underscore the universal nature of His salvation program. As we have learned before, the number four, when it has a spiritual meaning, usually symbolizes universality.

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

Not only has God saved us, but He has even made us unto kings and priests, so that we shall reign on the earth! This magnificent truth can also be expressed in another way: that after Christ had risen from the grave, He sat down at the right hand of God and was given authority over everything, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. So He has, since He has been reigning as King, Ephesians 2:6 then reads, “And [God] hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

If Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God reigning as King and if we are seated with Him, then we are reigning as kings as well. We, of course, are not actually in heaven, but we are the ambassadors of the King of kings. As we reign as kings, we reign as king and priest. We are not then the deities of heaven. For we do not reign as Gods, as some people think. Rather, we reign by the grace of God, in the grace of God. As we reign, as God reigns in heaven, we reign as Gods in the earth. When Christ was nailed to the cross (Matt. 27:50), it says “When Christ had received the Spirit, said he with a loud voice, ‘Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,'” (Rev. 5:9). What does this mean? It means that Christ had paid for our sins, God redeemed us. Christ was nailed to the cross, and He died on the cross. He was nailed to the cross, and He died on the cross.

Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.

5:11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Here, God is giving us a picture of the beauty, the wonder and the majestic character of God. We see it, because many angels gathered around the throne to praise Him.

A somewhat similar description of the heavenly throne can be found in Daniel 7. Verse 9 of that chapter gives us the setting: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.”

Then, verse 10 reads, “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Here, we see the wonderful glory of God with thousand thousands ministering unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him.

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

Those millions of angels that are surrounding the throne are saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”… Throughout this chapter, the chief focal point always returns to Christ as the Redeemer – the Lamb that was slain. He is worthy because He died and rose again from the dead. It was His worth. Notice that He is worthy to receive seven different things: power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. They represent the perfection of all that anyone is entitled to. Christ, to start with, is worthy to receive power. He is omnipotent; He spoke and everything came into being, and by His Word all things are sustained. He is worthy to receive riches. He owns everything and He is the inheritor of the new heaven and the new earth. He is infinite, wise, and has the strength to be obedient even unto death. And honor – there is no one else that we can bow before except the Lord Jesus. Note also, anyone else be glorified as He is glorified. And so, He is worthy to receive all blessings.

5:13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

It says here that every creature in heaven and on earth is praising the Lamb. This reminds us of Psalm 148:

Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his host.

Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded it.

He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not
pass. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto unto. Praise ye the LORD.

Savior of all. The word “LORD” in this Psalm is really “Jehovah”. This is the name that God uses in the Old Testament to identify Himself as the Savior. Thus, the phrase “Praise ye the LORD” should really read “Praise ye the Savior.” In other words, every part of creation is to praise Him for being such a wonderful Savior. Not many can understand why believers want to praise Him. But will the creation and the unsaved of this world praise Him as well?

Yes, indeed. The whole universe was originally created to the glory of God. But mankind, which was to rule over the world, rebelled against God and, as a result, God cursed man. So that imperfect man won’t be ruling over a perfect world, God also cursed the creation. Romans 8:20 explains: “For the creature [creation] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.” And verse 22, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

But God loves His creation. The word “world” in “For God so loved the world…” is from a Greek word that, in the largest context, means the whole universe. God gave His only begotten Son not only to redeem those who would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but also the creation itself. Romans 8:21 declares, “The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

In other words, just as all those who have died in Christ will be resurrected with a perfect spiritual body, the presently cursed creation will be destroyed and be replaced by a new heaven and new earth. We read about this in II Peter 3.

New creation. That’s why Romans 8:19 says, “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” The manifestation of the sons of God occurs on the last day, when all believers are raptured and caught up to be with Christ. Then, after the unsaved have been judged, God will destroy this earth with fire and recreate a new universe to accommodate the spiritual bodies of believers.

Yes, the whole new creation will glorify Christ the Lamb. This does not mean, however, that there will literally be animals and sea creatures, as we know them. For one thing, we read in Revelation 21:1, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” If there is not going to be any sea, then there will not be any sea creatures. Moreover, I Corinthians 15:50 states, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” And that would exclude all the animals of this earth from heaven.

Why then does Revelation 5:13 say that every creature in the heaven and in the earth shall praise God? And what about all those things in Psalm 148? Answer: God is speaking in parables, using this present universe, with all its plants and animals and sea creatures and rocks, etc. as a figure to represent the creation. He is telling us that the whole creation will be redeemed, and will be praising Him forever and ever.

Unbelievers too. What about the unbelievers who are standing for judgment? Are they going to praise the Lamb? Yes, they are; but sadly, not as believers. The Bible says, “If the world hated you, you know that the love of God is not in you.” Only while we are living on this earth can we have salvation. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). There will be no second chance.

But the unsaved will give glory to God nevertheless. We read in Philippians 2:9-11: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

It is highly significant that on Judgment Day, the Lamb that was slain will be the Judge. The same Lord Jesus who meekly and humbly endured the shame of eternal damnation on the cross will return with power and glory on the last day to judge the world. What a dramatic contrast that is.

Similarly, we believers are to walk very humbly and meekly on the earth; we are to endure insults and tribulations. But at judgment day, the tables will be turned. The proud of this world will be humbled and ashamed and, as I Corinthians 6 says, we will be judging them with Christ.

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

Remember in Revelation 3: God identifies Himself to the Laodicean church as “the Amen?” The word means truly, or absolutely. Here, God is reminding us that all that we have read about the Lamb being worthy to receive glory and honor and power and so on is absolutely true. There is no exaggeration.

We are not surprised, therefore, that the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever. Throughout eternity, all believers will be worshipping Christ. We recognize and are deeply grateful that He, the Eternal God, is our Creator and our Savior. He is worthy of our praise and worship.

Of course, we are already worshipping Him now. We worship Him by being obedient to His Word. We worship Him as we sing songs of praise to Him. We worship Him as we pray to Him, as we recognize that He is the giver of all good and perfect gifts. We worship God as we fellowship together in the congregation.

New creation again. Notice the constant refrain “for ever and ever”. We saw it in verse 13, “and unto the Lamb for ever and ever;” and here in verse 14, “they worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” This is very important.

Back in Revelation 1:18, God declared, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.” The focal point of that statement is that He is alive for evermore. This means that the salvation program of which we are an integral part, of which we are the primary beneficiaries, is a once for all development or happening.

Never again throughout eternity will God put through a salvation plan under which He, God Himself dies to save sinners. It is done once for all; Christ is the Lamb for ever and ever. This important fact also guarantees our salvation. It means that the new heaven and the new earth, we will be with Him for ever and ever. We will never be separated from God by our sins. Nor will Christ ever need to pay for our sins again.

Revelation 6
Lesson 9 for Revelation 6:1-17 ~ "Opening the First Six Seals"

6:1. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and behold, as it were a book opened before him: one of the four beasts [better translated living creatures] saying, Come and see.

The Lord Jesus Christ now begins to open the seals of the book. Remember, this book is God’s salvation plan, and there is only one who is worthy to open it. So, as each seal is opened, we should expect to see some aspect of that program. Failing to keep this in mind has caused many to make way-out speculations about the four horsemen in this chapter.

Earlier in our study of Revelation, we saw that the voice of God is typified by thunder and that the four living creatures are a representation of God Himself. Not surprisingly, therefore, this verse tells us that as the Lamb opens the first seal, John hears, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four living creatures saying, “Come and see.”

Thus, this verse again focuses on the Lord Jesus. As He begins to open the seals, He tells John – and us – to come and see His perfect salvation plan.

6:2. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Many theologians and commentary writers identify the rider of the white horse as the Antichrist. That’s a most unfortunate mistake. Nowhere in the Bible is the color white associated with Satan or the Antichrist. White has to do with that which is pure, that which is holy.

Describing Christ, for instance, John writes in Revelation 1:14, “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow.” In Chapter 3, God told the church of Sardis in verse 5, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.” In Chapter 19, in fact, where God talks about Christ coming in the clouds of glory to judge the world, verse 11 states that He is sitting upon a white horse.

Remember, the Lamb that was slain for our sins is opening the seals, and is telling us to come and see the salvation plan that He has provided for us. The first and foremost figure in that plan, therefore, should be Christ. Indeed, many Scriptures confirm that.

Psalm 45. In Hebrews 1:8, we read: “But unto the Son he saith, ‘Thy throne is everlastig, O God, and for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.’” That passage is quoted verses 6 and 7 of Psalm 45. So, we know at least that portion of Psalm 45 is messianic.

Now, notice verses 3 to 5 of that psalm: “Gird thy word upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.”

It is prophesying here that Christ, the King, would be riding prosperously, or victoriously, with a sword girded at His side. The sword, of course, is the Word of God. His arrows would

penetrate the heart of His enemies and the people would fall under Him.

Can you see how closely Revelation 6:2 parallels this passage? The rider of the white horse has a bow; and a bow is that which will penetrate the heart of His enemies and the people falling under Him.

Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is the one riding prosperously on the white horse. With a bow in hand, He is going forth to build His church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

6:3.4. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, Come and see.

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

The first clue we have of this rider is that the color of the horse is red. Red is a color that God has assigned to Satan in Revelation 12. We read in verse 3, "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon," and in verse 8, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan."

Before Satan came to the scene, there was total peace on the earth. There was no warfare, no enmity anywhere in the world. And there were herbivorous animals. They did not kill one another. But because Satan had deceived Eve, causing Adam to disobey God, peace was taken from mankind. Because of their sins, animals then were carnivorous. They did not kill one another.

Thus, the second rider is a warning to the church. If a congregation is not faithful to the word of the Lord and is not doing what it’s been called to do, the “rider that sat on the red horse” will come and take peace from their midst, and they’ll begin to kill each other. Satan particularly wants to kill God’s people. He wants to destroy the church. That’s why he wants to kill one another. He wants to see the church fail, and he will see to it that the church is destroyed.

Enslaved. Having become enslaved to Satan, people will serve him since they have been engaging in all kinds of killing. They kill one another in wars; they murder each other; nowadays, they even kill unborn babies by the millions. This is the way Satan blinds mankind, he causes them to kill one another.

In his attempt to frustrate God’s salvation plan, Satan particularly wants to kill God’s people. Almost immediately after Pentecost, when God started the church, Satan left his word, was martyred. Then James was killed by the sword. Since then, Christians have been martyred in all parts of the world.

But note that both the power and the sword that Satan had were given to him by God. He cannot do anything beyond what God allows him to do.

6:5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come and see.

And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

This time, we have a black horse. Black is a color that signifies death, and it represents the great dragon. It signifies that the behavior of the church is constantly leading people over to death. And we see that a measure of wheat for a penny is a picture of the shortage of flour.

The third rider is a warning to the church. If a congregation is not faithful to the word of the Lord, the church will not prosper. It will be a period of great difficulty. The church will be in trouble, and there will be great pressures from the outside, and they will be pressed for funds, and they will be pressed for staff, and they will be pressed for all kinds of things. They will have a very difficult time. This is why the black horse is the third rider.

Oil and wine. The last phrase in this verse is comforting for the church, pictured by the oil and wine. In the Bible, wine typically represents the blood of Christ; and oil, the Holy Spirit who applies the gospel to the hearts of those who believe. It comforts the people, it gives them the power and the strength to continue in the work of God.

The pair of balances that the rider holds warns us that the church is constantly being weighed by God. Back in Daniel 5, there is an account of the last Babylonian king, Belshazzar seeing some mysterious writing on the wall. Interpreting it, Daniel told the king, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (v. 27). Shortly thereafter, God brought judgment upon him and his empire.

Oil and wine. The last phrase in this verse is comforting for the church, pictured by the oil and wine. In the Bible, wine typically represents the blood of Christ; and oil, the Holy Spirit who applies the gospel to the hearts of those who believe. It comforts the people, it gives them the power and the strength to continue in the work of God.

Remember the parable of the good Samaritan? He poured oil and wine on the wounds of the man who had been beaten up by thieves and left for dead. Physically, one may say that the oil helps to soften the wounds and the wine serves to disinfect. And that may be so. But spiritually, Christ is pointing to the nature of salvation. The half-dead man is a picture of the unsaved; he was healed by the Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ.

Thus, “see thou hurt not the oil and the wine” promises that even when their churches go apostate, true believers themselves will not lose their salvation. Those whom God has saved will not be deceived by false gospels. Once saved, we are saved eternally. For all the believers will be there judging with Him (I Cor. 6:2). And that will be the fulfillment of this particular statement. Death and Hell will come to those who rejected the gospel that we proclaimed.

The Old Testament confirms this in Ezekiel 14. In verses 12 and 13, God begins to talk about judgment on Israel, which is a type of the corporate church: “The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break off man and beast from it, and will cut off the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it.”

Judgment. Once a church goes apostate, the first thing that comes upon it is spiritual famine—the true gospel just dries up. This, as we’ve just seen, is in line with the third seal.

God then says in Ezekiel 14:14, “though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.”

Noah and Daniel and Job were men who found grace in the eyes of the Lord and are standout illustrations of what a righteous man is. But here, God is saying that even though they were in the congregation, judgment will still come to the apostate church. Only themselves will be saved.

Elaborating on the judgment. God goes on and warns that He would cause “noxious beasts to pass over it” (v. 15), “bring a sword upon that land” (v. 17), and “send famine upon it” (v. 19).

Close parallel. Notice how closely the fourth horseman of Revelation 6 parallels Ezekiel 14. It says, “a pale horse was given over them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword.”

Remember the sword of Ezekiel? “With hunger.” Remember the famine? “With death.” That would be the pestilence that accompanies the beasts of the earth.

Remember the noisome beasts? A similar statement can also be found in Jeremiah 15:2: “And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the Lord; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the
sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.

Worldwide apostasy. Note that in all these passages, God features the number four or fourth. In Revelation 6, we have the fourth seal, the fourth horseman, and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth. In Ezekiel 14, they will be killed in four ways: with sword, with hunger, with death, and with the beasts of the earth. And in Jeremiah 15, God “will appoint over them four kinds” of judgment.

The number four in the Bible, when it has a spiritual meaning, often represents universality. The fourth seal, therefore, points especially to that period of time just before Judgment Day when churches all over the world will become apostate.

This doesn’t mean that there won’t be a single church left that remains faithful to the Word. But by and large, congregations all over the world will become apostate. And God will judge them by allowing them to be overrun by false prophets that come with signs and wonders, by allowing them to be overrun by false prophets that come with signs and wonders.

Such an eventuality is implied in Matthew 24. Verse 15 says: “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,) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” The time will come, God is saying there, when gospels other than the true one will dominate churches all over the world; true believers will then have to flee from them.

Signs and wonders. And verse 24, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, yea, even such as never were since the beginning of the world for to deceive, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” God also declares in II Thessalonians 2 that the man of sin will take his seat in the temple. In other words, Satan (the man of sin) will overrun the corporate church (the temple). This will be the key characteristic of the final tribulation period, which transitions into Judgment Day.

And so God is warning us that we may never presume upon Him. True, the gates of hell cannot prevail against His plan to build His church. But when the corporate church becomes apostate, He will not stay Satan’s hand. In fact, if God’s elect are saved, He will loose Satan for a season to attack the unfaithful church as a judgment.

Remember we saw in Revelation 5 that this sealed book was written on both sides. It implies that for all believers who are alive in the Lord, in the earth. In the Lord, to witness to them and pray for their salvation, remembering that, but for the grace of God, we would be behaving as they are.

These souls, however, are living and reigning with Christ in heaven. Having completed their work on earth, they no longer have the duty of sending forth the Gospel. So, they are now eagerly awaiting the culmination of God’s salvation plan, and that will take place only when Christ returns to judge the world. Remember also that the souls of these believers, having departed from their sin-cursed bodies, now have completely the mind of God. They therefore earnestly desire that God’s perfect justice be done. And that calls for the avenging of the blood of the saints and the eternal damnation of the unsaved.

5:11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

White robes, as we have already seen, represent the righteousness of Christ. That white robes were given to every one of them is to emphasize again that these are souls of believers. These souls are told the same story yet for a little season. To rest in God is to trust God totally for our salvation. It is typified by the day of rest in the Old Testament.

In Numbers 15, there is an account of a man picking rose-buds on the Sabbath day. Because he did work on the day of rest, God had him stoned to death. It’s a dramatic picture of someone who claims to trust in Christ yet believes he has some work toward his salvation. Such a person is still subject to damnation because, consciously or otherwise, he refuses to give all the glory to God.

These souls under the altar are told to continue trusting fully in the Lord and to wait “until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” In other words, Judgment Day won’t come until all of God’s elect have become saved and have therefore been hated and murdered by the world.

Wonderfully, these souls have to wait but “for a little season”. It will not be a long time. The Bible says that since the cross, we have been living in the “last days”. Hence, we are now much closer to the end of time.

6:12. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.

Earthquake is a result of sin. This world was created perfect and man was given authority to rule over it. When man rebelled against God, God cursed this earth, as well as mankind, in order to maintain His ordained line of authority. As a result, earthquakes, along with thorns and thistles and all kinds of other bad things, entered into this creation.

Significantly, when Jesus died on the cross and again when He rose from the grave, there was also an earthquake. God uses those earthquakes to remind us that, as part of His salvation program, the man of sin, once he has been cursed, will be destroyed on the last day and be replaced by a new one.

No timekeepers. The language of this verse is quite similar to that of Matthew 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 powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”

To understand its significance, we need to go back to Genesis 1. There, the Bible tells us that God created the sun, the moon, and the stars on the fourth day “for signs, for seasons, days and years.” The purpose of the heavens was to mark the passage of time. Both Matthew 24:29 and this verse are thus talking about the last day, when the time keepers are taken out of existence. As the universe collapses, the stars will fall from heaven.

Black sun. The language of this verse in Revelation 6 also ties back to Joel 2:31, which reads, “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.” We know from Acts 2:16 that Joel 2 is talking about the first coming of Christ. At the time of the cross, the sun was darkened and the moon did not shine for three hours. This emphasizes that when Christ was hanging on the cross, Judgment Day came upon Him in the full sense of the word. Having become the representative for all believers He stood in the very same wrath of God as that which will be poured out on the unsaved on the last day.

Frankly, I do not know why the sun will be black as sackcloth of hair. Sackcloth has to do with mourning. However, I have searched the Scriptures, but have not found the spiritual meaning of the phrase “sackcloth of hair”.

Bloody moon. The moon in the Bible often symbolizes Satan. In Genesis 1, again, God decreed that the moon should rule over the night. Spiritually, Satan is the ruler of the night. Throughout the Scriptures, God uses the figure of darkness or night to represent sin, hell and Satan.

Sometimes, the moon also represents the law of God. In a real sense, even as the moon rules over the night, the law rules over the unsaved. Moreover, the ceremonial law was linked closely to new moons and other days in the lunar month.

Typically, blood symbolizes death and damnation. Jesus shed His blood; He was darkness in His place. Thus, “the moon became as blood” points both to the ultimate death and damnation of Satan and to the death and
damnation that the law of God will demand for the unsaved on Judgment Day.

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

How can the stars of heaven fall to the earth? Is God simply using a figure of speech? Possibly. As we have just seen, the statement in the last verse about the moon becoming as blood is symbolic.

But the prophecy given in Matthew 24 that the great tribulation would include such events is unmistakably clear. We are living in the time of its fulfillment.

So, by "fig tree casting her untimely figs," God is saying: Make no mistake, on Judgment Day the entire universe will experience God's wrath, with all its elements being destroyed. It is a historical event that will surely take place.

The heavens departed as a scroll, this verse says. We will call it "roll" is from the Greek word biblion, which God uses many times in the Scripture to identify the Bible. Thus, God is tying the departure, or the closing, of the heaven to the rolling together. He is emphasizing that the salvation offered in the Bible comes from heaven above. On the last day, both the universe and God's salvation plan will come to an end.

That mountains and islands will move out of their places also have a spiritual meaning. In the Bible, mountains are sometimes used as a figure of earthly kingdoms; and islands, of people. In John 6:18, for example, God calls Babylon "a destroying mountain". And we read in Psalm 97:1, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." There, God is clearly talking about peoples of the earth.

Amplification. Isaiah 34, which also discusses the end of the world, amplifies this point. Its first five verses read:

Come near, all ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their inhabited places: he hath 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 carcases, and the mountains shall be dotted with their blood.

And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and 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.

For my sword shall be bathed in heaven.

When God's judgment comes upon the nations, the peoples of the earth will find that their foundation is gone. They will belatedly discover that they have trusted in something that has no strength or stability. Every island and mountain will be moved from its place.

6:15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains.

Notice the people listed here. They include those who trusted in something going for them. They had fame, power and wealth; they were the masters of their soul. They dared to live out their lives without facing God.

But the list also includes the bondmen, the slaves, that is, whatever their social strata were, all the unsaved will suddenly realize that Judgment Day has come. All they can do then is to hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains.

The same truth shines through from Isaiah 2. We read from verse 17: "And the loveliness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And 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" (vv. 17-19).

6:16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

Realizing that it is too late for salvation, they ask the mountains and rocks to kill them, to crush them. They wish they could die so that they do not have to face Judgment Day.

This desire to escape judgment is also prophesied in Hosea. Talking about the final tribulation upon the apostate church, Hosea 10:8 says, "The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us." But they will all be calling in vain. There is no escape. The Bible has made it abundantly clear: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

6:17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? When Jesus was hanging on the cross on "the great and the terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31), God poured down His wrath on Christ. He was punished for all those whom He came to seek and save, not for His own sins.

Now, Judgment Day will come in all of its fury to the unsaved. This world has reached its last day of existence. The great day of His wrath is coming. Everyone who has not trusted Christ as His Lord and Saviour will have to stand before the judgment throne of God to answer for his sins. And just one sin will be sufficient to send him to hell.

And who shall be able to stand? Who can stand before God without being sentenced to spend eternity in hell? No one. Everyone who has not become saved will be found guilty. Nor will believers of the Lord Jesus Christ stand there. They will be standing with the Lord, judging the world.

The sixth seal, then, is a tremendous warning to the world. Judgment Day is coming. So, make sure that you are ready. Don't try to wait until tomorrow or some other time. You may not be living tomorrow. Even if you are, time is running out. Cry out to God for mercy while today is still the day of salvation. You may never have another chance.

Revelation 7

Lesson 10 for Revelation 7:1-6 ~ "Who are "All the Tribes"?"

7:1. And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

With the first six seals having been opened in Chapter 6 and the seventh yet to be opened in Chapters 8 and 9, this chapter is an interlude of sorts. Before God proceeds with the last seal, which has to do with His judgment process, He has something special to tell us.

In a brand new vision, John sees four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds from blowing on the earth, the sea and the trees. As we have learned before, the number four in the Bible often symbolizes universality. So, its repeated use in this verse stresses that the "blowing" that is about to come will affect the whole world.

Four winds. The term "four winds" in the Bible usually relates to some action of God that comes from heaven. In Jeremiah 49, for instance, we read of God saying, "He is going to pour out His wrath upon various wicked nations." He says in verse 36, "And upon Elam will I bring the

and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

So, this verse is anticipating an action of God that will affect the whole world. As we move on to the next two chapters, we will discover that it has to do with God's judgment.

Significantly, while the Bible often uses the term "the four winds of heaven" or something to that effect, it says "the four winds of the earth" here. The earth, as God moves with heaven, relates to that which is evil. I believe God is indicating here that this time He will let Satan loose to take over the apostate church throughout the world.

Earth, sea and trees. The three things on which the wind is to be used to seal the servants of God and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

The use of the sea to represent people is exemplified by Isaiah 57:20,21: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The Bible typifies the nation of Israel as a fig tree, and the body of believers as an olive tree. And in Psalm 1, it describes the child of God as "A guarantee."

One might argue that perhaps God merely intended these words to represent the nation of Israel as a fig tree, and the body of believers as an olive tree. But then, there would be no prophecy of the "fig" tree, which is to be used to seal the servants of God and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

The world is not yet ready to be given to Satan. Rather, what God has in view is that wherever there are congregations of true believers, there may also be Satan's emissaries who will keep subverting the true gospel from within the church.

That Satan's emissaries will keep subverting the true gospel from within the church is also taught in Revelation 12:7-12: "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the great river. For there were given unto him power, and war, and a great sword: and this sentence is full. And there followed him an angel with great power and strange appearance, and said to the dragon, We have kept thy sentence, that thou shouldst have power over the earth, and over the sea, and over the great river. But we will not have power over the earth, nor over the sea, nor over the great river, but over the dragon, whose sentence is full." The message here is that Satan's emissaries will keep subverting the true gospel from within the church to its end.

The purpose of God in giving these judgments to the church is to keep Satan from taking advantage of the church and to keep the true gospel from being subverted from within the church. God is warning the church to be on guard against Satan's emissaries and to keep the true gospel from being subverted from within the church.

God also uses Dan and Ephraim to typify the false prophets who are to dominate the apostate church just before the end of time. Thus, we read in Jeremiah 4:14-16: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? and thy foolish heart be exalted? For thou hast said within thee, I shall surely not be moved: a Rakitic about Jerusalem, that watcheth, and keepeth it from the inhabited parts of Mount Ephraim. Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah."

Symbolic Number What about the 144,000, then, the number of which they were sealed? We have already established that the twelve tribes are not referred to as national Israel, but as the believers in general. What many are teaching, these 144,000 cannot have anything to do with believers from national Israel.

There are others who teach that these 144,000 are literal, all the speeches the people God will have for Himself. For the total number of believers to be so small is also an impossibility. True, believers are but a remnant chosen by grace. It is most improper to suggest that God have lived on this earth. Still, God speaks of them as a vast company, relating them to the stars of the heaven.

A great multitude. In fact, verse 9 of this chapter explains, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood up before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

Deliberate Omission True, we have learned that Revelation 7 is talking about all believers, but we can also understand why God purposely omitted Dan and Ephraim from the list. In Genesis 49, the Bible records for us what Jacob said about the future of his twelve sons. We read in verses 17 and 18: "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

An adder is a poisonous serpent, and a serpent in the Bible is a figure for Satan. To "fall backward" means to come under the judgment of God. It is typifying the day of judgment of Satan, something that is most reprehensible.

False teachers. The tribe of Dan was not Satanic in itself. But God is teaching us there that wherever there are congregations of believers there will be false believers among them that are servants of Satan. This was true when Jesus was on earth. The Lord Himself called the Twelve to be His apostles, yet one of them, Judas, was of the devil. One knew that Judas had all along; but He called Judas nevertheless because it was an integral part of God's salvation plan. Jesus had to be betrayed by one of His followers.

That Satan's emissaries will keep subverting the true gospel from within the church is also warned by II Peter 2:1: "There shall be false teachers among you, who privately shall bring in damnable heresies." Likewise, II Timothy 4:3 notes that the time will come when the church will no longer endure sound doctrine, but will gather around them false teachers who preach what their itching ears want to hear.

Idolatry. God may have omitted Dan and Ephraim also because of their spiritual formation. When Israel was divided into two nations, the northern kingdom was ruled over by a very wicked king named Jeroboam. He immediately built golden calves and caused the people of the ten tribes to worship them. He set one of the golden calves in Dan to the north and the other in Bethal, which was within Ephraim's territory, to the south. So, it was in these two tribes that idol worship began to proliferate.

The northern kingdom of the ten tribes did not produce a single good king; every ruler did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Because Ephraim was the most prominent of the ten tribes, God often uses its name to represent that apostate kingdom. We read in Hosea 6:10, for instance, "I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled." God also uses Dan and Ephraim to typify the false prophets who are to dominate the apostate church just before the end of time. Thus, we read in Jeremiah 4:14-16: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? and thy foolish heart be exalted? For thou hast said within thee, I shall surely not be moved: a Rakitic about Jerusalem, that watcheth, and keepeth it from the inhabited parts of Mount Ephraim. Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah."
before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” These are the same people represented by 144,000, the number that John heard.

To resolve this contradiction, we must interpret this number symbolically. In the Bible, especially in the Book of Revelation, God frequently uses the number twelve to signify the fullness of His believers. Remember we looked at the forty and twenty elders and learned that they represent all believers? Twenty-four is the sum of twelve plus twelve. Here, 144,000 is the product of twelve times twelve times 1,000. A thousand is a number that represents the completion of God’s plan.

Later on, when we get to Revelation 21, we will find God using the Holy City, New Jerusalem, to symbolize the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And we will see that it is a city that measures twelve thousand furlongs by twelve thousand furlongs by twelve thousand furlongs. It has twelve gates and twelve foundations, and it has a wall that measures 144 cubits.

We believe, of course, are the bride of Christ. Hence, to describe the Holy City, New Jerusalem, God repeatedly features the number twelve.

All the redeemed. In Revelation 14, moreover, God will talk about the 144,000 again. We will see that they all have the Father’s name written on their foreheads, and that they were redeemed from the earth. From the context of that chapter, we will see once more that every person who has become a child of God, every person who has been redeemed by the blood of the Lord “is from the tribe of Judah.”

Before we leave this verse, I should point out that the prophecies concerning the tribes of Israel made by Jacob in Genesis 49 and by Moses in Deuteronomy 33 have never been fulfilled by national Israel. Nor can they ever be in the future, since these individual tribes no longer exist.

As we study these prophecies carefully below, we will find that they all have to do with the spiritual Israel of God. We will discover that every one of these tribes identifies with some aspect of the New Testament church.

The Last Days

In Genesis 49, just before Jacob began to deliver his deathbed prophecy to his twelve sons, he said to them in verse 1, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.”

The last three words there – “the last days” – give us an important time clue. In the whole King James Bible, the term “last days” appears only in eight verses. Besides Genesis 49:1, they are Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1, Acts 2:17, II Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:2, James 5:3 and II Peter 3:3. In all these cases, that term talks either about the whole New Testament period, or the short period just before the end of time.

Hebrews 1 begins, for instance: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”

Latter days. The Hebrew word for “last” is sometimes translated “latter” in the Bible. And in the Old Testament term “latter days” is also a figure pointing to the New Testament period. Hosea 3, for example, talks about the Messiah coming to reconcile the children of Israel to God, and verse 5 there reads, “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.”

Once we understand that even back in Genesis, when Jacob was talking about the future of his twelve sons, he was really prophesying events of the New Testament period, we can then fully appreciate the fact that the people with whom God is particularly concerned, and for whom He died on the cross, are the spiritual Israel of God. In effect, all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

7:5a. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand.

To ascertain that the twelve specific tribes God has in mind does not require a typological interpretation of the New Testament church, let’s examine what Jacob had to say in Genesis 49 of each of them at his deathbed. Just before Moses died, he also prophesied blessings on the individual tribes. So, we will study those statements in Deuteronomy 33 as well.

We start with Judah, the first tribe on the list. Remember, the 12,000 for each tribe is a number symbolizing the fullness of all those who are to be saved under God’s salvation plan.

(1) Judah. “Judah, thou art my son whom I love; thou shalt be my firstborn, and the most desirable of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.” (Gen. 49:8) In the historical context, Reuben was indeed the first born to Jacob. “But,” says I Chronicles 5:1, “forsooth as much as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel.” We’ll find Jacob referring to that in the next verse.

Since the cross, actually, none of the thirteen tribes of Israel has been considered the firstborn in any sense. This prophecy of the “last days” can only be talking about the New Testament church. We believers are called the firstborn, that is, we were considered the firstborn.

According to Hebrews 12:23, all those who have become saved have come “to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.”

Again, “my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power” no doubt refers to the Lord Jesus in the first instance. But these attributes have also been secured for us because we are identified with Christ and are indwelt by His Spirit. Hence, “Ye shall receive power…” (Acts 1:8). “Ye shall receive power…”

Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few” (Deut. 33:6). Only believers of the Lord Jesus Christ have eternal life and shall not perish. And though we are but a remnant chosen by grace, there’ll still be a great multitude of us, not just a few.

“Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed, then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch” (Gen. 49:9). The word “excel” is from the Hebrew word yathar, which is so translated only in this verse. Elsewhere, it is translated “be left” 39 times and “remain” 20 times. Either of those two translations would be more suitable here. God is saying that Reuben, because he committed adultery with his father’s wife, would not be left, or remain, the firstborn.

The adulterous act of Reuben is recorded in Genesis 35:22. As a result of that, he indeed did not receive the blessing of the firstborn. Joseph, instead, was given a double portion of the inheritance.

7:5c. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

(2) Gad. “Gad, thou art thus my Implement, and the Implement of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.” (Gen. 49:7) In the historical context, Reuben was indeed the first born to Jacob. “But,” says I Chronicles 5:1, “forsooth as much as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel.” We’ll find Jacob referring to that in the next verse.

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(3) Gad. “Gad, a troop shall overtake him: but he shall overtake at the last” (Gen. 49:18). The word “troop” in the Bible normally means an invading force, especially an evil one. Actually, the name “Gad” itself also means troop. He was given that name because Jacob was born in a troop was coming (Gen. 30:11). Before we were saved, spiritually, we had all been overcome by an evil force, Satan. But as believers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have become the overcomers; we are the conquerors of last.

And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad; he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head” (Deut. 33:20). Here’s the historical context. Before the Israelites went into
the promised land, Gad, Reuben and half of the Manasseh tribe asked Joshua for permission to have as their inheritance the land on the east side of the River Jordan. That land was especially suitable for their sheep and cattle. They were given the permission – provided that when the time came for the rest of Israel to cross the Jordan, they would fight with them and help them conquer the land. That they subsequently did.

Thus, as a lion dwells in the wilderness, the tribe of Gad dwelt on the unprotected side of the River Jordan. To fight against outsiders, they had to have the strength of a crowned king.

And he provided the first part for himself; because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel (v. 21). By settling on the east side before the other nine and a half tribes, Gad provided the first part for himself. He was able to do so “because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated”; in other words, God allowed him to settle there as his portion.

Later, he crossed the Jordan “with the heads of the people” – that is, with the leaders of the other tribes – and was therefore executing “the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel.”

Redemption. Symbolically, the two-and-a-half tribes that settled on the east side of the Jordan are a picture of the New Testament church. Two-and-a-half is 2 plus 1/2 (or 0.5); or 5 times 0.5. As we’ve previously learned when we studied Revelation 1:12, spiritually the number two symbolizes a church.

Similarly, the number five often symbolizes the grace or redemption of God. For example, the temple tax, which itself signified redemption, was half a shekel. And when David fought Goliath, he put five stones in a bag, although he only used one to kill the giant. The grace of God gave him victory.

So, 2 + 0.5 emphasizes that the New Testament church is made up of people who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. And 5 x 0.5 underscores that it is all the grace of God.

Even as Gad settled on the wilderness side of the Jordan, we are sojourning in a hostile world and can easily be assaulted by the forces of evil. But we are protected by Christ, the lion of Judah who has been crowned King of kings. Like the two-and-a-half tribes, we join hands with other believers doing the work of God, conquering people for Christ.

7:6a. Of the tribe of Asher were sealed twelve thousand.

(4) Asher. “Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield dainties” (Gen. 49:17). This prophecy is being fulfilled by the New Testament church – not the nation of Israel – since we are the ones who have become spiritually fat on the bread which is the Lord Jesus Christ. To us, this Bread of Life is resplendent in spiritual nourishment.

The Hebrew word for “dainties” here is only found in two other places in the Bible. Lamentations 2:15 is translated “delicately” there. That verse reads, “They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace daggers.” This is a negative statement. The passage – for that matter, the whole Book of Lamentations – talks about the apostasy that will beset the church during the final tribulation period. Nevertheless, the verse above does not say “they who cannot be delicately” refers to those who originally had the riches of the gospel.

Pleasing to God. In Proverbs 29:17, that same Hebrew word is translated “delight.” It reads, “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee delight; yes, he shall give delight unto thy soul.” Here, God uses the example of a father correcting his son to teach that those whom God chastises are those whom He regards as sons and who delight His soul. The word “delight” also refers to those who have been saved.

Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we can thus understand the phrase “he shall yield royal dainties” in Genesis 49:20 to mean that as believers send forth the gospel, many people will become saved.

“Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil” (Deut. 33:24). Here again, Asher is a picture of believers carrying out the Great Commission. The church will be blessed with more and more children of God as a result, and believers will accept one another as brothers.

The Bible often uses one’s feet to represent the whole person. A man with naked feet, for example, is a picture of him standing spiritually naked before God. Before we are saved, our feet are naked and dirty. Oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit by which each of us is anointed a prophet, a priest and a king. When we become saved, our feet are cleansed by the Holy Spirit; they are dipped in oil.

“They shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, shall thy strength be.” (v. 25) Iron and brass signify strength. We believers have the strength to overcome sin and Satan because our feet are now covered by Christ’s righteousness; we wear the shoes of the one who died and rose again for us.

The statement “as thy days, so shall thy strength be” means that our strength grows with the passage of time. In the physical world, it doesn’t hold true. After we reach adulthood, our strength first levels off and then weakens as we approach older age. Nor does that statement hold true for the nation of Israel in any sense. It makes abundant sense, however, in describing the body of Christ and the church. As long as we are the days of the child of God? Forever. And in Christ, our strength is infinite. Thus, Paul writes, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

7:6b. Of the tribe of Naphtali were sealed twelve thousand.

(5) Naphtali. “Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words” (Gen. 49:21). “Hind” is an old English word for deer. We read in Psalm 18:32,33: “It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hind’s feet, and setteth me upon my high places.” Notice how this passage reaffirms what we have just learned? That is, God girds us with His strength when we are victors for Christ.

Generally, the Bible speaks of believers as sheep because it is an animal highly dependent on the shepherd. But here, God provides the delightful animal to show a different characteristic of the child of God. The feet of a deer are delicate, yet very strong. We are weak on our own, but strong in Christ.

And we have been let loose. You see, an unsaved person is in bondage to sin; he is a slave of Satan. When we become saved, however, Satan and sin can no longer control us. That is, we are “freed” (v. 25). Consequently, as believers we are “let loose,” or given the freedom to fulfill the Great Commission.

One more. In addition to these Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 statements, there is one other prophecy about Naphtali that we should also read. That is, its firstborn, which also applies to Zebulun. And it is found in Isaiah 9:11-12: “...when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan; the Galilean of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

This prophecy is quoted in Matthew 4 as having been fulfilled when Jesus started to minister in Capernaum. It was upon the sea coast, in the borders where Zebulun and Naphtali previously had lived. Note that the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali are Galilean of the nations. In other words, He uses the land of Zebulun and Naphtali to typify believers from all the nations of the world.

7:6c. Of the tribe of Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand.

(6) Manasseh. There is no reference to Manasseh in either Genesis 49 or Deuteronomy 33 because both Jacob and Moses blessed Joseph, the father of Manasseh and Ephraim. When we look at Joseph later on in this chapter, we will get some insights into Manasseh.

Actually, we already got some insights from our study of Gad because the tribe of Gad, together with the tribes of Reuben and half of Manasseh, Manasseh, settled on the east side of the Jordan River. We saw that those two-and-a-half tribes were a picture of the New Testament church. Like Reuben, moreover, Manasseh was the firstborn. He came ahead of his brother Ephraim. Manasseh, therefore, is also a picture of all believers.

Lesson 11 for Revelation 7:7-17 ~ "The Great Multitude"

7:7a. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand.

(7) Simeon. Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitation. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged quick graves. It is well that it was not long; for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel” (Gen. 49:5-7). The historical account that led God to make the harsh statements about Simeon and Levi is recorded in Genesis 34. Jacob, after having lived in Haran for 40 years, returned to the land of Canaan and camped near a city called Shechem.

Like Shechem, the firstborn of Jacob, we will get some insights into Manasseh. And as we have seen, the tribe of Manasseh was prophesied that these two tribes would not possessors of the new heaven and the new earth. Even as Gad settled on the wilderness side of the Jordan, we are sojourning in a hostile world and can easily be assaulted by the forces of evil. But we are protected by Christ, the lion of Judah who has been crowned King of kings. Like the two-and-a-half tribes, we join hands with other believers doing the work of God, conquering people for Christ.

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Pleasing to God. In Proverbs 29:17, that same Hebrew word is translated “delight.” It reads, “Correct thy son, and he shall give thee delight; yes, he shall give delight unto thy soul.” Here, God uses

receive any independent inheritance in the land of Israel. For Simeon, the fulfillment of that prophecy is found in Joshua 19:1: “And the second lot came forth to Simeon and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.” Simeon’s land was within the land of Judah. In fact, this act of mass murder was so reprehensible in God’s eyes that when Moses gave his deathbed blessing to the various tribes in Deuteronomy 33, he omitted Simeon altogether.

Through these sad events, however, God was showing a type to be a figure of the body of Christ. Like Simeon, we are by nature all cruel and murderous. “Out of our heart,” Jesus says, “come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts and all manner of wickedness” (Matt. 15:19).

Again like Simeon, we ourselves do not deserve any independent inheritance. Our inheritance comes from that of Christ, and Christ was of the tribe of Judah.

7:7b. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand.

(8) Levi. What was said of Simeon in Genesis 49 was also said of Levi. Like Simeon, Levi did not receive an independent inheritance. They were to be within the inheritance of the children of the other twelve tribes. But God also picked the tribe of Levi to represent Christ Himself in a very special way. We can see that in Exodus 12. Just before God struck the firstborn in Egypt, He told the people of Israel to kill a lamb and smear its blood on their door posts. That night, when God came to kill the firstborn in Egypt, He passed over those houses that had blood on the door posts, thereby sparing the firstborn in them.

Substitution. The blood on the door post represented, of course, the shed blood of Christ; Jesus was our substitute in suffering God’s wrath. Alluding to that night, God later said to Moses: “I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix [the womb] among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD” (Num. 3:12,13).

In essence, God was saying, because He killed all the firstborn in Egypt, the firstborn of Israel were likewise His to kill. (The firstborn stand for the whole human race because they are the ones who open the womb that brings forth the new generation.) Therefore, God allowed the tribe of Levi to substitute for those firstborn. This tribe is thus a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The priesthood. In Numbers 18, God made a distinction between the priesthood that came out of the tribe of Levi and the rest of the tribe. We read in verse 1: “The LORD said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your fathers, and thy sons and thy father’s house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons and thy father’s house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons shall bear the iniquity of your fathers.” Here, God gave the priests the specific duty of “bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary.” They alone were to be identified with the altar and the burnt sacrifices. They were thus a type of Christ, who alone bore the sins of the believers at the cross.

Other Levites. God then talked about the rest of the tribe of Levi in verses 2 and 3: “And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, Aaron, thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee…And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die.” These other Levites had nothing to do with the atonement, but were nevertheless joined to the priests in ministering in the tabernacle. They thereby symbolize all believers, who are joined to Christ and who minister under Christ’s direction.

Note that those Levites that were not priests were thus a type of Christ in the service of the altar; otherwise, they would die. Likewise, if we work toward our salvation or take some credit for it, we would be subject to eternal damnation, just as those Levites who were not priests.

All believers. Sometimes, God uses the whole tribe of Levi to represent the body of believers. Speaking of Christ being “the messenger of the covenant” that would come, for example, He said in Malachi 3:3, “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purge the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”

Christ came to purify not everyone from the tribe of Levi, but all believers. So, the sons of Levi in that prophecy really refer to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus.

7:7c. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

(9) Issachar. “Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens” (Gen. 49:14). Does God use an ass, or a donkey, to typify those who would become saved? Yes, indeed. Let us consider verse 14: “Thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD’s.” This parallels what we have just read from Numbers 3.

But then verse 13 continues, “And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb….” Of all animals, God specified there that the firstborn of the donkey was also to be redeemed by a lamb. That very sentence ends with this statement: "and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem," underscoring thereby that the donkey is a picture of the firstborn of man. Perhaps God likens us to a donkey because by nature, we are ugly and stubborn like a donkey!

Two burdens? The Hebrew word for “two burdens” is used in only one other place in the Bible – Judges 5:16. Its translation there helps us better understand this verse. Judges 5 is a song of praise sung by Deborah and Barak. The song also noted that Reuben had not shared in the blessings that would come, for example, He said in Malachi 3:3, “He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purge the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”

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7:8a. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand.

(10) Zebulun. “Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an harbour of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon” (Gen. 49:13). Remember when we looked at Naphtali, we saw in Isaiah 9:1 that both Naphtali and Zebulon were a picture of the Galilee of the nations? That same truth is reflected here.

The word “haven” means “at the seaside.” Thus, Zebulun shall be a port for ships to come into and go out from. The term “ship” in the Bible, especially when it is used in the ships of Tarshish that comes to this world. But elsewhere in the Bible, ships are often used as a picture of the church as it sends forth the gospel:

Naphtali and his family, for example, were saved from the worldwide flood by being in a ship. And we often find Jesus and/or the apostles in a ship in the sea of Galilee. Thus, Zebulun is a seaport from which the gospel is sent out to the nations all over the world. This idea is further developed in Deuteronomy 33:18,19: “And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy strength. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.”

As noted earlier, we rejoice for being in the Lord Jesus Christ. We also rejoice for having the privilege to send forth the gospel to all nations. The word “mountain” in the Bible often symbolizes a kingdom. And the mountain that Zebulun and Issachar are calling people into is the Kingdom of God. In the same vein, we read in Isaiah 2:2, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.”

The term “seas” or “waters” frequently typify the wicked of the world. We read in Revelation 17, for instance, about the great whore who sits upon many waters. The verse explains that these waters are “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” over whom she rules.

Similarly, Isaiah 57:20 says: “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

It is from among the wicked of the world that believers are being drawn by the gospel. Before that, they were hidden in the sand. Thus, this verse is saying that the New Testament church sending forth the gospel to the unsaved. That task was never assigned to the nation of Israel.

7:8b. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand.

(11) Joseph. Joseph was clearly a type of Christ. Just as he was sold as a slave by his brothers, Christ was delivered to the Romans by His own people. As Joseph was put in jail and in jail, Christ went down to hell for our sins. And as Joseph became Prime Minister of Egypt, Christ has been reigning with God.

Thus, in Genesis 49:22-24 Jacob gave him this blessing: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:..."
The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the song of the bow.)

Jesus, of course, is the vine and we, by abiding in Him, become fruitful branches, or boughs. He is also the well that brings forth the water of life. While He was upon earth, He was the Bread of Life. He is the Good Shepherd, and He has, as we saw in Revelation 6, since been going forth conquering and to conquer riding on a white horse and holding a bow. He has been strengthened by the mighty God Himself.

Christ is also the Good Shepherd and "the stone of Israel" – He is the stumbling stone, the foundation stone, the chief cornerstone.

"Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb" (v. 25). The blessings God has given Christ are total, encompassing the heaven above and "the deep that lieth under". And they include "blessings of the breasts and of the womb", which means that Christ will have a multitude of children.

"The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of thy progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." (v. 6). These blessings that have come to the Lord Jesus Christ are greater than those given to Abraham and the other patriarchs. They extend into the everlasting hills; they are eternal. Moreover, God has poured these blessings not only on the head of Christ, but on the head of all those who have been chosen among mankind to become saved. Yes, we who have been adopted as God's children are typified by Joseph also.

7:8c. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

(12) Benjamin. Benjamin was the youngest son of Jacob and the second son of Rachel, for whom Jacob had great affection. Sadly, when he was born, Rachel died in childbirth. We read in Genesis 35:18, "And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin." We are like Benjamin in that for us to have a spiritual birth, a death – that of Jesus – had to occur. And both of his names relate to the body of believers. Benjamin means "Son of My Right Hand", and Benoni, "Son of My Sorrow".

In Ephesians, God speaks of Christ sitting at the right hand of God (1:20) and of believers sitting in the heavenly places with Christ (2:6). So, positionally, we are sitting at God's right hand.

Before we discuss the name "Son of My Sorrow", let's go first to Moses' blessing in Deuteronomy 33:12, as it carries the same line of thought. "And of Benjamin he said, the beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the most beloved of Jehovah God, dwells with us. To keep us safe, He will never leave us nor forsake us. He covers us with His robe of righteousness, and speaks between his shoulders as a child rides on the back of his father. He is with us, He protects us and He carries us through hard times.

"Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil" (Gen. 49:27). In sharp contrast to Deuteronomy 33:12, this prophecy in Genesis is surprisingly negative. To "ravin" means to hungrily prey on other animals. So, God is saying that Benjamin shall devour as a wolf.

What does a preying wolf symbolize? In Ezekiel 22, God was criticizing the people of Israel for their apostasy, faulting them for breaking the law, profaning the holy things, and rejecting the authors of God's Word. He read in verse 27, "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to eat the flesh of theirkindred, like devoured the behavior of Israel's leaders to wolves ravening the prey, destroying souls in the process.

The same picture is painted in Zephaniah 3, where we read in verses 3 and 4: "Her princes with her magistrates and her nobles like devoured wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

End-time church. So, when God speaks of Benjamin being voraciously hungry as a wolf, devouring the prey and dividing the spoil, He is picturing the apostate church toward the end of time. That's why Benjamin is also named Benoni – the "Son of My Sorrow". Nothing brings more sorrow to God than for Him to see the church running after false gospels.

With the end of time rapidly approaching, the church has increasingly and increasingly apostate. More and more churches are defying God's rule concerning divorce and the role of women in the church. They willfully ignore God's command to preserve the purity of God, offering instead salvation plans that are based on what people want to hear, not the gospel of the Bible.

Worse yet, the success story in Christendom of late has been the explosion of churches featuring tongues, dreams, and visions, which represent a blatant disregard of the warning not to have additional revelation beyond the written Bible. Yes, the corporate church is becoming the Son of My Sorrow to God. Thankfully, true believers, by the grace and strength of God, will endure to the end and will be saved.

7:9. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

Back in verse 4, the Apostle John heard that the number of those who were sealed by God was 144,000. Those 144,000, we learned from studying verses 5-8, represent the fullness of all believers. Here in this great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. This is talking about the same people.

God had promised Abraham some 4,000 years earlier that he would be the father of a multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. This is talking about the same people.

God promised Abraham some 4,000 years earlier that he would be the father of a multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.

The Lord Jesus is the Lamb who is seated on the throne of God. He is the vanguard throughout the New Testament period, applying the Word of God to the hearts of sinful men so that they become born from above. He then indwells us believers to guarantee the completion of our salvation on the Last Day.

In this scene, though, the Bible focuses constantly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the third person of the Godhead. Why? Because it was He who left the glories of heaven and took on a human nature and endured the wrath of God for our sins. It is He who rose again and dealt Satan a fatal blow.

7:11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.

Speaking of angels, God asks rhetorically in Hebrews 1:14, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" From that, we know that angels themselves are not heirs of salvation. Being ministering spirits, they were not given bodies
like ours; they were not created in the image of God.

God’s plan for the angelic world is altogether different from that which He has for man. All the angels were created at the same time. At least, we know that angels do not beget angels. “They neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Matt. 22:30).

We learn from Isaiah 14 that a vast company of them fell to their destruction because they had followed the evil counsel of Satan (Rev. 12:9). Not given any salvation, these fallen angels will all be condemned to hell on Judgment Day (Jude 6). Meanwhile, as devils, evil spirits, and Satan’s in-betweens, they are enemies of God.

Good angels. Those that did not rebel along with Satan, as far as we know from the Scriptures, will never be threatened with damnation nor with the possibility of falling into sin. In fact, they are intimately identified with God’s salvation program for mankind.

Before God had finished writing the Bible, He had occasionally sent one or more angels to bring messages to mankind. Other than that, God has revealed not much in the Scriptures as to when and how He uses them to minister to believers. But we do read this wonderful re assurance in Psalm 91:10,11: “There shall no evil befall thee, nor shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

Beholding God. And speaking of those who are in His kingdom, Jesus says in Matthew 18:10, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.” Whenever believers are, we know that there are angels watching over them on behalf of God.

We also read in Luke 15:10 that when a sinner repents, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God. Not surprisingly, therefore, they are now rejoicing greatly; they are seeing the culmination of God’s salvation plan.

These angels are standing round about the throne on which God sits, and also round about the elders and the four living creatures. Remember we learned in Chapters 4 and 5 that the elders represent all the believers and the living creatures, God Himself! So, this picture emphasizes that the angels are standing around God and the believers.

And they fall down before the throne on their faces and worship God. You see, in heaven every being prays God; everyone loves the Lord, everyone worships the Lamb.

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

What a beautiful song of praise this is! All honor and glory and power and so on be unto God. He is the only one who deserves to receive them. Notice that the angels list seven attributes here. The next time you pray, you can see that they are praising God for His eternal perfection.

Note also that instead of just God, they use the term “our God”. It indicates that they not only fully recognize God as their sovereign ruler, they have a close relationship with Him as well.

Remember what “amen” means? It means, “So be it.” Having in heaven a great multitude of believers coming from all parts of the world is exactly what God had planned before the foundation of the world. Significantly, this statement of praise is bracketed by two Amens. God is doubly underscoring that truth. Not one of His elect will be left unsaved on Judgment Day.

7:13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

Why does God ask John this question? Answer: To make sure that the apostle knows with absolute certainty whom this great multitude represents, so that all those who study what John has recorded here in Revelation will know as well.

7:14. And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Instead of answering, the Apostle John humbly indicates that he himself does not have the answer. Speaking for God, the elder then tells him the truth: “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

When we see the words “great tribulation”, we tend to think immediately of Matthew 24:21, where Jesus says, “For then shall be great tribulation...” Indeed, many theologians do teach that these people are all the believers that survived through, or were saved during, the final tribulation.

But before we accept that conclusion, note first that the apostle does not refer to the great tribulation at all. Let’s review what God has revealed to John up to this point, so we can better understand the context in which this statement appears.

Brief recap. Chapter 1 tells us about John being caught up into heaven where he was given a glimpse of “the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter”. Chapters 2 and 3 then present seven messages from the Lord to the seven churches. They are, in fact, God’s instructions to all congregations throughout the New Testament period. Chapter 4 then shows us awe and wonder over in which God sits, and Chapter 5, the Lamb of God who alone was worthy to take the scroll.

Symbolized by the opening of the first six seals, Revelation 6 then speaks figuratively of the sending forth of the gospel, the persecution of believers, the apostasy of the church, the mushrooming of false prophets, the anguish of martyred believers, and finally the eternal damnation of the unsaved.

God will not begin to talk about His judgment process until Chapter 8, which process ends with Judgment Day itself. And here in Revelation 7, He has been giving us assurance that “God is doubly underscoring that truth. Not one of His elect will be left unsaved on Judgment Day.”

As to when and how He uses them to minister to believers, the promised return of Jesus Christ.

In that context, God is now showing us that all who are there; and they need no candle, neither light of the moon; for the Lord giveth them light: and they shall walk by the light of the Lamb; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Once the Holy Spirit leaves this earth, no amount of evangelizing will be able to save a single soul.

All nations. Note also that this multitude comprise people of all nations and tribes. It means that they include, for example, Ruth the Moabitess, as well as Abel and Enoch who were saved before the flood. The nations and tribes from which they came no longer exist. So, this group may represent throughout time. They all went through great tribulation in their lives; but only the last generation will go through the final tribulation.

That they “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”, sounds like a contradiction. But this is written in figurative language. The shed blood of Christ has washed away our sins.

7:15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Speaking of the new heaven and the new earth, Revelation 21:5 says, “there shall be no night thereof; and there shall be no darkness any more: for the Lord giveth them light.” Or, in other words: “And the Lamb shall be their light, and the kings of the earth do serve God and His Christ.”

Again, God is using earthly phenomena to give us spiritual insights. “Day and night” is an earthly phrase that gives the idea of something that goes on continuously. Effectively, God is saying that in heaven our service for Him will go on without ceasing.

Likewise the “temple” is used in this verse as a figure that represents the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Revelation 21:22, “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

Among us. In a certain sense, when we believers are present in this body on earth, we are absent from the Lord. That’s what the Bible deceives us, II Corinthians 5:8 and Philippians 1:23. But in another sense, we are never absent from the Lord because Jesus promises at the end of Matthew, “lo, I am with you always. He is with us in the person of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us.

But when we go to heaven, God will dwell among us in a far more intimate way. Throughout eternity, we will be in the literal presence of the Lord.

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

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says in Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” That’s the hunger and thirst we’ll never experience in heaven.

As soon as God starts to save us, we begin to find our lives empty and unfulfilling. We develop an increasing desire to study His Word, to know more about God and do His will. But on this earth, our hunger and thirst can never be fully satisfied. In heaven it will be. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know only in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” (I Cor. 13:12)
Lesson 12 for Revelation 8:1-6 ~ “The Final Tribulation”

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

Through the opening of the first six seals, God shows us in Revelation 6 His program for the whole New Testament era. From the first seal where we see Christ riding forth victoriously on the white horse to the sixth seal, we see God's judgment process. Let me hasten to point out, though, that Revelation 8 and 9, which are associated with the sounding of the first six trumpets, are not talking about Judgment Day. The latter is discussed in Revelation 11, when the seventh trumpet is sounded.

We know that because Chapter 9 closes with this statement: “And the rest were killed by the breath of the horses in the mouth of the lions.” That's the rapture! It occurs on the last day. People are so afraid of having to go through the final tribulation that, instead of learning the “sound doctrine” on the end time, they embrace those teachers who say what their itching ears want to hear. But let's look at a few more passages about the rapture of believers. We read in Matthew 24:21: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” That, of course, is talking about the final tribulation. Now, versus 24 and 25 tell us that 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.” That's the collapse of the universe. (Incidentally, the word “immediately” there is from the Greek eutheos, which can also be translated “shortly.” For instance, God uses that same word in II John 14. There, the apostle John said to Gaius, who was living in a different city, “I trust I shall shortly [euthes] see thee, and we shall speak face to face.”)

The last trump. The gathering of the saints, it says there, will be heralded by the sound of the trumpet. Of that trumpet, God gives us more information in I Corinthians 15:51,52: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump:

Jericho was a picture of God condemning the unsaved on Judgment Day. Prelude. Here, the seven angels are given seven trumpets because Christ is about to start His final movement. Now, when we study Revelation 4-7, we must not hesitant to point out, though, that Revelation 8 and 9, which are associated with the sounding of the first six trumpets, are not talking about Judgment Day. The latter is discussed in Revelation 11, when the seventh trumpet is sounded.

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8.5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

To help you understand this verse, let's go first to Numbers 16. The people of Israel were then sojourning in the wilderness. One day, 250 assembly leaders, instigated by a Levi and two Reuben rebels, rose against Aaron and Moses. They wanted to have the authority that Moses had and also the right to be priests. That rebellion so angered the Lord that He destroyed them all.

The next morning, the entire congregation, instead of learning to obey, murmured against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of having killed the people of the Lord. God then poured out the plague on the people. Moses immediately told Aaron to take fire off the altar and some incense and put them in a censer, and run with the censer into the midst of the congregation. Aaron did that and the plague was stayed. Even so, nearly 15,000 people died.

That censer holding fire from the altar and incense again represented the atonement Christ offered. So, this historical parable teaches that when people who are supposed to be God’s children persist in being apostate, God will judge them. But the true believers among them will not lose their salvation, because Christ has made atonement for them.

From judgment to judgment. Here in Revelation 8, we see that the fire-filled censer is cast into the earth before any of the trumpets are blown. With that picture, God is again assuring us that even though He is about to judge the apostate church, every one of His elect has been atoned for by Christ and will surely be saved.

Significantly, this censer does not contain any incense. It means that God is not hearing the prayers coming out from those churches. Those congregations are no longer made up of God’s children.

Let’s go now to Revelation 16, which also talks about Judgment Day itself. We read in verse 18: “And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth…”

The language there is virtually identical to the second half of this verse, and that is the language God uses to describe Judgment Day. So, God is preparing us in a censer and rainbow censer Christ to understand that the judgment of the apostate corporate church during the final tribulation period will be followed shortly afterwards by Judgment Day itself.

8.6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The seven angels are finally preparing themselves to sound the trumpets. It means that the great, great majority of God’s elect have at last become saved. The time has therefore come for Him to begin judging the unfaithful church.

Judgment Against Israel

Before we move ahead further in our study of Revelation, let’s pause and review God’s dealings with nation, and time, and people. It will enable us to better understand why “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17), as well as the strange language of the next couple of chapters.

Even before He created the universe, God had developed a salvation plan to save a people for Himself. The names of those whom He had chosen were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Rev. 21:27). That program became operative right after Adam and Eve sinned. That the Lord Himself clothed them with coats of skin strongly suggests that they were saved. Subsequently, God saved Abel, Enoch, Noah and his family and many others.

But it wasn’t until God had called Abraham that He began to set apart a collective body of people for Himself. That corporate body, or the nation of Israel, was to be God’s nation in the earth. Then, for some 2,100 years, the Bible spoke of the nation of Israel as a congregation of God’s people. To set them apart from other peoples, they were given the sign of circumcision.

The invisible church. We must be careful not to confuse this visible representation of God’s people with the invisible church of God, which is the kingdom of God. Jesus Himself emphasizes, the kingdom of God “cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20,21). The eternal church of Christ is not of this world (John 18:36); it is made up of all believers throughout time, including Moses and David, as well as those who have just become saved.

Whereas every member of the eternal church is a child of God, not everyone in the corporate congregation is saved. Except during the reign of Kings David and Solomon, in fact, Israel was generally in rebellion against God. Of the people, Moses led out of Egypt, most perished in the wilderness. All of that group, Hebrews 3 tells us, died in unbelief; they were unsaved.

Because Solomon engaged in massive idolatry in his latter years, he divided the country into two after his death, with 10 of the 12 tribes forming the northern kingdom of Israel; and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the southern kingdom of Judah. Every king of the northern kingdom did evil in the eyes of the Lord. In 709 BC, God caused its people to be taken captive into Assyria and then dispersed.

While a few of Judah’s kings were obedient, most were apostate also. In 587 BC God used the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and the temple and take the people into captivity.

Persistent unbelief. Even during their 70-year exile, God still regarded the Jewish people as the visible representation of His kingdom; and He continued to reveal His will to them through prophets. And after that, He allowed a remnant of them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. But by and large, the people persisted in unbelief and engaged in idolatry. That so angered God that, finally in AD 33, He dismissed Israel as His representative of His kingdom. That was signaled by the rending of the veil of the temple when Christ died on the Cross. The New Testament church then became the temporary and the corporate representation of His kingdom on earth.

Like ancient Israel, the visible, corporate church, which consists of various denominations and congregations, is not the same as the invisible, eternal church, of God. Within every congregation of churchgoers, there are unbelievers as well as true believers.

This distinction between the two can be readily seen in Revelation 2 and 3, where God warned that He would remove any candelsticks of unrepentant churches while reassuring the true believers in those congregations that their salvation is secure. So, when the Bible refers to the church, we need to imagine the context to determine whether He has the corporate or eternal church in view.

Examples for the Church

God also uses the Babylonian conquest of national Israel and the end-time judgment of the corporate church. We read in Habakkuk 1:6, “For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the broad places of the earth to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.”
In the historical context, God was warning Israel that the Chaldeans, which is another name for Babylonians, will come and possess their land. But verse 3 of Chapter 2 reads: “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, although it tarry, surely it shall come, and it shall not tarry.”

Implication: He was talking about developments that will undermine the Jewish faith. On the basis of these words, the term “forty years” in Revelation 13:10 is used metaphorically, as God views the 1260 years of the papal reign as 40 years in which the false church will be overthrown, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not run into evil things, as they also did. Examples: God warns the (corporate) church to remember what He did to ancient Israel in many other ways. He says in verse 11: “Let us be wise therefore, to hear with the heart, and not with the ears; in order to understand with the heart, and not with the eyes, to hear and see the truth of our preaching.”

Typically, they tell you that God loves them and that Christ has paid for all their sins. Promoting the “benefits” of one being a child of God, and of murmuring in discontent, and how they were in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not last after evil things, as they also lasted.

Lest we forget. In verses 7-10, God recalls the many occasions when the Israelites were guilty of (spiritual) fornication, of tempting or testing God, and of murmuring in discontent, and how they were severely punished as a result. Then He says in verse 11: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

God warns the (corporate) church to remember what He did to ancient Israel in many other passages in the New Testament. He says in Jude 1:3, “Knowing this first, that afterward shall come in mockers, speaking a lying tongue, to them which shall think to please the flesh, as they do that are without: for their destruction is in their own thoughts.”

II. Blindness of the Congregation

As God began to bring judgment on Israel, He blinded the congregation so that they could not be saved. He told the prophet Isaiah: “Go, and tell this people: Heed the word, but understand it not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (6:9,10).

This verse is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 13 as He explains to the disciples why He speaks in parables – He doesn’t want the unsaved, whose hearts are hardened, to understand the spiritual truths that God has prepared for believers. God also said in Isaiah 29:10,11: “For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed.”

A similar judgment on the end-time church is prophesied in II Thessalonians 2. After noticing that Christ’s return will be preceded by a period when the church will have been dominated by false prophets, Paul says in verses 11,12: “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Indeed, there will be many churchgoers today who are thoroughly convinced that they are saved, but who nevertheless are actually following gospels other than that which offers salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God has so blinded them that they believe a lie, not the truth.

III. Famine of the Word

When Israel was in gross rebellion against God, He issued this warning in Ezekiel 14:13: “Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it.”

The staff of bread, as we learned when we studied Revelation 6, has to do with the heavenly bread, the Word of God. The idea of God cutting off spiritual food to His people because of their rebellion, is also found in Amos 8. In verse 2, He told the prophet, “The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.” God then explained in verse 11 what He would do: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.”

Carrying out that threat, God stopped sending provisions. The Israelites, after 40 years, the people heard nothing from God at all. Then, Jesus came. He publicly denounced the spiritual leaders of that day and, by His death, desecrated ancient Israel as God’s representation on earth.

Abomination. Similarly, as we approach the last day, most churches will be characterized by a famine of hearing the true gospel. In Matthew 24:3, the disciples ask Jesus, “When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” He answered: “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) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains...” (vv. 15,16).

About the desolation of the church, Daniel had said: “I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” (v. 26). The “horn” there is a picture of Satan; and the “Ancient of days” is God.

What Daniel saw was that, before Christ returns to pronounce judgment for the saints and before the saints possess the new kingdom, there will be a period when Satan makes war and prevails against the saints. It was a vision of the final tribulation period, when false prophets controlled by Satan will be in the position of the corporate church; they will be standing in the holy place. People in these congregations, as a result, will no longer hear the true gospel proclaimed.

IV. Rejection by God

Because of Israel’s disobedience, God said in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”

A similar rejection has been prophesied for the end-time church. God says in Jeremiah 23:19: “Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days will he show end.”

At first glance, the language seems to relate to ancient Israel. But the phrase “in the latter days” makes it clear that God is really talking about the New Testament church. So, the statement “ye shall consider it perfectly” means that when the Lord directs His anger against the apostate church, true believers will recognize it perfectly. How is God showing His anger against the church? He says in the last two verses of that chapter: “Therefore, behold, I will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon her, and eternal shame, which shall not be forgotten.” He begins to abandon it.

V. Conquest by Babylon

Even back in Deuteronomy 28:49, God warned Israel through Moses: “The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flieth: a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young.”

The nation that God raised up to finally destroy ancient Israel, and itself was later destroyed by God. As we noted earlier,
Babylon is repeatedly pictured in Revelation Chapters 16–18 as a representation of Satan and his dominion. Does this mean that God has also prophesied Satan to take over the institutional church, and then on the Last Day He will bring judgment on Satan himself? Yes, indeed.

We read in II Thessalonians 2:3, where God is speaking of Christ's return: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that as he satithe in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." The "man of sin" there is Satan. He is called a man because in Isaiah 14, where God talks about the fall of Lucifer, Satan was identified as "the man that made the earth to tremble" (v. 16). Before Christ finally comes to judge him, he exalts himself in the blinded church, causing misguided churchgoers to worship him without knowing it.

"Fierce countenance." In Daniel 8, God also alludes to the rise of Satan within the end-time church. He said in verses 23: "And in the latter time...when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.”

The only other place in the Bible where the phrase "fierce countenance" appears is Deuteronomy 28:50, which we read earlier. There, God describes Babylon, which would come and destroy ancient Israel, as "a nation of fierce countenance." This "king of fierce countenance" that Daniel speaks of is thus pointing to Satan as well. The devil is now being used by God to destroy the mighty and the holy people, in other words, to overrun the corporate church. Verse 25 continues, "And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes, but he shall be broken without hand." During this period, Satan and his false prophets prosper greatly in destroying souls with their false gospel, their crafty assurance of peace. So confident are they that they even stand up against the Lord Jesus by undermining the commands He has set forth in the Scripture. In the end, they will be broken without hand, but by God.

Wolves in sheep's clothing. This king of fierce countenance is said to understand "dark sentences." That phrase is from a Hebrew word that is sometimes translated "dark sayings" elsewhere in the Bible. In Psalm 78:1, for example, God says: "Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old." We also read in Proverbs 1:5: "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

What Daniel 8 is warning us, therefore, is that unlike other heretics, the false prophets that take over the corporate church at the end-time period are very dangerous. The Word of God is that they are able to quote and talk about the Bible as well as any true preacher. Why? II Corinthians 11:13-15 explains: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

VI. The Tongues Phenomenon

Remember God warned in Deuteronomy 28 that the conqueror will come with a "tongue thou shalt not understand" that would shatter Israel. He repeated that warning in Jeremiah 5:15: "Lo, I will bring upon thee a nation from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say." In Isaiah 28:11, God warned again: "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear."

This all corresponds with the New Testament warning of Matthew 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

In fact, right in the context of the tongues phenomenon, God says in I Corinthians 14:21: "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth them which believe, with edifying, and exhorting, and comfort." Indeed, more and more churches are being invaded by the phenomenon of tongues. And with hardly any exception, those ministers who advocate the seeking of "gift of tongues" are also involved with signs and wonders, such as miracle healing, angel visitations, divine messages from visions and so on. By way of contrast, God tells true believers to walk by faith, not by sight.

There can't be any doubt that supernatural signs, wonders and tongues are of Satan, because when God has finished writing the Bible, He said in Revelation 22:18: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." In other words, having put in the Bible all that He wanted to reveal to mankind, God let it be known there that He would no longer bring any message through supernatural signs and wonders.

The whole Bible. To rationalize their position, many of those who go after signs and wonders say that the phrase "the words of the prophecy of this book..." refers only to the prophecy of this book: thus refer to the words God has declared to us in the Bible. Moreover, verse 3 of Revelation 1 reads, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." The commands that God wants us to hear and keep appear hardly in Revelation, but mostly in the rest of the Bible.

The Fig Tree Parable

In the Bible, God typically uses figs or the fig tree to represent Israel. In Jeremiah 24, for instance, He likens those exiles who are obedient to "good figs"; and the rebellious ones, "evil figs." They were cursed at a period and a time. Jesus said the fig tree shortly after His triumphal entry. He was symbolically pronouncing the end of ancient Israel as the earthly representation of the kingdom of Christ. Later, talking about the end of the age, Jesus said in Matthew 24:32,33: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and 

puttheth forteth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Thus, God is again using the fig tree as a time clue for the end of the corporate church.

Miraculously, national Israel is again a nation among nations; the fig tree is again in leaf. But even after nearly 50 years, well beyond the typical life expectancy of the tree, many have said that nation still fails collectively to bear fruit. Having seen this come to pass, we should know that the end is near, even at the doors.

Now in progress. With all these in mind, I am convinced that we have already entered the final tribulation period. In the world at large, sins have multiplied, but people are hardly bothered by it. Meanwhile, to those who truly love the Lord, recent years have all but proved that now Satan has entered the game. There is no doubt that nation still fails collectively to bear fruit. Having seen this come to pass, we should know that the end is near, even at the doors.

Lesson 13 for Revelation 8:7-13 ~ "Judgment Upon the Church"

8:7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

First trumpet. In the second half of Revelation 8, we are going to find many statements about fire coming from above and all kinds of things being burnt up. Many theologians interpret them to mean that the final tribulation will be characterized by a devastating nuclear holocaust. Such a conclusion is wrong. The point of the first angel is that the Lord will return at a time when the world is in great turmoil, is at odds with what the Bible declares elsewhere.

In I Thessalonians 5:3, God says, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." People would hardly be saying "peace and safety" if a major nuclear war was in progress. This does not mean that there might not be a limited nuclear exchange or two at some point. But the language of the Bible precludes a worldwide nuclear holocaust.

Business as usual. The Lord Jesus Himself says in Luke 17:26-30: "And as it was in the days of Noah [Noah], so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and..."
destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

In other words, it will be business as usual for the invisible church made up of believers as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, and as the beasts of the earth. In Zechariah 13:3-8, we read, "Speaking of His salvation program, God promises in Zechariah 13:3-8: "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."

God clearly uses the "third part" in that context to represent all the people of God, the kingdom of God. More often than not, in fact, it symbolizes the kingdom of God. Here, we see the earthly representation of that kingdom being cast into the fiery furnace, because before, it was a figure for the peoples of this earth. In short, God is casting the corporate church to the fiery furnace.

Historical parable: God uses this analogy of one-third for His elect also in II Samuel 8. We read in verse 2 there: "And he [David] smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts."

Here, David is a type of Christ, and the Moabites represent the human race. Note that the one-third David spared were allowed to live not because they were any better than the two-thirds that were put to death. It underscores that we are all sinners, just as we saw the tribesmen that became the third part became David's servants, we believers are the bondservants of Christ.

While the third part in Zechariah 13 and II Samuel 8 represents the eternal church that embraces God's people, it helps to point out that in the context of Revelation 8 and 9, it refers to the corporate church, the visible representation of the kingdom of God. This is similar to the way the Bible uses the name Israel: sometimes it denotes the Israel of God, the invisible church made up of believers throughout the ages; while some other times it refers to the nation of Israel, which before the cross had been the corporate representation of the kingdom of God.

Hail and fire. Hail and fire, as well as blood, are pictures of God's judgment. They were among the plagues that came upon Egypt before the Exodus, and God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by raining upon them brimstone and fire out of heaven.

We also read about hail in Isaiah 28:2: "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim shall return to their rest;"

Historically, the mighty and strong one that God was Assyria, which God later used to overrun the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Spiritually, though, that warning is for the end-time church. Already, more and more congregations are so drunken with pride as to wantonly ignore the commands of God and arbitrarily change the gospel of the Bible.

Trees and green grass. We read in Isaiah 60:13, "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the Electronic church green that is beautiful to see;"

In that verse, God used various trees to signify that believers would come from various nations to glorify Him. Significantly, whereas this verse declares that one-third of all trees and all green grass will be burnt up, just ten verses later, in Revelation 9:4, we read, "It was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads."

By this seeming contradiction, God underscores that He is using the "third part" in these passages to typify the institutional church upon which He is bringing judgment in the final tribulation creatures in the sea. And God often typifies believers as fish. Remember Jesus says, "I will make you fishers of men?"

Sometimes, to be sure, God uses fish to represent humanity in general. We read in Habakkuk 1:14, for example: "And [God] makes men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?" But here, the added phrase "and had life" makes it clear that the church is in view. Spiritually, only believers have life.

God also uses a ship to represent the church. Noah and his family, for instance, were saved from the flood by an ark, which was a huge ship. And in the four gospels, we often read about the disciples entering into a ship. Typically, in those historical parables, the ship represents the body of believers i.e., which we enter when we become saved. The church is our haven against the stormy sea.

But now, because the church is no longer being judged. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the Electronic church green that is beautiful to see.

Third trumpet. We read in Revelation 9:1: "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit."

As we shall see when we get to that verse, Jesus is the star that is given the key of the bottomless pit with which He opens to let Satan out.

The great star in this verse is therefore also the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes down from heaven burning as a lamp – burning not to bring light, but to bring judgment.

Rivers and fountains of waters are again normally identified with the church that sends forth the gospel. In John 7:38, Jesus says, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And Revelation 17:7 reads, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."

Thus, Christ is saying over and over again that before He judges the world on the Last Day, He first brings judgment upon the corporate church for her apostasy.

8:11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

God now gives us a hint of the nature of that judgment. Wormwood is a plant in the hemlock family that is bitter and poisonous. It is used in the Bible to signify something that is altogether deadly.

The star, we have just learned, is Christ Himself. As He judges the church, He lets people of the apostate congregations drink poison waters – that is, He will let them believe in gospels that resemble the real one but do not really bring salvation. We read in II Thessalonians 2:11, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

God actually deludes them so that they believe a lie.

But why has God sent these people this delusion? The answer is found in the preceding two verses in II Thessalonians 2: "Even him [the Lord Jesus Christ], whose coming is after [or against] the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

Because they do not love the whole truth set forth in the Bible, He allows them to be deceived by Satan. This is why, as we will see in Revelation 9, Christ lets Satan out of the bottomless pit.

Warnings of wormwood. Back in Deuteronomy 29, when Moses exhorted the Israelites in his parting address to be obedient, he warned them not to turn from God and worship other gods. He said in verse 18, "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood."

As it turned out, of course, that nation did eventually engage in spiritual idolatry. They listened to false prophets who told them lies rather than the true Word of God. We then read in Jeremiah 23:15, "Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land."

Carrying out His judgment before BC just as He had warned, God used Assyria to overtake Israel. Actually, Jeremiah 23 is meant primarily for the end-time church because verse 20 reads, "The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly." The term "latter days" in the Bible always refers to the New Testament period.

Bitter waters. A further commentary on wormwood appears in Proverbs 5. We read in verse 3, "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil."

Ostensibly, it advises young men not to listen to
the sweet talk of a harlot. But spiritually, the strange woman typifies false prophets. Both honey and oil are identified with the gospel. God described Canaan as a land of milk and honey to signify its richness, causing the anointing of the Holy Spirit. So, this verse declares that false prophets do come with gospels that sound just as sweet and smooth as the true one. But the next time they come, “But her end shall be as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.” Meaning: These false prophets are, in fact, bringing confusion, causing their followers to go down to hell in the end.

So, we begin to see that God will judge the endtime corporate church by letting it be taken over by Satan’s wolf-in-sheep-clothing ministers. They will bring gospels that much resemble the true salvation message but are nevertheless counterfeit. Hence, it says here in Revelation 8:11, many men die of the waters because they were made bitter.

8:12. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

Fourth trumpet. As I noted before, the “sun” is a picture of Christ; and the “moon”, the law of God. God, in this context, the latter represents the whole World of God. Thus, in the first pestilence, malediction period, the doctrines that Christ teaches will be smitten and the Word of God will no longer be faithfully proclaimed in the church.

Even as Christ is the “star”, believers are pictured as “stars”. In Genesis 26:4, God promised Abraham, “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all the nations of the earth be blessed.” We also read in Daniel 12:3, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Those who are wise and who help bring others to righteousness are, of course, believers.

Day and night. The “day” is also a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Psalm 118:22-24: “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.” In that context, the day, as well as the stone, is representative of Jesus. We rejoice and are glad because we are in Christ. The church is also identified with Christ.

So, just as the third part of the sun was smitten, the day came not for a third part of it. The corporate church is no longer sending forth the true gospel. It says here, “and the night likewise.” We read in Genesis 1:16, 17, “He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.” You see, believers are to give light in the night upon this dark world. But now, the people remaining in the apostate congregations are mostly unbelievers; they are darkened likewise.

8:13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

This chapter begins, you may recall, with the opening of the seventh seal. At that time, the apostolic congregations are severely admonished by their seven trumpets. We learned that the last trumpet represents Judgment Day (see Rev. 11:15). So the first six relate to events leading up to Judgment Day.

In this half of Revelation 8, the first four angels have blown their trumpets. We saw that they all have to do with God’s judgment on the corporate church. The number four in the Bible typically means universality. Thus, the judgment on the institutional church is worldwide in nature. That God will first judge His own house for its disobedience is written in Peter 4:17. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” It is a declaration to the church that God has delivered sinners to hell on Judgment Day. He must first punish those representatives of His who have disobeyed His Word.

Exhausted its usefulness. Moreover, with virtually all of God’s elect having become saved, the era of God using the corporate church as His evangelistic instrument has come to an end. In these final days, God is using individual believers for the dispensations and new church congregations that remain faithful to His Word to bring the gospel to the remainder of His people.

The period when God judges the church is described in Matthew 24:21 as a time of “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” That’s because never in the history of the world was there a time when believers had to endure the anguish of helplessly watching churches all over the world being taken over by false prophets; and never before was there so little hope left for these “fake” and “counterfeit” dispensations to come to Christ. This kind of anguish and tribulation can only be experienced by the true child of God; it is far more painful to the inner soul than any physical torment can inflict.

Three Woes. Now, God is widening His judgment. It is going to impact the whole world. And so, an angel cries out in a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth.” There are yet three more trumpet blasts to come. The number three signifies that, horrible though they may be, these woes will serve the purpose of God.

In Chapter 9, we will find that the first two woes take place during the final tribulation period. Only the third woe represents Judgment Day. Then, as Revelation 10:7 puts it, “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound [his trumpet], the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.” When God finally judges the world, believers will receive their glorified bodies and their salvation will at last be consummated.

Revelation 9

Lesson 14 for Revelation 9:1-12 ~~ “Satan Loosed on Earth”

9:1. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

Fifth trumpet. In the closing verse of Chapter 8, you may recall, the Apostle John heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!”

Inasmuch as the sounding of the first three trumpets will bring woes to “the inhabitants of the earth”, that proclamation effectively reiterates that the four trumpets described in Chapter 8 had to do with judgments on the corporate church. Often spoken of as the final tribulation period, this judgment is prefigured in the Old Testament by God delivering Ancient Israel into the hands of the Babylonians.


Having begun His judgment at the house of God as it must (I Peter 4:17), God is beginning to bring judgment against the unsaved people of the world. Like the first four trumpets, the fifth and sixth are interpreted in parabolic language that events that would unfold toward the end of time. This would correspond to the final tribulation period for the church. It is the sounding of the seventh trumpet that ushers in Judgment Day itself.

Satan, who has been loosed a little season, is again being used by God to carry out the punishments associated with the fifth and sixth trumpets. But just as Babylon in the Old Testament was ultimately destroyed by God, Satan himself will be cast into hell when the last trumpet is blown.

The Living Star. As we’ve learned from Revelation 8:10, the star that falls from heaven is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He “falls” from heaven in the sense that he descends from the lofty heaven above. The term “bottomless pit”, as we will see when we come to Chapter 20, is the place or position into which Satan, after having been defeated by Christ at the cross, was cast. It is associated with hell, although it is not hell itself. Like all the unsaved, Satan will not be cast into hell until Judgment Day.

We read about the binding of Satan in Jude 6: “And the angels which kept not their first estate [that is, who did not keep their original position], but left their own habitation [deserted their home in heaven], he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

So, the “bottomless pit” is actually an interim state to which the defeated Satan has been consigned. In that condition, his ability to prevent people from following Christ is markedly reduced. Having vanquished Satan by His death and resurrection, Christ is thus the one who put the devil under “everlasting chains.” By the same token, He is the only one who has been given the key of the bottomless pit.

9:2. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkenened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

In Genesis 19:23-26, we read about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and about Lot’s wife turning into a pillar of salt. We then read in the next two verses: “Abraham gat [got] up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord, and called Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the plain of the land, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.”

This smoke from the pit thus has to do with God’s judgment. Every time Satan was loosed, he demonstrated his desire to create disturbance and confusion. Now he is transferred to his bottomless pit when he began evangelizing the world, so He put His wrath against mankind on hold during much of the New Testament period. As if Peter 3:7 puts it, “The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But now, the time has at last come for God to begin showing His wrath. So, Christ opens the bottomless pit, releasing the devil therefrom so that he can once again deceive the nations and bind the hearts of unsaved men.

Darkened sun and air. The darkened sun is another picture of the gospel being suppressed. Christ is the sun and the light, and that light is now being dimmed.

What does the darkened air picture? In Ephesians 2:2, Paul says, “And ye walked as ... ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” This verse describes Satan as the prince of the power of the air.

Speaking to those who have become saved, Paul writes in Colossians 1:13, “[God] hath...
delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (The word “power” there means dominion or authority.)

We can infer from these two verses that the kingdom of the air, of which Satan is the prince, is the dominion of darkness to which every unsaved person belongs. It is the sin-cursed world at large. The phrase at large is thus saying that even the dark, unsaved world is getting darker still. With Satan being loosed, sin is multiplying everywhere.

Prophecy fulfilled. Indeed, this is precisely what is happening in our day. Until just a few decades ago, for example, most of the civilized world, including countries that had hardly any Christian influence, had maintained at least a certain measure of respect toward standard. People living according to their conscience.

For example, believers and unbelievers alike honored the marriage institution and frowned upon divorces, unmarried men and women living together and perverted life-styles. Even among heathens, motherly love was something that could be taken for granted.

Today, the marriage institution is in shambles. Fornication is not only widely condoned, but glorified, by the media. Homosexuals flaunt their sinful life-styles, and people of all persuasions are obsessed with materialism and self-adoration. Worse of all, millions of children are separated from their parents every year by accredited doctors at the request of their own mothers!

The second half of Romans 1 has long prophesied this. Verse 18 there begins: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” We then read in verses 24 to 28:

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was met.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not convenient [that is, not proper].

Yes, God has begun to give mankind up. He is preparing the world for the Final Judgment Day.

9:3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and there was given unto them power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Locusts in the Bible also represent God’s judgment. One of the ten plagues that came out of Egypt before God brought the Israelites out, for example, was that of locusts. They devoured everything that was growing in the fields.

In Nahum 3, God also uses locusts to typify His judgment. Because the northern nation of Israel had become ultimately devoted to idolatry and fell into the hands of the Assyrians. But then, through the prophet Nahum, He prophesied that He would in turn destroy the Assyrian empire in general, and its chief city Nineveh in particular. We read in verses 15-17: “There shall be fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm; make thyself strong as the cankerworm; for they are multiplied upon the earth.”

Indeed, people have lately begun to say, “Peace and safety.” For the first time in history, the major powers of the world are no longer building up their military forces. With the concurrent collapse of the former Communist Russia, only the United States can now be regarded as a super military power and for any number of reasons, this country has been aggressively cutting back on major weapons.

Five months. The five months in this verse here, like most other figures in Revelation, should be understood metaphorically. The actual duration of the final tribulation, which I’ll discuss later in greater detail, will be quite a bit longer. This five-month period ties back to the flood of Noah’s day. According to Genesis 7:11, it was on the seventeenth day of the second month when all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. We then read in verses 3 and 4 of Chapter 8: “And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the water abated. And it came to pass in the sixteenth day of the second month, in the seventeenth year, while the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.”

A significant characteristic of that particular demonstration of God’s wrath, which lasted five months to the day, is that it was worldwide in scope. With the symbol of five months, therefore, God is telling us that His time-of-the-end judgment will be worldwide in nature as well. Already we can see clearly that the moral decay that I mentioned earlier is a worldwide phenomenon. So is the falling away of the church.

Tormented. If it is going to be business as usual for the world when Christ returns, how then are the unsaved being tormented? And since the unregenerated love their sins, aren’t they having a grand time?

Yes, people will be “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (Matt. 24:38). Nevertheless, while sinning may seem pleasurable at the time, its consequences even on this earth are typically painful.

For example, homosexuals and those engaged in other sexual perversion are currently suffering from the deadly disease, AIDS. Just recently, it was revealed that its proliferation all over the world has been twice as rapid as it had been previously thought. Likewise, fornication and easy divorces have resulted in innumerable broken families, with the attendant problems literally tormenting both the parents and the children involved. Even unwed mothers and drug users are beginning to discover that they are caught in a living nightmare.

That’s why it says here that “their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.” Though the victims hardly feel the sting of sin at first, they will in time be tormented by its full impact.

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

The people of the world say, “Let’s eat, drink and be merry today, for tomorrow we’ll die.” They are of the impression that when they die, their existence will just terminate. Those suffering from the dire consequences of sin also wish that when death comes, all their miseries will cease.

But physical death will not be the end of their being. On the last day, all those who have died in sin will find themselves raised and standing before the judgment throne of Christ and they will be judged according to what they have done. Found guilty of all kinds of sins, they will then be sentenced to spend eternity in hell.

Hell is not annihilation. Revelation 14:11 says, “And the smoke of their tormenteth up ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and receive the mark of his name.”

Yes, many nowadays think that at the moment they die, it will be the end of their existence. But they shall seek but shall not find that kind of death. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, and the unrighteousness of that unrighteousness.

9:7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle: and on their heads were like crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.
In the Book of Revelation, horses are typically associated with spiritual warfare. Remember the four horsemen of Revelation 6? The first rider was riding on a white horse. We learned then that he represented Christ going forth with the gospel. And the second rider, who sat on a red horse and to whom was given power to take peace from the earth, is a picture of Satan trying to frustrate God’s salvation plan.

Later on in Revelation 19, we’ll see Jesus coming on the clouds of glory at the Last Day. Describing that moment, John writes in verse 11, “And the raiment upon him was white as snow, and his hair as the hair of women, and his mouth like a burning flame.” This verse is thus saying that Satan and his workers are prepared to wage a spiritual battle.

Masquerade. It says here that the locusts have crowns like gold and their faces are as the faces of men. Back in Revelation 4:4, we saw that the four and twenty elders, which represent all believers, also had on their heads crowns of gold.

So, this verse is further teaching that Satan will not be coming with a forked tail and a red suit. His workers are people disguised as ministers of God. Hence, those who are snared by their false preaching and false religions will think that they are worshipping God, even though they will actually be worshipping Satan.

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

In 1 Corinthians 11, God declares, “the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man” (v. 3). Also, “every woman that prareth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head” (v. 5), and “if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering” (v. 15). In short, women have been given long hair to show that they are under the headship of man.

On the other hand, verse 7 declares, “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, foolishness as he is the image and glory of God;” and verse 14, “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?” Notice that although the locusts have faces of men, they had the hair of women. Meaning: these false prophets are not at all the image and glory of God; they do not recognize the headship of Christ.

Teeth of lions. Further exposing their true colors are their “teeth of lions.” To understand that, let’s go to Psalm 58, where God also uses that figure of speech. Showing that every man is sinful at birth, God says in verse 3, “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” The Psalmist then beseeches the Lord in verse 6, “Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord.”

Thus, the Bible speaks of the wicked as having the teeth of lions, even as these locusts have the teeth of lions. In other words, although the locusts look like true ministers of God, they are coming in disguise, just like the false prophets of ancient days in warfare. The second half of this verse thus stresses that Satan and his followers are very well equipped; they are eloquent in their preaching and can effectively rationalize their false teaching.

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

This verse reiterates that the final tribulation will be characterized by widespread emergence of false prophets. That’s because in Isaiah 9, God specifically relates tails to false prophets.

In verse 14 there, God says, “Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and root.” He then explains in verse 15: “The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.”

In the battle of the final tribulation, Satan’s main weapon will be false prophets. Like the stings of scorpions, their teaching and preaching will be poisonous. Remember, this is a worldwide affair. Outside the Christian community, they will use other religions to deceive the nations. This, too, is what we are witnessing today. The new age mentality is mystical and the Muslim religion has all been flourishing of late, winning converts all over the globe.

9:11. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue hath his name Apollyon.

We tend to think of an angel as a celestial being that is good. The fact is, not all angels are good. Satan is a fallen angel. Having been released from the bottomless pit, he is now the king ruling over the locusts. He is called the angel of the bottomless pit because not only has he himself been consigned to hell, he is also actively causing others to be similarly consigned.

The Hebrew word abaddon is translated “destruction” wherever it appears in the Old Testament. We read in Job 26:6, for instance, “Hell is naked before him, and destruction [abaddon] hath no covering.” In that context, God is saying that hell cannot hide from God’s view. And we read in Psalm 88:11: “Shall thy lovingkindness be [abaddon]?” Here, the Bible is saying in effect that only the living give praises to God.

The Greek word Apollyon, which appears in the Bible only in this verse, is associated with the Greek word apollumi, which is usually translated “destroy” or “perish.” Here are two examples: Matthew 10:28: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy [apollumi] both soul and body in hell.”

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish [apollumi], but have everlasting life.”

Thus, Satan’s Hebrew name points to his preoccupation with destruction, while his Greek name reveals that it is the kind of destruction that results in eternal damnation in hell.

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

One of the last three trumpets has now been sounded. So far, God has given us one picture of the destruction that Satan will bring to the world. He “cut off” Christ; he will deceive people into worshipping him without realizing it. Two more woes have yet to come. The next one will be a continuation of the same theme. The final woe, though, will be Judgment Day itself.

Lesson 15 for Revelation 9:13-21

"The Second Woe Unfolds"15

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

Sixth trumpet. In the Old Testament tabernacle, the four horns of the altar were inside the entrance gate, there was a large altar. We read about it in Exodus 27: “And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits wide, and three cubits high.” And he said unto Moses, “And the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same.”

That was the altar on which the main sacrifices were offered; it foreshadowed the cross on which the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for our sins. Then, inside the tabernacle building and in front of the curtain that screened the Holy of Holies from view was a smaller altar. God spoke of this altar, which was overlaid with gold, in Exodus 30: “And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same.” And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about” (vv. 1-3).

Notice that it was upon this altar that the priests were charged to come in the purest circumstances before, incense in the Bible is symbolic of the prayers of believers. Our prayers are a sweet fragrance that rise up to God.

Horns. This altar, as well as the larger one that was covered with brass, had four horns at its four corners. These were not the musical instrument horn, like the trumpet. Made of shittim wood, these were projections that resembled horns.

In the Bible horns are used to signify strength, remember? We learned that when we studied Revelation 5:6, where the Lamb was described as having seven horns. As the number four spiritually stands for universality, the four horns of the brazen altar pointed to the power of Christ’s sacrifice in atoning for the sins of believers all over the world. That’s the power David sang of in II Samuel 22:3: “The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, myaviour; thou savest me from violence.”

The four horns of the golden altar, on the other hand, represent the power of the prayers that have come before God from saints all over the world. Hence, we see here that the apostle John heard a voice from the fourth altar.

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

These powerful prayers are asking the angel that has the sixth trumpet to loose the four angels. This lies upon the surface of Revelation 6:9, where, at the opening of the fifth seal, the apostle John saw “the souls of them that were slain”. They were crying: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” They were then told to wait “yet for a little season”. Now, the time has come for God to begin avenging their blood. God is also answering the prayers of saints that are still waiting. This is a parable in which a widow persistently asked an unjust judge to avenge her, tells us always to pray and not to faint. He concludes in verse 7, “Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night and

unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.

Four angels. The four angels in this verse are not the same as those spoken of in Revelation 7:4-8. Those spoken of in Revelation 7:4-8 are sealed, and the sealing is symbolic of their being sealed for God's purposes. The four angels of this passage are not sealed, and they are not symbolic of their being sealed for God's purposes. The four angels of this passage are real, historical angels, and they are not symbolic of their being sealed for God's purposes.

The angels being loosed here represent the fallen angels who have been bound by Christ since the cross. God is using them to cause woe to the unsaved of the world, as well as the church that has turned a deaf ear to the message of the gospel.

Also, when God promised Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to his seed, He also promised that He would give the land of Canaan to his seed as a picture of the kingdom of God. Thus, the land of Canaan is a picture of the kingdom of God. Inasmuch as the land of Canaan is a picture of the kingdom of God, the river Euphrates, which flowed right through the city of Babylon, is identified in the Bible with Babylon. Babylon, of course, is a figure of the kingdom of Satan. Thus, the land of Canaan is a picture of the kingdom of God, and the river Euphrates is a picture of the kingdom of Satan.

Inasmuch as the land of Canaan is a picture of the kingdom of God, and the river Euphrates is a picture of the kingdom of Satan, it is logical to conclude that the loosing of those angels would correspond with the Kingdom of God being established for a thousand years. This is confirmed by the verse that follows, which states that the tares will be separated from the wheat after the thousand-year reign of Christ. This verse makes it clear that the final tribulation did begin precisely at its appointed time.

In Revelation 8, God repeatedly uses the term “the third part” to speak of His judgment against the corporate church. But this second woe, according to the last verse of chapter 8, is the third woe. This verse makes it clear that the final tribulation did begin precisely at its appointed time. In fact, every detail of God’s salvation plan has been unfolding at the exact moment as it had been ordained before the foundation of the world.

Galatians 4:4-5 points out, for instance, that “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Christ came to earth exactly when the appointed time for His incarnation had arrived.

In this connection, it’s highly significant that Christ, the Lamb of God, was crucified on the very day when the Passover was being observed by the Jews—the very day when the priests were killing the Passover lamb in the temple. Passover was the first of the three annual feasts that the Israelites were commanded to observe. Held on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish calendar, it commemorated the day when God took the Israelites out from Egypt; it also pointed to the atonement provided by Christ.

The second was the feast of Pentecost, fifty days later. It was also called the feast of the firstfruits of wheat harvest. Remarkably, it was on the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was poured out, starting thereby God’s program to evangelize the world. On that very day, some 3,000 people from 18 nations were saved upon hearing the gospel proclaimed by Peter. They were the firstfruits gathered into the kingdom of Christ.

A clue? The third annual feast stipulated by the ceremonial law was the feast of the ingathering, or the feast of Tabernacles. That was held in the seventh month. This feast celebrated the ingathering of the harvest in the fall and commemorated the Israelites’ successful arrival into the land of Canaan.

Both of those events have important spiritual implications for the Christian who is repeatedly told to return as a harvest day. At that harvest, the tares will be separated from the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30)—the unsaved will be gathered and judged until the time of the great tribulation had brought into the new heaven and new earth.

Considering that the atonement and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit coincided with the first two feasts, I think we have good biblical reasons to expect the Lord to return at a time when the third annual feast is being celebrated by the Jews. In other words, it will be some time in the fall of the year. Obviously, this doesn’t tell us the exact day when the Lord will return, but rather it tells us the time of the year it will happen. And if the day of the year it might be since the feast of Tabernacles lasts more than a week. At any rate, this verse makes it clear that the final tribulation did begin precisely at its appointed time.

In Revelation 8, God repeatedly uses the term “the third part” to speak of His judgment against the corporate church. But this second woe, according to the last verse of chapter 8, is the third woe. This verse makes it clear that the final tribulation did begin precisely at its appointed time.
So, this verse reiterates that when Satan is loosed, he will victimize the unsaved by using false prophets that speak so authoritatively that they sound more like true ministers of righteousness. They will be successful for the tails were like unto serpents, and had heads." Even as the head of the true church is Christ, the head of the sinners is Satan. And they will be using the devil's tactics.

When the first serpent appeared in the Garden of Eden, it deceived Eve by causing her to doubt the Word of God. "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). And when Jesus was on the Mount of Olives, He had a similar experience. And it tempted her by appealing to her self-interest, saying, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (v. 5).

The last phrase says, "with them they do hurt." Yes, with these deceptions, the false christs are indeed hurting a lot of people. The growth of their churches is the success story of the day; their denominations are widely praised for their effective evangelistic programs. But all the time, they are hurting the unsuspecting. Like the false prophets of Jeremiah's day, they are telling people that they have peace with God when there is no peace.

9:20. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the things which they had done. These unsaved will persist in worshipping devils and idols in the Bible, God again and again equates the religions of the unsaved with idol worship. Psalm 115 is one example. Speaking first of Jehovah, God, verse 3 declares, "our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." Then, it goes on to talk about the heathen religions in verses 4-8: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not for they walk not peradventure they speak through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." But have we really to come to a day when a great number of people do not repent of their sins? Yes! For the first time in the history of mankind, millions of mothers, doctors, nurses and others have been murdering unborn babies without any second thoughts.

Yes, we are well into the final tribulation and are much closer to the end of time than most people realize.

The last phrase says, "with them they do hurt." Yes, with these deceptions, the false christs are indeed hurting a lot of people. The growth of their churches is the success story of the day; their denominations are widely praised for their effective evangelistic programs. But all the time, they are hurting the unsuspecting. Like the false prophets of Jeremiah's day, they are telling people that they have peace with God when there is no peace.

By no means will all the unsaved be deceived and killed by these plagues yet repented not of the things which they had done. These unsaved will persist in their idolatry more than bowing to man-made idols and having other religions. We read in Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil deceits, idolatrie, and covetousness, which is idolatrie." In citing four categories of sins, this verse again reminds us that spiritual and moral decay toward the end of time will be universal in nature.

Spiritually, the unsaved will persist (1) in their murders because they will be serving Satan who was a murderer from the beginning; (2) in sorceries because they will be increasing in their influence and power; (3) in fornication because they will keep flirting with pagan religions; and (4) in thefts because they will be turning the house of God into a den of thieves.

During this period, moral decay also spreads all over the world. Using drugs, many people are effectively engaging in sorceries. Fornication and adultery have become the standard of behavior. And thefts and robberies are committed in high places. But have we really to come to a day when a great number of people do not repent of their sins? Yes! For the first time in the history of mankind, millions of mothers, doctors, nurses and others have been murdering unborn babies without any second thoughts.

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Revelation 10
Lesson 16 for Revelation 10:1-11 ~~ "The Little Book in God's Hand"~~
Back in Revelation 5, we were introduced to the scroll that only the Lord Jesus is worthy to open. It has seven seals. The first six were opened in Chapters 6 and the seventh, in Chapter 8. Thus, Chapter 7 was an interlude between the sixth and the seventh seals. In that interlude, God talked about the 144,000 that He would save before Judgment Day comes. Those 144,000, we learned, are a picture of the entire body of believers.

The seventh seal, in turn, is subdivided into seven trumpets. We have gone through the sound of the first six in Chapters 8 and 9. But the last trumpet, which will signal Judgment Day itself, won't be blown until verse 15 of Chapter 11. So, we are now entering yet another interlude.

10:1. And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:
By now, you probably know quite well that the Greek word that is translated "angels" can be correctly translated "messenger" as well. If so, you no doubt know also that this mighty messenger is none other than Christ Himself. Remember: Only He can answer to the description given here.

Note that this mighty messenger is clothed with a cloud, He has a rainbow upon His head, and His face shines like the sun. When we studied Revelation 1:17, we learned that "Christ coming with a cloud" is a picture of His coming with judgment. We'll see that picture in much sharper focus when we get to verse 14 of Chapter 14.

Also, when we studied Revelation 4:3, we found that the seventh of the seven covenants that God has made with man. It also symbolizes the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is a bridge between God and man. Finally, we saw back in Revelation 1:16 that Christ is described as having a countenance as "the sun shineth in his head". And when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, His face shone like the sun.

Pillars of fire. Fire normally has to do with judgment — Judgment Day in particular. But back in Exodus 13:21, where God was talking about His ever-presence with the Israelites, we read, "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light."

So, by noting also that the feet of the mighty messenger were like pillars of fire, this verse is starting Chapter 10 off by presenting Christ both as the Mighty One who will come to judge the world and as the Mighty Savior who leads the way for His people and gives them the light of eternal life.

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

The term "little book" here is from the Greek word bibliairidion, which is found four times in this chapter of the Bible and this chapter only. It is a diminutive of biblion, which means book, and is therefore properly translated "little book." More often than not, God uses the word biblion to refer to the Bible. Using bibliairidion in this particular chapter, therefore, God is emphasizing that what's written in this little book represents but a very tiny part of the whole Word of God, and that it involves events in connection with Judgment Day. That this little book is in Christ's hand tells us that all the events written therein will unfold exactly in accordance with His will. (See commentary on Revelation 1:16 regarding the symbolism of "hands").

But didn't Jesus say 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? At first glance, it does seem that even Christ does not know when Judgment Day will be. But that cannot be. The Lord Jesus is eternal God Himself; He knows the end from the beginning. Revelation 10:2 is just one of many, many Scriptures declaring that Christ is in full control of all the events leading to, and including, Judgment Day. Since the Bible never contradicts itself, we need to re-examine Mark 13:32 in the light of the light of Revelation 10:2. Actually, "the day" or "the day of the Lord" is typically used in the Bible to identify the event of Judgment Day, not its timing. The word "hour" is sometimes used in that sense as well. Thus, Revelation 18 repeatedly speaks of Babylon, a picture of Satan's world, being destroyed in one hour.

Moreover, the word "knoweth" or "know," which often means having the knowledge of, can also mean having a close relationship with. For example, I John 2:3 reads, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." The second "know" there has to do with having a personal relationship with Christ.

So, Jesus was simply saying in Mark 13:32 that no one had experienced Judgment Day and therefore knew what it would be like. Before the cross? Not so. And when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, He knew because He was the one to pour out His wrath.

The victor. Another widely misinterpreted verse clause by with by Revelation 10:2 is Zechariah 14:4, which reads: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."

Reading that passage, many theologians teach that the Lord Jesus will someday descend on the mount of Olives as a human king. He will then go into Jerusalem and reign there 1,000 years. But of the same event, this verse says that Christ will set His right foot on the sea and His left foot on the earth. How can God, coming again as a human king, physically set one foot on the sea and another on the earth?

In the Bible, actually, a person standing on something is a picture of a conqueror having vanquished the foe; he is standing with his foot on the neck of the enemy. Thus, the Bible speaks elsewhere of Satan being trodden under foot.

Judgment. This picture is well illustrated in Micah 1. We read in verses 3-5 there: "For behold, the LORD cometh out of his place, and shall stand upon the sea, and the mountains shall be molten under him; and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sin of the house of Israel shall be for many days, even unto the end, and many shall be cut off, and thine enemies shall be the ruler over thee; but you shall be named, "The remnant of Jacob.""

Daniel wrote in verse 27: "And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it." Even though he records it in the book of Daniel, Daniel himself would not understand it any part of it. In Chapter 12, God again said, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end." He added in that same verse, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

What God is saying in Daniel 12 and here in Revelation 10 is that until "the time of the end" draws near, the meaning of these prophecies will be hidden from believers as well as unbelievers. That's why so many commentaries of end-time prophecies have proved to be more fiction than truth. God's final approach, God will open up the meaning to His people. Then, as believers search through the Bible back and forth, comparing Scripture with Scripture, knowledge and understanding of these verses will increase.

As I have pointed out before, we are indeed living near the very end of history. So, if there was ever a time when Christians should diligently examine what the Bible has to say about the final tribulation and Judgment Day, it is now.

10:5. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and his voice was as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice of the horns was heard in his mouth, and he had seven thunders. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those sayings, and seal the book, even to the time of the end. But the seven thunders uttered their voices.

Job 37:2-5: "Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. He thundereth with his voice; great things come to pass with him. He saith also, Where is the way of the lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders roareth; and when he had cried, seven thunders roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things are done; not in way, nor in order, nor in time: for his voice shall say to the north, Go forth; and at the south, Be still and rest.

And the sound of the seventh trumpet, will bring God's "mystery" to its completion. God uses the word "mystery" in the Bible, as Romans 16:25 points to the mysterious nature of the events written therein to unfold. Remember, this little book pertains specifically to the horrible final tribulation period and Judgment Day itself. These are events people both in and out of the church nowadays do not want to hear or talk about. But here, John is specifically commanded to take this little book.

10:9. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken; and the kings of the earth, and the governors, and the captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every man, whatsoever is called blessed and that doth live for ever and ever, stood afar off, and they beheld the earthquakes, and the sun was darkened, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken; and the winds of heaven swirled the sea into the midst of the earth. And the mountain of God was thrown asunder, and was moved out of his place, and the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

Since the world began, God has hidden the gospel secret since the world began. The Bible is God's Word, written by men under the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit. No man has the right to say, "Thus saith the Lord" or "Thus saith the Lord" when quoting from the Bible. Only God can say, "Thus saith the Lord," as in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, who declared, "Thus saith the Lord," as in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, who declared, "Thus saith the Lord." He added in that same verse, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

As a special note, remember, we are living near the very end of history. So, if there was ever a time when Christians should diligently examine what the Bible has to say about the final tribulation and Judgment Day, it is now. Here in Revelation 10, God again swears by the voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those sayings, and seal the book, even to the time of the end. But the seven thunders uttered their voices.

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And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was thine; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written, Suffer Revelation to be measured: and, lo, a reed like unto a rod. And, lo, a mouth was given unto me, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

11:1. And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and he measured the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

The Apostle John is told here to measure the temple of God. What temple is this? We read in Hebrews 8:10 that “this temple” is spoken of as the temple in the Lord. The temple is the body of believers.

John is to measure with a reed like unto a rod. A reed is the stem of a tall grass, which was sometimes used in the old days as a measuring tool. While it is usually rather weak and breaks easily, there is nothing more fitting of the King of Judging the nation, the Psalm 2:9 declares, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

On the other hand, Revelation 19:15 says, “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

The sharp sword that goes out of His mouth, as we’ve previously learned (Rev. 1:16), is the Word of God. So, the Word of God is that which John is to measure with.

When a building is under construction, it is regularly measured to ascertain that every part is fitted together properly. Here, the Apostle John, a representative of all believers in this instance, is told to use the Word of God to ensure that the temple is properly built. In short, we are to make certain that people are brought into the body of Christ by hearing the true gospel, the whole counsel of God.

Notice God says “Rise” as He tells John to do the measuring. Implication: only those who have experienced the resurrection of the soul, those who have been born again, are qualified to carry out the Great Commission.

The 70 Weeks of Daniel 9

Before we move on to the second half of verse 2, let’s take a detour to the Old Testament. That’s because later in this verse and also in Revelation 12 and 13, we’ll find numerous mentions of 42 months, 1,260 days, or three and a half years. All this time period considers a year to have 12 months and a month to have 30 days, those periods seem synonymous. To find out what they represent, we go to the Book of Daniel.

In Daniel 9:24-27, God gives us two time paths leading to the Messiah’s two comings. Both of them involve 70 weeks. (As the Hebrew word “weeks” also means seven, 70 times 7 equals 490 years.) The starting point of both is identified as “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” in verse 25.

Searching through the Scriptures, we find only two commandments or decrees that had to do with this rebuilding. (The rebuilding of the wall under Nehemiah’s direction did not involve any command; he merely sought and received permission from King Artaxerxes to do so.)

In 537 BC, King Cyrus of Persia, responding to a command from God, directed the Israelites in Persia to go back and rebuild the temple. Some 50,000 Israelites did indeed return to Jerusalem and lay the foundation of the temple. But 490 years after 537 BC was 47 BC, which did not relate in any way to the coming of the Messiah.

Then in 458 BC, King Artaxerxes commanded Ezra to re-establish the law, to resume offering sacrifices and to resupply the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:12-25). This date is evidently what God has in mind because it works out perfectly.

The Cross.
The first path is given in verse 24: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.” This is a prophecy of the Lord’s first coming. By going to the Cross, He finished the transgression in which we sinners had come to save and made an end to their sins. He atoned for their iniquity, thereby reconciling them to God. He also brought in the everlasting righteousness of God. This sealed up the salvation that the Bible had long prophesied.

And after He had resurrected and ascended back to heaven, He was anointed the most Holy – the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Then did Jesus go to the cross? From Luke 3, we know that He was baptized in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. Since Tiberius began reigning in AD 14, Christ’s baptismal year took place in AD 29. According to the events recorded in the Gospel of John, we also know that the Lord ministered on earth for about three and a half years and that He was crucified on Passover, which was in the spring. That puts the Cross in AD 33, with Christ having been baptized in the fall of AD 29.

From 458 BC to AD 33, there were exactly 490 years (458+33-1 = 490). One is deducted from the sum because there was no year zero between 1 BC and AD 1.

The second coming. The second path, which is a bit more complicated, is given in verses 25 to 27. It begins back in AD 70, Visa 70 being broken into three segments: seven weeks, sixty-two weeks and one week. Verse 25 reads: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the seven won’t be blown until verse 15 of this chapter, was sounded back in Chapters 8 and 9 and the fourth.”

Implication: God wants this message to go out into all the world. The apostle was already very advanced in age when he recorded this prophecy, and he knew that the people of Israel would eventually reject Jesus as the Messiah and thus be scattered throughout the nations. What is the promise for God’s people for the future? God names four groups in this verse – peoples, nations, tongues and kings.

Notice that God names four groups in this verse – peoples, nations, tongues and kings. The number four signifies universality (see commentary on Revelation 8:13 where the number four). Implication: God wants this message to go out into all the world. The apostle was already very advanced in age when he recorded this vision in Revelation. And being an exile on the island of Patmos, he himself could not possibly carry out the commission. So, this command is really meant for all believers.

In this interlude, then, God is emphasizing to us that we must let the world know that Judgment Day is coming. When we do so, we will offend many. But the fact that most people won’t like to hear what we have to say is immaterial. We must remember Matthew 24:14, where Jesus says: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”
the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

The Messianic Prince is Christ, of course; and the street and the wall that shall be built again refer to the Holy City. The word "troublous" means distressing. Thus, this verse prophesied that Christ would come to rebuild the Holy City at the end of the tribulation period that it would be a time of great spiritual distress.

But we wonder why God separated the first seven "weeks" (or 49 years) from the 62 "weeks" (434 years) instead of saying 69 weeks outright. Either the first period, or the second, or both, must have some special meaning. Indeed, seven weeks of years is highly significant in the Bible.

Jubilee. In Leviticus 25, God told the nation of Israel in verse 8, " Thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years," and then in verse 10, "And ye shall have the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you."

Not coincidentally, 457 BC, the year after King Artaxerxes had issued his decree, was a Jubilee year. So 497 BC, seven years before the thirty-nine years 69 weeks by 7 weeks in 434 years. In other words, that 434 years would begin in 406 BC. And lo and behold, between 406 BC and AD 29, the year Christ was baptized, there were exactly 434 years (406 + 28 + 7 = 434). Thus, the prophecy of verse 25 has been fulfilled.

Stumbling stone. Verse 26a reads: "And after three weeks and two days shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself, but for the sins of those whom He came to save. But who are the people of the Prince? The Jewish people. God says in John 1:11, "He [Jesus] came unto his own, and his own received him not." And, "the city and the sanctuary" that they destroyed was the Lord Jesus. They crucified Him. Of Himself, Christ said in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And, the prophecy of verse 26a was fulfilled at the cross.

Spiritual warfare. Still prophesying events to unfold after AD 29, verse 26b reads: "...and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make war until a certain end be fulfilled, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." This brings us to the end of time. Because of the increasing falling away of the corporate church, God will allow Satan and his emissaries to make it desolate. This, the final tribulation period, extends right to the end of time, which is also the time when God's salvation plan reaches its consummation. On the last few chapters of Revelation, that is the final tribulation period. They obviously cannot be two human reigns, 1260 months to signify the final tribulation period in the Bible. As we read this passage, we immediately think of Matthew 11:21, Jesus said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Nazareth! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

This phrase thus reaffirms that the two witnesses will be Abraham and Moses. It consists of believers who have repented of their sins. And because they mourn for the lost of the world, they witness to them, telling them the Good News. Jesus Christ.

11:5-6. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

As we read this passage, we immediately think of Moses and Elijah. The one and only Elijah, of course, was the one who had turned the waters in Egypt into blood, and brought plague after plague upon the earth just before he took Israel out of that country, and we know that Elijah with the two witnesses, calling down fire from heaven to destroy his enemies (II Kings 1:10,12) and who prayed that it would not rain during the reign of wicked Ahab, after which the heaven was shut for three and a half years (I Kings 17:1).

But as we noted earlier, the two witnesses cannot be two human beings. And nowhere in the Bible does it teach that they will have been gone to be in glory with Christ would come back to this sin-cursed earth to do additional work. God is thus using Moses and Elijah here symbolically. You see, Elijah is a great representative of the prophets, even as Moses is the great representative of the law. Specifically, God is speaking here of the power of the gospel, the power of the Word of God to save people. For the Bible to use Moses and Elijah to represent the Word of God is not unique. In Luke 24, where we find the resurrected Christ talking to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we read in verse 27, "And, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." So, this verse is essentially saying that as we bring the gospel, we have the full power of the Word of God.

It also says here that "if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed." In what manner? By the power of the gospel. You see, the living Word of God is a two-edged sword. While it brings salvation to those who respond positively, it also condemns those who reject it. In this regard, Paul writes in II Corinthians 2:16, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

11:7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. During our study of Revelation 13, you may recall that we took a long detour just before the first trumpet was sounded to review the way God dealt with Israel when it had turned apostate and to show why He is likely to deal with the church in much the same way. First, we noted nearly all of God's elect having become saved so that the church has substantially served its purpose, it has become increasingly apostate. And even as God used Babylon to judge Israel,
He is now using Satan and his false prophets to judge the church. These truths are summed up neatly in a capsule by this verse.

It says here that when the church (the two witnesses) will not resist the beast's attempts to bring forth the gospel, it will be overcome and killed by the beast, which is a picture of Satan. Again, Satan won't be killing Christians physically. This is paralleling language prophesying the current state of the corporate church. It is so overwhelmed by false prophets that, as far as sending forth the gospel is concerned, it is as good as dead.

11:8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

As the earthly representation of the kingdom of God, the institutional church is now nothing but a corpse. These spiritually dead congregations, it says here, are lying in the street of the great city where our Lord was crucified. Our Lord was crucified, of course, just outside the city of Jerusalem. Symbolically, Jerusalem is where the body of believers belongs. But now, this great city is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. Sodom was one of the four cities destroyed by God in the days of Abraham. Its people were very wicked, and for that reason, God had to destroy them. Here, the corporate church is called Sodom because it has turned spiritually adulterous.

Significantly, when Israel was apostate, God also called it Sodom. Speaking to the nation of Judah, for example, He said in Ezekiel 16:49, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

Egypt. In the Bible, Egypt is a picture of enslavement. The Israelites were slaves in that country. Their deliverance by the powerful hand of God typifies the liberation of believers from their bondage to sin and Satan. Now, the church is called Egypt because it again is in bondage to Satan and its emissaries. Masquerading as ministers of righteousness, the latter are successfully deceiving people into worshipping Satan, although the latter think that they are following Christ.

This doesn't mean that there won't be any congregations that remain true to the Word of God. Nor does it mean that individual believers and researchers will not continue to spread the gospel to others. During the final tribulation period, they will be used by God to save the very, very last few of His elect. But churches in general will be bringing gospels other than that of the Bible.

11:9. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies...and put out of sight. But that is not to be the case. Satan wants to flaunt his victory before all people. So, the apostate congregations visit on him gospels tailored to appeal to the unsaved, they have been mushrooming all over the globe.

Three and a half days. Does this verse mean that the final tribulation will last only three and a half days? No, if so, we would expect Judgment Day to have come almost immediately after the final tribulation period. So, that is contrary to what the rest of the Bible declares.

How long will the final tribulation period be, then? Many theologians teach that it will be seven years. That is a 9:9 ratio, which, as we saw earlier, speaks of the last of the seventy weeks. But as we have just learned, that last week represents the whole period that runs from Christ's ascension to the end of the earth. That was in the middle of that week that the Lord went to the cross and put an end to blood sacrifice and burnt offerings.

Actually, three and a half days is just one of several figures used to typify the final tribulation period. It lies back in Daniel 7, where, in a vision Daniel saw four beasts. The fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and having ten horns, is a picture of Satan when he is loosed. Of that beast, verse 25 says: "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the lives of the saints of the Most High, and shall change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

That passage is describing exactly the same event as Revelation 11. The church is given into Satan's hand. One time plus two times plus half a time equals three and a half years.

Seventy years. In the last chapter of II Chronicles, you read about the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians. All that, God explains in verse 21, was "to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbath: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years."

Between 609 BC, when Jerusalem was first taken by Egypt, and 539 BC, when the servitude was lifted, there were 70, or seventy years. That 70-year captivity, when the land enjoyed her sabbath, is another type of the final tribulation period. Jesus confirms that fact when He says in Matthew 24:15 that when the abomination of desolation, which speaks of the last of the 70-weeks prophecy, is set up, the end will come.

How long will the final tribulation period be? In Daniel 7, Daniel was told that "The fourth beast...became a great horn that grew exceedingly great. It again is a picture of Satan that has been loosed. About that horn, verse 11 says, "Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down." The word "sacrifice" does not appear in the original manuscript and does not really belong here. The "daily" that is taken away refers to the candle that burned daily, or continuously, in the temple. It typifies the light of the gospel, which will be snuffed out by Satan during the final tribulation period.

We next read in verses 13 and 14, "Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall the vision concern the daily, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleaned." That's 2,300 days.

Eighty-four. So, if you add up the three time periods that are identified with the final tribulation -- 70 years, 23 years and 3 1/2 days -- with God putting especially heavy emphasis on the year 23, then you get 2,340 days. You get that number also by multiplying 12 by 3 1/2. Spiritually, of course, 12 represents the fulness of God's plan, especially as it relates to believers.

So, through that historical parable, God is saying that while the final tribulation period will see the corporate church being destroyed, it will also lead to the completion of God's salvation plan. By the last day, the fulness of God's elect will all have become saved.

When we stop and think about it, we must acknowledge that only the infinitely wise and powerful God could have so arranged historical developments as to have exactly 276 people survive in that particular shipwreck and then have it recorded in the Scriptures!

Abomination of desolation. The number 23 is linked to the final tribulation most directly in Daniel 7. There, it says, "A horn...came up that it grew exceeding great. It again is a picture of Satan that has been loosed. About that horn, verse 11 says, "Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down." The word "sacrifice" does not appear in the original manuscript and does not really belong here. The "daily" that is taken away refers to the candle that burned daily, or continuously, in the temple. It typifies the light of the gospel, which will be snuffed out by Satan during the final tribulation period.

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the institutional church will be highly visible worldwide, it will no doubt last much longer than 3 1/2 days. But it is not likely to be as long as 70 or even 23 years. That’s because God has mercifully promised that He will shorten that period for the sake of His elect.

We read in Matthew 24:21,22: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”

This narrows down to the 2,300 days that we saw earlier in Daniel 8:14, when God answers the question that specifically asked how long the transgression of desolation would be. In fact, the word “days” in that verse was translated from a rarely used Hebrew word that means “evenings and mornings.” By that, I believe, God is stressing that He is not speaking figuratively; He means literal 24-hour days. If so, the final tribulation will last a little less than six and one-third years.

11:10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two things could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for by night it was put out, and by day it could not stand.

For the reason that we stand before the judgment throne; instead, we will be judging the world with Him.

Sheep and Goats. But Matthew 25 says that when Christ comes again, He will gather all the people and then separate them into two groups, the sheep on the right and the goats on the left. Verse 34 reads, “Then shall the King say unto them, Ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” When will that conversation take place?

It won’t. Actually, it is evidenced by His classifying people as sheep and goats, Jesus is giving a parable there. Parables are earthly stories with a spiritual or heavenly meaning. They are not to be taken literally. In this story, the King says to the sheep, “For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” He then explains, “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” He then tells them that because they did not do those things to the least of His brethren. If we interpret this passage literally, we would end up with a gospel of works. In other words, it would suggest that if we live a good life on earth, we would qualify to go to heaven; otherwise, we would be sent to hell. Such a conclusion is altogether contrary to the gospel of grace.

Worse yet, a literal interpretation of this parable would suggest that an unbeliever could claim that he deserves to go to heaven because he did give a drink to a thirsty Christian once. On the other hand, a believer could be sent to hell for having failed to visit a fellow Christian who was ill or in prison. This cannot be, because the Bible clearly teaches that once saved, a believer is always saved.

Ambassadors. What that parable really teaches is that there are two kinds of people on this earth: the sheep, representing the believers; and the goats, the unbelievers. While all of them will be otherwise present here on the last day, there won’t be a literal conversation between God and them. Rather, God is using the parabolic conversation to show us the kind of people who will go into heaven and the kind of people who have to remain here for judgment.

You see, believers are commissioned by Christ to be His ambassadors on earth. Having been so commissioned, every one of them has the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.”

In Matthew 17, where Jesus was transfigured before the three disciples in an high mountain, we read in verse 5, “While Peter was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

Judgment. But Christ coming with the clouds has to do with Judgment Day. We will see that vividly when we come to Revelation 14. So, the phrase “they ascended up to heaven in a cloud” implies that that is when the Lord Jesus Christ in judging the world. That also confirms that believers will not be judged on Judgment Day.

True, the Bible does declare in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But the fact is, we did stand for judgment in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ nearly two thousand years ago. He was found guilty with our sins and He paid the penalty in full for us by dying on the cross. For that reason, when Christ returns, we will at once be given our glorified bodies and will then be “in the air” in the rapture. There isn’t a moment that we stand before the judgment throne; instead, we will be judging the world with Him.

Lesson 18 for Revelation 11:11-19 ~~ The Last Day~~

11:11. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them; and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

In this verse, the pronouns “them” and “they” again relate to the body of true believers. After the final tribulation period comes the last day, when Christ returns and raises up all those who have died in Christ. As the Spirit of life enters into them, they are resurrected. This is also the day when those believers who are still living on earth are raptured. (“Rapture” is not a biblical word — it is a term ascribed by theologians for this glorious event.)

A somewhat more detailed description of this event appears in Matthew 24. Starting from verse 28, we read: “Immediately after the
At first glance, this verse seems to contradict 10:36,37, the Jews were commanded to bring the Bible to typify believers. In Nehemiah indicate that believers are still here on earth. But the remainder of this verse seems to accompanied by earthquakes and the collapse where the opening of the sixth seal was same hour was there a great earthquake end-time events. The first statement – "what we have learned about the sequence of enthusiastic than true believers in talking about followers of false gospels seem to be even more eternal punishment.

So, this parable is teaching that the ones that will go into heaven are those who have been given the Great Commission. The rest of the people in the world will all be sentenced to eternal punishment.

What about those unsaved people who evangelize with great zeal? Indeed, some followers of false gospels seem to be even more enthusiastic than true believers in talking about the gospel. Christians and preach gospels that closely resemble the gospel of the Bible. But when Judgment Day comes, these pseudo Christians will be slain, that is, they will be subject to the second death. That’s why they are afraid and finally give glory to God. But it is too late for them to receive salvation.

Remember in Joshua 7, Achan was found guilty of taking gold and silver from Jericho against God’s command? Before he and his family was stoned to death and burned with fire, Joshua said to him: “My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord. Their king is a pitiful example of the unsaved who, even as they are being cast into hell, are commanded to give glory to God. 11:14. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

In the last verse of Revelation 8, you may recalled, God says, "Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" Having judged the apostate church in the first four trumpets. He was then about to widen His judgment upon the whole world. Right after that, He let Satan out of the bottomless pit to deceive the nations and bind the hearts of men. We noted then that the number three signifies that it is the purpose of God that these woes, horrible though they are, come upon “the inhabitants of the earth”. The first and second woes, described in Chapter 9, were associated with the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets. Since the third woe, which corresponds to the sounding of the last trumpet, will be Judgment Day (see Rev. 11:15), God begins His judgment there.

The idea that God first judges the apostate church and then the world is echoed in other statements. For example, in 1 Peter 4:17, we read, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" The house of God is the churches and congregations where believers are normally found. And this verse says that God begins His judgment there.

Precedent. The reason God judges the church first comes out of other places, in Jeremiah 25. The people of Judah were then assaulted by the Babylonians and the statement God made on that occasion is highly relevant to us. Remember God says in 1 Corinthians 11:1 that what happened to ancient Israel were written down as examples and warnings for the church.

In verse 15 and 16, we read: "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me, Take the wine cup 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 will send among them." The phrase "all the nations" reveals immediately that God is talking about the final Judgment Day.

This is confirmed by the next two verses: “Then took I the cup at the Lord’s hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the Lord had sent me: To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse.

Notice that it begins with Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. Those are pictures of the corporate church. Worldwide. From verse 16 to verse 25, Jeremiah predicts that God will strike peoples of more than a dozen nations. Then he declares in verse 26, "And all the kings of the north, and far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth; and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them." Sheshach is another name for Babylon; so the king of Sheshach symbolizes Satan. He, too, will come into this judgment.

Now, verse 27: "Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue [that is, vomit], and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you." This is language of eternal damnation.

And verses 28 and 29: "And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Drink ye indeed, and do enjoy all of you; do be drunken, and let yourselves be drunken with your own wine; For I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants thereof, saith the Lord of hosts; Effectively God is saying there, “I have destroyed even the church that is called by my name because of its disobedience, how can you, the rest of the unsaved, who have been in total rebellion against me, expect to escape punishment?” By punishing the church first, God has made it clear that there is no way Satan and the unsaved world can avoid Judgment Day.

11:15. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Seventh trumpet. The last of the seven trumpets has finally sounded. As the number seven symbolizes perfection, this is the culmination of God’s perfect salvation program. In the remaining chapters of Revelation, God will yet tell us many other things. But as far as the context of Revelation 8 to 11 is concerned, the climax has come.

So, we have here a triumphant statement proclaiming that the Lord Jesus now rules over all the kingdoms of this world and that His reign will never end. Ever since the fall of man, Satan has ruled the world by the right of conquest. True, he has not yet got what God has allowed him to do. But he has been the prince of the air and has deceived the inhabitants of the earth. Now, the kingdoms of this world will have last become the kingdoms of our Lord.

11:16,17. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, for thy judgments and thy wondrous works: for thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

The four and twenty elders, as we learned back in Revelation 4,4, represent all those who have become saved. Notice that they have sat before God, which means that they have ruled with God. Do you remember when does a believer become corporate in heaven? The moment he becomes saved. We read in Ephesians 2:4-6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." To have sat together with our Lord in heavenly places is to have ruled with Him.
Now, though, they fall upon their faces as they thank and worship the Lord. They address Him as "Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come". That's how the Lord identified Himself back in verse 5 of Chapter 1. It stresses that Christ is the eternal God, the Lamb that was slain but is alive, and the one who will return to judge the universe and to complete our salvation. And they are praising Him because He has taken His great power and authority and has begun to reign. Unlike His incarnation, when He came as a meek and suffering servant, He now returns in power and glory.

11:18. And the nations were angered, and the wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets and unto the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

We can understand why believers are grateful when they receive their glorified, spiritual bodies when Christ returns in glory. Their salvation is finally completed. But why should they be thanking God for bringing His wrath upon the unsaved? Why are they so glad that God has come to judge the spiritually dead? Are we not to love our enemies? Yes, we are to be loving now. But once we are raptured, our will is altogether theirs. And when He will, we rejoice to see God's perfect justice done.

How long will God's wrath come upon the unsaved? There are those who teach that when the unsaved are condemned by God, they simply burn up and cease to exist. Not so. The punishment will be everlasting. The Bible is very clear on that. When we get into Revelation 14, we'll see this in great detail.

Suffice it to note here that in Revelation 22, where God talks about believers forever basking in the presence of God in the new heaven and the new earth, verse 15 states, "For without [meaning outside] are dogs, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and murderers, and whoever loveth and maketh a lie." In other words, they will exist throughout eternity, but on the outside.

Special rewards. The four and twenty elders are praising God also because He has come to "give reward" unto His servants the prophets and to the saints. Does it mean that when Christ returns, He will evaluate our works and hand out special rewards to those who have served Him extra diligently?

Some passages in the Bible seem to suggest that. Take, for instance, John 4:35,36. Speaking to His disciples, Jesus says: "Take heed that ye do not your work for the hire of this world, and that ye do not bear false witness against God." That is, giving extra diligence.

In Acts 18, for example, God uses that word three times as He gives us the account of Paul being persecuted by the Jews in Corinth. The apostle was brought by the Jews to the bema presided by Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. The word bema also appears as "judgment seat" in John 19:13. There, we read, "When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat..." Similarly, we read in Matthew 27:19, "When he [Pilate] was set down on the judgment seat [bema], his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man..." When Jesus stood before the bema of Pontius Pilate, He surely was not being evaluated for reward. He was being tried as a prisoner. And there was no way that Jesus could be crucified by Pilate. Spiritually, you see, that is a picture of Jesus standing before the bema of God on our behalf, and He was found guilty because He had taken upon Himself all of our sins.

Died with Christ. What II Corinthians 5:10 really teaches, therefore, is that every human will be judged by God and will receive "according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad", that is, "whether..." So, as we've already seen, it sets forth the same principle as that of Hebrews 9:27: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." And what every human deserves, of course, is eternal life. It's there in II Corinthians 5:10: "...the one who will return to judge the universe and to complete our salvation..."

But what about II Corinthians 5:10, which says: "For we must all appear before the judgment 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?" Indeed, if Corinthians 5:10 is taken as a proof text to teach that believers will stand before the "bema" seat of Christ, where God will give them rewards on the basis of how well or poorly they have served Him. The Greek word bema simply means "judgment seat". That Greek word appears nine other times in the Bible and in all those cases, it refers to a court before which the accused are tried.

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the budded staff is a picture of the new life that Christ brings to His people. The whole scene, therefore, is a picture of God having successfully fulfilled His promise to build His church and to save His people.

Heavenly grace. The lightnings, thunderings, earthquake, and great hail in the final statement are all signs of heavenly signs coming to judge this world. The voices in Revelation 15, with their great voices in heaven proclaim that the Lord shall reign for ever and ever. They reflect the awesome majesty of God.

Elsewhere in the Bible, God speaks of all kinds of heavenly signs in connection with the Last Day. Matthew 24:29 says, for instance, "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." It is actually a quotation from Isaiah 13:10 in the Old Testament, which was also talking about Judgment Day.

But in this verse, God mentions five items. As we have learned before, the number five is the number of grace. It stresses that the entire salvation plan has come from God's amazing grace. And that grace is now being witnessed in all of its glory.

Revelation 12

Lesson 19 for Revelation 12:1-17 ~

"Satan: The Persistent Enemy"

12:1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

The Apostle John now sees a brand new vision. Unrelated chronologically to the seven seals and the seven trumpets, this one gives us a behind-the-scene look at the persistent attack that Satan has been making against Christ and His church. While verse 2 reveals that this "woman" brought forth the Lord Jesus, she cannot be a picture of Mary, the mother of Christ, because verses 6 and 14 tell us that after the childbirth, she fled to the wilderness where she was fed for 1,260 days. Mary didn't do that. She and baby Jesus were taken by Joseph down to Egypt instead.

Moreover, the period of 1,260 days, as we discussed at length when we studied Revelation 11:2, really represents the entire New Testament period. So, this woman cannot possibly be a symbol of any human being.

The entire Bible, however, often uses a woman to picture the church. We read in Ephesians 5:31,32, for example: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

And Revelation 21:9 calls the church the bride of the Lamb. So, this woman really represents the church from whose womb Jesus was brought forth. In this respect, this vision ties back to Genesis 3:15, where God declared, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The seed of the woman is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Might the woman represent the nation of Israel then? No. True, before the cross, Israel was the corporate body of the kingdom of God on earth. But most people in the nation of Israel were unbelievers, and there is no enmity existing between Satan and unbelievers.

It is the eternal church, then, that brought forth the Lord Jesus. Up to the point of His birth, that church had comprised all the Old Testament believers, including Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Mary, the human mother of Jesus. After Pentecost, believers from all nations have been added to it.

Sun and moon. Thus, we see this woman clothed with the sun. The sun, as we have seen many times before, is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And true believers are commanded to "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14). She also has the moon under her feet. As we learned earlier, the moon is a type of Satan. Having been defeated by Christ at the cross, Satan is now under the feet of the church, as well as those of the Lord Himself. Hence, Romans 8:37 declares that we believers "are more than conquerors."

An Old Testament passage that presents much the same truth as Revelation 12:1 is Malachi 4:2-3. It reads, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts." Note that Christ is called "the Sun of righteousness" and that the "wicked" are ashes under the soles of believers.

Crown of stars. Remember back in Revelation 1.20, the Lord told the Apostle John that the stars in the skies are the messengers of the churches? Believers are pictured as stars in Daniel 12 also. Speaking of the end of time, verses 2 and 3 declare: "And many of them that sleep in dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

The crown upon the woman's head signifies kingship and it has twelve stars. The number twelve in the Bible signifies fullness, especially that of the body of believers. Indeed, believers are kings; they have royal blood. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," God says in 1 Peter 2:9.

In sum, all these symbols underscore that this woman is a picture of the eternal church of Christ.

12:2. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. Before the Messiah came, had true believers suffered from great pain? Yes, indeed. For humanity lay in deep despair. As we've just seen, God first promised to send a redeemer to come. But then, Israel turned progressively apostate. For hundreds of years, they were in deep despair. For God had promised, believers were eagerly waiting for the redeemer to come. But then, Israel turned progressively apostate. In response, God actually stopped all prophetic utterance to them around 400 BC. As a result, just before Christ was born, four hundred years of God's silence came to pass. Subsequently, God reiterated the promise over and over again. So, while unbelievers within the nation of Israel didn't understand what God had promised, believers were eagerly waiting for the redeemer to come.

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12:3. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

As we'll soon see, this dragon is identified in verse 9 as Satan the devil, the great adversary of man. At the red is often linked by the Bible to wickedness. We read in Isaiah 1:18, for instance, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Satan, of course, is by far the greatest and most wicked sinner.

Here, we see that this great red dragon has seven heads and ten horns, and that there are seven crowns upon his heads. In Revelation 13, we'll see a beast coming out of the sea that also has seven heads and ten horns. But here the crowns are on the horns. And when we get to Revelation 17, we'll find once more a beast with seven heads and ten horns, but there's no mention of either being crowned.

Why the difference? Remember, the number seven indicates the perfection of what God has in view, and ten, the completeness thereof. Revelation 17 further gives us three definitions: "The seven heads are seven mountains" (v. 9), and "the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings" (v. 12). A king, of course, is one who has the power to rule, especially when he is crowned.

With that in mind, we can say that in all cases, the beast is a picture of the dominion of Satan. Here in Revelation 12, where the seven heads are crowned, the perfection of Satan's rule over his kingdom throughout time is highlighted. In Revelation 13, where the ten horns are crowned, the emphasis is in on the final tribulation period, when Satan is especially powerful. We'll be able to see that difference more clearly when we get to Revelation 17.

12:4a. And his tail drew the third part of the stars, and cast them to the earth.

At first glance, this verse seems to say that Satan caused a third of the angels to rebel with him, some of whom became fallen angels. But looking at it carefully, we see that it was a third part of the stars of heaven that was cast down by Satan's tail. And as we noted in verse 1, stars have to do with the Bible.

When we began to study the blowing of the seven trumpets, remember, we determined that the term "the third part" refers to either the eternal church or the corporate church, depending on the context. And in our study of Revelation 9:10, we learned that tails have to do with false prophets.

So, God is telling us here that before the birth of Jesus, national Israel, the corporate church of that day, had been cast down by Satan's false prophets onto the path to destruction.

12:4b. And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

Meanwhile, from the line of true believers that extended down to Mary, Jesus was about to come forth, Satan, of course, was not literally standing there in Bethlehem prepared to pounce upon the child. He worked through King Herod in his attempt to devour the child.

After Jesus was born, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matt. 2:2).

From Micah 5:2, the priests and scribes determined that the Messiah must have been born in Bethlehem of Judea. King Herod then told the Magi, "When ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also" (Matt. 2:9).

Instead of worshiping Christ, though, Herod really wanted to have that child killed. So, when the Magi did not return, he issued an order to have all the babies in Bethlehem up to two years old killed. But Satan failed to devour Jesus because Joseph, forewarned by an angel of the Lord, had "When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt." (Matt. 2:13.)

12:5. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

That man child was the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to save His people. But this verse directs our attention to another function of His, namely, to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Many
more and more churches are turning apostate. But if at all possible, we are to find one that is perfectly scriptural had the translators used the phrase “Michael the arch messenger” in Jude 9. So, it would have been ‘arch messenger’ here is ‘archangel’ (v. 17). Then, in 10:1-10, we’ll see that Christ defeated Satan at the cross.

12:9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. He was cast out to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Here, God makes it clear that the serpent, the Devil, Satan and the dragon all refer to the same individual, the one who deceives the whole world. This does not mean that Satan is a sort of devil, but rather that Satan is the one who seeks to deceive the whole world. Being a created being, he is not omnipotent. In job, when God asked Satan where he had come from, he answered, “From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (1:7). He goes to and fro in the earth; he cannot be in two places at a time.

12:10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

With Christ having gone to the cross, salvation is now available to all who believe in Him. And since He has conquered Satan, He has overcome the one who accused us before God. The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which means that Satan has been defeated.

12:11. And they overcame him not by might, but by my Spirit in the heavens. And they that overcome shall inherit the kingdom of God; and I will give them the Angel is commonly believed to be an angel of power, after that the Holy Ghost is come on them.’
upon you”; and in Romans 1:16, where Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Thus, the strength refers to the evangelistic power of the Holy Spirit.

Now comes also “the kingdom of our God”. This is the kingdom that Christ came to establish. Right after Moses had died, we read in Deuteronomy 34:6, “And if that person is one of God’s elect, he will 

the word of our testimony, which is the sword of 
Word of God as it is proclaimed by believers.

longer had any grounds for making such 
doubt to justify his own rebellion. But after Christ 
died for all the sins of believers, Satan no 
example, for having stolen his brother’s 
salvation of Old Testament believers as well. He 
work on the cross. While in principle Jesus was 
according to I Corinthians 15, is predicated on 
to appear as he did, along with Elijah, on the 
Moses' body. This explains why Moses was able 
knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day 
Bible does not give us any other information 
for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one 
be sent to hell to be tormented. 
What have we to 
repenteth 
…they loved not their lives unto the death 
for he subsequently resurrected 
her substance is increased in the land 
us, but a short time. 
that statement is also spiritually true with every 
salvation program is now in full swing. 
by the fact that God’s salvation 
we rejoin to dwell in heavens, and ye 
In James 2:19, we read, "For 
do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come 
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the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do 
the full authority to liberate God’s elect from Satan’s 
"speaking of His special relationship to Israel, 
under the wrath of God. 
prophets have been infiltrating congregations all 
he hath but a show kingdom. Luke 15:10 reveals that "there is joy in the 
we rejoice as well. We read in Philippians 3:20, "For 
our conversation [meaning citizenship] is in heaven; from whom also we live, even the Lord Jesus Christ.” So, from the moment we are 
we are dwelling spiritually in heaven. 
Woe to the earth. As we learned when we studied Revelation 12:1, the sea is a picture of the 
peoples of the earth, particularly the unsaved multitudes of the world. Woe to them 
now because Satan is coming down with great 
anger. He realizes that he has little time left 
before he is sent to everlasting punishment. 
Remember the time Jesus healed the two 
demon-possessed men? The demons He had 
right after he is sent in Matthew 8:29, "What have we 
do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come 
hither to torment us before the time?" You see, 
knew that when Judgment Day comes, they 
be sent to hell to be tormented. 
In James 2:19, we read, "Thou believest that there 
is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, 
acrimonious debate. 
And if that person is one of God’s elect, he will 
that the word of our testimony, which is the sword of 
their way, when Satan’s elect were made for Christ’s sake: 
...they loved not their lives unto the death." But 
that statement is also spiritually true with every 
bad and the righteous or the wicked, for that 
they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall 
run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." 
Thus, in the first half of this verse, God assures 
us that when He calls us to serve Him in this 
world, He gives us the strength to do the 
task, as well as His protective care. The rest of 
verse 14 is a reiteration of what was stated in 
verse 6. (Three-and-a-half times means three-
and-a-half years, which corresponds to the 
1,260 days in verse 6.) By saying twice that the 
woman is to be fed and nourished, God 
underscores how important it is for us to study 
the Word. There simply is no other way whereby 
we can develop our spiritual strength. 
12:15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth 
water as a flood after the woman, that he 
could cause her to be carried away of the flood. 
The Greek word for “flood” here is normally 
translated “river” elsewhere in the Bible. It’s 
the very same word that God uses in John 7:38, 
where Jesus says, “He that believeth on me, as 
the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers 
of living water. But the rivers of living water 
represent the true gospel as it is applied to 
God’s elect by the Holy Spirit. 
Thus, by the serpent casting out of his mouth 
water as a flood, it illustrates that Satan’s 
emissaries will be mouthing gospels that sound 
almost like the true one, but are in fact of 
the devil. Because these gospels appeal to the 
worldly mass, many congregations in the 
corporate church will be carried away by this 
river of poison water. This is especially 
pronounced in the current final tribulation period. 
12:16. And the earth helped the woman, and 
the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the 
flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. 
An account recorded in Numbers 16, I believe, 
can help us understand what God has in view 
here. There, we find three men, Korah, Dathan 
and Abiram, rebelling against Moses. They 
challenged his authority and wanted to be 
priests themselves. The next morning, the Lord 
told the Israelites to separate themselves from 
the tents of those three men. Moses then told 
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12:17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Like the woman, the "remnant of her seed" represents the body of believers. The Bible indicates in many places that believers are but a remnant of the whole. We read in Isaiah 10:21, for instance, "Though the Lord turn, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God."

Does the "remnant of Jacob" mean that those returning to God will come only from national Israel? No. In the same context, Isaiah 11:10 says, "And the root of Jesse shall be a root of a dry branch, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."

The root of Jesse, as we learned when we studied Revelation 12, is God. He will be sought by the Gentiles, that is, non-Jews who come to believe on Him. And they will find resting in His atoning work on the cross to be glorious.

To show further that the remnant refers to all believers, verses 11 and 12 read, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an hand again the second time to recover the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God."

Second gathering. Notice it says there that the Lord shall recover the remnant the second time, implying that God recovered the remnant once before. Well, that was after the Israelites had been thrown into captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. When the Medes and Persians defeated the Babylonians and came into power, God raised up Nehemiah and Ezra to gather a remnant of Israelites back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the wall.

That, however, was pointing to the second gathering. This time, the remnant will be the Israel of God, those whom God had chosen to save. Dispersed in the four corners of the world, they are called a remnant because they account for only a tiny percentage of the whole human race.

Here in Revelation 12:17, God uses the term "remnant of her seed" to represent the body of believers. The emphasis here is that Satan will attack one generation of believers after another. His war against the body of Christ will persist throughout the New Testament period.

Obedience. This remnant is described as they "which keep the commandments of God." That's because only true believers find in their heart an earnest desire to do the will of God. Out of the heartfelt joy and gratitude, believers instinctively want their life to be pleasing to their Savior. This is part of their new nature.

The commandments of God include the whole Word of God, everything that the Bible teaches. In the New Testament, Jesus sums it up in two great commandments. In Mark 12:29-31, He says: "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: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is none other commandment greater than these."

Effectively, those two commandments encompass the whole law of God. We are to love God with our entire being and to love our neighbor as ourselves. How do we love God with our entire being? Only by becoming a child of God, because only then is there real righteousness in our life. It doesn't mean that we literally love God totally once we're saved. We still have a desire for the things of this world. But God looks upon us as though we do love Him above all, because we are covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness.

Testimonies. And God wants us to love our neighbor as ourselves. If we truly love our neighbors, we naturally want them to have the very best. And we can help them get the very best by showing them the way to become saved. And this is precisely the final phase of Revelation 12:17 - the remnant "have the testimony of Jesus Christ".

You see, believers are mandated by God to send the gospel into the world. And indeed, all true believers desire to see salvation come to others, especially their loved ones. This, incidentally, is why Satan is angry at the remnant. Not every believer is qualified to send the gospel into the world. And this is precisely the final phase of Revelation 12:17 - the remnant "have the testimony of Jesus Christ".

Here in Revelation 13, both symbols apply. That the beast rises up out of the sea means that the dominion of Satan comprises all the unsaved people of the world. And every human being - whether a child of God by faith, is consigned to spend eternity in hell.

Condemned. People like to point to God's love by quoting the 3:18: "For I love you." But let's break the verse up with the final phrase of Revelation 12:17 - the remnant "have the testimony of Jesus Christ".

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The symbol of having a name upon the head can represent the body of Christ. The root of Jesse, as we learned when we studied Revelation 12, is God. Most of the Gentiles was told in verse 36 to engrave on a gold plate the words "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" and fasten that plate to the front of a mitre, or a diadem. Then, God said in verse 38, "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD."
Satan's workers speak much as the true ministers of the gospel do, they are really out to devour. Why? Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah in Revelation 5:5, and the devil is described in 1 Peter 5:8 as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. This is reinforced by...

Dan. 7:4: The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

Even as the woman in Revelation 12 (a picture of the body of believers) was given the wings of a great eagle, he that taketh away the head of the beast saw eagle’s wings. Again, Satan tries to imitate the church. But its wings have been plucked off; it cannot provide the protective care and the spiritual guidance that God gives to his church. In short, this beast does not save people. And being a spirit, Satan has to work through men. So, this beast was made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.

Bear. Revelation 13:2 also says that the beast was like unto a bear. And...

Dan. 7:5: “And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it; and the beast said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.”

In the Garden of Eden, God took a rib out of the side of Adam and formed Eve. Later, Adam called her “bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23). Here, Satan, the wicked ruler over the poor people, is said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

In Habakkuk 1, there is a verse that talks about leopards flying. Warning that He would raise up the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to destroy Judah, God says in verse 8, “Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horned shields shall come forth; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.”

Thus, in both Daniel 7 and Revelation 13, God was indicating that, just as He raised up Babylon to destroy the apostate Judah, He would use Satan to bring judgment against the end-time church. Note that in this Daniel verse, the number four, which symbolizes universality, is consistently featured in “four wings of a fowl,” the “four heads” of the beast. It underscores the universality of Satan’s rule during the final tribulation period.

13:3. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

In Psalm 68:21, we read that “God shall wound the head of his enemies.” Christ indeed fatally wounded Satan: His first blow was at the cross. Hebrews 2:14 says: “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 of death, that is, the devil.”

But why was the deadly wound healed? Because the death blow Christ dealt Satan is that which guarantees eternal condemnation for Satan on Judgment Day. But Judgment Day will not come until the thousand years have lasted, and the world has fully unfolded. Most of the people God had chosen to save must still be born during the New Testament period. As long as this world exists, Satan still has the right to rule over the unsaved.

Significantly, this statement of Satan having been healed appears in the context of “all the world wondered after the beast.” You see, only in the blinded eyes of the world does Satan appear healthy and well. The unsaved do not understand what happened at the cross. They are just fascinated by what Satan has to offer here and now.

13:4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

Not only do the people of the world wonder after Satan, they even worship him. To be sure, not many people openly admit that they are Satan worshippers; the great majority of the unsaved don’t. But God can see what is in the heart of man, can see the hidden masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other (Matt. 6:24). Thus, anyone who does not worship God is doing the devil’s work. This verse says that the dragon, which represents Satan, is the one who gives power to the beast, which represents his kingdom or the unsaved world. But it also notes that they worshipped both the dragon and the beast. The point is, one cannot really separate Satan from the world that he rules; the two are intimately related to each other. Hence, God says in I John 2:15, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

At any rate, the unsaved are so enamored by what Satan has to offer that they say, “Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” In their way of thinking, nothing can beat the things that the world offers. What they don’t know is that neither the power nor the wisdom of the world is meaningful when it comes to salvation. God says in I Corinthians 1:1: “For I, according to the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent...Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (vv. 18, 19, 25).

13:5. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

Whenever a person comes with a theory or a philosophy that denies the existence of God or challenges the Word of God, he is speaking blasphemies. And since time began, Satan is to send forth the true gospel, Satan uses all kinds of people to discredit us. When our Lord was on earth, He, too, was despised and rejected. When we return to the Master, the Bible declares, will happen to the servants. When Jesus was reviled, He reviled not in return. That’s the example He wants us to follow. And we can follow that example cheerfully when we remember that it is a blessing to be persecuted for Christ’s sake. "Blessed are ye, Jesus says, “when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. 5:11, 12).

13:7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kinds, and tongues, and nations.

Who are the saints? Some Christians in the past who lived such a virtuous life as to deserve special honor in the church? No, every child of God is a saint. In fact, the Greek word for “saint” is the same word for “holy.” It means someone who has been set apart for the service of God. All believers are so separated. The Apostle Paul writes, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord.” (2 Cor. 4:5). In this context, though, the saints that are overcome by Satan refer to the churches and congregations where believers normally assemble. So, this verse is saying once again that during the final tribulation period in which we are living, virtually all congregations are overtaken by false prophets. We have learned many times in this study that God emphasizes that this apostasy is worldwide in nature. To convey the idea of universality, God normally features the number four. He would use an expression like “all kinds and tongues and nations.”

But this verse says that Satan was given power over “all kinds, and tongues, and nations.” With
the number three, God is reassuring us that He has purposely let Satan overcome most congregations at this end time. He is using Satan to set both the corporate church and the world up for his own final triumph. However, God also uses the sword to typify the wicked of the world. We see this dramatically in Luke 22. On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples in verse 36, “he that hath no sword shall not be able to follow me.” When they said, “Lord, behold, here are two swords,” He answered in verse 38, “It is enough.”

Why did He tell the disciples to buy a sword? To fulfill the prophecy in the verse just quoted, “if it be possible, repent ye.” In Revelation 2:37, “For I say unto you, that this is that written must yet be accomplished in me. And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.” The verb was quoting from Isaiah 53:12, which had prophesied that the Messiah would be “numbered with the transgressors.”

The wicked. The transgressors are the wicked, therefore, those in rebellion against God. We read in Proverbs 2:21,22: “For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.” So, in that statement, Christ identified the sword with the wicked of the world. And in the context of Revelation 13, Satan, who rules the wicked world, is the one who kills with the sword.

Incidentally, Christ told the disciples to take two swords on the eve of His crucifixion also for symbolic reasons. At that moment in time, He was about to turn Himself over to the enemy. Remember when the Jews and Christians came to seize Him, Jesus said, “this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53)? You see, the number two has to do with the church. During the three days and three nights when Christ was “in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40), the church was without its head; it came under the power of Satan.

But here in Revelation 13:10, God assures us that Satan will himself be killed with the sword. He will be killed, however, by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Patience and faith. After having declared that Satan will surely be judged, God goes on to say that this is a time that calls for patience and faith on the part of the saints. This exhortation applies, of course, mainly to us believers who are living during the end-time period. To us, it has been most agonizing to see churches all over the globe modifying the Word of God to please men, thereby preaching gospels that do not really bring salvation. And it has been terribly heartbreaking to watch many of our unsaved loved ones becoming saved are rapidly evaporating. This kind of acute spiritual distress is something believers in other ages have never experienced, and something the unsaved cannot understand. That is why the Lord warned that the great tribulation would be different from the trials that believers have faced in the past, and why we believers need greater patience and faith to live through this period of great tribulation.

Lesson 21 for Revelation, 13:11-18 ~ "Prophecies of Our Time"

13:11a. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the sea.

So far in Revelation 13 we’ve seen that the beast coming out of the sea represents Satan’s rule primarily over the New Testament period. Now God begins to deal exclusively with Satan’s activities in the end-time period. We are living in today. Before we go on, though, let’s take another detour to Daniel because the Books of Daniel and Revelation supplement each other in many ways.

When we studied Revelation 13:2, we looked at Daniel 7:2-6 and saw that the first three beasts in that chapter were very similar to the beast that came out of the sea and spoken of earlier in this chapter. Now, we are going to find that the fourth beast of Daniel 7 corresponds directly to this beast that comes out of the earth.

Dan. 7:7: After this I saw in the night vision, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake 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.

Regarding this part of the Daniel 7 vision, the Bible itself has this to say:

Dan. 7:23: The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

Like the beast that comes up from the earth, the fourth beast in Daniel 7 is diverse from the first three. It is “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly” and it has “great iron teeth” to devour the world. These descriptions underscore that Satan is far more powerful now than anytime earlier in the New Testament era.

This fourth beast is different from the first three also in that it has ten horns, symbolizing the completeness of his power. Remember, we saw in Revelation 13:1 that the ten horns were crowned in that vision. That’s because a good part of this chapter focuses on Satan’s strong rule during this final tribulation period.

The Little Horn

Dan. 7:8a: “I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots...

Among the ten horns, Daniel sees yet another horn. God gives the interpretation:

Dan. 7:24: 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, and he shall subdue three kings.

In his song of praise, Zechariah the father of John the Baptist spoke of the horn as “the horn of salvation” (Luke 1:69). With Jesus being the Great Horn, Satan would be the little horn. Note than Dan. 7:8a says that the little horn came up among the ten, but verse 24 says that he shall rise after the ten kings. Taking them together, we see that the current powerful rule of Satan represents the closing climax of his overall domination of the world.

Plucked up. What about the three horns that were plucked up by the roots?

First, the number three shows that it is something that serves God’s purpose. Second, it ties back to an historical fact recorded in II Chronicles 36. Before the Babylonians finally entered and destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BC, King Jehoiakim, who had captured the last three kings of Judah — Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. Since the conquest of Judah by Babylon prefigured the current takeover of the apostate church by Satan, the statement that “he shall subdue three kings” reiterates that the vision has to do with the final chapter of the church age.

Yet another beast. Thirdly, this reference to the three kings serves to link the fourth beast in Daniel 7 also to the beast in Revelation 17, because it also has seven heads and ten horns.

Let’s look briefly at a couple of verses that speak of the beast’s seven heads, Revelation 17:10 says, “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: as we not before, together the seven heads (or kings) represent the whole span of Satan’s rule. Hence, the last one, which yet to come and continue a short space, must be Satan’s final reign.

Verse 11 adds: “And the beast that was, and is not, even he is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.” Though Satan is the eighth king, it explains here, he is nevertheless still part of the seven kings, because Satan’s end-time dominance would still be a part of his overall reign allowed by God. After that, he will go to hell.

Eighth king. That he is also called the eighth king is where the Daniel 7 connection comes in. The fourth beast started with ten horns. The little horn that arises after them would have been the eleventh. But he has plucked up three kings, and so he becomes the eighth king.

By this linkage with Revelation 17, which clearly talks about the last stage of Satan’s rule, we are further assured that Daniel 7 is talking about the final tribulation period.

Dan. 7:28: And, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. The “eyes of man” are normally a picture of prophets bringing the gospel. In Isaiah 29, where God declared that his eyes and mouth were brought spiritual blindness to Israel, He said in verse 10, “For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.” God equates “your eyes” with “the prophets and your rulers” there.

Here in Daniel 7:8, though, the eyes were in the little horn, which is Satan. As the phrase “speaking great things” means prophesying, the picture is that of Satan prophesying to the nations through false prophets preaching false gospels.

Once more, we find God’s own commentary later in the chapter:

Dan. 7:25a: “And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws.” The saints of the most High are the children of God. They are so inundated by false prophets that churchgoers begin to consider them the outsiders. The principle goals of Satan’s teaching are “to change times and laws” of the Bible.

Changing times. Indeed, we have long entered this sad state of affairs. Over the past century, among the most widely promulgated doctrines on biblical time is that Judgment Day is at least a thousand years down the way. These doctrines come in many varieties. Some suggest that Christians will be secretly raptured on biblical time again of His pending judgment. We find those warnings in Isaiah, Jeremiah and the other prophetic books. But instead of repenting, the Israelis ridiculed and mistreated those prophets.

Three-and-a-half. We looked at “time and times and the dividing of time” when we studied Revelation 11, remember? It corresponds to the three and a half days when the dead bodies of the two witnesses lay in the street.

Thankfully, Satan’s success lasts only a short space. A final victory for the Lord Jesus follows:

Dan. 7:9-11: I beheld till the Thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose head was like the purest wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his feet like fine brass; and the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning fire.

In this context, the thrones that were cast down are those of the eight kings. Together, they represent Satan’s end-time rule. The Ancient of days who did sit, of course, is Eternal God. With fiery flame, He will wage the unsaved and will sentence Satan to eternal damnation.

Daniel 8

In the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, Daniel had another vision. That vision, recorded in Daniel 8, also relates to what we’re studying here in Revelation 13. In the first part of that vision, the prophet saw a ram with two horns doing great things. Then it wanted to do even more. So came a little horn that would take away the dominion from the first wild goat by means of a trick. And when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

As in Daniel 7, God Himself explains what the vision represents...
Dan. 8:20-22: The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Greece; and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up against the nation, but not in his power.

The Medes and the Persians, pictured by the ram with two horns, conquered Babylon shortly after Daniel had seen that vision and became the dominant kingdom for about 200 years. But they, in turn, were conquered by Greece, the first king of which was Alexander the Great.

Secular history reveals that in only a few years, Alexander the Great conquered the known world of his day. But he died very young, in his early thirties. After his kingdom was divided among four generals, lost all its might.

All nations. In the Bible, nevertheless, the kingdom of Greece has continued to be highly relevant. Even though the Roman Empire was predominant when the New Testament was written, God typically uses the term “the Greeks” — not “the Romans” — to distinguish the Gentiles from the Jews.

Hence, “the four notable [kingdoms] toward the four winds of heaven” in Daniel 8:6 really represent all the nations of the world that have emerged after Alexander the Great. Only by understanding this can we find continuity in the prophecy of Daniel 8, because the rest of this vision pertains to the end of time.

Dan. 8:9,10: And out of one of them came forth a fourth horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host of the holy people, and smote the lampstand.

Here, God again paints a picture of Satan taking over the corporate church. In His commentary, though, He gives us some new details about this little horn:

Dan. 8:23: And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. In this end-time period, Satan is of fierce countenance and understands dark sentences. The only other time God uses the phrase “fierce countenance” in the Bible is Deuteronomy 28:49,50. Warning Israel of the curses for disobedience.

He says: “The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose countenance and understands dark sentences. They come as ministers of righteousness — not the Romans — to distinguish the Gentiles from the Jews. They come as ministers of righteousness — not the Romans — to distinguish the Gentiles from the Jews.

And here’s God’s own commentary:

Dan. 8:24: “And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.”

God is still pounding it in, warning again that in these end-time days, the devil’s deception is succeeding in casting away the truth of the Bible. Ever-burning light. Why does it burn? It must have had sacrifice. When does it have sacrifice to do with the final tribulation period as all animal offerings ceased after the cross?

The fact is, the word “sacrifice”, italicized in the King James Bible, does not appear in the original manuscript. The “daily” that was taken away relates to the lamp that burnt continually in the temple. In fact, the Hebrew word for daily here, tamid, is usually translated “continual” or “continually” elsewhere in the Bible.

Back in Leviticus 24:2-4, God said to Moses, “Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually; that the candlestick may stand between the porch and the veil, yea, it shall be with the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation; shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the Lord continually: it shall burn on the face of Aaron’s burnt offerings continually before the Lord.”

You see, those lamps represent the light of the gospel. The true gospel is the “daily” that is taken away by the little horn.

Self-deception. Of the devil at end-time, God says:

Dan. 8:25: “And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”

Satan is the father of lies. Because of his craftiness in deception, his false gospels are widely perceived as the right way to gain peace with God. In reality, they are leading people to destruction. Satan even deceives himself into believing that he is more powerful than he really is. He has become so arrogant in his heart as to think that he is God. Thus, II Thessalonians 2:4 describes the devil as he “who opposeth and exhalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” But Satan can go on so far as God allows him to go. On the last day, he will be broken — not by hand or any human force, but by the Lord Jesus Himself.

Having studied the beasts in Daniel 7 and 8, we are now better equipped to understand the rest of Revelation 13.

13:11,12: And he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

From our study of Daniel 7, we have learned that this second beast, which comes out of the earth, is the antichrist. He begins to reign during this final tribulation period. That he has two horns like a lamb and speaks as a dragon reaffirms that Satan is the Antichrist and that his false prophet comes as an impostor. Yet even though they are in fact speaking on behalf of the devil.

Jesus speaks of this in Matthew 24:23, “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.” In other words, when someone comes and says you can feel the presence of Christ in this church or that church, be wary of them. The people there are so spirit-filled as they sing and dance, don’t believe it. The lamb they are worshipping is really the dragon.

13:13. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

The ministers serving Satan operate as though they have special power from God. As II Corinthians 11:15 warns, they have been “transformed as the ministers of righteousness” by them.

Calling fire down. There is only one account in the Bible in which someone called fire down from heaven to destroy his enemy, and it’s recorded in II Kings 1. There, we find the wicked king of Syria sending his fifty men to try to take Elijah. The prophet called fire down from heaven to consume them. The king then sent a second captain with his fifty men and they, too, were destroyed by fire from heaven. Elijah, you see, was a figure of the Lord Jesus there; and that confrontation was a picture of Christ vanquishing His enemies.

Falling Backward. But how can Satan make fire come down from heaven? In II Corinthians 11, Paul tells us that Satan is “like an angel of light.” He has allowed Satan and his false prophets to have the appearance of God. They are going to continue deceiving people into believing that they are more powerful than they really are. They are going to continue deceiving people into thinking that they are more powerful than they really are. They are going to continue deceiving people into thinking that they are more powerful than they really are.

(1) Judas and the Temple Servants. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, the temple servants, led by Satan-indwelt Judas, came to arrest Him. Jesus asked them, “Whom seek ye?” and they answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Then, we read in John 18:6, “As soon as then he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.” If Elijah could call fire down to destroy those who came to take him, surely Jesus could do the same because He came to earth to be crucified. But by causing them to fall backward upon hearing the name “I AM”, He demonstrated that He did have that divine power.

(2) Eli, the High Priest. In I Samuel 4 is the account of Israel being defeated by the Philistines. The enemy captured the ark and killed the two sons of Eli, the high priest. A Benjamite ran back to Shiloh and gave Eli the bad news. Verse 18 then reads, “And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake. He died: for he was an old man, and full of days.” As the high priest, Eli was Israel’s representative before God. His falling backward upon hearing the news about the ark was thus a picture of the nation of Israel coming under the judgment of God.

(3) Northern Kingdom. In Isaiah 28, God warned that He would send a foreign nation to judge the Northern kingdom of Israel because of the lack of faith. He said: “But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.” In other words, God was saying, “Those people refuse to heed my warning. Instead of my whole Word, they just pick a verse here and a passage there. So, they...
(4) The Tribe of Dan. In Genesis 49, Jacob was telling his twelve sons that "which shall bless you in Jacob."
He said in verse 17: "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward." Dan and Ephraim are the two tribes that God distinctly commanded in the "tribes" of Israel listed in Revelation 7. They were used by God there to typify the false prophets that would arise from within the institutional church.
In his prophecy, Jacob likened Dan to a serpent and an adder, both of which refer to Satan. That Satan would cause the rider to fall backward stresses that false prophets would snare their followers into damnation.

Misguided "blessing," This prophecy is indeed being fulfilled everywhere in our time. In churches that have been going after the signs-and-wonders gospels, a common phenomenon is people falling over backward.

Ironically, those who fall over backward think that they have received a special blessing from God in that they have been slain by the Holy Spirit. The truth is, nothing in the Bible ever suggests that believers would experience such a "blessing." If anything, their falling back shows that they are under the judgment of God.

13:14a. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of the signs and wonders which he had power to do in the sight of the beast;

Tongues phenomenon. Besides causing people to fall over backward, Satan's workers deceive people through the "tongues" phenomenon. There are two kinds of speaking in tongues recorded in the Bible. In the Book of Acts, we find several accounts of believers suddenly having the ability to speak in a known foreign language. It was God's way of showing that the gospel had begun to go out to all nations.

The second kind involves speaking in an unknown language. It was one of the spiritual gifts that certain Corinthians had received. We read in I Corinthians 14:2, "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." In verse 22 of the same chapter, God labeled this phenomenon of speaking in an unknown tongue as a "sign," or a miracle.

Satanic activity. A study of church history shows that this sign ceased shortly after the apostolic age. But in the last few decades, more and more churchgoers seem to have this gift again. The fact is, speaking in tongues is one of the miracles God allows Satan to deceive people with.

When the Bible was still being written, God did bring divine revelation via people speaking in unknown languages. When interpreted by those who had the gift of interpreting tongues, the messages served to edify the congregation.

Divine parameter. When God had finished using the sign, however, He declared in Revelation 22:18, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.

In other words, God was saying, "I have written in the Bible all that I want mankind to know. From now on, any supernatural message you receive can only be from Satan. So, if you consider such a message to be a divine confirmation to me, it would mean that you are not a child of mine, and I will punish you even more severely than I shall the average unsaved person who does not know me.

God-given power. When it speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit, the Bible typically uses the Greek word dunamis. The word "power" that Satan has in this verse is from the Greek didomi, which is normally translated "give." Meaning: Satan comes with signs and wonders in the end-time only because God has given him the right to break the silence between the supernatural and the natural.

When Jesus was ministering on earth, He attested to His deity by signs and wonders. To show that the apostles were God's servants, they were also empowered to do signs and wonders for a short period. At that time, Satan was not allowed to perform miracles so that people would be led astray. As we have been taking as to where the supernatural power came from.

Not by sight. The apostles ceased to perform any such miracles once their credentials had been established. Believers have since been told to walk "by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7).

In fact, even before Christ ascended back to heaven, He had said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Earlier, when some of the Jewish leaders asked Him for a sign, He answered, "An evil and adulterous generation seeth after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Matt. 12:39).

The point is, seeing signs and wonders does not yield saving faith. The only supernatural thing God wants us to see is the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the miracle of the cross.

Testing program. Toward the end of time, however, Satan has an opportunity to do saving faith. Like the Jews of Jesus' day, the unsaved will be interested primarily in seeing visible signs. And it is to test and judge the church that God will give Satan permission to increasingly do signs and wonders during that period.

Every biblical reference to signs and wonders in the end-time has to do with satanic activity. For example, Paul says, "For these shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." And in II Thessalonians 2:9-10, which speaks of Satan being revealed "with all power and signs and lying wonders" just before Judgment Day, we read: "Even him [the Lord Jesus Christ], whose coming is after [or against] the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." God is not the author of confusion. So, when He purposely allows these signs and wonders today, He Himself will not be doing them. Incidentally, the phrase "if it were possible" in Matthew 24:24 implies that it is not really possible for God to change people.

13:14b. saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound of a sword, and did live.

In the Old Testament, pagan worship was characterized by the worship of idols. We don't find much idol worship recorded in the New Testament. But there are repeated warnings against serving mammon, or money. The foolish man can fall into the trap of idolatry, or worshiping anything other than God Himself. Colossians 3:5 elaborates, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness; which is idolatry." In other words, whenever we seek to satisfy our lusts or sinful nature or to go after the things of this world, we are confounding an image to the beast.

13:15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Satan is also empowered by God to give life to the image, that is to enable false prophets to perform supernatural signs and wonders. Remember we saw in Daniel 8 that the king of fear, when he saw these signs, "was confounded; and all the rest of the people that were with him were confounded also." Daniel 8:26. Did he remember those foolish sentences? That is what this verse means by "the image of the beast should speak." The ministers working for Satan are able to preach the Word of God eloquently. But instead of the full counsel of God, they modify the gospel to appease and attract the unsaved. Gathering popularity by preaching what people with itching ears like to hear, these false prophets have been taking control of the corporate church, effectively killing thereby the voice of true believers.

13:16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, and free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.

To better understand this verse, let's look at Revelation 14:1, where the Apostle John sees in heaven the Lamb and the 144,000 "having his Father's name written in their foreheads." Those 144,000 represents all the saints. Which name of the Father is written in their foreheads? Jehovah? Jesus? Christ? The Word of God? The Lord of Hosts? All these are names of God; each one gives us some insight into the character and attributes of God.

But none of them is really the name of God because God does not have a name as we do. We are given names to distinguish one from another. However, God does not need any name to identify Himself from other gods. In fact, we will find in Revelation 19 that God has a name that no man can know. You see, such terms as "the Father's name," the name of God and "the name of Christ" are all meant to denote everything that God is. So, having the Father's name on their foreheads is a figure of saying that these are God's people.

By the same token, this verse is a figure of speech saying that Satan owns all the unsaved. He has placed his brand upon them, much as a rancher puts his brand on the cattle he owns.

Enslaved. It says here that the mark is in their right hand, or in their foreheads. As we've learned before, the right hand represents the will of a person; and the foreheads, his mind or his intellect. In either case, it means that the unsaved are surrendered to Satan. That's why no one can on his own decide to follow Christ. People become saved only because God has broken their bonds and has begun to incline their wills and draws them to Himself. Only God can act and save people.

13:17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

When we read the phrase "buy or sell," we immediately think of economic activities. But a person's salvation is not dependent on his financial ability to buy or sell. To learn what God has in view when He says that people must compare Scripture with Scripture. We read in Mark 11:15: "And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple; and made it a den of thieves." Going back to Jeremiah 7, we read: "And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and cast out them that sold and bought in the temple; and made it a den of thieves."

Notice it talks there about people that sold and bought in the temple. Verse 17. "And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written in your law, 'My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer but ye have made it a den of thieves.' Quoting from Jeremiah 7, the Lord Jesus, equates in that statement those who bought and sold in the temple with the houses of thieves.

Den of thieves. Going back to Jeremiah 7, we read in verses 9 and 10: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and bow yourselves to strange gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?"
God was faulting ancient Israel for having become spiritually adulterous. They burned incense unto Baal and walked after other gods, yet they dared to come into the temple and say, "We are God’s people." So, God called them by asking, "Do you think you are liberated to do all these terrible things?"

He continued in verse 11, "Is this house, which is called by my name, become like an harlot? And will I continue to be a harlot unto you? Therefore will I no more be your God," says the LORD. That statement, which Jesus quoted in Mark 11, effectively identifies a den of robbers, or thieves, with unsaved people who come into the temple and say that they are saved. We thus see that those who "buy or sell" are synonymous to those who worship other gods and yet claim to be God’s children.

In a nutshell, then, God is saying in Revelation 13:17: no one can worship Satan and still think the answer to 666 can be found in the Bible. We must find the answers from the Bible itself. I want to make it clear from the very beginning that this number of man is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

13:18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

The Greek phraseology for "it is the number of a man" can also be correctly written as "it is the number of man": You will see why the latter translation makes a better sense once we have studied and understood what 666 means.

Throughout the New Testament era, theologians have tried all kinds of approaches to understand the number 666. Prevalent is the use of numerology – that is, using the numerical values assigned to the Greek, Roman or other alphabets. Supposedly, the name of the antichrist will be such that the values of all its letters add up to 666. There is no biblical authority, however, for using numerology to interpret Scripture. With reference to the Word of God, I Corinthians 13:13 says, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

To understand the symbols used in the Bible, we must find the answers from the Bible itself, I think the answer to 666 can be found in Zechariah 13. There, God declares in verses 8 and 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."

Two-to-one. Here, God divides the human race into two groups. The first group, represented by the figure two were all the unsaved of the world. They shall be cut off and die. The other group, comprising all those whom He has chosen to save and whom He would call "my people", is symbolically identified as the third part.

Let me hasten to point out that these are symbolic fractions. We cannot infer from the statement that one-third of all the people that have ever lived are saved. The Bible has made it very clear that only a remnant of the population is chosen by grace to be God’s children. A remnant means just a tiny fraction. You may recall that when we studied Revelation 2:10 and 7:4, I noted that the number 1,000 represents the completion of God’s plan. Well, two-thirds of 1,000 equals 666 in whole numbers. So, you can see that the symbolic number that God has assigned to the unsaved of the world.

Confirmations. There are at least two other accounts in the Bible where God uses the two-to-one relationship to represent the unsaved and the saved. The first is in II Samuel 8. It begins by noting that David smote the Philistines and subdued them. Then verse 2 reads: "And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And so the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought gifts." Here we have another picture of salvation. David is a figure of Christ. Two thirds of the Moabites, who typified the unsaved, were put to death. One third were spared and they became the bond servants of Christ. We of course are the bond servants of Christ.

The second account is in II Kings 1. We made reference to this a little earlier when we talked about falling over backward. Remember Elijah called down fire from heaven and destroyed two captains with their companies of fifty men each? Well, the king sent a third captain with his fifty men to take Elijah. This group pleaded for mercy and they were spared. God again destroyed two-thirds, and saved one-third.

In this closing verse of Revelation 13, God is effectively issuing this warning: you need true wisdom. Things are not what they appear on the surface. Those who follow after the false gospels may think that they are worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ and are therefore saved. But they are really buying and selling in the temple; they are a den of robbers. They belong to the beast, because they are among the symbolic two-thirds that are unsaved.

Revelation 14
Lesson 22 for Revelation 14:1-11 ~ “The Hour of Judgment”

14:1. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.

As Chapter 14 opens, the Apostle John sees yet another vision, a more agreeable vision than the previous one. The vision of Revelation 13 featured the devastating work of Satan, as he is used by God to judge the church during the final tribulation period. This one highlights the triumph of the cross.

First, he sees a Lamb standing on Mount Sion. This Lamb, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is standing on Mount Sion, which is a figure of the Kingdom of God. Standing with Him are 144,000. We first saw this number 144,000 in Revelation 7. We determined then that it is not literally the sum of 12,000 individual believers from each of the twelve tribes of national Israel; the number is symbolic. Reason: from the tribes that God listed, only three in total, really represents the four "tribes of the children of Israel", conspicuously absent were the tribes of Dan and Ephraim.

All Believers. By carefully studying the prophecies in Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33, respectively, about the twelve tribes that were listed, we discovered then that they really related to the body of Christ. And so, we concluded that the number 144,000, which is 12 x 10 x 360, symbolically represents the fullness both Old Testament and New Testament believers at the completion of God’s salvation plan.

That they have the Father’s name written in their foreheads, as we discussed at the end of our last study, stresses the fact that all those who have placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ are identified with Jehovah God, their heavenly Father.

14:2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

Whose voices are these? First, the voice from heaven is Christ’s. From our earlier studies, we’ve learned that "the voice of many waters" is that of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:15). Likewise, when God speaks, especially when He speaks as the Judge, He thundered (10:3; 11:19).

The other voice, that of the harpers, comes from believers of the Lord Jesus Christ as they glorify and sing praises to Him. The Bible frequently uses the figure of harps in connection with God’s people singing praises to Him.

We read in Psalm 33:2, for example: “Praise the LORD, sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath performed wonderful things; his right hand and his holy arm hath obtained him the victory. As the LORD hath sung his service and sung aloud a new song, so do I.”

In Psalm 149:3-5: “Let them praise his name in the dance; let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.”

14:3. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

Who are the “they” in this statement? From the context, verses 1 and 2, and verse 4, it appears that they are the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all those who have become saved. The Apostle John hears the voices of both God and the believers.

That God Himself sings praises is not new to us. During our study of Revelation 5, you may recall, we read in Zephaniah 3:17, “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”

New song. What new song are the believers singing? We find a reference to it in Psalm 98:1-2:

O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath obtained him the victory. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

The new song is one that praises God for His marvelous salvation plan, His victory over Satan.

Another reference to a new song appears in Psalm 106:1:

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 me upon a high place, that I might sing praise to him, and shall sing praises unto my God.

Here, the Psalmist explains that the new song that God has put in his mouth is a song praising God for having delivered him out of an horrible pit and the miry clay, both of which point to hell, and for having set his feet upon the rock, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believers only. Note that the singing in the vision takes place before the throne and before the four beasts (living creatures) and the elders. This is much like the throne scene we saw back in Revelation 5. We learned then that both the throne and the four living creatures are figures of God Himself, and that the four and twenty elders, like the 144,000, represent all who have become saved out of the human race. They’re all praising the Lamb that was slain for His worthiness.

Why is it that no man other than the saints could learn that song? Because this is a song of praise and glory, a song that only those who have been provided. The unsaved person has never experienced salvation. He can never understand, let alone appreciate, what Christ did for His people at the cross.
But don’t we often hear “Thank God” or “Praise the Lord” flowing from the lips of those who follow gospels other than that of the Bible? Yes, but they are not singing the new song. They may have been taught by their church that Christ was crucified for the sins of sinners, or they may have been intrigued by some signs and wonders they saw, but not necessarily mean that they have become saved. Without understanding the true gospel, they cannot really know what salvation is all about.

Come Judgment Day, even unbelievers will have the glory to go where they’ll see just a little later. But it will be too late for them to repent and put their trust in Christ. They will never be able to learn to sing this new song of praise for salvation.

14:4. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

How can God say here that not a single believer has ever committed fornication or adultery in his life and that every one of them is a virgin? Well, David was clearly a child of God, and yet he surely committed adultery. But God is using a figure of speech here. This parabolic statement refers to the spiritual condition of those who have become saved.

In the Bible, God uses men who run after harlots or their neighbor’s wife to picture those who are guilty of spiritual fornication or adultery. They are said to have defiled themselves with other women.

Spiritually, all believers are regarded as virgins by God on two counts. First, no matter how spiritually defiled we might have been before we were saved — worshipping money and things of the world, if not bowing down to literal idols — we became a new creature in Christ at the moment of our salvation. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17).

We become totally pure in God’s eyes because we are covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Secondly, once we have become a true child of God, we just do not run after gospels other than the gospel of the Bible. It’s not that we ourselves are holy. But we are held by Jesus Christ. It is He who keeps us from being snared by false religions and false prophets. And so, we have not defiled ourselves.

Followers of Christ. And that’s the same reason why we read in this verse that believers are “they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth”. We who have become saved surrender our entire lives as a result, we know that He, being our Lord, is in total control of us. We obey the Word of God as we are led by the Holy Spirit, and we are content with whatever lot He goeth.

In 1 Corinthians 15:22-23:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.

Remember, believers are joint heirs with Christ. As He is the firstfruits of those who have become saved and have been brought into the Kingdom of God. We read in James 1:18:

Of his own will (God’s will, that is) begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creation.

We are a kind of firstfruits because Christ is the firstfruits. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:22-23:

Firstfruits. In the Old Testament, the firstfruits were the initial harvest that was brought to the temple as sacrifices. Those firstfruits typified those who have become saved and have been brought into the Kingdom of God. We read in James 1:18:

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And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

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In John 1, when the Lord Jesus saw Nathanael, having become saved, was no longer under the rulership of the devil, the father of lies. He was looked upon by God as if he had never lied or practiced deceit.

In John 1, when the Lord Jesus saw Nathanael approximately 47, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” Did He mean that Nathanael had never told a lie in his life? Of course not. What Christ meant was that Nathanael, having become saved, was no longer under the rulership of the devil, the father of lies. He was looked upon by God as if he had never lied or practiced deceit.

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Without fault. Because Christ has redeemed us from our sins, washed us with His blood, we believe he will also be without fault before the throne of God on Judgment Day. God speaks of this in Ephesians 5.

Having been cleansed and sanctified by Christ, the church — the body of believers — can thus stand without fault before the throne of God.

14:6. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

So far in this vision, John has seen the Lamb, the four living creatures, and the various representations of the body of believers — the 144,000, the harpists, and the elders. No mention of his seeing any angels has been made, however. Yet, this verse says that he now sees “another” angel.

Well, why do we remember that the Greek word for “angel” can also be correctly translated “messenger”, then we understand why the word “another” is used here. John sees another messenger because all of the believers he has seen are messengers of the gospel.

As a matter of fact, this other messenger is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Chief Messenger. Why do I say that? Well, as we go through Revelation 14, we shall find five more references to “another” angel — in verses 8, 9, 15, 17 and 18.

In addition, verse 14 speaks of “a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man...” and that has to be Christ. Altogether, then, from this point forward, this chapter will be talking about the activity of seven individual messengers on Judgment Day.

Perfection. The number seven alone, which stands for perfection, suggests that these seven messengers are a picture of Christ. Remember back in Revelation 4:5 and 5:6, we read of “the seven Spirits of God?” That expression represented the perfection of the Holy Spirit. That’s why we remember that the Greek word for “angel” can also be correctly translated “messenger”, then we understand why the word “another” is used here. John sees another messenger because all of the believers he has seen are messengers of the gospel.

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Master Preacher. Here in verse 6, for example, this messenger is described as having “the everlasting gospel” to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

If there is any one person who can be credited for having preached the everlasting gospel to the world, it has to be John. 14:6. But more than that, I am convinced that these other “angels” are Jesus Himself because of what they are doing. As we read carefully over the activity that they are engaged in, particularly that of the last three, we’ll find language that can apply only to the Lord Jesus Christ on Judgment Day.

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.

Indeed, since Pentecost, when that program was officially launched, it is Christ who has been
This is the second “angel” that is really Christ and He is saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city.

Babylon, as we learned when we studied the nature of the final tribulation, is a figure of the whore of Babylon. We have seen this most clearly in Isaiah 14. In the midst of condemning “the king of Babylon,” God begins to talk about Lucifer in verse 12, saying that he was cut down to the ground because he had wanted to be like God. Lucifer, of course, is Satan himself.

In this age, especially during the final tribulation period, Satan often appears to have the upper hand. That’s why Christ will be the ultimate victor. By saying “is fallen” twice, the Lord underscores that His final victory over Babylon, the dominion of Satan, will surely come to pass.

Fornication. When we get to verse 10 a little later, we’ll see that the expression “the wine of the wrath” refers to God’s judgment. We’ll study that wine in more detail then. But notice here that this wrath is associated with fornication.

As they are used in the Bible, both fornication and adultery refer to sexual acts that are immoral, regardless of whether the people involved are married or not. Because the marriage bond is both a moral and a highly intimate one, God frequently uses it to picture the believer’s relationship with Him. By the same token, He uses fornication and adultery to portray spiritual fornication with Satan, whether or not the people involved are supposed to be spiritually married to God, as ancient Israel was.

A good sample of God’s hatred against fornication is found in the Book of Nahum. There, God was making an indictment against the City of Nineveh, a representation of the ancient Israel.

Fountains of waters. The unsaved of the world don’t worship God now. They don’t recognize Him as the Creator. But come Judgment Day, when Christ commands them to worship God, the Creator, they will do so whether they like it or not. This is underscored in Philippians 2:10, where we read:

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.

The problem, as I noted earlier, is that on Judgment Day, when they finally worship God and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, it will be too late for them to become saved. The day of salvation will have passed; they will all have to go to hell for their sins.

Fountains of waters. Having described God as the One who made heaven and earth and the sea, this verse goes on to say that He made the fountains of waters. The latter, I believe, is a parabolic expression that represents the gospel. This is a figure God uses frequently. “He that believeth on me,” Jesus says in John 7:38, “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

He also declares in John 4:14:

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 of water springing up into everlasting life.

So, this verse is teaching that not only did the Lord Jesus create the universe. He also made salvation possible. He is the author and finisher of our faith; He made the fountains of waters.

14:8. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
perfect in every respect.

14:11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

This is one of those passages found throughout the Scriptures declaring that punishment in hell is forevermore. We read also in Matthew 25:46, “And these [the unsaved] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

You see, the punishment for the unsaved is no less everlasting than the life of the believers is eternal. Hell is not annihilation! When God says that sinners shall perish, He is not saying that they will simply be burned up to a crisp and come to an end. It is eternal damnation. Their torment goes on for ever and ever.

This verse concludes by reiterating that the ones who will be judged when Christ returns are all those who worship the beast and his image, and have received the mark of his name. In other words, all the unsaved. Only those who have truly trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior can escape the terror of Judgment Day. Be sure you are among them.

Lessons 23 for Revelation 14:12-20

14:12. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

In verse 11, God has just said that the torment of the unsaved will be forever and ever; they will have no rest day nor night. Against that background, God is saying to believers here, “Knowing that you have become saved and have found rest in Christ, you saints can patiently wait for our Lord's return.”

Yes, in this life we have tribulation; we face all kinds of trouble. We’ll be persecuted, especially when we strive to be faithful to the word of God. We even have to struggle with our own sinful nature. But compared to the horrible, eternal torment we would have to endure had God not saved us, our current trials and struggles are really nothing. We can be patient.

The saints are described here as “they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” We do not keep the commandments of God, of course, to prove that we are saved. The commandments are to be kept out of love for God and to prove to the world that we are saved. But keeping the commandments of God is a good sign that we are saved.

In this verse, God is saying to us, “I am not going to forget about the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. I will not forget about them. I will not forget about the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”

14:13a. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.

This is one of those beautiful statements that assure believers that they never have to fear death. As a matter of fact, physical death is a great blessing.

For one thing, we don’t ever have to face Judgment Day. True, it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27). But in Christ, we have already been judged and punished at the cross. Moreover, death is a wonderful moment when we leave our body and go to live and reign with Christ in heaven. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

For another thing, the phrase “from henceforth” in this verse does not imply that somehow those who had previously died in the Lord were not blessed. But you see, God is holding out this measure of comfort to encourage the saints who are still waiting for the first resurrection. Those who have already died don’t need this assurance; they are already in heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ.

14:13b. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Once we are saved, we are assigned tasks to do. Our most important work is to bring the gospel to the lost world. “As the Father hath sent me, so send I you.” But as soon as we have finished the work that is assigned to us individually, we are called home to be with the Lord. That’s the blessed moment when our duties come. We then rest from our labor.

When we die, we cannot take anything from this earth with us. Naked we came out of our mother’s womb, and naked shall we return thither. But our works for the kingdom of God do follow us, and become saved as a result of our sending forth the gospel will also appear in heaven.

Luke 16:9 presents this very truth firmly.

There it says:

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

The mammon of unrighteousness is the wealth that we have. The wealth that we have will follow us into heaven. It will be our share in building up the body of Christ, our eternal inheritance.

In other words, your works will follow you in the sense that when you go to heaven, you will be greeted by those who have become saved as a result of your having been faithful in sending forth the gospel with the money that God has entrusted to you.

Secondly, Revelation 14:13, I believe, has another meaning that may even be more important in the context than the first one. You see, when a person becomes saved, his old self dies spiritually in the Lord. We read about that in Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” Likewise, we read in Colossians 3:3, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

In other words, we have died to self. We have crucified the flesh. And when we are dead in the Lord in this sense, we rest from our labors. We no longer try to work to earn our salvation; we rest in the finished work of Christ.

Here, our works also follow us. We read in Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

What are these good works? The things that we do as we live in obedience to Christ. As we do our share in building up the body of Christ, our works do follow us.

14:14. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and in the cloud there sat one like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

So far in Revelation 14, we have seen three angels, or rather three messengers, and we saw that all of whom are pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, this fourth being is without any question the Christ himself.

For one thing, the phrase “like unto the Son of man” directly identifies with the Lord. Secondly, the golden crown on His head signifies that He is the One whom the angels surround. And thirdly, the sharp sickle has to do with harvesting. It is the harvest time and Christ is coming back to harvest. When we get to Revelation 19, we’ll see this truth even more clearly.

And He is coming to judge; He is sitting upon the cloud. As I pointed out in earlier studies, “cloud” or “clouds” in the Bible often has to do with Christ coming in glory as Judge. Don’t ever forget it! A day of retribution will come, and the Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge.

Oh! It is so popular today to talk about the love of God, about how wonderful it is to be a Christian. But, as I’ve said so many times, preachers and evangelists nowadays hardly talk about hell and damnation. That subject, they say, is offensive to their listeners. Well, God doesn’t think so. As we have gone along through Revelation, we have found God using one figure after another to speak of eternal damnation. God does not want us to ever forget that Christ will surely return one day to judge the unsaved.

14:15:16. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thine sickle on the earth; and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

This statement proves that all the messengers in this chapter are indeed Christ Himself. Why? Because His personal name in Revelation 14 is found in a loud voice to thrust in thy sickle. No angel may ever order God to do anything. Christ is the Master. He is the King of kings, whereas angels are just ministering spirits sent forth to minister for the saints (Heb. 1:14).

Harvesting is frequently used in the Bible to signify the end of the world. Jesus says, for example, in Matthew 13:24-30.

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field.

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares [that is, weeds] among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprouted, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.

Later, beginning in verse 37, Jesus explains what that parable means. The weeds are the unsaved, and the wheat are the saved. But the tares are those who are going to be judged when Christ comes back. But they will be judged and cast into hell. Then God completes the salvation of the believers, represented by the wheat, by creating a new heavens and a new earth in which they will forever be in the presence of God.

When will all this take place? Jesus says in verses 39 and 40:

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. Therefore the tares
are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

Here again, incidentally, the word "angels" would have been more correctly translated "messengers" because they will not be doing any judging on the last day. Nowhere in the Bible do we read that angels will sit in judgment over anyone. But we do read in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?...Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"

Ripe for harvest. What does it mean that the earth was ripe? It is ripe because all the chosen of God have at last become saved. The earth is also ripe because the iniquity of the world has become so utterly bad that it is time for judgment. And so, the earth was reaped.

14:17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven. This verse was quoted in the introduction. It says here that Christ, having a sharp sickle, came out of the temple which is in heaven. This verse also re-emphasizes how important is the reason for the message. Here in Revelation, God wants to once in the Bible, it is still the Word of God and it includes warning the lost of the world of hell and damnation. Time is running out. So, while it is still called Today, let's get on with the task that God has assigned us with great urgency. Let's do all we can to inform people of the horror of hell and the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 15

Lesson 24 for Revelation 15:1-8 ~ "Preparing to Judge"

15:1. And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. The Apostle John now has a brand new vision. He sees seven angels.

To correctly understand this vision, we should first determine whether these "angels" are literally angels, or whether they are messengers. There is a difference, is there not? An angel is a ministrying spirit sent forth on behalf of the saints, whereas a messenger can be an angel, or Christ Himself, as we saw in Chapter 14, or a believer bringing the word of God. Well, these "angels" are actually believers, people who have become saved. Let me show you how we can be certain of that.

First, verse 7 of this chapter reads, "And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever." These seven vials are the same seven that John sees here in verse 1. Of the same group. Going to Revelation 21, we read in verse 9:

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. We don't yet know who this angel or messenger is, but we do know from the resurrection of Judas that he is one of the seven that have been given the seven vials in Revelation 15:7. Of this same person, the Apostle John writes:

"You will see this angel bringing the word of God. Well, these "angels" are actually believers, people who have become saved. Let me show you how we can be certain of that.

"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 we also read in John 5:28-29: Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto a resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

It's going to be a massive judgment. Billions of people, individually but nevertheless in totality, are going to stand for judgment — all the unsaved people that have ever lived in this world. And they will all be sentenced to spend eternity in hell. They will all be tormented for ever and ever.

Beloved, I'm afraid Revelation 14 has not been a pleasant chapter to study. With the exception of just a couple of verses, this chapter has repeatedly talked about Christ coming to judge the world. Some of the language God uses is ugly — "tormented with fire and brimstone" and "blood came out of the winepress," for example. We would enjoy much more studying those parts of the Bible that speak of God's love, God's mercy and God's grace.

But the warning that Judgment Day is coming must be said. We are commanded by God to proclaim the full counsel of God, and that includes warning the lost of the world of hell and damnation. Time is running out. So, while it is still called Today, let's get on with the task that God has assigned us with great urgency. Let's do all we can to inform people of the horror of hell and the Good News of Jesus Christ.

And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. (21:15)

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear, as the glass; proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. (22:1)

And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants these things which must shortly be done. (22:6)

The Apostle John then describes his reaction in Revelation 22:8:

And I John saw these things, and heard, and when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. He is overwhelmed by what this messenger has shown and told him. And he starts to worship him.

Fellowservant. Now, notice the next verse:

Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not [that is, don’t worship me]: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the commandments of God, and of their testimony. There you have it! God has declared to us in no uncertain terms that these seven messengers are believers that are in heaven. To avoid confusion, therefore, I am going to substitute the word “fellowservant” wherever it appears in this and the next two chapters since these three chapter are all speaking about this same vision.

The last part of this verse reads, “for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” It means that in the seven last plagues is the complete fulfillment of the wrath of God. They mark the consummation of God’s judgment.

15:2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. This scene, as verse 1 puts it, is great and marvellous because it focuses on the victory that the Lord Jesus Christ has given all the believers.

To start with, there was “a sea of glass mingled with fire.” We came across a heavenly sea of glass in chapter 4, verse 2. Remember? We read there:

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

I pointed out then that it was a reference to the “molten sea” in the Old Testament temple. To refresh your memory, let’s go to 1 Chronicles 4, where we read in verses 2 and 5:

Also he [Solomon, that is] made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about....And the thickness of it was an hand breadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; and it contained and held three thousand baths [of water].

A cubit is equivalent to about one-and-a-half feet; and a bath, nine gallons of water. Thus, this sea of cast metal approximates 15 feet in diameter. It was a very deep sea. It had a circumference of about 45 feet, and it could hold some 18,000 gallons of water.

Washing by fire. Why did God want that huge basin put in the temple? Verse 6 explains, “the sea was for the priests to wash in.” The washing, of course, immediately ties us to the atonement provided for us by the Lord Jesus Christ as He went through hell fire for our sins. We believers have been made kings and priests unto God, remember? That’s why the sea that John sees here is mingled with fire. That it was a “molten” sea also points to the atonement. To be liquefied for casting, the metal must have been heated and made hot. Thehell fire that Christ later endured, nevertheless, would be infinitely more intense.

Sea of glass. The sea that John sees in heaven, however, is a sea not of water, but of glass. Why? Fire is a symbol of purity. In Revelation 21, where God talks about the New Jerusalem, we read in verse 18, “And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, as it is precious glass.” Unlike the human priests in the Old Testament temple, who had to wash themselves over and over again, Christ, by going to the cross once, has once for all purified all those whom He cannot say He has washed. The equivalent of every believer being eternally punished in hell. No further washing is necessary.

Victorious believers. Standing on this sea of glass, therefore, are “them that had gotten the victory over the beast” and so on. The beast, as we have seen in the last few chapters, is Satan, and the “them” that have gotten victory over it are the believers.

We are victorious over Satan’s image also because false gospels can no longer snare us; over his mark because Satan can no longer put his brand on us; and over the number of his name because God assigned symbolically to the unsaved of the world (Rev. 13:18), no longer applies to us. Standing on the atonement effected by Christ, these victorious believers are seen to have “harps of God.” As they did in Revelation 14:2,3, where they were described as harpers, they are about to sing a song of praise to God.

15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

In the Old Testament, there are two accounts of Moses singing praises to God. Those two songs are much longer (comprising 19 and 43 verses, respectively) than this one here (only two verses). Why then does this verse say that they sing the song of Moses? Answer: Because they are singing the same kind of praise.

Let’s look briefly at the songs that Moses sang.

The first is recorded in Exodus 15:1-19. It is a victory song. As they did in Revelation 14:2,3, the redeemed were singing: “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

The second song of Moses is

32. Moses spoke the words of that song to Israel at the end of his life. God was about to have him die on Mount Nebo. Again, let’s read just the first four verses:

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, as the small rain upon the tender herb; and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. As these verses show, the song begins with Moses pictured as the word of God, praising the name of the LORD and the work of the Rock. It then goes on to describe how God took and nourished Israel, how He cared for them even though they repeatedly rebelled against Him, and how He finally brought judgment against their enemies. In short, it praises God for His merciful and magnificent salvation program.

Thus, as these believers in heaven sing the “song of Moses the servant of God”, they are praising God for having saved them. Their salvation, of course, was made possible by Christ’s sacrifice as the Lamb of God. Hence, what they are singing is also called “the song of the Lamb.”

Just and true. This song in Revelation 15 begins with these beautiful words: “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

Certainly, the works of God are great and marvellous, and His ways are just and true. That God is just is especially praiseworthy. Because He is a just God, He cannot allow Himself to forgive sinners justly to sit in judgment. To meet the demands of His Law and to satisfy His justice, He sent His only begotten Son to pay for the penalty of the sins of all those whom He had chosen to save.

They are also praising God for being true. Jesus says in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” It means that anything and everything that God has declared will come to pass. Even from the foundations of the earth, God had chosen the specific people whom He would save, and by the time Judgment Day comes, all of them shall have become saved.

15:4. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name for thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

In this age, only we believers fear and glorify the name of God. That’s because God has inclined our hearts to believe the Bible declares. Once the fact that mankind is under the wrath of God penetrates our sin-deadened souls, we begin to fear God. We humble ourselves and repent, beseeching God for His forgiveness. Not so with the unsaved. As Romans 3:16-18 states, “Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

But they won’t get the hint. Come Judgment Day, this song declares, “all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.” God’s judgments will surely be made manifest when everyone that has ever lived on this earth stands before the judgment throne.

15:5. And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

What temple is this that is opened? Certainly not the temple of the tabernacle in Jerusalem. At the moment Christ died on the cross, its usefulness to the kingdom of God ceased.

Note that this temple is called the tabernacle of the testimony. As such, it primarily represents...
Believers. Nevertheless, the Bible also describes the body of believers as the temple. In 1 Corinthians 3 and 6, for instance, every individual believer is said to be a temple of God. And Ephesians 2:21 describes believers collectively as a holy temple in the Lord. And every believer is commissioned to bring the testimony of Christ to the unsaved; thus, the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:21, "When I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." The testimony he proclaimed, of course, was the salvation message.

But believers have another testimony to give, and this other testimony is especially pertinent to the Revelation 15 setting. In Luke 9, as Jesus sent the twelve out to preach the kingdom of God, He told them in verse 5, "Whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them." It is in this sense that the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony is now opened. The believers in heaven are about to bring their testimony against those who have rejected the gospel.

15:6. And the seven messengers came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

These seven believers represent all believers. They are now coming out of the temple in heaven to bring judgment to the unsaved; they have the seven plagues with them. The number seven in both cases underscores the perfection of every aspect of God's salvation plan. That these believers are clothed in pure and white linen signifies that they are righteous before God. This is more clearly evident in Revelation 19:6. Describing the bride of Christ, that verse says, "The Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." Notice first that there was much incense in the censer. It had to do with the prayers of the saints. Back in Revelation 8:10, the souls of the believers in heaven had cried with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Then, the censer was filled with fire and cast into the earth. We saw then that the censer represented two things: (1) the judgment upon the world, and (2) the atonement provided by Christ's sacrifice that protected believers from that judgment.

Lastly, the seven angels blew their trumpets one by one, as God poured out His wrath, starting with the corporate church and finally ending with Judgment Day itself.

Parallel sequence. Here in Revelation 15, we see that believers are given the vials filled with the wrath of God. God is effectively answering their prayers and saying to them, "The time to avenge your blood has come." This, as a matter of fact, is another reason why they were singing the song of Moses.

Earlier, when we studied verse 3, I quoted only the first four verses of the song that Moses sang in Deuteronomy 32. Well, that song ended with these verses (41-43):

If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of vengeance upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

In the song of Moses, you see, God already promised to avenge the blood of His servants. Now, He is about to send His people to render vengeance to His enemies.

Remember, these believers will not be acting on their own behalf. It will not be a personal vendetta. They will be doing so only in the capacity that God has assigned them. They will be coming in the power of God to do the will of God, who lives for ever and ever.

15:8. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven messengers were fulfilled.

Smoke, as we have learned before (Rev. 9:2), has to do with God's judgment. So, this verse is saying that when Judgment Day comes, all of God's power and glory will be manifested. Christ will be totally victorious. All of God's justice will be satisfied.

Like the seven trumpets that began sounding in Revelation 8, the seven plagues will be poured out in Revelation 16 one after another. And again, just like the seven trumpets, the first six vials relate to events immediately preceding the last day, while the last vial pictures Judgment Day itself.

It says here that no one will be able to enter into the temple until the whole Judgment process is over. Here, God is referring to the new heaven and new earth that He will create after Satan and all the unsaved have been cast into eternal hell.

Of the new creation, we read in Revelation 21:22, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." That is the glorious temple into which we, who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, will enter after Judgment Day is all over. In that temple, we will be dwelling with God forevermore."

Revelation 16

Lesson 25 for Revelation 16:1-14

"The First Six Plagues"

16:1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven messengers (angels), Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

In our study of Revelation 15:1, you may recall, we learned by looking at the last six trumpets, that the first six trumpets begin with a day of the Lord. Then, to begin with Judgment Day itself.

As we proceed in this chapter, you will notice a close parallel between the outpouring of the seven bowls here and the sounding of the seven trumpets back in Chapters 8-12. Indeed, you'll find that the first six bowls, like the first six trumpets, have to do with the final tribulation period; only the last one refers to Judgment Day itself.

The difference. Nevertheless, the two pictures are different in one important respect. In Revelation 8 and 9, we saw repeatedly the fraction one-third, which is a symbol God had assigned to believers in Zechariah 13:9 and to...
the corporate church in the context of those Revelation chapters. The sounding of the first six trumpets thus focuses on God’s judgment against the corporate church that has turned apostate.

Here in Revelation 16, the term one-third does not appear anywhere at all. The bowl in this verse, for instance, is poured upon the earth. In fact, if one looks at the whole judgment on God’s terrible judgment upon the world at large.

16:2. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

Who has the mark of the beast? Anyone at all who is a slave of Satan, as God declares in Revelation 13:16. And who worships his image? All that dwell upon the earth whose names are not written in the Lamb’s book of life (13:8). In short, an evil and grievous sore has come upon all the unsaved people of the world.

The Bible frequently uses the figure of a grievous sore, or a grievous wound, to illustrate damnation. Take Job, for example. He was afflicted with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. In the spiritual dimension, the sorrow Job was a type of the Lord Jesus being condemned for our sins when He came to be our Savior.

In Nahum 3, where God uses Nineveh as a picture of the unsaved world, we read in verse 18: “Then will the LORD arouse his brightness, and his eyes shall shine, and his lips shall be aroused, and his vindictive anger will come upon him; his lips will be sweeter than honey, and he will kill the land of the strong. He will pour the blood of the poor into the land of the strong. His feet will be like the feet of a calf eating grass, and his body will destroy them, and they shall become food for the beasts of the field.”

The second messenger poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a huge, troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast forth locusts upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

Now, as the second messenger pours out his bowl of God’s judgment, the sea becomes as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea.

We looked at the symbolic meaning of “the sea” in our earlier studies and saw that it referred to the wicked of the world. We read in Isaiah 57:20, for example, “The wicked are as the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

But remember, murder in the Bible is more than killing. It also includes any sense in which true believers are martyred.

Strictly allegorical. I think I should emphasize again at this point that almost throughout the entire Book of Revelation, God uses earthly words and events parabolically to teach us spiritual truths. Verses like, for instance, are not saying that a literal sore will come upon every human being. For that verse to harmonize with the rest of the Bible, we must understand that it is talking about a spiritual sore.

Likewise, here in verse 3, God is not saying that all the seas and oceans will turn into blood during the final tribulation period. True, in Exodus, the Nile River did literally become as blood and brought death. But there, God was setting up types and figures of the wrath of God.

Here, God is picturing the hopeless state at end-time of those who are not among God’s elect. Because of their thick darkness, as Romans declares, God will give them over to their shameful lusts, their vile affections, and their reprobate minds. As their sin reaches full measure, every living soul among them dies the second death.

16:4. And the third messenger poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

Again, blood has always been associated with death and damnation. The fact that Christ shed His blood to save us believers means that He endured eternal damnation for our sins.

And rivers and fountains of waters, as we learned before, normally relate to the living water that issues from the judgment to become blood. For all practical purposes, the corporate church is no longer bringing the true gospel that is circumscribed by the Bible alone and in its entirety. Drowning the world, instead, are a wide variety of false gospels, as well as all kinds of religions and beliefs that lead only to death.

All this does not mean that no one at all will be saved during the final tribulation period. Although the institutional church has turned faithless, God remains faithful. He will preserve for Himself people and ministries that do not bow down to Baal but go on to herald the true message to the last of His elect. The world at large, however, are kept from hearing the true gospel.

16:5. And I heard the messenger of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

Here, we find the messenger that has just poured out the bowl upon the waters — that is, the unsaved of the world — praising the Lord for having so judged the world.

As I pointed out in an earlier study, while we are on this earth, we are to love our enemies. We want the best for them; we desire to see them saved. But when we stand before the Lord, we will have the final judgment, and God will pour out His wrath on all the unsaved.

His statement, Thou art righteous, O Lord,” emphasizes the perfection of God’s holiness and justice. And, of course, that “wast,” and shall be” means that God is from everlasting to everlasting.

16:6. And I heard the sound of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of mighty thunder, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The Lord Jesus being condemned for our sins when He came to be our Savior. The Bible frequently uses the figure of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea.

The sound of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of mighty thunder, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Yes, indeed. This is a picture of the unsaved world, we read in verse 12 that almost throughout the entire Book of Revelation, God uses earthly words and events parabolically to teach us spiritual truths.

The "daughter of Babylon" there is a figure of the people of Israel, the kingdom of Satan. We also read in Psalm 44:5-7: Let the sons be joyful in glory: let them sing alouud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand: To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people.

Very vindictive language, isn’t it? Again, you and I, as we exist in the world in this New Testament period, are not to read this and say, Aah! It’s wonderful that God will pour out His wrath on all the unsaved. No way! Jesus says we are to love our enemies and to witness to them. But once in heaven, we’ll be able to say “Amen” to these passages.

16:8. And the fourth messenger poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. The sun is spoken of in many passages in the Old Testament. Here’s Malachi 4:1-3: For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

In this context, the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured as the sun. He is called the Sun of righteousness. And while He brings healing to those who fear Him, He will also bring destruction to the whole universe when He returns. So, the pouring out of this fourth bowl upon the sun is a figure of speech indicating that the time has come for God to begin judging the unsaved. By the grace of God, no children of His will be hurt by this scourging. God assures us in Psalm 121:5-7: The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul.

And in Isaiah 49:10: 
They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

16:9. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

When sin multiplies, terrible things happen on this earth. Man’s inhumanity to man results in wars and killings, famine and plagues. In this connection, a prophecy that is being fulfilled in our day is Romans 1:28.

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is uncleanly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which wasmeet.

Never in the history of mankind have homosexuals been so wantonly flaunting their lifestyle. Let me hasten to emphasize that homosexuality is not necessarily worse than other acts of disobedience. And like any other sinner, a homosexual can become a child of God if he or she will turn to the faith that trust in Christ.

During the final tribulation period, the Satan-dominated world is in total spiritual darkness. Of the ten plagues recorded in Exodus 8-11, the second to last was one of darkness coming upon the land of Egypt, a darkness that could be so felt that nobody could move about. Well, God is using that figure here for the end-time scene. During the final tribulation period, the Satan-dominated world is in total spiritual darkness.

Result: there is the killing, the hatred, the moral decay, the drug addiction and all the other evil things that God has said He will send upon the ungodly and the unbelievers on the people in Satan’s kingdom. So much so that they gnaw their tongues for pain.

Yet, they repent not of their deeds. In their deceit and blindness, they blame the God of heaven; they blaspheme their Creator.

16:12. And the sixth messenger poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

One of the many passages in the Bible that talks about the drying up of the rivers is Isaiah 44:24; 47:8; and Revelation 18:28.

Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by His power. Psalm 104:2:

That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

God promised there that Christ, typified by King Cyrus of Persia, would come and provide for our salvation. The “deep” are figures of eternal damnation. Even as the parting of the Jordan River enabled the Israelites to enter the promised land on dry ground, Christ dried up the curse of sin by enduring hell on our behalf, thereby laying the foundation upon which the eternal temple is built.

Because this drying up of the waters refers to salvation, this Isaiah passage doesn’t relate directly to Revelation 16:12. A distinct relationship, however, can be found in Jeremiah 50, where God talks about the destruction of Chaldea, or Babylon. (Symbolically, the River Euphrates was equated because it flowed right through the city of Babylon.)

God begins in verse 35, saying, “A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the Lord, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, as upon the heathen, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men.” Then he speaks of a sword being upon the false prophets, the mighty men, their horses and chariots, and upon all the pillars of her strength, and the cords of her sinews, and her bars, and the bars of her gates, and upon her walls; for it is a time of judgment.

A drought. All this is a picture of Judgment Day, when God will destroy the dominion of Satan. Within that context, we find a reference to waters being dried up in verse 38:

A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up; for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. In a nutshell, I noted then that when Christ is on earth, He will not be doing any signs and wonders. Conversely, when Satan comes at the end of time, He will be doing just that. We will see at the end of time that Satan is the one doing the signs and wonders, not Christ.

Prerequisite. All this must take place in the world “that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.” What preparation is this? Well, in Isaiah 41:1-3, we read, Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near together to judgment. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him ruler over the peoples? He gave him as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued him, and passed safely; even by the way that he had gone before his feet.

The righteous man from the east is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is described in Malachi 4:2 as the “Sun of righteousness” that arises “with healing in his wings” and the rises in the earth. Here in Isaiah 41, He’s coming in judgment. And Revelation 16 picks up this figure as it talks about the Euphrates being dried up so that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

The kings of the east here, though, are the believers. We are of royal blood; we are the princes of God; and we reign and rule with Christ. On Judgment Day, we will also be judging with Him.

16:13. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

Again, remember in one of the ten plagues of Exodus 8, were there frogs everywhere in the land? What do the three frogs represent? In Judges 7:17-25, where God recounted that judgment against Egypt, we read, “He sent divers [that is, different] sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.” By God’s definition, you see, frogs represent that which destroys.

Whereas the frogs in Exodus 8 were sent by God to destroy the Egyptians, the frogs here come out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, which are all representatives of the kingdom of Satan. We don’t have to think about three individuals or three personalities. Note that the destroying forces all come out of the mouth. The devil and his emissaries will lead people to their destruction with their lies.

God’s purpose. Notice also that the number three is always a number that is magnified. It assures us that the seeming victory of Satan will be in full accord with the purpose of God. We find this reassurance also in II Thessalonians 2:11,12: And for this cause let them be strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

It is the purpose of God to let Satan overwhelm the world with sin toward the end of time. Why? To prepare the way for God and His saints to judge the unsaved on Judgment Day.

16:14. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

The principal way by which Satan deceives the world is the working of miracles by his slaves. Remember, these frogs come to destroy, not to edify nor to give light.

When we studied Revelation 13:14, I discussed at length this subject of miracles, especially those used by Satan’s workers toward the end of time. In a nutshell, I noted then that when Christ was on earth and later when the apostles began their ministries, they did signs and wonders to attest to their authenticity. Satan was not doing any signs and wonders then. Conversely, when Satan comes at the end of time with signs and wonders, Christ and His people will not be doing them, lest they create confusion.

Among the signs most commonly used by Satan: falling over backwards, speaking in tongues, miraculous healing, and messages from dreams, visions, voices and angel visitations. The Bible warns of this in II Thessalonians 2:9,10: “Even him [the Lord Jesus], whose coming is after [or against] the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

Worldwide. Satan’s deception will come not just through false gospel preachers, but all kinds of religions and cults that take advantage of man’s refusal to love the truth. And these counterfeit miracle workers will go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world. It is a means in God’s hand to prepare the world for the final confrontation between God and Satan, the final battle that will come at the great day of God Almighty. That battle is linked to Armageddon in verse 16 and we’ll look at its character carefully when we
come to that verse. Suffice it for me to say now that it is not a physical battle between believers and unbelievers; it is Judgment Day itself.

**Lesson 26 for Revelation 16:15-21**

**The Final Plague**

16:15a. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth,

God intercepts a warning in this verse. It is an interjection because the verses before and after this both talk about the great battle that is to come.

To be specific, verse 14 speaks of the spirits of devils going forth unto the kings of the earth "to gather them to the battle of that great day of God in Armageddon." Here, in the midst of those two related verses, God warns, "Behold, I come as a thief."

**The rapture.** What does He mean by coming as a thief? There are those who interpret it to mean that when Christ returns, He will come sneakily, just as a thief would come to rob someone, and secretly rapture the believers.

Let me put that idea to bed very quickly. The easiest way I know to look at I Thessalonians 4. Even those who teach that Christ will secretly rapture the believers will agree that this chapter is talking about the rapture. Now, read verses 16-17 carefully.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

That clearly is the rapture; we are caught up in the air to be with Christ. This language cannot be taken to mean a silent coming of the Lord Jesus. He descends from heaven with a shout, with a loud command.

**Power and glory.** A parallel to this passage is given in Matthew 24. There, Jesus says in verses 30 and 31:

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.

The Son of Man, it declares, will come with power and great glory, and they – that is, all the people on earth – will see it. There will be a great sound of a trumpet announcing the Lord's return. So, don't let anyone tell you that Christ will come quietly and secretly to rapture the believers.

What then does "I come as a thief" mean? Well, God's own explanation appears in 1 Thessalonians 5:2,3:

For yourselves know perfectly 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.

**Complicity.** Christ will not return sneakily, you see. He warns them as a thief in the sense that it will be a surprise to unbelievers. Spiritually, they are compliant with their own righteousness, their own religion or their false gospels. Physically, they think there is peace and safety in the world. But then, sudden destruction shall come upon them, and they shall not escape. When Christ returns, they will be utterly surprised.

But now notice verse 4: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtaking you as a thief." We who have become saved will not be surprised; but because we are spiritually ready. His coming will not overtake us as a thief.

**Throughout history.** In a sense, Christ has been coming as a thief to unbelievers all through history. When an individual dies, saviorified or unsaved, his eternal destination is sealed. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." (Heb. 9:27). For a believer, it is merely a matter of leaving his residence. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8). He leaves his body and goes to live and reign with Christ in heaven.

But when an unsaved person dies, his body goes into the grave and his soul goes down to a place of silence (Psa. 115:17). He no longer has any conscious existence. The next thing he knows is the resurrection of the last day, as his funeral services are finished for his sins. For him, effectively, the moment of his death is the moment Christ comes as a thief.

**He that watcheth.** Coming back to Revelation 16:15, we next read, "Blessed is he that watcheth." Who watches? This idea of watching is discussed also in Matthew 24, where Jesus is talking to the disciples about the upcoming Judgment Day. To pick up the context, let's begin with these verses:

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

The Lord's return will surprise the world just as the flood of Noah's day surprised the unsaved of that day. Jesus then talks about the rapture in verses 40 and 41, saying:

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. The ones that are taken are raptured to be with Christ; the others are left for judgment. Now, in that context, Jesus declares in the next three verses:

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that the goodness 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. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Do you see now how Jesus uses the word "watch" in that example? If you know that Judgment Day is coming and are ready for it, then you will not be surprised. The only way to be ready, of course, is to make sure that you have become saved.

16:15b. and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Before Jesus was crucified, they took off His clothing; His Only Begotten Son. He hung naked on the cross. Symbolically, it underscores that Jesus was then standing before God with all of the believers' sins that had been laden upon Him exposed.

Because the sins of believers have been fully paid for by Christ, they have been clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. And since a child of God can never lose his salvation, he always keeps his garments on. Every person that has not trusted in Christ as his Savior, however, will walk spiritually naked before God on Judgment Day with all his shameful sins exposed.

16:16. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

In Israel, there is a mountainous area called the Mount of Megiddo. Right below that is a large plain called the plains of Megiddo. Travelers by the hundreds of thousands come from the north with billions of soldiers to attack Israel, but Israel will defeat them right there.

Is that really going to be the Battle of Armageddon? Absolutely not! Actually, Revelation 16:16 is the only verse in the Bible in which the word Armageddon appears. To understand what God has in view with this Battle of Armageddon, let's look again at the context. In verse 14, we read that the spirits of devils, working miracles, go forth and gather "the kings of the earth and of the whole world" to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. So, the battle involves the whole world, not just some political nations in it.

Moreover, up to this point, this chapter has presented various pictures of the final tribulation period, when Satan and his false prophets, working miracles, go forth and gather the kings of this world and their armies, gather to make war upon him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them who had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

We'll look at this passage in more detail when we get into Chapter 19. But notice for the time being that the war ends with the beast and the false prophet being thrown into hell. That's Judgment Day. The Battle of Armageddon, I repeat, is a figure of speech that represents the final Judgment Day.

**Deborah and Barak.** Why is it called the Battle of Armageddon? Because Armageddon is a Hebrew word that means "the mount, or the mountain, of Megiddo", and because God has recorded in Judges Chapter 4 a battle fought in the plains of Megiddo that typified the Battle of Armageddon. Before that battle took place, God had delivered the rebellious Israelites into the king of Canaan. That ruthless king oppressed them for twenty years. When they finally cried to the Lord for help, He responded.

God raised up Deborah, a prophetess, and Barak to save them. Deborah and Barak took 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon, and they met with Sisera on the plains of Megiddo. These two forces were fighting for power over Canaan. That ruthless king oppressed them for twenty years. When they finally cried to the Lord for help, He responded.

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because they were slaves of the Canaanites. The wicked king, on the other hand, had 900 chariots of iron. But with God’s help, the Israelites came down from Mount Hor and, after a defeat of the Canaanites, who were headed up by General Sisera, and Sisera himself was killed. Deborah and Barak then sang a song of praise, which is recorded in Judges 5. There, we read in verses 19 and 20:

The kings came and fought, and the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Notice it speaks there of “the waters of Megiddo”. It was on the plain of Megiddo that the decisive battle took place. And the kings that came and fought the stars from heaven “took gain”, they lost the war. As I said earlier, that battle is a picture of Judgment Day when believers, together with the Lord Jesus Christ, will come down from heaven to judge and vanquish the wicked. Sisera is a picture of Satan.

16:17. And the seventh messenger poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done.”

So far in Chapter 16, six messengers have poured their bowls of wrath, bringing us right up to Judgment Day, although the battle has not yet been fought. We have gone through the final tribulation period. And now, the seventh messenger (seven is the number of perfection) pours his bowl into the air. And we hear a great voice from heaven, saying, “It is done.” What is done? What is the execution of God’s perfect judgment of the rebellious. You see, ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God, all human beings proceeding out of them have been tainted by sin, and therefore are subject to the judgment of God. During the course of history, God has graciously been saving all those whom He had chosen to save. As we finally come up to Judgment Day, all the elect will have received salvation, their sins having been fully paid for by Christ’s death on the cross. But for God’s righteousness to be vindicated and for the blood of Christ and of His followers avenged, all those remaining unsaved must be judged.

At the moment Judgment Day arrives, time comes to an end and eternity returns. That last day begins like—how do I say it?—but it never ends; it transitions into eternity. Among the first things that happen is, of course, the rapture of the believers. They’re caught up to be with Christ in heaven, and they receive at last their glorified, resurrected bodies. That completes their salvation in one sense. (Their salvation will not be completed in every sense, however, until they experience the new heaven and the new earth and what that also is a part of God’s program of salvation.) At the same time, there is the judgment of the unsaved. They have to be removed into hell. When all that has taken place, God’s salvation program will indeed be done in every aspect.

16:18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, one says.

“And there were voices...” What is the voice that we’ll hear when Christ comes on the clouds of glory? Let’s look at a few other passages that relate to this.

In I Thessalonians 4:16, we read, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel...” Remember, the term “archangel” should really be translated “arch-messenger, or chief of the messengers”. It is the voice of Christ Himself, you see. John 5 also alludes to that voice. There, we read in verse 28, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.” It is the voice of God calling for all those in the graves to come forth.

Thunders and lightnings. When we studied Revelation 10:3, we saw in Job 37 that when God speaks, God thunders. Hence, there were thunders. There were also lightnings and a great earthquake. Doesn’t this remind you of Revelation 6? When the sixth seal was opened, there was a great earthquake (v. 12). It went on to talk about the sun being black, the moon becoming black as the stars falling. All of this language is identified with Judgment Day, when the whole universe falls apart.

16:19. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

What does it mean that the great city was divided into three parts? Remember Zechariah 13, which I alluded to before?

And it shall come to pass, that in that land, saith the LORD, two thereof shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And 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: every one that shall call on my name shall be saved: and they shall say, The LORD is my God (vv. 8, 9).

Symbolically, God divides the world into three parts. Two parts represent the unsaved; the third part, the elect. Now, God is separating the believers from the unbelievers. The second half of this verse is a reiteration of what we saw in Revelation 14. Verses 8-10 reads:

Babylon, fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she hath drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication... If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

Babylon, a picture of Satan’s dominion, is being condemned to eternal hell. This theme about God remembering Satan’s wickedness and then punishing him is often found in the Old Testament. For instance, we read in Jeremiah 51:17:

Babylon hath been a golden cup in the hand’s hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

Notice it says here that Babylon has made “all the earth” drunken so that “the nations” are mad. We thus know that this passage cannot be talking about Babylon’s conquest of Judah in 587 BC. Rather, it is alluding to the final tribulation period, when the devil, typified by Babylon, causes the people of all nations to become increasingly sinful, as well as churches and congregations all over the world to become increasingly apostate.

God’s hand. Babylon is said to have been a golden cup in God’s hand because Satan is the means by which God prepares the world for Judgment Day. But we read in the next two verse:

Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, we go over the river; as we country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies.

Babylon is suddenly judged. The phrase, “she is not healed”, means that there is no hope for Satan. Why? Because his judgment is so bad that it reaches into heaven. Now verse 10:

The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

This verse indicates that God will judge Satan only after He has saved all the elect. And verse 11 tells us how:

Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

Historically, the Medes conquered Babylon in the late 6th BC. But they are a type of the Kingdom of Christ as it destroys the dominion of Satan on Judgment Day. God has come to destroy Satan because it is the vengeance of His temple. Christ is the temple ultimately, and so it is God’s justice that is accomplished.

This, then, is the Old Testament language that pictures Judgment Day. Many, many other passages of this nature appear in the prophetic books. This language is in view in verses 29 and 30 in Revelation 16. And we will see more of this in the next two chapters.

16:20. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

We saw similar language about the islands and the mountains when we studied Revelation 6. Remember? Verse 14 there reads, “And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”

We saw then that mountains and islands are used there as pictures of political kingdoms. As the universe collapses, they are moved out of their places on earth. In other words, they are being judged.

16:21. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

God often uses hail to typify judgment. We see that, for example, in Ezekiel 38:22:

And I will plead [or judge] against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

Fire and brimstone, remember, was cast down on Sodom and Gomorrah. It’s also a figure of God’s judgment. And here, God adds great hailstones to His list of symbols.

It says here that these hailstones weigh a talent each. According to biblical measurement, a talent is something like 130 pounds. Of course, hailstones of this size would do a lot of damage. But I think God has something more significant in view.

Candlestick and crown. In the Bible, there are two objects that weighed a talent: a candlestick and a crown. Clearly, Revelation 4 and 5, and 11, remember, each of the seven churches was represented by a candlestick in heaven? Thus, candlestick is a picture of the body of believers.

God speaks of something else weighing a talent: the golden cup, the golden goblet in God’s hand because Satan is the means by which God prepares the world for Judgment Day. And here, God adds great hailstones to His list of symbols.
Lesson 27 for Revelation 17:1-18 ~
"The Great Harlot"

17:1. And there came one of the seven angels [messengers] which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

When we first saw the seven angels with the seven last plagues in Revelation 15:1, you may recall, we determined by looking ahead at Revelation 22:9 that they were really believers. So again, the word "angels" in this verse would be more properly translated "messengers".

One of them is now showing the Apostle John a new vision and about the judgment of the great whore, or the great harlot. Now, in biblical language a whore, a harlot or a prostitute is someone who goes after other gospels and worship other gods and therefore commits spiritual fornication.

The many waters upon which the harlot sits, as we'll see in verse 15, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. In other words, she is a picture of the whole dominion of Satan.

17:2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

God created the peoples of the world in His image. They are supposed to be altogether faithful to Him. But the rulers of this world have rebelled against their Creator. They have gone their own way, seeking their own glory. They have committed spiritual fornication with this harlot.

No better than their rulers are the people of the earth. They too have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. Even as drunkards don't know what they are doing, the unsaved of the world do not realize that they have been serving

17:3. So he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Remember in Revelation 12, we saw a woman fleeing into the wilderness, where she was fed for 1,260 days. She’s a picture of the body of believers; and the wilderness, a picture of this world. You see, we are strangers and pilgrims in this world, and this world is where the great harlot is.

Notice that the beast John sees here is very similar to the one in Revelation 13:1. That verse reads: "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy." We saw then that the beast was the kingdom of Satan from the moment man fell through the end of time. The seven represent the perfection of his rule (it is an integral part of God's perfect program), and the ten horns picture particularly his rule during the final tribulation period.

We also saw that the name of blasphemy has to do with Satan being the antichrist. He reviles and abuses the Holy name of God in everything he does.

Spiritually speaking, "to sit" in the Bible usually means "to rule". Not so in this case. As we'll read in verse 7, the woman is being carried by the beast. In any event, the picture of her sitting upon the beast stresses that the two are intimately joined together. Both of them ultimately symbolize the kingdom of Satan.

17:4. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

Satan, you see, looking very glamorous and very beautiful. He deceives the unsaved into believing that getting what the world has to offer is where real happiness lies. None of these things, of course, really have any lasting value.

In the Bible, as a matter of fact, purple and scarlet fabrics as well as gold and precious stones are used to symbolize the temple or the body of believers. Thus, the way this woman is arrayed in also points to Satan as the antichrist. He comes with false gospels that closely resemble the true one.

The same truth is shown by the golden cup in her hand. It looks precious on the outside, but is filthy inside. Jesus uses that figure to describe the spiritual leaders of His day, saying in Matthew 23:27: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

17:5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Here, by the name written on her forehead, God is showing us the nature of the woman. The word "mystery", as it is used in the Bible, refers to something that has been hidden in time past. Here, God reveals that Babylon is also used by Him to picture the dominion of Satan. Among other things, this teaches that in the many Old Testament passages where God prophesied against Babylon, God was talking primarily about judgment against Satan, not the nation of Babylon.

Actually, the whole dominion of Satan is a mystery to mankind. They don't realize how real and evil it is. Had God not revealed it to us, we would be blind to Satan's deception as well. But with God having pulled off the wraps and stripped back the veil, we can now see clearly that the devil is the "Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth". It is that which is corrupt, that which is in utter rebellion against God.

17:6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

Satan and his emissaries are certainly guilty of having martyred a whole lot of believers. But in a real sense, God is saying here that the harlot is responsible for the death of every child of God. You see, Satan hates Christ. And because he hates Christ, he hates the entire body of Christ. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that anyone who merely hates someone else is guilty of murdering that person. Under that principle, Satan has drunken the blood of every saint.

The word "admiration" here means "marvel". The Apostle John is wondering with marvel when he sees the woman. He is marveling at what he sees. We probably would marvel, too. After all, most of the people around us seem decent and moral. And the gospels they offer all sound quite attractive.

But here, God is telling us that the Satan-controlled world is absolutely evil. It is guilty of the blood of all believers.

17:7. And the messenger said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

God now promises to reveal to the Apostle John (and us) additional information regarding Satan's activities, especially those relating to the end-time period. Remember, the ten horns of the beast pertain particularly to Satan's rule during the final tribulation.

17:8a. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition.

In this statement, God is giving us a capsule of Satan's end-time activities throughout time. From the fall of man through the time of the cross, Satan ruled this earth almost totally. Very few people were saved: "The beast that thou sawest was." From the cross until the beginning of the final tribulation period, Satan was kept "in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day," as verse 6 of Jude puts it. During that period, the bulk of God's elect, people from all nations, have become saved. Thus, when the Book of Revelation was written, the beast is not in virtual control of the world.

But he shall ascend out of the bottomless pit. In Chapter 9, remember, the Lord Jesus Himself opened the bottomless pit and let him loose, purposely allowing him to become even more powerful in the final tribulation period than he was before the cross. But wonderfully, the end of it all is that he shall go into perdition. The word "perdition" means utter ruin, total destruction, eternal damnation.

17:8b. and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Until Judgment Day finally comes, though, the unsaved of the world will behold the harlot and wonder after her. They are titillated by the beauty of this woman. They are fascinated by the things and pleasures of this world. These are the ones whose names were not written in

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the book of life from the foundation of the world. We talked about the book of life in an earlier study, but let me review it briefly.

God speaks of the book of life from two vantage points. First, the reference to it primarily signifies that it is written in the book of life from a creation vantage point. The names of the unsaved are subsequently erased from it. Thus we read in Exodus 32:33, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

But from a redemptive vantage point, only the true believers are written in the book of life. God speaks of the book of life as a place where His name is written and where we are chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world. Before even time began, God had sovereignly written the names of all the elect in the Lamb’s Book of Life. In the latter sense that the book of life is spoken of here.

17:9. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. With the figure of the seven heads, God is showing us a specific aspect of the kingdom of Satan. Remember in Revelation 12:3, we came across a great red dragon that also had seven heads. We saw then that it was a picture of the rule of Satan. The structure being presented here in Revelation 17:9, as God talks about the seven heads being the seven mountains.

Many commentaries say that God has the City of Rome in view here, because Rome is seated on seven hills. Rome may or may not sit on seven hills, but the Bible certainly does not indicate anywhere that Rome was directly involved with the events of the end of the world. Rather, God typically uses the word "mountain" in the Bible as an allegorical expression for a kingdom. We know the word “mountains” in this verse does signify something far beyond the verse below, God talks about seven kings.

17:10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. As in verse 3, the number seven here is used symbolically. It signifies that the rule of Satan is altogether in accordance with God’s perfect plan. Also symbolic are the seven kings. God is not talking about seven political rulers or kingdoms on earth. Within the whole duration of Satan’s rule, there have existed a great many more than seven kingdoms. Hundreds of nations have arisen. Many have fallen; some still exist today.

The last of the seven kings may be a figure of Satan’s rule during the final tribulation period, because it says here, "when he cometh, he must continue a short space." When the Apostle John saw this vision (about 1,900 years ago), the greater portion of Satan’s reign had already past. “Five are fallen, and one is.” The seventh will be much, much shorter by comparison.

17:11. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth king. As He did in verse 8, God reassures us at the close of this verse that the final-tribulation rule of Satan, powerful though it is, will be followed by his going into perdition.

17:12. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. There are those who try to identify these ten kings with today’s Common Market in Europe. They’re no different from those in the past who suggested that the antichrist was Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Nero or others. They all fail to realize that the Bible is not concerned about political or economic developments. The fact is, the language of Revelation 17 makes it quite clear that God is talking about the war that comes between Christ and Satan. And in this verse, He is again drawing our attention to the final tribulation period.

You see, when Revelation was written, the New Testament era was just beginning. The church had barely begun to send forth the Gospel into all nations. So, God may have seen that the ten kings, which represent the final rule of Satan, were still in the future. Hence, they had yet to receive their kingdoms. Moreover, when they finally receive power as kings, it would only be for "one hour." In other words, if compared to the total duration of Satan’s rule, which reached all the way back to the beginning, the final tribulation represents a very short period of time.

Notice that the ten horns receive power as kings “with the beast”. Even though the eighth king is of the seven, the explosion of wickedness toward the end of time is ultimately identified with Satan himself.

17:13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. Back in verse 7, the messenger of God told John that he would tell him “the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.” As we have learned before, God has used one figure after another to point to the end-time rule of Satan. And now, he reveals the big truth that with one mind, all those who serve Satan shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

In other words, all of the sinful activities that unfold during that short period, whether in the corporate church or in the world at large, will serve to bring the power and strength to Satan. They don’t know it, but all the people in the world will in one form or another be worshiping Satan.

17:14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. Because they worship Satan, they shall make war with the Lamb. And we are talking about a spiritual warfare here.

To be sure, Christ already vanquished Satan at the cross. But God has given Satan the right to continue his rule over the hearts of the unsaved as long as this world continues. He has been using Satan to accomplish His purposes. But once the last of God’s elect has become saved, the game’s over. The Lamb shall overcome Satan and his slaves, his King of kings, and Lord of lords all the time. He rules over Satan and his dominion. The devil never had a chance to win!

Victorious along with Christ are those that are called, and chosen, and faithful. Because God has called the elect, because He has chosen them in the first place, and because He has obligated Himself to save them, they are faithful to Him.

17:15. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

Notice that God uses four words to describe those on whom the harlot sits. This underscores again that the dominion of Satan encompasses the unsaved throughout the world.

17:16a. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore.

If both the harlot and the ten horns are figures of the kingdom of Satan, can it be that Satan’s kingdom shall hate Satan’s kingdom? Yes, indeed.

Actually, we see this all around us. Wicked people constantly hate other wicked people. They commit all kinds of crime against one another. Throughout history, there have been wars and fights as one people bitterly hates another. Indeed, had God the Holy Spirit not restrained sin, the world would long have destroyed itself. But God has now restored His restraining hand. Satan’s self-destructive tendency within the domain of Satan is intensifying.

Jesus alluded to this in Matthew 12:25,26. When He was accused of having cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub, He declared, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?” In the final tribulation period, Satan is indeed divided against himself.

17:16b. And shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. Nakedness in the Bible has to do with one’s sins being totally exposed before God. By causing the world to become increasingly wicked and sinful, Satan is effectively preparing this world for Judgment Day. There can be no question then that they deserve to be punished by the Holy God.

Eating flesh is, of course, a figure of cannibalism. It’s another picture of self-destruction among humanity. We can see that vividly in our day. Here’s one conspicuous example: Because people have thumbed their noses at God’s command against divorce and sexual perversion, there has been a mushrooming of broken families, a proliferation of AIDS, and an upsurge in abortions. That’s modern-day cannibalism!

17:17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. But God hasn’t lost control. He has been guiding the unfolding affairs all the time. He let Satan out of the bottomless pit purposely. It is His will that Satan causes the world to become excessively sinful, so that when Judgment Day comes, there’s no question that everyone deserves every bit of hell fire. It is also God’s purpose for both the rulers and the people of the world to consciously or subconsciously worship Satan, giving their kingdom unto the beast. The whole dominion of Satan will have a cohesiveness, an ugly wickedness that totally indoctrinates the world.

But this won’t last long. It will continue only until the words of God shall be fulfilled. God has repeatedly promised to save everyone whose name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. To fulfill that promise, He has kept the wicked world going. Once that has been accomplished, Christ will come with His judgment.
Lesson 28 for Revelation 18:1-24 ~

18:1. And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

The word “power” in the phrase “having great power” here means might or authority. From the context, this is to say that Babylon has risen to its greatest power and influence. God gives us a little more insight into the dominion of Satan as a great city, the city of Babylon. It is the kingdom of Satan that rules over all kings and rulers of the world. And that’s why we should not be surprised to see wickedness multiply geometrically as we approach the end.

Revelation 18

Lesson 28 for Revelation 18:1-24 ~

“The Fall of Babylon”

18:4. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues.

We children of God must separate ourselves from the world, however. The Bible says in I John 2:15, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

18:5. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and her king is fallen.

In these verses, God underscores that the punishment for Babylon will also be the worst possible.

18:7. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow shall she give: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

Man was created to glorify God, but rebellious man, in his love of the world and thereby escape from His wrath, both He is his own king of his own life. And he lives deliciously — that is, he lives luxuriously just to satisfy his own taste, his own desire, his own pleasure. But however much Babylon glorifies and satisfies herself, that much torment and sorrow will be given to her. A direct relationship exists between the penalty to be paid and the sin that has been committed. This is in line with the principle set forth in verse 6: “Reward her even as she rewarded you.”

18:8. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the preparation of her desolations.

For will be gone in one day. And famine in this world has longed for and labored for and fought for will not stand the test of what the rest of the Bible teaches. God warns in other verses that “they have no rest, day nor night,” that “the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever,” that “there is weeping and
When we saw back in Revelation 13 that no man could buy or sell unless he had the mark of the beast, we learned that in the spiritual sense, buying and selling has to do with preaching or following Christ. Other than the death of the saints, the only event that could come with false gospels for personal gains are effectivelly selling the souls of men to Satan.

Come Judgment Day, these activities, as well as the buying and selling of things, will all cease.

When we looked at Ezekiel 16 in an earlier study, we saw that God clothes His chosen people with fine linen, gold and silver, precious stones and all manner of beautiful ornaments. Well, that's how this great city here is clothed. Moreover, as we've learned before, the church is often represented in the Bible by a ship or ships. And here, among the mourners are every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off. And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, and wailing and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her c步步foodliness!

This passage again describes the lament of the unsaved as they see the world destroyed in one hour. But the language God uses points particularly to the apostate church.

When we looked at Ezekiel 27, where God uses Tyre, a great and mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

The love for this world is so deeply ingrained in the hearts of the unsaved that even on Judgment Day, the first reaction of the kings, the great people of the world, is to lament for her. They are sad to see the things of this world going up in smoke.

But notice that they are standing afar off. Before Judgment Day, the unsaved man is right in the thick of the things he is startled by all the things that the world can produce. But now, he has been separated from the world; he is terrified by its sudden destruction. He still laments for her, though.

Remember Lot's wife? She apparently loved the things that Sodom and Gomorrah had to offer. Standing afar off as she was being led out of the city, she looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. Well, all those who keep longing for the fallen Babylon will be punished for it also.

18:11-14. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thy wine, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all things written with gold, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and spices, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

The Lord has warned in Matthew 6:24: "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."

The unsaved of the world, because they do not serve God, are all serving mammon. Money is their master. In that sense, they are all merchants of the earth. And they will weep and mourn over the destruction of the world.

In the Old Testament, God gives a similar prophecy in Ezekiel 27, where God uses Tyre, a seaport much frequented by merchant ships, as a figure of this world. In the first 33 verses, God describes how the merchants from various countries profited from doing business with Tyre. Then, He says in the last three verses: "In the time when they shall be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and thy kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shall be any more."

When Christ returns to destroy the world with all the material things in it, the kings and merchants will all stand afar in horror.

Slaves and souls. Significantly, among the "merchandise" listed in this Revelation passage that will have no more buying and selling are "slaves, and souls of men". The unsaved do not limit their trading to physical goods. They peddle the souls of men as well.

When the Worm Dieth not

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When the Worm Dieth not
Lesson 29 for Revelation 19:1-21 ~

"Praise God! Satan is Judged"~

19:1. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; who didst judge the great whore, and didst avenge the blood of his servants, and didst reign for ever and ever.

19:2. And the kings of the earth, and the great ones, and the rich, and the chief princes of the earth, did see the smoke of the fire going up out of the place of God, and out of the before named holy city, and fell upon their faces, and were turned to the ashes.

19:3. And out of heaven came a voice saying, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

19:4. And there was seen a white robe spread forth in the midst of the sky, and they that had overcome were there, having their vials of victory; and there was laid upon every one a white crown, and they were called unto the marriage of the Lamb.

19:5. And the sound of their voices was as the sound of many waters; and as the sound of many voices, saying, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

19:6. And they are the two witnesses, the two lambs, the two olive trees.

19:7. And they, which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, are twice redeemed. 19:8. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

19:9. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and neither day nor night did they depart from the temple of the Lord, worshiping him.

19:10. And the dragon was angry with the woman, her mother is the great city which hath many palaces.

19:11. And the seven heads and the ten horns, which gave him power and authority and greatness, are before him and before the throne, crying, who is like unto God? What shall we say in the name of God's righteousness and salvation?

19:12. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is come down to men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

19:13. And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

19:14. And he said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful.

19:15. And just before the end, Jesus said to His disciples, These things will all come to pass. And He also told them to be prepared, for they would be persecuted, and sold as bondslaves. And He said, But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.


19:17. And by the Spirit of God, I say, the Spirit of God is here, and He is with all the believers in Christ. And they shall be crowned with glory and honor, and they shall reign over the kingdom of God. And the God of all nations will be their God, and they shall be His people, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His children.

19:18. And they shall reign over the earth, and they shall be kings, and they shall reign with Christ, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

19:19. And there shall be no more mourning, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things are passed away.

19:20. And the city of Jerusalem is pure and holy, and there shall be no more curse in it, for the former things are passed away.

19:21. And the grace of God is upon them, and the glory of His kingdom is upon them, and the power of His God is upon them, and they shall reign over the earth, and they shall reign with Christ, and they shall reign for ever and ever.


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In the Old Testament, God often uses horses and chariots to illustrate judgment from Him. Speaking of the eventual destruction of Tyre, which is a figure of the whole world, He says in Ezekiel 26: “By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground” (vv. 10-11).

And in Nahum 3, where God warns of the destruction of Nineveh, another picture of Satan’s kingdom, we read: “Woe to the bloody city! it is full of lies and robbery, the prey departeth not. The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifeth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts” (vv. 1-4).

The white color of the horse on which Jesus rides points to the purity and sinlessness of God.

The names God uses here – Faithful and True – are meant to highlight those specific attributes of His; God is absolutely faithful in carrying out all of His commands, covenants, and promises, and His Word is altogether true and trustworthy.

With the last phrase of this verse, God again pictures Judgment Day as the final battle between Him and Satan. He links “With the last phrase of this verse, God again pictures Judgment Day as the final battle between Him and Satan. He links” With reason to this: “in righteousness he doth judge” (vv. 7-8). This confirms what we saw in Revelation 16, that the battle of Armageddon is not a physical battle, but a picture of Judgment Day. Christ will “make war” by coming on the clouds of glory and bringing an end to all wickedness.

19:12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.”

"His eyes were as a flame of fire” is a phrase we first came across back in Revelation 1. It is a figure of speech showing that on Judgment Day, Christ sees every evil deed and thought of those being judged.

The Lord has on His head many crowns because He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Although God uses hundreds of names in the Bible to help reveal Himself to us, we still cannot know everything about the infinite God. We know Him only in part; we see Him through a glass. And so, it says here that He has a name that no man can know. No one can really search out altogether who God is.

19:13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

The figure of His vesture having been dipped in blood declares that Christ is the One who has the unique right to be the judge. To atone for those whom He came to save, He endured the wrath of God on the cross. Now, for God’s justice to be vindicated, He shall impose the same punishment upon the unsaved.

Christ is intimately identified with the Word of God, of course. The Gospel according to John opens with this statement: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” Then it says in verse 14, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

We are thus not surprised to learn here that His name is called "The Word of God".

19:14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Who are these armies that follow Him? They are the believers! According to the Book of Revelation, this is stated in I Thessalonians 3:13, where we read, “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in that day.”

Actually, it is the souls of those who have died in Christ that will come back with the Lord. They will then reunite with their resurrected bodies at the last day. These believers have all been given the robe of righteousness. And like the Lord Himself, they are also riding on white horses. Meaning; They, too, are coming to judge. Remember 1 Corinthians 6:2,3? It says there that the sanctified judge not only the world but the angels as well.

19:15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he should rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

A sharp sword protruding from His mouth is another way of saying that Christ is the Word of God. With His Word, He shall smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron.

The picture of Christ ruling with a rod of iron is taken from Psalm 2:7-9: “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Just as a potter would smash all the vessels that are not worth keeping into smithereens, the peoples of the earth will on Judgment Day be reduced to a nothing, so to speak, as they are removed into hell. God uses such language as “to trodden underfoot the witnessing of the wrath of Almighty God” in the last part of the verse to underscore the terribleness of the wrath of God throughout eternity.

19:16. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

In the Bible, God sometimes speaks of a person and his raiment as one and the same. We have just seen, for example, that every child of God is clothed with the righteousness of Christ’s righteousness. That robe represents a spiritual condition that is an integral part of the believer. That’s why we see here that the name is written on the Lord’s vesture.

But why on his thigh also? Remember when Jacob wrestled with the Lord at the River Jabbok in Genesis 32, the Lord smote him on the thigh and he became lame? Remember also when Eliezer was sent by Abraham to get a wife for Isaac, Eliezer put his hand under Abraham’s thigh and swore that he would be faithful to carry out what he had been commanded to do?

Underneath the vesture, the thigh, is the reproductive organ, and the reproductive organ of the Jewish male is that which was circumcised. All of these symbols point to the Seed that would come. Here, God is emphasizing that the promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

19:17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he had a little sleigh, sayings, All the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God. That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

An angel cannot literally stand in the sun at this point in time, because when Judgment Day comes the sun is no more. The sun in this verse is a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. This angel is standing on the authority of Christ.

Nor are literal birds feeding on literal carcasses. Rather the angels shall gather the unsaved to show that He has utterly vanquished the enemy. We see that picture in the Old Testament many times, when God is speaking of His wrath. In Jeremiah 4:25, God says, “And I will make towards this people a smiting, and a magna to their children from generation to generation.” God says here that many flocks of carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.”

Or again in Jeremiah 16:4, “They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.”

In Luke 17:34-37, the Lord Jesus also makes a reference to this: “I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Where the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”

The word “eagles” there could be translated “vultures,” the carrion eaters. The body is the carcass of the defeated foes. Christ is saying that when the Last Battle comes, the believers will be raptured, while the unsaved will be left behind for judgment.

Note in this Revelation passage that among the flesh of people is the flesh of horses. Horses, remember, have to do with strength in warfare. So, God is teaching here that whatever power the unsaved may have will be altogether useless against God. It, too, will be totally vanquished.

19:18. And I saw the dead, small and great, come to the white horses; and they were arrayed to war; and gave them white horses; and they rode upon them: For them is prepared for a time of the great battle, with Satan and his followers making war against Christ and His army. The confrontation will be short and decisive; the beast, representing the whole kingdom of Satan, is taken.

Also taken is the false prophet, that is, Satan as he comes through false preachers with signs and wonders to deceive the unsaved into worshipping him.

The lake of fire into which the beast and the false prophet are cast is a picture of hell. Elsewhere in the Bible, God pictures hell as a place of outer darkness, a place where the wicked die not, where there’s weeping and gnashing of teeth and so on.

Note that the two are cast in the lake of fire alive. They have not been annihilated; they will continue to endure everlasting and unquenchable fire in hell.

19:21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Generally, the word “remnant” in the Bible refers to the elect. We believe the remnant consists of the righteous remnant of the whole human race whom God had graciously chosen to become saved. But in this context, that word has two meanings, both of which point to the unsaved.

First, it emphasizes that no one will escape judgment. After having said that the beast, the whole dominion of Satan, has been taken, God then singles out the false prophets as those who are also cast into the lake of fire. Now, God
Lesson 30 for Revelation 20:1-15 ~ "Symbolic Millennium"

20:1-3. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed little season.

At first glance, this passage does seem to talk about something that will take place in the future. Since Satan has been deceiving people right down to the bottomless pit, he will be deceived no more, implies that there will come a golden age when this world will not be under the impact of Satan at all. But remember Revelation 9? It started out almost the same as verse 1 here: "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit." That star, we learned then, was the Lord Jesus Christ. So therefore is this angel, or rather this messenger.

Now, in Revelation 9, we saw that when the Lord released Satan from the bottomless pit, its ultimate destiny was to exist for a thousand years before God would finally destroy him. In our study of the first 19 chapters, we have firmly established the fact that the final tribulation period will be followed immediately by Judgment Day.

Note that this passage in Revelation 20 is telling us how Satan got into the bottomless pit to begin with. So, it cannot possibly be talking about an event yet to come. Moreover, nowhere in history will the future downhill phase be described in this way. It seems that at some future time Satan will first be cast into hell and then be freed from it so that he can again deceive the nations. On the other hand, there are verses speaking of the binding of Satan as an historical event.

"Eternally chained." In Jude, for example, God — warning that even as there were judgments in the past, there will surely be future judgment — says in verse 5, "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not the truth; even so shall also the judgments of God be judged by the nations. And ye shall be delivered even as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed some 4,000 years ago. And in verse 7: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed some 4,000 years ago.

Right between these two historical judgments, God says in verse 6: "And angels, [satan is a fallen angel] which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Note that the Book of Jude was written just a few decades after Christ went to the cross. Yet, God already spoke of the angels being reserved in everlasting chains in the past tense. "Cast down to hell." In II Peter 2, the Bible again cites three past judgments to warn of a future judgment. It says in verses 5 and 6: "[God] spared not the world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."

Just before those two historical examples, it says in verse 4: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

Again, even when this letter was written, God already said in the past tense that He had cast the rebellious angels down to hell in chains of darkness. Clearly, the binding of Satan was an event that would take place at the end of the millennium.

Binding the mighty. When, then, was Satan bound? In Matthew 12, Jesus made a statement that gives us a clue. Referring to Satan as a "strong man," He says in verse 28: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil [that is, plunder] his goods, except he first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his house."

Christ is alluding to Isaiah 49, where God first prophesied that the day would come when Satan's house would be plundered. We read in verse 24, "Satan's house would be plundered."

Verse 25 goes on: "But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and thou shalt help me, and thou shalt see my salvation." God was promising there that He would deliver or save the captives from Satan, who is called "the mighty" and "the terrible" in verse 24. And he said in Matthew 12, "To plunder the house of Satan of his captives, Christ had to bind the strong man first.

The cross. That binding occurred at the cross. We read in Hebrews 2:14, "Forasmuch then as the children are made sharers of flesh and blood, he, [Christ] also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

Through His death, Christ cast Satan into the bottomless pit, the cross. Satan was destroyed at the cross in the sense that (1) he will have to spend eternity in hell for sure, and (2) he could no longer hold people in his devilish grasp as tightly as he had throughout the Old Testament period. And to the extent that God has been saving people from virtually every nation of the world since Pentecost, Satan could deceive the nations no more.

It says in verse 3 of Revelation 20 that God set a seal upon Satan. It means that God has ordained the binding of Satan. All of God's power and authority is available to keep Satan from contesting God's plan to save His people. The fact that Satan was bound at the cross nearly 2,000 years ago makes it clear that the term "a thousand years" in this passage cannot mean a literal period of one thousand years.

Completeness. The truth is, the number 1,000 here in Revelation 20, like almost all the other numbers in the Book of Revelation, is a figure of speech. Throughout the Bible, in fact, God frequently uses the numbers 10, 100, 1,000 symbolically to mean the completeness of God's plan in whatever is in view.

Back in Revelation 2:10, you may remember, Christ told the church in Smyrna that some of them would be cast in prison for 10 days. We saw then that the ten days represent the completeness of God's plan for the individual imprisoned believers. Here's another example. Psalm 105:8 says, "He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations."

The context makes it quite clear that the "thousand generations" phrase is meant to echo the term "for ever" in the first phrase.

Likewise, in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coins, God uses 100 sheep and 10 coins to symbolize the completeness of all those whom He has come to seek and save.

Now, we can better understand what God means when He says in verse 2 of Revelation 20 that the Lord bound Satan "a thousand years", and in verse 3 that He cast Satan into the bottomless pit till the "thousand years" should be fulfilled. When Christ destroyed Satan at the cross, He bound and cast Satan into the bottomless pit that the completion of God's plan should be fulfilled. What is God's plan in this instance? To have Satan bound until the start of the final tribulation period. 20:4. And when the thousand years are over, he shall be loosed.

But remember Revelation 9? It started out...
with the Lord right here on this physical world for a thousand years. Nevertheless, you may recall, when we studied Revelation 4:2, I took pains to show from seven different patterns of Scriptures that the rapture will take place on the very Last Day of this earth’s existence. What follows will not be 1,000 years, but Judgment Day itself.

Moreover, this passage is talking about the souls of these martyrs. It’s true that in the Bible, the word “soul” sometimes means people. When it says in I Peter 3 that “eight souls were saved” from the flood of Noah’s day, it means that eight people on the ark were saved. In these cases, the word “people” or “persons” can be substituted for the word “souls.” Thus, eight people or eight persons were saved in Noah’s ark. That is, how would cause this verse to read, “I saw the people, or persons, of them that were beheaded.” That doesn’t make any sense at all.

**Spirit essence.** Fact is, the word “soul” is also used in the Bible to mean specifically the spirit essence, as distinguished from the body, of a person. When we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord in our spirit essence.

Only when we understand the word “souls” this way does the passage make sense. When John saw were not martyred believers in their whole personalities, but their spirit essence only. And under no circumstance will believers reign on this earth as disembodied spirits.

In theory, we live and reign with Christ the moment we become saved. (I’ll elaborate on this when we get down to verse 6.) But we have since been sent to this earth as Christ’s ambassadors. It is when a believer dies, therefore, that his spirit leaves the body and goes to live and reign with Christ in heaven.

In a sense, every child of God that dies is beheaded by Satan. Remember the two beasts in Revelation 13, both of which were pictures of Satan. In verse 15 we read, “he had power to give life unto the image of the beast...and cause that as he lived, so would he live.”

What are we to make of verse 5b referring to? The resurrection we have just discussed – that is, the resurrection of the unsaved on Judgment Day? It cannot be, because verse 6 says, Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”

Actually, verse 5a is merely a parenthetical statement inserted to show what happens to the souls of the unsaved when they die. The main current of thought so far has been: God talks about the souls of the martyrs living and reigning in heaven. Now, God explains why they are living in heaven and shows what the first resurrection is.

According to this statement, all those who have experienced the first resurrection share the following five characteristics:

1. **They are blessed.** In the Beatitudes Christ says, Blessed are you. Blessed are they that mourn; Blessed are those that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are the meek; Blessed are the hunger and thirst after righteousness, and so on. Believers are the ones who are blessed.

2. **They are holy.** Believers are holy. We read in Romans 11:16, "If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; while the body of believers is the whole batch and we individually are the branches that share in Christ’s holiness.

3. **On them the second death has no power.** God declares in Romans 8:1-2, There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Those who have trusted in Christ are not subject to eternal damnation. The second death has no power over them.

4. **They are priests of God.** God tells us in I Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation: that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his own light. For ye were not chosen as common assembly, but as an holy priesthood, to show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his own light.

5. **They reign with Christ.** We read in Ephesians 2:4-6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

If Christ is sitting at the right hand of God reigning over all nations, then we believers who have been made to sit together in heavenly places are indeed in God’s presence.

**First resurrection.** Since every believer shares all the above five characteristics, it becomes clear that at the moment a person becomes born again, he experiences the first resurrection. Moreover, we have just seen in the Ephesians 2 passage above that while we were spiritually dead, God quickened us (made us alive). And He raised us together with Christ. If Christ experienced His resurrection when He was raised from the dead after three days, then all who have been raised with Christ from our spiritual death, must also have experienced our resurrection.

It was our first resurrection, the resurrection of our souls. The second resurrection will be the resurrection of our bodies on the last day.

20:7,8. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

At the completeness of God’s plan for the binding of Satan, God will let Satan loose to usher in the final tribulation period that is the event described in Revelation 9:1 as Christ unlocking the bottomless pit. In this context, Satan’s attack upon the apostate church is pictured as a war that culminates on Judgment Day. Thus, we see here that Satan goes out to deceive the nations in the four quarters of the earth, gathering them together to battle.

All through time, of course, Satan has been attacking the church. But because God was carrying out His program to save believers from every nation, God protected the church from any lasting damage. But now that most of God’s elect church has become apostate, Satan will take over the corporate church. As a result, Satan and his false prophets have been able to make massive inroads into churches all over the world.

**Gog and Magog.** Gog and Magog are names taken from Ezekiel 38, where God also talks symbolically about the nations of the world banding together under the leadership of Satan to attack the corporate church. Here, God reveals to us that Gog and Magog are really symbols He uses to represent the nations in the four quarters of the earth.

In the Bible, God first used the expression “as the sand of the sea” to describe the huge number of offspring He promised Abraham. He said in Genesis 22:17, “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”

But in Isaiah 10:22, that term is used to describe the ungodly in Israel, while the true believers are identified as a remnant: “for though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return.” We find the same usage in Romans 11:27: “Two things shall be gathered together out of two tribes of Israel, the house of Joseph and the house of Judah.”

It is with the latter meaning that “as the sand of the sea” appears here. The nations that Satan is gathering together to battle Christ not only are numerous in number, but they will be fighting from within as members of the corporate church.

20:9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. Throughout the New Testament era, there was a church here or a denomination there that went apostate. But there were always many
congregations that remained faithful to the Word of God. From time to time, God would also raise up new churches and denominations to ensure that the work of Christ would go on.

During this tribulation period, however, the number of churches that remained faithful will shrink rapidly. For all practical purposes, Satan’s forces will have compassed, or surrounded, the city of the saints and the beloved city – both of which are, of course, pictures of the body of believers.

But just when Satan and his false prophets appear to have succeeded in totally besieging the church, fire will come down from God and the city, and the true church will be found to have been completely surrounded. God’s word guarantees that “these are the things I have against you: that you have left your first love” (Rev. 2:4).SATAN'S FORCES WILL HAVE COMPASSED, OR SURROUNDED, THE CITY OF THE SAINTS AND THE BELIEVED CITY – BOTH OF WHICH ARE, OF COURSE, PICTURES OF THE BODY OF BELIEVERS.

20:10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

And so, the devil is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. He says here that already in that lake, which means the grave. Even if their bodies have totally decayed, the unsaved will still be standing before God as a whole personality. The same holds true for those who died in an explosion or who have been burned to ashes.

Again, as verse 12 already stated, they are judged every man according to their works. By reiterating this dire statement, God is reiterating that every unsaved person, judgment will surely come to pass.

20:14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

For over 13,000 years, death and hades have served as the repository for those who are to be considered as hell on the last day. The grave or the sea, or however the body was disposed of, has been the gathering place for their bodies (and the bodies of believers as well), and the place of silence has been the gathering place of their souls. Come Judgment Day, two reservoirs will have lost their usefulness. And so, death and hades are cast into the lake of fire.

God calls this final judgment “the second death.” The first death, of course, is the physical death experienced by all human beings, except Enoch and Elias and those who will still be alive when Christ returns.

Whereas the first death is separation of body and soul, the second death is separation of man from God throughout eternity. God talks about this in II Thessalonians 1:7-9: “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels [or messengers], in flaming fire taking vengeance on 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.”

The second death, you see, is to be cut off forever from God. We cannot possibly understand its horrible character because we are living in a world of only some blessings of God are always present. Even the unsaved are blessed in many ways by His mercy and grace every day. All we know is that for one to be forever separated from God must be super, super horrible.

20:15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Since only those whose names are found in the book of life are spared from being judged, everyone will be cast into hell. And no one can be judged by God and not found guilty. And so, all of them will be cast into hell.

One may ask: “Does this mean that if my name was not written in the book of life, I must spend eternity in hell even if I’ve really wanted to be saved God’s way, and even if I’ve humbly cried out to God for His mercy, and truly trusted Christ as my Lord and Savior?”

No. That cannot be. Because the heart of man is in such rebellion against God that no one would ever want to be saved on God’s terms. When anyone begins to cry out to God for mercy, they allow His grace to begin to work in their lives. When they respond to the gospel sincerely, it’s only because his name was written in the book of life.

But whether you are among God’s elect or not is God’s privilege. The question at issue is: God comes with this marvelous gospel, that whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ can be saved. He comes with the marvelous promise that if we deny Him all our heart, we will surely find Him. And God is faithful to all His commitments.

So the question at issue is: “Do I sincerely acknowledge that I am a sinner deserving to go to hell? Am I going to repent and cry out to God for His mercy? Do I really want to be saved on God’s terms? Am I willing to hang my whole life on the Lord Jesus Christ?” I pray that your answers to all those questions are an unequivocal “Yes”. God has promised in Jeremiah 29:13: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Revelation 21
Lesson 31 for Revelation 21:1-14 ~
“The New Heaven and the New Earth”

21:1a. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.

In II Peter 3, we are told that on Judgment Day the present universe shall melt with fervent heat and the earth and everything in it shall be burned up. God will then create a new universe out of the ashes, as it were, of the old one. Here, we find the apostle John looking at this new heaven and the new earth.

Actually, the present universe was created perfect. But when man rebelled against God, God cursed this earth as well as man, because a perfect earth cannot be ruled over by a corrupted ruler. We thus read in Romans 8:20-23: “For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they [the creation], but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Note that God talks about the creation, or the universe, with the same language as He does with man. It is another idea of the new universe; therefore, let’s look at the resurrected body of the believer.

No resemblance. We read in I Corinthians 15:35: “But some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” The answer is in verses 36-38: “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened [made alive], except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sower not that body which shall be, but God giveth it a body as he hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.”

It goes on in verses 42-44: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is sown in righteousness: 31 New Life Digest, Original Series, First Quarter 1994.
raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in incorruption.

Moreover, the new universe must also be similar to the heaven where Christ is currently reigning. Why? Because even now, there are in heaven people who are in their glorified, spiritual bodies. All the remainder of the curse of sin will have been taken away.

21:4b. for the former things are passed away.

The prophet wrote, "But what about my loved one, which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

21:4a. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:

In the Bible, God focuses particularly on a few spiritual reasons for our weeping tears:

To begin with, we weep when we discover that we are lost. Weeping is always a sign of sincere concern, as when the Lord says, "When you see Jerusalem being laid waste, you will lament, as one laments for her children; in that day all Israel will mourn."

Seconly, we weep as we share the gospel with the unsaved, knowing that unless they believe, they will be lost to eternity in hell. Psalm 126:6 says, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Thirdly, we weep for the faithful who have gone to be with the Lord. And so, we come back rejoicing.

We who live in these end-time days also weep when we see more and more churches turning apostate and coming under the judgment of God. Back in Jeremiah's day, God punished Israel by delivering it to the nation of Babylon. The prophet wrote, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes ointment of honey! That I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

There are, of course, many other causes for weeping in this world. There is sorrow and crying in response to broken relationships and man's inhumanity to man. And there is pain and suffering resulting from man's rebellion against God. As Psalm 119:136 puts it, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

But in the new heaven and the new earth, God will wipe away, or blot out, every tear. There will be no more weeping. Everything is going to be joy.

Jerusalem" because everything in it will be new. All the remainder of the curse of sin will have been taken away.

21:3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and he will be their God, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Again, God is using a physical entity to picture a spiritual truth. He himself is, as it were, the tabernacle. Even when Jesus was on earth, He identified Himself as the temple. In John 2:19, He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Bible makes it clear that He was referring to His body.

So, the big point of this verse is that God Himself is with men. He shall dwell with them and be their God. True, God the Holy Spirit is present with us now. But we cannot see Him. We now live entirely by faith. But in the new universe, we will see Christ in all of His glory.

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21:4b. for the former things are passed away.

The new earth is a place of perfect bliss because all the former things that were tainted by sin are passed away.

Of this same point, God says in Isaiah 65:17,18: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the Former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

Same person. "But what about my loved ones?" one may ask at this point. "Will I see them and remember them in glory?" Yes, we'll recognize them. The believer that goes to be with the Lord in heaven will always be the same person that he is on this earth. We know that because when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, the latter were still recognized as Moses and Elijah. They had not lost their identities.

We must remember, however, that in heaven there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Therefore, while we shall recognize our loved one, we will no longer relate to them as we do on this earth. The center of our affection will be upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But we will still love and be loved by them, and with a more wonderful love than before—a perfect love that finds its substance in our love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile, because the former things have passed away, we shall no longer miss those loved ones that have never become saved. There is no sorrow in the new heaven and the new earth.

21:5. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

God reiterates that He is the Creator of the new universe and reassures us that everything that is written in the Bible is absolutely true and trustworth.

21:6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the waters of life freely.

What is done? God's magnificent salvation plan, of course. Declaring again that He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end", Christ is effectively saying that He is the Author and Finisher of that plan.

Having brought the whole program to its successful conclusion, every one of His chosen will have free access to the fountain of the water of eternal life, which is Christ Himself.

21:7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. The moment God saves us, we are overcomers, or conquerors. And we become children of God. "And if children, then heirs;" Romans 8:17 says, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." It goes on in verse 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Oh, the magnanimous, the magnificence and the largesse of God! God gives us all things. When we think of an inheritance we generally think of money and property. But here, God highlights an aspect of this inheritance that is infinitely more wonderful: "I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Imagine, the Eternal Majesty who will destroy the first universe and create a new one, is so condescending as to tell us that He is our God and we are His sons! We are of His family. Isn't it wonderful?

21:8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

While believers will be infinitely blessed, the eternal destiny of all the unbelievers is condemnation. What kind of people are they?

The fearful. No, they didn't fear God when it was still the day of salvation. But, as we saw in Revelation 6, when Christ comes on the clouds of glory, every unsaved person will be in stark terror, knowing that Judgment Day has come.

(2) The unbelieving. No matter how pure, how decent and how moral a person is by human standards, he is filthy in God's eyes if he has not repented while Christ is his Savior. Thus, John 3:18 warns: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned
already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

(3) The abominable. The prophet Daniel spoke many times of the “abomination of desolation” coming in the holy place. In those passages, he was prophesying the host of false prophets that would come toward the end of time with gospels other than that of the Bible. Thus, false prophets are the abominable.

(4) Murderers. The Bible says, if we hate our brother, we already have committed murder in our hearts. Without realizing it, the unsaved of the world bear an extreme hatred toward the Lord Jesus Christ and His people. Even though physically most of them have not killed anyone, they are all murderers.

(5) Whoremongers. This is another word for fornicators. We are created in the image of God. And not live out his life to the glory of God is engaging in spiritual fornication.

(6) Sorcerers. Mankind is fascinated by the occult. But with the exception of the short time when Jesus and the apostles were on earth, the only supernatural breakthrough God wants us to be concerned with is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. All other paranormal activities are of Satan.

Thus, false prophets are the abominable. For other foundation stones, see the notes on Revelation 21:20. Lesson 32 for Revelation 21:15-27 ~~ The New Holy City

21:15. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

In Revelation 11:1, you remember, the Apostle John was given a reed like unto a rod to measure the temple of God, the altar, and the worshippers there. We learned then that God measures the progress of His salvation program in terms of the number of people that have become saved. As soon as all of God’s elect have received salvation, the program comes to an end, and Christ returns to destroy this universe.

We find the same truth in Revelation 7. God assures us there that Christ will not pour His wrath upon the world until He has first put a seal on the foreheads of all His servants.

This golden reed, I believe, is a picture of Christ Himself, as the Word of God. The Word is the standard by which the temple of God is measured.

Notice that to be measured are three things – the city, the gates, and the wall – all of which are pictures of the body of believers. And the number three signifies the purpose of God. It is His purpose that the New Jerusalem comprehends the precise number of people whom He had chosen to save.

21:16. And the city lieth foursquare; and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city, and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

A furlong is roughly a ninth of a mile, and so 12,000 furlongs are equivalent to approximately 1,300 miles. We must remember, though, that God is speaking in parabolic language. He is not talking here about a physical body. We can’t even contemplate a city in the shape of a cube going up that high into the air.

What God wants to convey to us with that language, I believe, is that this city is immense. The total number of people He has saved by the last day, though it accounts for but a small fraction of all those that have ever lived on this earth, is huge. Revelation 7:9 describes them as “a great multitude, which no man could number.”

In this verse, God features the number 12,000, or 12 x 1,000. The number 12 signifies the fullness of all believers, and the number 1,000 indicates their completeness. But why does He picture the city as a cube, where the length and the breadth and the height are equal? By using 12,000 furlongs, He emphasizes that the total number of believers in heaven will conform exactly to His eternal purpose.

21:17. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the measure.

Notice that it doesn’t say whether this wall is 144 cubits deep, or 144 cubits high, or 144 cubits long. No one can build a wall that measures just 144 cubits. God is using this seemingly incomplete statement to underscore that He is not talking about a physical wall.

Now, 144 is twelve times twelve. Besides the number 12, it also involves the number 2 because we have the number 12 twice. And the
number 2 represents the church, or, more specifically in this case, the believers as they send forth the Gospel into the world. Whenever a believer shares the Gospel with others, he is assuming the role of a messenger of God.

So, this hypothetical wall that measures “an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the messenger” represents the church. Specifically in this case, the believers as they carried out the Great Commission. Having done its work on earth, the whole body is now in heaven.

21:18. And the building of the wall it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

We came across the word “jasper” earlier in this chapter when it talks about the city descending from heaven. We learned then that the jasper, being the last stone on the ephod worn by the priest, points to the everlasting nature of the new holy city. Built of jasper, this wall is also everlasting.

God sometimes uses gold to picture the body of believers, as well as Christ Himself. In Zechariah 13, He speaks of those whom He saves as the third part that He refines and tests like silver and gold. The city is pure gold, it says, because in heaven we have gotten rid of all our dross.

The last phrase would be better translated “like unto clean glass”. The original Greek word for dross - katharos - means “clean”. The city is likened unto clean glass, because in the new heaven and the new earth there is no spot of sin anywhere.

21:19-20. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, a chrysoprasus; the seventh, a topaz; the eight, a chrysolite; the ninth, an emerald; the tenth, a sapphire; the eleventh, a diamond; the twelfth, an amethyst.

Remember God says in I Corinthians 3 that we build upon the foundation, which is Christ, using gold, silver and precious stones, wood, hay and stubble? The gold, silver and precious stones refer to those who have become saved after having heard the Gospel; the wood, hay and stubble that were burnt up represent those who have never become truly saved. We are gold, silver and precious stones.

In verse 18, God already likens the city, the body of believers, to gold. Here, He speaks of believers in terms of precious stones. Again, God stresses the intimate relationship that exists between Christ and the believers. Each foundation is garnished with a precious stone.

These are the stones that were put on the high priest’s ephod, but they are listed in a different order. In Exodus 28:17, the first stone named is the sardius. Here, it is the sixth stone. And while the jasper was the last stone in the ephod, it is used here to garnish the first foundation, thereby underscoring the eternal nature of this kingdom.

21:21a. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl:

The word “pearl” is featured in one of the parables Christ gives in Matthew 13. Beginning with verse 45, we read: “Again, a kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls – namely, the body of believers. The city is pure gold, it says, because in heaven we have gotten rid of all our dross.

The man is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was seeking goodly pearls – namely, the kingdom of God or the body of Christ. The pearl He found was the church. To put it another way, that kingdom for Himself, Christ had to sell all that He had. He had to empty Himself of His glory to become a man, and go to the cross to take the punishment on behalf of all those whom He came to save.

Once again, God emphasizes the intimate identification between Christ and the kingdom of God. We saw in verse 12 that the twelve gates had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Here, we see that every one of those gates is a pearl. As I pointed out before, Christ is the gate, of course.

21:21b. and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were the ground of the temple.

Wherever we find that word “way”, “street”, “path” or “highway”, the first place to find its spiritual meaning is to look at the Lord Jesus Christ. He declares flatly in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

That the street is pure gold is easy to understand. Christ is the King, as gold symbolizes, and He is absolutely pure. But why is He like “transparent glass”? Answer: To see the kingdom of God, we have to look through the Lord Jesus Christ.

This matter of seeing is emphasized in John 3. Talking to Nicodemus, Jesus says in verse 3, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” To be born again means to become saved. We have to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. So, this street that is described as pure gold represents Christ through whom we obtain our salvation.

21:22. And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

The idea that Christ is the temple is not new, of course. Jesus said to the Pharisees, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it.” Here, God is using the same figure; throughout eternity the temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. The figure of the Lamb emphasizes Christ’s sacrifice at the cross, and God and Christ are one.

Here again, we see the close interrelationship between Christ and the body of believers. Earlier in our study, we saw that the body of believers is the temple of God.

21:23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Unlike the figures of speech that we have seen in most of what we’ve read in Revelation 21, the sun and the moon in this verse must be understood literally. That is, because whenever God uses the word “sun” it almost always symbolizes something spiritual, Christ is always in view. He is, for example, “the sun of righteousness, rising with healing in his wings” (Mal. 4:2); and He is the Sun “which is as a burning and shining lamp” (Mal. 3:16) (Ps. 19:5).

So, when it says that the city has no need of the sun here, we know immediately that the sun is not a picture of God. Believers are always in need of Christ. In Him we live and move and have our being now and forevermore. In this verse, God is highlighting the difference between the new creation and the present earth. Man, being rebellious as he is, does not by nature recognize God. But he does realize that if the sun would disappear, all lives on this earth would end. Not so in the new creation.

By way of contrast, the new universe will have no need for the sun. Our dependence is altogether upon the Lord Jesus Christ, because it says here, “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Isaiah 60. What are we reading here in Revelation 21 is quite similar to what God says in Isaiah 60. To be sure, in Isaiah 60 God was talking primarily about His program to evangelize the world, the program that began with Christ’s first coming. For example, we read in Isaiah 60:9: “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, and thy daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Israel, because he hath glorified thee.” Or verse 3: “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Regarding the sun, however, verse 19 says: “And the sun shall be no more by day; neither shall the moon shine any more.” For the LORD shall be thou an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”

That’s essentially what this Revelation verse is saying. Isaiah 60:19 is anticipating the completion of our salvation.

21:24. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. Again, we find a parallel in Isaiah 60. It says in verses 3-5, “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, come to thee [Christ]; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.”

The word “sea”, remember, is a figure of the people of the world, who are under the wrath of God. But out of that sea comes the remnant chosen by grace. In another sense, the oceans are converted unto Christ and come into the body of believers. The nations will walk in the light of Christ, the light that has provided them that salvation.

Back in Revelation 4, remember, we saw the four and twenty elders casting their crowns before God. He is their glory. He is our glory, and we come in and pay homage to Him.

Queen of Sheba. God paints a similar picture in I Kings, when the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon. You perhaps are intrigued by that particular historical event. Solomon in that context is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the Queen of Sheba, the nations of the world that become saved. We read in verses 2-6: “And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions [that is, the answers to all her questions]: there was not anything hid from her in all his wisdom.”

Or verse 3: “Then the king made for her a throne of gold.” Solomon draws a picture of the believer. He is that king and that throne of gold.

And she gave the king an answer of good sense and great understanding, and gave him fifteen talents of gold, and spices in abundance, and balsam; so much as she brought with her. And all her臣子, and the sitting of his servants, and the fashion of his table, and the which was kept in his house, and the kind of meat which he used to eat, and the servants that ministered unto him; and how he stood in the gate, and how the gate was kept every several gate; the king said to the woman, ‘Tell me, I pray thee, what more canst thou show me?’”

Now, you see, she is a picture of the nations of the world bringing their witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Before we were saved, we were wood, hay and stubble, using the language of I Corinthians 3; we were subject to eternal damnation. But now in Christ we have become glorious gold, silver and precious stones. Knowing that we don’t deserve any of it on our own, we bring our glory back to Him.

Eternal truth. Like Isaiah 60, this I Kings 10...
passage has to do with the New Testament period, when people from all nations are drawn to the kingdom of God. But here in Revelation 21, God is talking about the new heaven and the new earth, and He using figures relating to things pertaining to the church? I believe it's because these are such important truths that God wants us to remember them throughout eternity.

I don't know how all of this will work out. But I do know that in these visions of glory that John has recorded for us, God has featured the Lamb that was slain. The essence of our praise to God throughout eternity will identify with Christ being our Savior and with the church having successfully carried out the Great Commission:

21:25, 26. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

The gates also signify something that begins on this earth. In Isaiah 60, we read in verses 11 and 12: “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and their kings shall be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

Remember, Isaiah was written at a time when very few people had become saved. God was promising that the time would come when the gates would be opened so that people could come in day and night. The gates, which represent the Lord Jesus Christ, will remain open continually.

No one need ever say, “Oh, I'm too great a sinner. I cannot be saved.” The gate is wide open. We just have to acknowledge our sins and cry to the Lord for mercy. No one can say, “Oh, I rejected Christ so many times, it is too late for me to become saved.” Nonsense! The Bible says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7).

No night. Notice it says here in Revelation 21:25, “the gates shall not be shut at all by day.” It doesn't say day or night. It adds instead, “for there shall be no night there.” This difference between Revelation 21 and Isaiah 60 is highly significant. It underscores that never again will there ever be the threat of sin coming into the new world.

A legitimate question sometimes arises in our minds: “God created this earth perfect. It was very good. Adam and Eve were in total fellowship with the Lord. Yet, somehow sin got in.” This is a legitimate question. If that were the case, Satan, that which is in rebellion against God, No sin or sinner can come in to the new heaven and the new earth.

The statement also means that none of those who have been sent to hell can ever enter the New Jerusalem. There is no parole; there is no cross-over. We have to make sure that we are saved while we are still on this earth. This reminder is also stressed in Isaiah 60. Verse 12 there says, “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

This reminds us of the cross-over. We have to make sure that we are saved while we are still on this earth. This reminder is also stressed in Isaiah 60. Verse 12 there says, “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

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But let me tell you something. If your name is not written in the Lamb's book of life, you will never have any desire in your heart to go to heaven on God's terms. Romans 3 says that no one seeketh after God, no, not one. The only reason anybody really wants to be saved on God's terms is that his name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

The problem is, many, many people want to be saved – but they want it with their own kind of a salvation plan. They consider the salvation plan that God sets forth to be reprehensible. It robs man of his grace. It robs him of his ego. But the Bible makes it clear that we must come to God with a broken and a contrite heart. We have to admit our spiritual bankruptcy. We have to stop pretending Him in fear and trembling as we recognize the awfulness of hell. In childlike faith, we then ask God for the faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why? Because there shall be no night there. It will be denile entrance into the holy city, the New Jerusalem. There is no parole; there is no cross-over. We have to make sure that we are saved while we are still on this earth. This reminder is also stressed in Isaiah 60. Verse 12 there says, “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.”

Beloved, humble yourself and ask God for His mercy right away.

Revelation 22
Lesson 33 for Revelation 22:1-21 ~ “Glory Forever”

22:1. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

This river of water symbolizes, of course, the gospel as it is applied by the Holy Spirit to the hearts of people that are being saved. The Apostle John is thus being shown a picture of the New Jerusalem. No crucifixion is necessary. The implication, although there is no longer any need of salvation in the new heaven and the new earth, we will be praising God throughout eternity for having provided salvation for us.

Notice that this is a pure river of water of life. The gospel is pure and holy.

22:2. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The vision John sees continues to highlight God's salvation program. Like the street we saw in Chapter 21, this street, as well as the tree of life, represents Christ.

The term "twelve manner of fruits" points to the fullness of the gospel that the Lord provides. That the tree of life "yielded her fruit every month" is again a figure of speech since there's no sun or moon in the New Jerusalem; it emphasizes that God has fulfilled the promise He made in Ezekiel 47:12: “And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to its months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.”

Normally, the Bible stresses more the importance of the leaves than the fruit. Not so with the tree of life, which is Christ Himself. Even its leaves bring healing to the sin-sick souls of the elect in all nations.

22:3. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

Back in Deuteronomy 28, God warns, beginning in verse 15, “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the earth, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land... And He goes on and on pronouncing curse after curse.

Since now we can obey God perfectly, all humans – except those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ – are thus under the curse of God. But in the new heaven and the new earth, there will never again be any curse. God says in John 14:14, "Lo, I and my Father are one."

This is a powerful statement. It means that we can be saved. For it means that we can receive the Father's Name as written on the heads of believers. Here, it talks about the Lamb's Name. There's no difference between the two because, as Jesus says in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one."

Christ-like. That God puts "they shall see his face" and "his name shall be in their foreheads" in the same statement is significant. In John 3:2, God says: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” When we read that, we think of our outward appearance – that is, we'll look like Christ. That may be so. But I think it also teaches that all of God's attributes will be found in perfection within us.

Oh, we are not from everlasting; we are not infinite in character. But once we receive our glorified spiritual bodies, we will be like Christ. That is, we will have all the attributes that God has that He had given to believers in an incomplete fashion now will be in perfection, because we will be with Him face to face and we will have His name written on our forehead through eternity.
Again and again and again, God keeps
And once the Gospel is preached to all nations,
All we know is that we will be reigning with
"…one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."
The very fact that the New Testament era has
in Revelation 22:7a. Behold, I come quickly:
this universe and create a new one. This, of
that the world will just go on and on. They scoff
in the dim future. Nowadays, most people think
faithful and true. All of these things will happen.
year followed year, decade followed decade and
the Messiah ever come?"
the land, and when they were taken in captivity
usher in an era of great joy. But when believers
of those days looked at the terrible condition of
Israel, when they saw the desolation that was in the land, and when they were taken in captivity by Assyria or Babylon, they would wonder, "Will the Messiah ever come?"
Year followed year, decade followed decade and century followed century, there was no Messiah. But then, in the most inconspicuous way, a baby is born in Bethlehem. Very quietly Jesus grows
in the New Testament age, we have been
living in the final segment of God's salvation program. And so, we can begin to look at the end of all things.
Note that it was about 2,000 years after the flood that God confused the tongues and scattered people all over the earth. It was 1,000 years later that God called Abram to be the father of a great nation. Later, God called the nation of Israel, and in 2,000 years after Abram's grandson Jacob to Israel, who became the progenitor of the nation of Israel. God dealt with Israel for about 2,000 years and then Christ came and ushered in the New Testament era, the period in which God evangelizes the world.
The end. Of the New Testament era, God says in 1 Peter 4:7, "The end of all things is at hand," and in 1 Corinthians 10:11: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." In other words, once we entered the New Testament age, we have been living in the final segment of God's salvation program. And so, we can begin to look at the end of all things. The end of this book. To keep the sayings means to uphold and obey them.
22:7b. Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of this book.
Prophesy is to declare the Word of God. So, "the word of God" means the declaration of the Word of God that is found in this book. What does "this book" refer to? Just the Book of Revelation? No, it cannot be. This verse talks about he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book. To keep his sayings means to uphold and obey them.
As we have learned from our verse-by-verse exposition, one can never understand, let alone uphold, the word of God, unless he be seen in Revelation without going into the rest of the Bible. We must compare Scripture with Scripture. So, we can keep "the sayings of the prophecy of this book" by keeping the sayings of the whole Bible. In short, this "book" refers to the entire Bible.
22:8. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.
This verse emphasizes that we are never to worship the human being, no matter how great a preacher or teacher he may be. It is God whom we worship. The messenger who has been showing these things to the Apostle John is a fellow believer. We know that to be so because he says he is of them which keep the sayings of this book. Even while we are on this earth, there is within us believers a sincere desire to do the will of God, although our human nature keeps us from obeying perfectly.
In heaven, however, there is perfect obedience, a perfect keeping of the Word of God. We will never find ourselves remorseful for having done or said something that displeases God. That's why we long for the new heaven and the new earth, where there will no longer be any rebellion within us.
22:10. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.
When the prophet Daniel received messages from God regarding the end of time, messages that he had trouble understanding, God would say, "Seal up these words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Or again in verse 9. "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." God was saying to Daniel, "Seal it up. It's still the future. Don't try to figure it out, because I am not going to open it up to anyone any time soon." That was about 500 years before Christ.
Even toward the end of the First Century, when the Apostle John heard the "seven thunders uttered their voices" in Revelation 10, he was told in verse 7, "Seal up these words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Or again in verse 9. "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." Elsewhere, we read in Daniel 12:4, "And thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Or again in verse 9. "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are sealed up and opened not even until the end of the world." God did not want to reveal to anyone.
Time to open up. But here in Revelation 22:10, God says, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book." It doesn't mean that God had begun to open up all the passages relating to the end of the world when Apostle John was writing this chapter some 1,900 years ago. That's because in the same statement, God continues, "for the time is at hand." What time is at hand? The time for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the time for God's salvation plan to be culminated. That's the time when God begins to open up the Word of God regarding the end of the world to childlike, studious students of the Bible.
22:11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. This verse divides the whole mankind into two classes. The unjust and the filthy are the unsaved. They will remain unjust throughout eternity. The righteous and the holy are those whom God has saved. Their salvation is for eternity.
22:12. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. 

As I discussed at length when we studied Revelation, the Bible says, "the wages of sin is death." There are wages that must be paid. The recompense that is given according to every man's work is the judgment every unsaved person receives the eternal punishment in hell.

22:13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 

Why is this reiterated here? In other passages God stresses that He is the Creator of the world, He is the One who developed and has carried out a marvelous salvation plan. But now, His salvation program is reaching its climax. He is about to bring it to its glorious conclusion. And even as He is the author of our faith, He is the finisher also.

22:14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 

At first glance, this verse seems to suggest that our good works are those that qualify us to enter heaven. But we know that is contrary to what the rest of the Bible teaches.

Actually, the doing of the commandments of God is a result of our salvation. If God had not saved us, if God had not given us the intense desire to do His will, none of us will do His commandments. So, the verse is merely saying that those whom God has saved will be in heaven.

22:15. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. 

God often uses dogs to picture unbelievers, especially false prophets. We read, for instance, in Psalm 22:16, "For dogs have compassed me: the wicked have compassed me round about." God often uses dogs to picture unbelievers in the end-time days, because false gospels are arising all over the world. How can we determine which is the true gospel? In I John 4:23, God says, "Hereby we know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." Looking at this statement, many conclude that anyone who admits that only Jesus is the Son of God and came in the flesh is a child of God; he has responded positively to the gospel. But we find in Luke 4:41 that even devils said to Jesus, "Thou art Christ the Son of God." Is the Bible contradicting itself? Not at all.

For one to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh not only means that he acknowledges that fact intellectually, but that he agrees with all that Christ has declared, and that he is of one mind to serve Him. No way were those devils in Luke 4 of that mind. They were in rebellion against God. They did not confess. Likewise, many unsaved people acknowledge that Christ is the Son of God, but when they become flesh, they do not have any desire to be of the same mind with Christ. By itself, therefore, I John 4:3 is not enough a guideline to help us decide if we have the true gospel.

Key criteria. But in Revelation 22:18 and 19, God has given us a further criterion by which we can know whether a gospel is that of the Bible or not.

For over 1,600 years, God used human beings to record in the Bible exactly what He wanted us to know. It is the Bible. If it is not the Bible, it is not the gospel.

Sporious argument. Some fall into the snare in thinking, "Well, if God shows me through a vision something that is already in the Bible, then it really is not new revelation. And I have not added to the Word of God." Let's see if that's a valid argument. Let's look at Psalm 18. It's a long poem; it has 50 verses in it. Yet in II Samuel 22, we find exactly the same 50 verses in word for word. One is a complete duplicate of the other. Since it is a duplicate, can we just take Psalm 18 and cut it out of the Bible? Right at this moment you say, "Oh, no. You can't do that. Psalm 18 was spoken by God at one time, and II Samuel 22 was spoken at another time. God has placed them in two different places in the Bible. They together are the Word of God." In fact, we find that when God duplicates messages, He is emphasizing, "This is surely going to come to pass." God has a real purpose when He duplicates statements in the Bible. Can you begin to see that if you received a message from God and it was an exact duplicate of something in the Bible, that would be an addition to the Word of God?

22:19. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

On the other hand, if any man takes any part from the Bible, God warns that He shall exclude that person from the holy city. Since a child of God cannot lose his salvation, the implication here is that he was never saved to begin with. But we find in II Peter 2:20 that he was a servant of Satan. Isn't it beautiful that God assures us here that if we receive a message from God it was an exact duplicate of something in the Bible, that would be an addition to the Word of God?

22:20. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

God emphasizes again that He comes quickly. Notice the response: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." That is the desire of the believer, that He will come to our lives. Then He will come to finish His salvation program, that He will come to complete all that He has prophesied and promised in His Word. "Amen; so be it" is what that really means.

Notice also the last sentence, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Isn't it beautiful that God assures us here that if we receive a message from God which is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? And what is the grace of God? That we might be saved. As we complete this study, may that be my plea to you. Oh, that you might know the grace of God!

Then we have the closing statement, "Amen." "So be it. So be it." That is the desire that we are left with as we finish this Word of God.
Background Information

Family Radio
The following information was copied from the Family Radio Web site:

The Ministry of Family Radio
Family Radio is committed to the Person and salvation work of Jesus Christ as revealed in God's divine Word, the Bible. We are a nonprofit, nondenominational, educational organization dedicated to obeying our Lord's command to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Family Radio programs include no commercial advertisements. Air time for other Christian broadcasters on Family Radio is free of charge. The ministry relies solely upon God working through listeners for the financial support of day-to-day operations. We as a ministry desire to be entirely faithful to God's divine, infallible Word, the Bible. Every effort is made to accurately present the Gospel of the Bible. In purpose and belief, we stand out from other radio and TV ministries in our faithful reliance on the Bible as the ONLY infallible authority.

First Broadcast in 1959
Family Radio was organized in 1958 under our official name, Family Stations, Inc., and began to broadcast February 4, 1959, over KEAR FM in San Francisco. Since then, God has enabled the ministry to purchase a number of powerful AM and FM stations and several smaller educational facilities and translators around the country. Our domestic broadcasts reach metropolitan areas such as Birmingham, Charleston, Chicago, Cleveland, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, Omaha, Philadelphia, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

International Broadcasts
An important addition came in 1973 with the purchase of an international short-wave station, which we called WYFR, in Scituate, Massachusetts. With the use of many transmitters and antennas, the Gospel is proclaimed in ten languages from the WYFR facility, now located in Okeechobee, Florida. In 1982, our international outreach was expanded to India and the Far East with the use of powerful transmitters in Taiwan. Family Radio has become a worldwide ministry; our broadcasts now span the globe so "That all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God, and that there is none else" (1 Kings 8:60).

A Diversified Outreach
In addition to the broadcasts, Family Radio offers Bible-based pamphlets and tracts to teach and exhort and other diverse means of spreading the Gospel, including the following.

Family Radio School of the Bible
Primarily a correspondence school, Family Radio School of the Bible courses are designed to help laymen and professionals to minister in the church, on the job, and at home through the study of various subjects and certificate and degree programs. The school operates on the principle of Matthew 10:8, "freely ye have received, freely give." In accordance with this principle, the FRSB does not charge tuition; it is dependent upon the generosity of students and friends.

Missionary Tours
Family Radio sponsors "Missionary Tours" which provide opportunities for staff members and listeners (at their own expense) to help spread the Gospel through tract distribution. Our ambassadors for Christ have visited cities in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia (every continent except Antarctica).

On the Internet
Our Christ-centered programs are now available worldwide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on the Internet. Access to the Internet may be via computer or television (with the proper equipment). In addition to the programs on the Internet, Bible studies such as "The Glorious Garden of Eden" and "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9" are on our Home Page. Downloadable books include "What God Hath Joined Together" and "God's Magnificent Salvation Plan." The Internet also has our program guide, short-wave schedule, and The Bible. Tell your friends and family that they can find Family Radio on the Internet at: http://www.familyradio.com

Supporting Family Radio
If you believe God would have you financially support Family Radio you can send your tax-deductible gift to:

Family Radio
Oakland, CA 94621 USA

Or use our "Secure Internet Check Form!"

End of Web site information.

For biblically based answers to your questions, you can listen to the Open Forum on Family Radio stations in many locations in the USA on Monday through Friday evenings at 8:30-10:00 p.m. Eastern Time (5:30-7:00 p.m. Pacific Time) or call 800-322-5385 (from within the USA and Canada) during those hours. There are also recordings of past programs available on this Web site.

The Open Forum is translated from English into nine other languages and broadcast by short-wave radio around the world. You can also listen to prerecorded short-wave broadcasts on the Web site. Write to Family Radio at the above address to obtain a short-wave broadcasting schedule for your area or call these numbers:

Toll Free: 800-543-1495 (from within the USA and Canada)
Toll Call: 501-568-6200 (from outside the USA and Canada)
This Book

Assembled for Distribution

This book was assembled by two Family Radio listeners who have grown in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior over the years (with help from the questions and answers about the Bible as heard on the Open Forum program and other Family Radio materials) and who desire the same for others.

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Version 1010 – One column, 10-pt font, 198 pages.
Version 1020 – Three columns, 8-pt font, 89 pages
Version 1021 – Update page 2 items.
Version 1023 – Update Rev 8:11, 13:14a,16:14 (the Lord Jesus Christ)->(the man of sin) (8/16/2000)

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