



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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PREFACE

In presenting this book on one of the most difficult and controversial subjects of the Bible, we do so in the spirit of love and humility, not wishing to be viewed as those who hold contrary views for the sake of being different. Neither do we lack appreciation for the scholarly and spiritual aspects that many commentators have put forth throughout the centuries. We pray this book will help shed some light on some of the obscure passages of the book of Revelation and be used to persuade believers to walk in purity all the days of their lives.

THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST

There are basically three main interpretations of eschatology, or the study of the end times, concerning the Second Coming of Christ and His subsequent millennial reign upon earth.

1. The Amillennial View has its origin in the writings of Saint Augustine, who lived during the fourth century A.D. He first thought that the millennial reign of Christ would be between His first and second

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

advents. However, seeing the deplorable condition of the world even in his days, he then assumed that the kingdom of God was purely spiritual and found in the hearts of the faithful. Therefore, he did not embrace a literal reign of Christ upon earth.

2. The Post-millennial View originated with a Unitarian minister named Daniel Whitby in the seventeenth century. He believed that the gospel would permeate throughout mankind, resulting in a thousand years of peace after which the Lord would return. Events have proven this theory incorrect, and its adherents have diminished considerably in numbers.

3. The Pre-millennial View was the view held by the Early Church. It maintains that the Lord will return and rule for one thousand years in person upon earth. We believe that this is the correct view that is plainly set forth by Scripture.

THE RAPTURE

Another very important aspect that must be addressed concerning the method of interpreting the events of the last days is the time when the rapture of the Church will occur. There are several main schools of thought that encompass virtually all the various proponents of eschatology.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

1. Pre-tribulation Rapture. This theory has its origins in the teachings of John Darby and the Plymouth Brethren during the early part of the nineteenth century. It teaches that the Lord will come for His Church prior to the beginning of the last seven years of the Church Age (or the last week of Daniel's seventy week period - Dan. 9:24-27), and that the Church will not go through the tribulation. In a certain sense, it suggests that the Lord can return at any time.

2. Mid-tribulation Rapture. This is a more recent view which is embraced by a number of scholars who feel that the views of pre-tribulationists and post-tribulationists are incompatible with the truth of God's Word. It teaches that the Church will be raptured during the middle of the last seven years of the Church Age, just prior to the last three and a half years of the Great Tribulation.

3. Post-tribulation Rapture. This theory teaches that the Church will pass through all the judgments of the Last Days, including the Great Tribulation, the *Trumpets* and the *Vials*.

However, even the most avid proponent of any of the above theories will admit that not one of these views can adequately answer all the objections which are raised against them. It would therefore

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

appear to us that in the spirit of love and conciliation we should look objectively at another view which would overcome the objections that are leveled at these other theories.

As many theologians have already pointed out, I must accept the view that the Church is not raptured at the onset of the seven year period. This is very clear from Scripture. Certainly, the Early Church did not hold this position, and an objective study of the teachings of the Lord Himself as well as the Apostle Paul would lead us to the conclusion that the Lord will not come in the clouds for His people until *after* the Great Tribulation.

Later, as I exegete, passage by passage, this very wonderful book, I will seek to suggest a *possible* time period without being absolute or rigidly dogmatic. My personal belief is that the Lord Himself will make all things abundantly clear to His Church in His appointed time. These views are presented as a proposition to God's people. However, I feel I must be firm about the fact that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation. With this in mind, let us now look prayerfully at this book with an open heart and ask to be instructed by the Lord.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation was written during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, who ruled from A.D. 81 to A.D. 96. Revelation is basically chronological, with the majority of the book focusing upon the final period of the Church Age.

Revelation chapters 1-3 contain the introduction and the messages to the seven churches of Asia, which were located within a hundred mile radius of each other. John the Beloved was the spiritual overseer of these seven churches. He had been exiled to the Isle of Patmos, located only a few miles off the shore of Ephesus. It was on this island that the Lord commissioned John to write the book of Revelation.

In Revelation 4:1, John was taken out of the first century by the Spirit into the future to see the end of the Church Age, the judgments of God upon the wicked, and the rise of the Antichrist and the false church. He also saw the glorious Church of Jesus Christ being prepared and emerging triumphantly out of the Great Tribulation, ready as the radiant Bride for the Second Coming of Christ. The Apostle

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

also had a revelation of the New Jerusalem and the New Earth and the New Heavens, which will be created after the millennial reign of Christ upon this earth.

The book of Revelation fulfills the maxim of Saint Augustine, who said: “The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed. The Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.” Since the book of Revelation contains more than 550 Old Testament references, it is safe to state that it contains the culmination of all unfulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Revelation, in actuality, is the book that ties up the plan of God for the ages. That which had its beginning in the book of Genesis finds its completion in Revelation. In fact, there are many interesting parallels between these two remarkable books, which can be seen in the following examples:

Genesis

- The first creation
- The First Adam and his bride
- Paradise lost
- The serpent seduces
- Babylon (Babel) founded
- The tree of life forbidden
- The old world judged by the Flood

Revelation

- The new creation
- The Second Adam and His Bride
- Paradise regained
- The serpent judged
- Babylon destroyed
- The tree of life offered
- The last day judgments of the Seals, Trumpets, and Vials

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Another point worthy of mention is that the book is governed by the number seven, which speaks of completeness in Biblical numerics. In the book of Revelation there are fifty-four “sevens” (or 3 x 18 sevens), which signifies that there is Divine strength to bring to completion all that God has purposed for this age of man upon earth.

METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

There are basically three schools of interpretation of the book of Revelation. They are called the *Preterist*, the *Historical*, and the *Futurist* methods of interpretation.

Preterist

The Preterist method of interpretation views the events in the book of Revelation as having been fulfilled during the time of the Roman Empire in the Early Church. This interpretation was developed by a Spanish Jesuit priest named Alcasar, who died in 1614. The purpose of this interpretation was to combat the Protestant School of Theology which was saying that Babylon was the Roman Catholic

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Church. The Preterist method of interpretation is not accurate. It was developed solely to justify the existence of the Roman Catholic Church.

Historical

The Historical method of interpretation is dependent upon a good knowledge of history, because it teaches that Revelation chapters 1-22 were fulfilled throughout the nineteen hundred years of Church history. This view presents a number of problems. To mention just one, as the years pass by, the Historical method makes changes to fit current events into the end-time picture. This method of interpretation lacks credence and validity.

Futurist

The Futurist view is accepted by the majority of the Church. It is the correct, Scriptural method of interpretation. The Futurist method of interpretation views Revelation chapter 1 as the introduction, Revelation chapters 2-3 as the messages to the seven churches of John's time, and Revelation chapters 4-22 as events that relate to the future. This method applies the majority of the book of

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

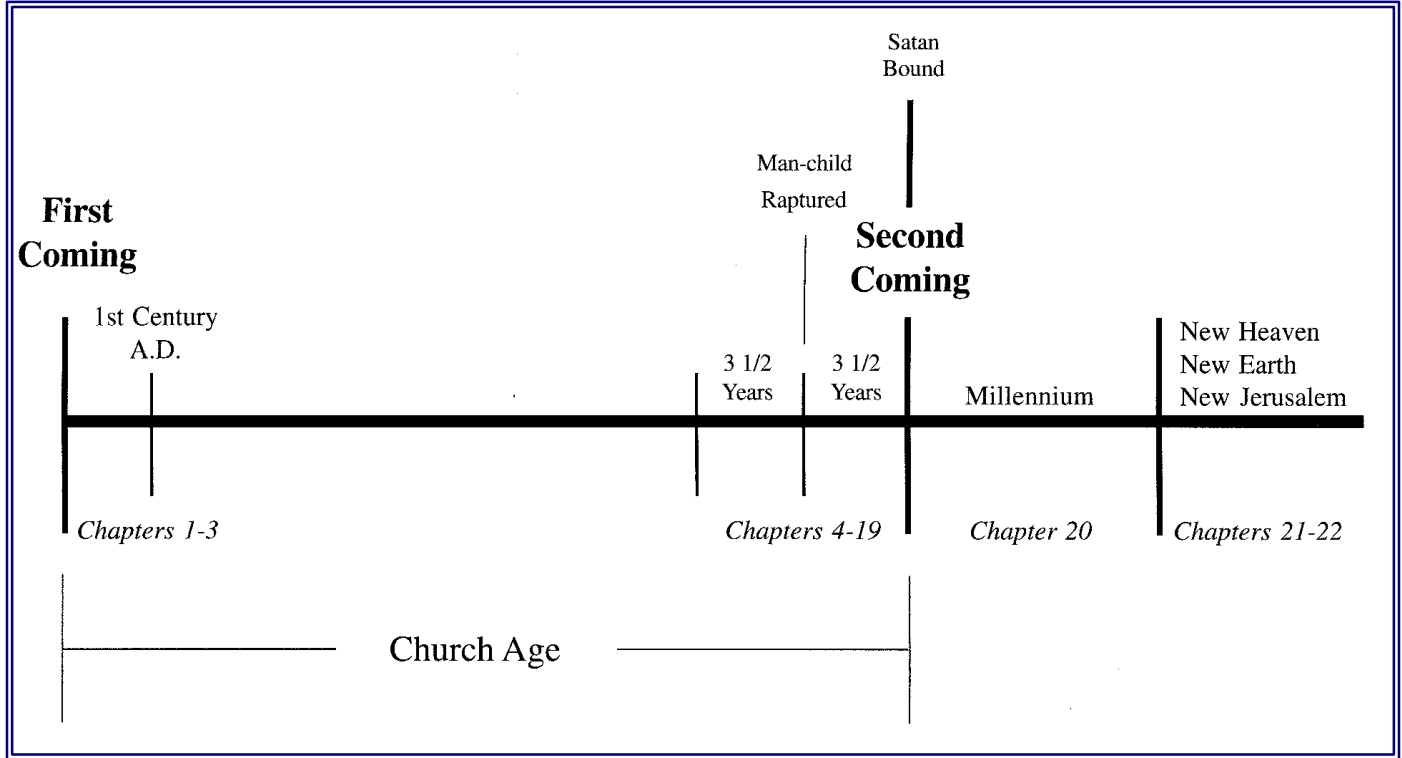
Revelation to the end of the Church Age, declaring that the book of Revelation has not yet been fulfilled.

OUTLINE BY CHAPTERS

Chapter	Theme
1	The Introduction
2 - 3	The Seven Churches
4	A Door Opened in Heaven
5	The Book with the Seven Seals
6	The Opening of the Seven Seals
7:1-8	The Sealing of the 144,000 Israelites
7:9-17	The Great Multitude in Heaven (The triumphant martyrs)
8 - 9	The Seventh Seal (Opens the Seven Trumpets)
10	The Seven Thunders and the Little Book
11:1-2	The Measuring of the Temple
11:3-12	The Two Witnesses (Elijah and Moses)
11:13-14	A Great Earthquake
11:15-19	The Seventh Angel (Trumpet) Sounds
12	The Church of Jesus Christ
13	The Unholy Trinity
14	The Seven Visions (Oracles of the last days)
15 - 16	The Seven Angels with the Seven Last Plagues (The Seven Vials)
17	The Judgment of the Great Whore (Rome)
18	The Fall of Babylon (The city)
19	The Marriage Supper of the Lamb; The Second Coming of Christ
20	The Millennium
21-22	The New Heavens, New Earth, and New Jerusalem

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Overview of Revelation



Part One

THE INTRODUCTION - 1:1-20

1:1-2 - "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

The word "revelation" means *to uncover, to unveil or to reveal*. Verses 1-2 give us an understanding

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

of how this book came into existence. God the Father gave this book to Jesus after His ascension to heaven.

Christ said in Matthew 24:36 concerning the time of His Second Coming, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” God the Father is the only One who knows the actual day and hour of the Second Coming of Christ. As the Son of Man, Jesus’ revelation of the last days was not complete while He was upon earth. He had to grow in knowledge as we do. However, after He ascended to the Father in heaven, He knew all things. The book of Revelation was given by the Father to Jesus, who then sent it by an angel to John.

John was the last living apostle of the Lamb (of the original 12). He wrote five books of the New Testament—the Gospel of John, the I, II, and III Epistles of John, and the book of Revelation.

John was around ninety years old when he received this book. He said in his first epistle, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn. 1:3).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

John had an intimate knowledge of God's Word and an understanding of God's ways. He received his greatest revelation in the maturity of his life. There is a certain purity that is worked out in men and women who have continued to walk with God as they grow older. As Christ said, as we continue in the Word, we know the truth and that truth sets us totally free (Jn. 8:31-32).

The Seven Beatitudes of the Book of Revelation

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."* This constitutes the first of "The Seven Beatitudes of the Book of Revelation." The others are found in chapter 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, and 22:14. Many of the great divisions of the Bible start with their own beatitudes, which are the keys to receiving the blessings that the Lord desires to bestow upon His people.

The Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) contains the Ten Commandments, of which the Lord said in Deuteronomy 6:17-19: "Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, To cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the Lord hath spoken.”

The book of Psalms begins with a pronouncement of a blessing upon those who do not walk with the ungodly and who also meditate continually upon the Word of God. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa. 1:1-3).

The prime message of the prophets was repentance and a turning back to the Law. A blessing is pronounced upon those who do so. The prophet said in Isaiah 56:1-2: “Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.” (See also Isa. 1:18-20).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The New Testament has, as is well-known, the Beatitudes pronounced by the Lord Himself. In His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord gave these nine beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12: “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, 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.”

Let us return now to the first beatitude in the book of Revelation. It is extraordinary in several ways. First of all, the Lord pronounces a blessing upon those who read or who simply hear the words of this

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

prophecy. This is the only place in Scripture where the reading of a book is guaranteed to bring a blessing upon the reader. Notice that the Lord does not say that one must understand the book to receive a blessing, but must simply read or hear it.

Also, the book of Revelation is called *prophecy*, thus linking it with the prophetic flow found particularly in the Major and Minor Prophets of the Old Testament. This is substantiated by the fact that so many of the subjects and illustrations of the end-time events of Revelation are found paralleled in the writings of the Old Testament prophets.

There is an admonition to keep the sayings of this book: “Bless-ed 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.” This warning to keep the commandments in this book is repeated in chapter 22:9: “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.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Greeting

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.*” In verse 4 we are directed to the seven churches in Asia. For the modern reader, it needs to be mentioned that Asia was the name given to a *Roman province* in the western part of the country that is known today as Turkey.

These seven churches were those over which the Apostle John exercised apostolic care late in his life. He visited them in a circuit, in the same manner in which the prophet Samuel did, traveling to various cities in Israel. “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord” (1 Sam. 7:15-17).

These seven churches are enumerated in Revelation 1:11: “What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.” They were the first beneficiaries of this very remarkable prophecy.

After addressing the seven churches in Asia, John then gives the traditional New Testament greeting of “grace” (1:4). Grace is divine enablement to triumph over all the obstacles and struggles we encounter on our pilgrimage from earth to heaven. Grace also means God’s unmerited favor, which is received as we humble ourselves before the Lord.

John also greets them with “peace.” Peace was the salutation of the Lord to His disciples before and after His resurrection. Peace is the most prized gift to mankind, sought after by nations and peoples everywhere, but so rarely found. Christ said to His disciples in John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” The Apostle Paul said to the Philippian believers: “Be [over-anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep [or garrison]

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7). Peace comes from the Prince of Peace alone, and it is bestowed upon His loved ones. Peace is given to the righteous.

Something else worthy of note is that this traditional greeting comes from Him “which is, and which was, and which is to come.” This little phrase about the Lord who “is and was and is to come” is very important. This title of the Lord Jesus Christ is repeated in varying forms throughout the book of Revelation. There is a distinct reason for this. It is to emphasize the fact of His resurrection and pre-existence as the Son of man, but also that He is coming again. Jesus is alive today.

Then, because all testimony has to be affirmed in the mouths of two or three witnesses, the greeting comes also from the seven Spirits of God, who are named for us in Isaiah 11:2. These seven Spirits of the Lord are an extension of the Person of the Holy Spirit.

1:5 - *“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”* Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. This echoes what Paul wrote many years before in First

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Timothy 6:13: “I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.”

Jesus is also “the first begotten [or firstborn] from the dead.” This is repeated in Colossians 1:18. Christ was the first to receive a resurrected body. Paul said in First Corinthians 15:20, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” The Lord Jesus conquered death.

Now with elegant simplicity, John declares the authority and majesty of Christ in the wonderful title “The Prince of the kings of the earth.” This title signifies that Christ is the One who has the preeminence over the kings of the earth. The Lord Jesus is the King of Kings, and He reigns over all the rulers of the earth.

In his typical manner of expression, John then declares the love of Jesus for us. It is similar to his declaration in John 13:1 of the unfailing love that Jesus manifested toward His disciples: “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Even in the hour of His greatest need, the Lord poured Himself out for His disciples and gave everything He had for them. That is true love! Love constrained Him to give *all*.

Lastly, John recalls the supreme sacrifice of Jesus for us. Christ not only shed His blood for us, but He washed us from our sins in His precious blood that flowed from Calvary. This word “washed” could also be translated “freed or loosed.” The Lord washed us, made us as white as snow (see Isa. 1:18), and set us free from our sins by His blood.

1:6 - *“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”* John declares the ultimate reason why we are cleansed—that we might become kings and priests unto God. This is by no means an isolated truth. It was the original plan and purpose for the children of Israel. The Lord said to the children of Israel in Exodus 19:6, “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” The Lord Jesus is a King, but He is also a Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Therefore, He wants us to be spiritual king-priests too. This is a truth that we see developed in more detail in Revelation 5:9-10.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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.”* One of the most clear-cut facts about the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is that He will come with clouds (cf. Dan. 7:13) and every eye will see Him. There will be no *secret* coming. This truth is repeated time and time again throughout Holy Scripture. Christ declared in Matthew 24:30, “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.”

In the record of Jesus’ ascent to heaven forty days after His resurrection, we have a picture of His Second Coming. We read in Acts 1:9-11: “And when [Christ] had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus is going to return to the earth in the same way He left this earth when He ascended to heaven. Because of this, we know several things about His return. He will come with clouds. Also, because He ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12), when He returns His feet shall touch the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). And every eye shall see Him. Everyone around the world will see Him at the same time because of His omnipresence.

Also, those who pierced Him will see Him. Zechariah 12:10 says, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” (See Psa. 22:16; Isa. 53:5).

The Alpha and Omega

1:8 - *“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”* Christ reveals Himself here as the “Alpha and Omega.” *Alpha* is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and *omega* is the last letter. This emphasizes the fact that the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Lord is the beginning and ending of all things. Paul brings out this truth in Philippians 1:6, where he said, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Because our Lord is the Alpha and Omega, we can be assured that He who began the work in us will complete it. He is “the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). Thus, what God purposed before the foundation of the world, whether it be for a nation or an individual, He will fulfill and bring to fruition. We have to be absolutely persuaded of this deep in our hearts in order to hit the mark of God for our lives. Knowing God’s unchanging character, we can say with David by faith, “The Lord will perfect [or complete] that which concerneth me” (Psa. 138:8).

The Lord states that He “is, and was, and is to come.” The constant repetition of this phrase in the book of Revelation is by no means incidental. It is given to impress upon us not only the certainty of the Lord’s Second Coming, but also the distinct difference between Christ and the Antichrist.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The coming Antichrist “was, and is not, and is to come” (Rev. 17:8,11). Why the contrast? The reason is that Christ comes from above with the clouds, but the Antichrist “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit” (see Rev. 17:8).

The Lord is called the Almighty, but the Antichrist is a man who lived prior to the writing of the book of Revelation. Revelation 13:18 clearly states that the Antichrist is a man: “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.”

Isaiah 14:12-15 speaks of Satan the fallen archangel whose former name was Lucifer. Then Isaiah 14:16 speaks of the Man of sin (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3), a man who shall arise in the last days who will be totally possessed and energized by Satan. When the Antichrist is destroyed and cast into hell by Christ at His Second Coming, the nations will say, “Is this the *man* that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?” (Isa. 14:16).

1:9 - *“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

testimony of Jesus Christ.” John identifies himself with his readers. Although he was a revered apostle, he simply calls himself their *brother* in the family of God. This brings out the thought of identification. The same was true of the prophet Ezekiel. He testified, “I sat where they sat” (Ezek. 3:15). In other words, he identified with the people to whom he ministered, and could relate to their needs.

John also says that he is their companion in tribulation. John was no stranger to tribulation. The New Testament Church began in tribulation and the last day Church will end in the Great Tribulation. Acts 14:22 tells us that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” The background to this awesome statement is Paul’s stoning at Lystra. Can you see how the New Testament saints entered into the kingdom of God? It was through much tribulation and persecution.

The greatest persecutions against the Church of Jesus Christ are yet to come. Christ declared in Mark 13:19 concerning the last days, “For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.” John received the book

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

of Revelation during a time of tribulation. This can apply to Christians today. It is during times of trials and tribulations that the saints experience and receive the greatest revelations of their lives.

“Your companion ... in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.” The Greek word for “patience” is *hupomone*, which means *a steadfast and conquering endurance*. This type of patience transforms all forms of suffering into glory. The way of the kingdom is the way of endurance. This endurance is found in the person of Christ. He Himself endured to the end, and He said in Matthew 24:13, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” This applies especially to the last day Church, because this was spoken in the context of the days before the Second Coming.

The last week of Christ’s life on earth was His darkest hour; and yet it was also His greatest hour. The last week of Christ’s life and ministry is a type of the last days of the Church. Although He experienced the greatest sufferings, He also received the greatest glory there has ever been—culminating with His victory on the cross. And I emphasize that it was a victory, not a defeat!

Although the book of Revelation was given as a source of comfort to the suffering Christians in John’s day and for the saints of God in all ages who are persecuted, it has a special application for the last

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

day Church. By declaring the ultimate triumph of God and of Christ over Satan, the Antichrist, the false prophet and the false church, Revelation assures us of our ultimate triumph if we continue to walk in the light. What assurance we have in Jesus!

1:10 - *“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.”* The Lord’s day is Sunday. This was the day Christ arose from the dead. The Old Testament Sabbath was Saturday, but in the New Testament it is Sunday. Sunday is both the first and the eighth day of the week. The number eight speaks of new life, a new order and a fresh beginning in the purposes of God; in this instance, it speaks of the inauguration of the Church Age with the death of Christ upon the cross and His subsequent resurrection.

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 the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”* Christ is the Alpha and Omega. This title is used twice in chapter one and also in Revelation 21:6 and 22:13.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Repetitions in the Word of God are for emphasis. Therefore, they should not be overlooked. This is made clear from Genesis 41:32, where Joseph said, “And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.” It is clear the Lord wishes to emphasize that He will finish the work He has begun (see Rom. 9:28). Truly, “He who began a good work in us will complete it!” (Phil. 1:6).

“What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches.” This was John’s commissioning to write the book of Revelation. The ministry of a writer takes a special anointing and grace, a unique equipping, and also an enormous amount of preparation. Solomon said in Psalm 45:1, “My heart is indicting a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” When we write under the unction of the Holy Spirit our hearts burn within us.

In Revelation 1:12-17 John receives a fresh revelation of Jesus Christ. This was a revelation of Christ in His fullness. For three and a half years, John was accustomed to seeing the Lord in His earthly form, but now he receives a greater revelation of the fullness of Christ. At the last supper, John had

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

leaned upon Jesus' bosom, but this new revelation caused him to fall down at the feet of Jesus as though he were dead. There are many degrees to the manifestations of Christ. In heaven there are degrees of light. The nearer one draws to the throne of God, the brighter and stronger the glory becomes.

The brightness of glory revealed to us depends upon our spiritual development. There are times when Christ tempers the glory of His manifestation so we can behold Him (cf. Ex. 34:33-35). In John's life there was a continual unfolding of the beauty and person of Jesus, and so it should be with us.

In John 14:21 Christ gave us the key to a never-ending and ever-increasing revelation of His person and nature. Christ said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." The word *manifest* means "to openly reveal and show." The key to this unveiling of the Lord's beauty and person is obedience to His commandments.

Each time the Lord reveals Himself to us, there is a transforming power to develop that particular revealed name and characteristic of Christ in us. Second Corinthians 3:18 states that "we are

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” It is the Holy Spirit who takes us from one level of glory to the next. Every one of us can receive a progressive revelation of the beauty and character of Christ. Sometimes this is literal when we have our eyes anointed to see Him in the Spirit.

The secret to being transformed is found in First John 3:2—“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.” As we behold Christ and see Him in all His beauty, we shall be transformed into His image and likeness. We become like whatever we focus our heart and attention upon. If we have dove’s eyes for the Lord and our heart is fixed on Him, as we behold Him we shall become just like Him.

1:12-13 - *“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”* John saw Christ clothed upon with His high priestly garment which went down to His feet. This garment was made of fine linen, which speaks of righteousness (Rev. 19:8). Thus every area of Christ’s life was filled with

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

righteousness. The golden girdle speaks of divine service and the dignity of an office, a position and a person's character. In this instance, pertaining to the Lord, gold is the emblem of deity or the divine nature, and the girdle speaks of truth and faithfulness (Isa. 11:5).

1:14 - *“His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire.”* White hair is always a symbol of wisdom. Remember, in Christ are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). His eyes were as a flame of fire. This speaks of the penetrating vision of Christ. Jesus looks right through a person and brings hidden things to the light.

1:15 - *“And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.”* Brass symbolizes judgment. Brass does not change with time. Feet of brass indicate a continuity in judgment and an inflexible standard for the Christian's walk. Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. There is no such thing as situational ethics. God's standards never change!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Water speaks of life. Jesus said in John 6:63, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” When Christ speaks, His words sound like many waters (cf. Psa. 29:3).

1:16 - *“And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”* The sword coming forth from the Lord’s mouth speaks of the efficiency of the written and spoken Word being like a sword. The Word of God is the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17). Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

The sun speaks of Christ. When Christ was transfigured, His face shone as the sun (Mt. 17:2). In Malachi 4:2 the Lord is called the Sun of righteousness.

1:17 - *“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.”* There are many degrees of manifestations of the Lord.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

There were many men in the Word of God who fell at the Lord's feet (see Josh. 5:14; Ezek. 1:28; Dan. 8:17, 10:15). They were overcome with the majesty and holiness of Jehovah—Christ.

The Lord laid His right hand upon John and told him not to fear. The right hand is always a symbol of authority. Christ is the First and the Last. This title is used four times in the book of Revelation (1:11; 1:17; 2:8; 22:13). This is a similar title to the Alpha and Omega.

1:18 - *"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."* Note the constant reference to the resurrection of the Lord. Christ possesses the keys of hell and death. He has power over death. God raised Christ from the dead and freed "Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24 - NIV).

1:19 - *"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."* Verse 19 gives us the key to interpreting the book of Revelation. *"The things which thou hast seen"* are the things John saw in chapter one. *"The things which are"* refer to chapters two and

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

three. *“And the things which shall be hereafter”* refer to chapters four through twenty-two, which develop the events that would take place after the lifetime of the Apostle John.

1:20 - *“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”* The mystery of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks are interpreted by the Lord Himself. The seven stars are the seven angels of the churches. There is an angelic ruler over every church.

It is very important to have the right angel over your church. For example, once there were several churches gathered together for a meeting. The Lord revealed that there were two angels on the platform—one was a true angel and one was a demonic prince. These angels were in conflict during that service. There can be a duality in the covering over a church.

When a church embraces a false doctrine, they are actually embracing the fallen spirit which is behind that false doctrine. Unfortunately, that spirit will ultimately govern the church (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; Isa. 8:19; Gal. 1:8).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

A second interpretation of the seven stars is that these angels can also speak of a pastor or a leadership ministry. Paul said to the Galatians, “You have received me as an angel of God” (Gal. 4:14). The purpose of the ministry is to bring illumination and to stay on the path of righteousness so others can receive guidance from us for their lives.

This is exactly the function of the stars. Not only do they give light, but they stay on a fixed course. Because of this they are used for navigational purposes. A person can obtain a true fix from which his position may be calculated. May we be as those spoken of 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.”

The seven golden candlesticks represent the seven churches. The candlestick gives light and direction. It also represents the anointing of the seven Spirits of the Lord (see Isa. 11:2-3; Zech. 4:1-6, 11-13). There was once a prophecy given to a certain church warning them, “I will take away the light of My Spirit from your midst if you continue moving in wrong areas.” May the Lord grant that we walk

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

in constant fellowship with Him so that the candlestick of God remains in the midst of our congregations.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Seven Churches of Asia



Part Two

THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES - 2:1 - 3:22

In Revelation 1:11 John was commanded to write what he saw in a book and send it to the seven churches. John the Beloved was the spiritual overseer of these local churches. They were located in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), all in a hundred mile radius of each other. In Revelation chapters

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

2-3 the messages which were sent to the seven churches are recorded for us. Each church received a different revelation of the Lord and a different message, each pointing to the spiritual state of the church and its needs.

The book of Revelation, which details God's judgments on this world and on the false church prior to the Second Coming of Christ, begins by addressing the present state of the Church at that time. As the Apostle Peter states in 1 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?"

There are four applications of the messages to the seven churches:

1. They applied to the actual churches in John's day.
2. They apply to the Church from New Testament times until our days, dispensationally and in their order historically.
3. They apply to local churches today.
4. They apply to individuals (a personal application).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Parallels of The Seven Churches

The fact that there are seven churches means that they can be linked with two other sevens in the Word of God—the seven feasts of the Lord (Lev. 23) and the seven parables of the Kingdom found in Matthew 13.

7 CHURCHES

Ephesus
Smyrna
Pergamos
Thyatira
Sardis
Philadelphia
Laodicea

7 FEASTS

Passover
Unleavened Bread
Firstfruits
Pentecost
Trumpets
Atonement
Tabernacles

7 PARABLES

Sower
Tares
Mustard Seed
Leaven
Treasure
Pearl
Net

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

These parallels are amazingly accurate. Remember, however, that types and parallels only help to illustrate a truth, but they cannot be taken as doctrine. Parallels, like parables, do not apply in every aspect.

These parallels tell us some interesting things for our day. The Laodicean church, a type of the Church of the last days, parallels the seventh feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the feast of revival, the latter rain, and ingathering. It parallels the seventh parable of the Kingdom, about the net, which also speaks of the last days. Thus in our day we shall see the Feast of Tabernacles fulfilled and a great ingathering of souls into the kingdom of God, but we shall also see many Christians lose their fervor and love for the Lord, settling for passivity and half-heartedness.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Seven Churches Dispensationally

These seven churches can also be looked at dispensationally. They show the history of the Church from New Testament times.

- *Ephesus* speaks of the early New Testament Church.
- *Smyrna* speaks of the late New Testament Church that experienced great persecution.
- *Pergamos* speaks of the early Roman Church.
- *Thyatira* speaks of the Dark Ages.
- *Sardis* speaks of the Middle Ages (Martin Luther's time).
- *Philadelphia* speaks of the Wesley Era (Holiness Revival).
- *Laodicea* speaks of the last day Church.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Outline of the Messages

Each message has a similar outline, which is as follows:

1. A specific revelation of the Lord was given to each church through a description of Christ or one of His titles.
2. The Lord's commendation was given, if appropriate.
3. The Lord's correction or reproof was given, if appropriate.
4. The Lord always closed with a promise to those who overcome.

One of the interesting facts about these churches is that the meaning of the city's name often reflects the spiritual status of the church. We should remember this when assessing the problems or character of the church that we attend or pastor.

EPHESUS (2:1-7)

Ephesus means "desired one" or "desirable." This should have been the theme of the church, but they were reprimanded by the Lord because they had left their first love. The city in itself was a scene of great beauty. The Temple of Diana in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the world. Yet

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

amid this beauty there were the horrors of temple prostitution. The temple became a source of great commercial gain.

Therefore, when Paul and his companions were accused of jeopardizing the worship of Diana through the introduction of Christianity, there was naturally an outrage by the craftsmen and vendors of heathenism (Acts 19:23-41).

The other six wonders of the ancient world were:

1. The pyramids of Egypt
2. The hanging gardens of Babylon
3. The statue of the Greek god Zeus at Olympia
4. The marble tomb of King Mauslus at Halicarnassus
5. The colossus of Rhodes
6. The Pharos, or lighthouse at Alexandria, Egypt

** With the exception of the Pyramids, none of these exist today.*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Ephesus was the most important city in the Roman province of Asia Minor. By New Testament times it had grown to better than a quarter million in population. Its commercial importance was heightened by the fact that three great trade routes converged at the city. It was also a city of great political importance. As a free city, it had been granted by Rome the right to self-government.

According to Eusebius, Ephesus became the home of John after his exile to Patmos ended. Ephesus hosted Early Church councils for the purpose of settling doctrinal differences. It was destroyed by the Goths in A.D. 262; and although rebuilt, it never regained its former prestige and splendor. It steadily declined and by the fourteenth century had ceased to exist.

Ephesus was a port, but by the time of the first century it had become a dying city, being incurably filled with silt. To a certain extent, this was the condition of the church. It was undeniably the finest of the New Testament churches founded by the Apostle Paul (see Acts 19). The depth and profoundness of the truths that Paul was able to impart to this church far exceeded those he presented in his other epistles. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians is known as "*The Queen of the Epistles.*"

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

2:1 - *“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”* The Lord holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. This clearly shows that He holds His ministers in His hand and He walks in the midst of His churches—beholding all things. Nothing escapes the scrutiny of His gaze. Hebrews 4:13 says, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

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 say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.”* The Lord said to the Ephesian church, “I know thy works—thy manner of life—and thy labor.” They were a hard working church and industrious, undoubtedly zealous for souls and full of good works.

2:3 - *“And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”* They endured much opposition and great difficulties; and they did not grow weary in well

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

doing (Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13). These are great qualities to possess; and we would do well to emulate these traits of the Ephesian church. Paul said in Hebrews 6:10, “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” God remembers all of our service for Him and for His Church, and He will reward us for it. So you can see that this was a church that was full of good works.

2:4 - *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”* However, good works can never replace relationship! These believers had become works-conscious rather than Christ-centered and had lost the fervor of their love for the Lord. They appeared outwardly to be very religious and were working for the Lord, but their hearts had grown cold toward the One whom they were serving. Good works and ministry can never substitute for a love relationship with the Lord Jesus. They are “broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

The Ephesian church had become more of a Martha church than a Mary worshipper of the Lord. The difference between these two sisters, which typify two types of believers, can be seen in Luke 10:38-

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

42. “Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered [or distracted] about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art [anxious] and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Martha was a diligent worker, doing many good works for Jesus, but in all her service, she got sidetracked and distracted from the most important thing in life—spending time with Jesus and giving Him all of our love. Mary, on the other hand, was totally in love with the Lord and dedicated her time to worshipping Him.

The Ephesian church majored in works but neglected their devotional time with the Lord. They fell into the same error as the Shulamite (Solomon’s bride), who testified, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song. 1:6). Like the Shulamite, the Ephesians

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

specialized in works, service, and caring for others, but they neglected their own heart and relationship with the Lord.

The Ephesian believers had left their first love for the Lord, the love of their espousals, much like Israel of old. The Lord said to Jeremiah, “Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown” (Jer. 2:2). The Ephesian church had ceased to follow hard after the Lord. Many marriages have been ruined because the wife became a housekeeper and ceased to be a bride.

The awesomeness of this warning is made even more poignant when one considers that the Apostle Paul had given a revelation of the intimate relationship between the believer and the Lord to this church more than to any other church.

Paul said in Ephesians 3:16-19: “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

In John 15:5 Christ said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” If a branch is broken off from the vine, it can still bear fruit for a time. This is like the Ephesian church. They were still bearing fruit to an extent. They were commended for their works, but they had neglected the life flow which comes from union and communion with Christ. Jesus is the Vine. If we are not united with Him and do not receive our life from Him, with time we will wilt away and bear no fruit. That is what happened to the Ephesian church.

This church received the teachings of the Apostle Paul, the finest teacher in the New Testament, for three years and still that message never penetrated their hearts. It never became a part of them. They were blessed with the finest teaching and yet they never changed. When it comes right down to it, life is a heart issue.

2:5 - *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works [or do the things you did at first]; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

place, except thou repent.” The call was to repent and do the first works—the things they used to do.

The Lord is speaking about a return to true worship of Himself and a relationship with Him.

The warning is that if they did not amend their ways and put things in order, they would lose the light of His presence and revelation in their midst—the candlestick of God.

Many years ago while I was preaching at a certain church in New Zealand, the Lord gave me a vision of His candlestick in the sanctuary. Unfortunately, the candlestick was off to one side. The awesome warning to this particular congregation was that if they did not improve their walk with the Lord and put things right, He was going to take away the anointing of the Holy Spirit. A study of the Song of Songs will help keep our love for Jesus always fresh.

2:6 - *“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”* The Lord then further commends them because they hated the work of the Nicolaitans. A word of explanation is necessary here. The Nicolaitans were a sect that had distorted the teachings of Nicolas, one of the early church deacons mentioned in Acts 6:5. Nicolas said that the flesh was nothing.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Some of his followers took this statement to mean that it did not matter what they did in the flesh; and they proceeded to give themselves over to debauchery and licentiousness of the vilest kind. They practiced immorality on the grounds of spiritual liberty. The Lord made it clear that He also hated these heresies.

The Promise to the Overcomers

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.”* All the promises of God are to the overcomers—those who overcome the world, the flesh, the devil, and every obstacle and hurdle they face in life (cf. 1 Jn. 2:12-14). Quitters will not inherit the promises of God.

The specific promise given to the overcomers in the Ephesian church is that they will eat of the tree of life. That which was barred from mankind after the Fall is now restored to the overcomer—to live forever in the paradise of God.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

While these messages contain specific promises given to the overcomers in each of these seven churches, in a much broader sense they also have an application for every believer. This is clearly seen from the admonition—“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” We need to ask the Lord for the experience of King David in Psalm 40:6-8. “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”

God opened David’s ears to hear; and David had a heart that had been so changed by the Lord that he rejoiced at what he heard and delighted to do God’s will. It is extremely important for our ears to be opened by the Lord so that we are enabled to hear the voice of the Spirit and have a heart that responds and obeys.

SMYRNA (2:8-11)

The city of Smyrna was a Greek colony from very early times. It was destroyed by the Lydians about the end of the 7th century B.C. For several hundred years Smyrna lay waste and virtually ceased to

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

exist until it was rebuilt in the third century B.C. by Lysimachus, one of Alexander the Great's generals. After he rebuilt it on a new site nearby, it became famous in the Roman Empire for its beauty.

The root meaning of Smyrna is “myrrh,” which signifies suffering and particularly death. Myrrh was the embalming fluid of the Middle East. This symbolized the life of the believers in Smyrna. Although they lived in a town of much affluence, the Christians themselves were discriminated against and were very poor, being the subjects of much persecution. One of the outstanding aspects of the message to the church of Smyrna is that the Lord did not give them any reproofs.

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.”* The Lord introduces Himself to the church of Smyrna as the First and the Last, who was dead, but is now alive. This described the city of Smyrna, which had once been a flourishing city, then was dead, but was now alive again. More so, however, this revelation of Jesus relates directly to the saints at Smyrna because they had to endure great persecution, even unto

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

death. The Lord is encouraging them by telling them that He has passed through the vale of death and come forth into resurrection life; and that they will partake of this same life as well.

2:9 - *“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”* The Lord commends them for their works. Also, He tells them that He knows the things which they have suffered. What a comfort it is to realize that our beloved Lord knows our trials and is afflicted in all of our affliction (see Isa. 63:9).

The believers in Smyrna for the most part were very poor naturally, but spiritually they were very wealthy. They possessed the true, enduring riches of God’s grace (see Prov. 8:18). They had stored up great treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19-20). Praise the Lord for all of His material blessings, but we need to realize that we cannot take any of them with us to heaven. We want to be rich in grace and in truth!

In Smyrna there were false brethren. They claimed to be Jews (or believers), but they were not genuine. Paul made the difference between true brethren and false brethren very clear in Romans

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

2:28-29, where he said, “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Although these men might have been circumcised in the flesh, because they were not circumcised in their hearts, in the Lord’s estimate they were not members of the true Church but of the counterfeit church—Mystery Babylon—the bride of Satan. It is always heartbreaking for those who are true and genuine to see people who are not sincere. There is a disdain in the heart of the upright for hypocrisy.

2:10 - *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* The Lord told these believers not to fear any of the things they were going to suffer, for He would be with them in their fiery trials just as He was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace of Babylon (Dan. 3:25).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The number ten can speak of trials (cf. Dan. 1:12; Num. 14:22). The ten days of tribulation could refer to the ten specific periods of persecutions of the Church by the ten Roman Emperors from Nero to Diocletian.

Nero	A.D. 54-68
Domitian	A.D. 81-96
Trajan	A.D. 98-117
Marcus Aurelius	A.D. 161-180
Severus	A.D. 193-211
Maximinus	A.D. 235-238
Decius	A.D. 249-251
Valerian	A.D. 253-260
Aurelian	A.D. 270-275
Diocletian	A.D. 284-305

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The next Emperor after Diocletian was Constantine. After he became a Christian, he made Christianity the official religion of the state. The persecutions ceased after his conversion. Unfortunately, as we shall see later, a more dangerous enemy emerged in the form of compromise, which sought to destroy the purity of the witness of Christ.

Smyrna was a suffering church. Its name was taken from the root word for myrrh, which speaks of death because it was the embalming fluid of those days. The church of Smyrna was ordained to be a church of martyrs. The very famous martyr Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna. When he was arrested and offered his freedom by the governor if he would curse Christ, he replied: "Eighty and six years have I served Christ and He has done me nothing but good. How, then, could I curse Him, my Lord and my Savior?" He was then taken out and burned at the stake.

Myrrh also speaks spiritually of the fruit of meekness (compare Song. 4:12-14 with Gal. 5:22-23). This church that was undergoing tribulation was bringing forth the beautiful fruit of meekness. Tribulation, if embraced with the right attitude, transforms us into the image of our Lord Jesus, who said, "I am meek and lowly."

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Lord exhorted these saints to be faithful unto death, even as Christ was obedient unto death (Phil. 2:8). The reward for this is a crown of life. James 1:12 says, “Blessed is the man that endureth [trials]: for when he [has stood the test], he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” Truly, these believers in Smyrna overcame the devil “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11). We will inherit everlasting life if we remain faithful and true unto the end!

The Promise to the Overcomers

2:11 - *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”* The Lord’s promise to them was that they would not be hurt of the second death. The second death is being cast into the lake of fire and eternally separated from God (see Rev. 20:12-15). How terrible it will be for sinners to find that all that awaits them after having spent thousands of years in hell are the horrors in the lake of fire for eternity! This should persuade us to lead a godly life in all righteousness and holiness all the days of our lives here on earth that we may by His grace inherit the crown of life!

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

PERGAMOS (2:12-17)

Pergamos (or Pergamum) was the capital of Asia until the end of the first century. It was renowned for the worship of Asklepios, whose symbol was a serpent entwined around a sapling. This serpent was associated with the ability to heal. Pergamum means “married” and also “elevated,” both of which have spiritual significance for the church. It was this church that epitomized the time of the early Roman Church, the period in history when the Church had become married to the State, beginning in the time of Constantine. Therefore, the Church was elevated instead of persecuted, but lost its spiritual power as its economic power and prestige increased.

2:12 - *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.”* The Lord introduces Himself as the One who has the sharp sword with two edges. This is a reference to Hebrews 4:12—“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” It also alludes to the fact that the Roman proconsul had what was called the power of the sword. This meant that he had

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the power to put men and women to death without conferring with Rome first. Christ has the power over life and death.

2:13 - *“I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat [or throne] is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.”* Satan’s seat is attributed to this city. It was the place of his throne. This needs further explanation for clarification.

The cult of Mystery Babylon’s High Priest, who was called a Pontiff, had its seat in Babylon. He was called “Pontifex Maximus,” which means “chief bridge builder.” This signifies that he is the one who stands in the gap between man and God. When Babylon was overthrown by the Persians, the high priest went to Pergamos where he was welcomed. Later, the kings of Pergamos took this role. When Attalus III, the Pontiff, and the king of Pergamos died in 133 B.C., this title was bequeathed to Rome.

Eventually, Julius Caesar the Roman Emperor was made Supreme Pontiff in 63 B.C. The Roman Emperors continued to exercise that prerogative until Emperor Gratian, who was a Christian, refused it. Damascus the Bishop of Rome was elected to this position in A.D. 378 and the popes have held

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

this title ever since. Further information concerning the rites of Babylon incorporated into Catholicism is contained in the section dealing with Revelation chapter 17.

The Lord commended the church of Pergamum for remaining true to His name which is above all other names. This was particularly costly for the Christians in Pergamos because their city was the first site of a temple built for the Caesar cult. They had to deny that Caesar was Lord in order to remain faithful to Christ. It was at great cost that believers maintained the faith in this city filled with idolatry. The Lord singles out Antipas who paid the supreme price in becoming His faithful martyr.

2:14 - *“But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.”* Despite the many admirable qualities of this church, there was mixture in it; and the Lord did not find their works to be perfect. They lacked discernment. From this church we can see the necessity of discernment. If we do not discern between the righteous and the wicked, we could be led astray into doctrines that will rob us of eternal life.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The believers in Pergamos welcomed those who propagated the doctrine of Balaam. The explanation of this doctrine, together with the life of Balaam the prophet, is found in Numbers 22-25. The prophet Balaam was a man of renown throughout the lands east of Jordan because he had the power to bless or to curse peoples. He was a prophet of God, but there was mixture in his life. He turned to heathen practices, especially sorcery, to obtain his desired results (cf. 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 1:11). Unfortunately, whenever there is mixture in a life, the old adage “one bad apple spoils the whole box” holds true.

Because of his love for money and craving for prestige, when Balaam realized that he could not curse Israel because God had blessed them, he resorted to a very devious plot to bring judgment upon God’s people. He counseled Balak, the Moabite king who had sought his help against the Israelites, to send young Moabitish girls into the camp of Israel. They seduced the Israelites to commit fornication and idolatry. The result was that God ordered the slaying of the transgressors.

Thus the doctrine of Balaam is seducing God’s people to commit fornication and to be joined to idols. Regrettably, that doctrine did not cease with the death of Balaam. It has endured throughout all generations even unto our very day. It entered into the Early Church, and with remorse, we have to

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

say that it is found in the Last Day Church too. God wants us to walk in purity (see 1 Thess. 4:3-7) and have no other gods or loves before Him.

2:15 - *“So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.”* As already mentioned, the Nicolaitans were those who erroneously followed the teachings of the Deacon Nicolas who taught that the flesh was nothing. They took this teaching to an extreme, saying that it did not matter what was done in the flesh. Thus they excused a life of sin and licentiousness.

However, there is another aspect of their teachings that is taken from the derivatives of the name “Nicolaitan.” Nico means “to dominate” and laitan comes from laity. Thus, there is the thought of the laypeople in the Church being dominated by the priesthood and the ministers. Again, this is the forerunner of Catholicism.

2:16 - *“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”* The Lord’s command is to repent. Repentance means an about-face—a 180 degree change in direction. It means that a person who is walking in one direction turns around and begins walking in

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the opposite direction. The Lord warns them that if they do not repent, He will fight with the sword of His mouth against those who continue in their disobedience.

Unlike the Roman proconsul who could only kill a person physically, the Lord Jesus has the power to take a person's life and send his soul into eternal damnation. Christ said in Matthew 10:28, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him [that is the Lord] which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

The Promise to the Overcomers

2:17 - "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*" In verse 17 there are three very special promises given to those who overcome.

1. Hidden Manna. First of all, they will eat of the *hidden manna*. Manna was the food that nourished the children of Israel in the wilderness. Manna is spoken of in Psalm 78:24-25 as angel's food: "And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

angels' food: he sent them meat to the full." The spiritual interpretation of hidden manna is the hidden truths of the Word of God.

Proverbs 25:2 says, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." God hides and veils His most precious and deepest truths from those who are not sincere. When His disciples asked Him why He spoke to the multitudes in parables and abstruse sayings, He replied, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Mt. 13:11).

The casual reader of the Scriptures will never discover the vast treasures contained in it. It takes a diligent search and study of the Scriptures with a pure heart to obtain the hidden manna. This is the duty of a *king*. Only those who have a love for the truth will find it, for the Lord does not "cast His pearls (His most precious truths) before swine" (Mt. 7:6).

2. A White Stone. The second promise to the overcomer is that the Lord will give him a *white stone*. A white stone is a symbol of innocency. In a Grecian trial, after the evidence had been heard, the accused was led away while the judges deliberated. When they reached their verdict, he was brought

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

back in. On the table of the judges there was placed a stone—a white stone for a “not guilty” verdict and a black stone for a “guilty” verdict.

Thus in this promise the Lord is saying that He will present the overcomer faultless and blameless before the throne of God. Jude 1:24 says, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

3. A New Name. Third, the Lord promises to give the overcomer a *new name*. A person’s spiritual name reveals his call, promises, and character. Our new name reveals the aspect of the Lord’s character that He has worked out in us and our particular facet of ministry. It should be emphasized that this can be revealed to an overcoming Christian in this life. We do not necessarily have to wait until eternity to know our new name in Christ. We want the blessing of Isaiah 62:2, which says, “And thou shalt be called by a *new name*, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

THYATIRA (2:18-29)

The root meaning of the name *Thyatira* is “continual sacrifice.” A very affluent city, it was a city renowned for its color dyes. One of its best known converts was Lydia, who was a merchant. Acts 16:14 says, “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” The church of Thyatira was birthed from Ephesus during the three year period while the Apostle Paul was teaching in Ephesus. This local church is symptomatic of the Church in the Dark Ages which instituted the constant sacrifice called “the Mass.”

2:18 - *“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.”* The Lord approaches this church in the form of a judge. His eyes of fire (cf. Psa. 11:4) and His feet which are as fine brass speak of judgment.

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.”* They were a church that majored in good works. In fact, their last works

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

were more than their first. In other words, they grew wiser and better. All Christians should earnestly desire that their last works are their best works. They were charitable, and that charity flowed out in the form of service to others. They were strong in faith and were commended by the Lord for their patience.

2:20-23 - *“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. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a [sickbed], and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”*

What was the error of this church? They were not a separated church. The “love” message was over-balanced in this assembly; and as a result they embraced a woman named Jezebel because she

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

called herself a Christian and a prophetess. True love would have taught them that they should not have allowed this woman to lead them astray with her teachings.

Because this woman prophesied and appeared to be very spiritual, they allowed her to teach in their church. She is described as a *Jezebel*—the name of the wicked queen of Israel and wife of Ahab who urged him to commit wickedness and confirmed him in that path of ungodliness (1 Kgs. 21:25).

The woman called Jezebel in the book of Revelation had the same spirit as the queen of Israel. She led the people of God astray into fornication and idolatry. Through her prophesying, she caused the men of this church to commit adultery with her—all in the name of God.

The Lord's judgment upon her was that He would kill her *children* and cast them into great tribulation. It is quite possible that she had given birth to natural children through her adulterous lifestyle, but more probably this refers to her spiritual children (or followers). When the Lord judged her and those who were led astray by her, it was going to cause the churches to tremble before the Lord. God is known by the judgment He executes (Psa. 9:16; cf. Ex. 7:5); and His judgments put His fear in the hearts of His people.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The interesting point here is that the corruption which was destroying this church came from *within*, not from the outside. This woman was a professed believer who had turned away from the Lord and was causing others to do so too. Let us remember the admonition of King David to Solomon concerning the strange woman who forsakes the guide of her youth (Prov. 2:17).

Regretfully, although this spiritual Jezebel typifies the Dark Ages and the Catholic Church, she also typifies people in the Church today. There are many who prophesy in the name of the Lord who are not walking uprightly with the Lord. Be careful of such pseudo-Christians. Do not follow their teachings or their ways; have nothing to do with them or else they will lead you astray! The Lord is very longsuffering with His people. God waited for a hundred and twenty years for people to change in the times of Noah (see Gen. 6:3; 1 Pet. 3:20). He waits for a long time that He may be gracious unto us (Isa. 30:18). During this time, He gives us the opportunity and the grace to repent, for repentance is a gift that God alone can give (see Rom. 2:4-5). However, if we choose not to change and continually reject His grace, then the Lord must judge our unrighteousness.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

God limits a day (Heb. 4:7). We must seek the Lord while He may be found (Isa. 55:6), because if we don't, the day will come when we will not be able to find God, as in the case of Esau (Heb. 12:17). The Lord was very longsuffering with this Jezebel in the church of Thyatira and He gave her time to change. But because she rejected His grace, the Lord then judged her.

The Lord is completely upright and fair. All of His works are done in equity and justice (Deut. 32:4). He rewards everyone according to his works. This truth is repeated constantly throughout Scripture (see Rev. 20:13). Paul warned in Colossians 3:25, "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons [with God]." Those who do wrong will be punished. God is not a respecter of persons. What is right is right and what is wrong is wrong. Let us seek always to do what is right in the sight of God.

2:24-25 - *"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come."* The Lord promised those who had not succumbed to the blandishments of Jezebel that He would not put any other burden upon them. It was obviously a

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

tremendous spiritual and moral battle that the church at Thyatira had to endure, fighting those insidious doctrines.

Regretfully, many times when we have been in circumstances where evil has been present in a church, the majority of the church has sided with those who were not walking uprightly. To take a stand for what is right and hold steady against those who are evil and who embrace false doctrines requires an abundance of grace. These spiritual battles really wear on our minds, but “thanks be unto God who always causes us to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14). The Lord exhorted these believers to hold on to what they already had until He comes.

The Promise to the Overcomers

2:26-28 - *“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.”* Those who overcome and do not give up will receive many special blessings. All of these promises are predicated on doing God’s will unto the *end*.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

1. Power Over the Nations. The Lord will give the overcomers power and authority over the nations. They will rule the nations with a *rod of iron*. This is a reference to the millennial reign of Christ upon earth. Those who overcome will be co-heirs with Christ and rule with Him for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:6). The Lord says in Psalm 2:8-9: “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.”

The prophet Jeremiah was given authority over the nations. When the Lord commissioned Jeremiah to the prophetic office, He said to him, “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (Jer. 1:10). The words of Jeremiah had an impact upon nations. He was a man of the Spirit who had the Lord’s authority. May we ask the Lord for this same blessing and mantle.

2. The Morning Star. Also, the overcomer will receive the morning star. The Morning Star is actually a title of the Lord Jesus (cf. 2 Pet. 1:19). The Lord said in Revelation 22:16, “I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” This church which had to combat the false

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

prophetess Jezebel was given the most precious promise of all—the Lord Jesus Himself. This is the portion of spiritual Levites. In the Old Testament, the inheritance of the Levites and the priests was the Lord.

2:29 - *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* The message concludes as do all those to the seven churches, with the admonition to hear what the Spirit of God is saying unto the Church *today!*

SARDIS (3:1-6)

Sardis means “the escaping ones” or “those who come out of.” Dispensationally, this church typifies the Reformation Era when the eyes of many of God’s people were opened and they began to leave the Catholic Church.

3:1 - *“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”* The Lord introduces Himself to the church at Sardis as the One who has the seven Spirits of God. As Paul said, “The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6). Christ was saying to this

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

assembly: "I've come to you as the One who brings life. You have a name that you live, but in actuality you are dead!"

The historical background of each particular city often helps us understand why the Lord spoke as He did to these churches. The Lord told this church that they had a name (or reputation) that they lived, but actually they were dead. Sardis was known for its past splendor, but also its present decay. At this time it was a city of degeneration. They were living on their former prestige, but in reality they were dead.

Paul said, "First the natural, then the spiritual." As it was in the natural for this city, so it was in the spiritual for this church. The natural condition of the city revealed the spiritual condition of the church. Unfortunately, many churches today are like the church of Sardis. They are known for things that God did in the past, but presently there is decay.

The believers in Sardis had a name that they were alive, but in reality, they had lost the fire. Many churches and believers today are in a similar condition. They are living upon what God did in the past. They lack a present anointing and vision. The importance of having something fresh from God today

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

is beautifully illustrated in the journey of the children of Israel. During their wilderness sojourn, they received manna each day, but they could not keep the manna for the next day because it became moldy. That which once had life becomes death. The Church needs fresh oil, fresh truth, and fresh manna. It is not what we were, but what we are today that counts.

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.”* The Lord admonished the believers in Sardis to be watchful and to strengthen the things which remained.

The history of Sardis is very revealing. It had a habit of not being watchful because of pride. By 600 B.C. Sardis had become one of the wealthiest cities in the known world. Croesus, reputed to be the richest king in history, ruled there with oriental splendor. The city was built upon a rock and was thought to be impregnable. When it was surrounded by Cyrus, king of Persia, the army arrogantly neglected to place watchmen at strategic places—thinking that no army could ever penetrate their fortress. Cyrus bribed a young man to reveal the secret passages into the city.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Unfortunately, the inhabitants of Sardis did not learn their lesson. Again they left the city without watchmen when Alexander the Great was besieging it. He took the city as Cyrus had done years before. In spite of Christ's warnings, in A.D. 1402 the defenders again left the city unguarded when it was surrounded by the Muslims, who conquered and completely destroyed it.

It is a terrible condemnation for the Lord to say to a church or an individual that He has not found their works *perfect*. Repeated again and again in Holy Scripture is the fact that the Lord seeks perfection. Anything less is falling short of God's expectation and best for us.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect [mature and complete], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." We do not want to be like the ground that received the seed of the Word of God among thorns (works of the flesh) and did not bring any fruit to perfection (Lk. 8:14).

3:3 - *"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."* The Lord warned the church of Sardis that if they were not watchful, He would come to them unexpectedly as a thief in the night and unannounced. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:42-

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

44: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

We must always be alert because the enemy is seeking to destroy us every opportunity he gets. Let us never become proud and self-confident in our Christian walk, thinking that we have attained to a certain level of maturity and we cannot fall. Remember Sardis! If we do not guard our hearts diligently and walk circumspectly, the enemy can come into our life and destroy us. The Lord chided the church of Sardis by telling them that He would come as a thief *in the night*. This is exactly what Cyrus had done years before. He took the city by night. How imperative it is to learn the lesson that the inhabitants of Sardis never learned and be watchful in spiritual matters.

3:4 - *"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy."* Even in assemblies where the majority of the believers are spiritually dead, there are usually a few who are walking with the Lord (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:18). Such was

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the case in this church. The Lord commended those in the church of Sardis who had not defiled themselves, but had remained faithful to the Lord. Christ promises them that they will walk with Him in white garments (a symbol of purity) because they are worthy. They have been made worthy by walking in obedience to the Word of God. Let us heed the exhortation of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 9:8: “Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.”

3:5-6 - *“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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* There are three promises to the overcomer:

1. He Will be Clothed in White Raiment. Those who overcome will be clothed upon with white spiritual garments. White garments speak of the purity and righteousness of Christ. We need a change of our spiritual garments (cf. Zech. 3:3-4). We want to be without spot or blemish or wrinkle in the eyes of God (Eph. 5:27).

2. His Name Will Not be Blotted Out of the Book of Life. The Lord also promises not to blot the names of those who overcome out of the Book of Life. The Book of Life is the book in heaven that contains all the names of the redeemed and those who will be given entrance to heaven (cf. Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27; 22:19).

Obviously, for something to be erased out of a book, it had to have been there at one time. This clearly proves that a person can be saved at one time, having his name written in this book, and then turn against the Lord and lose his salvation. The Apostle Jude made this very clear: “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” (Jude 1:5). What a blessing it is indeed to have our names *remain* written in the Lamb’s Book of Life!

3. The Lord Will Confess His Name Before His Father and the Angels. The Lord also promises that He will confess the names of those who overcome before His Father and before all the angels. Christ said in Matthew 10:32, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Therefore, one of the qualities of an overcomer is that he

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

is not afraid or embarrassed to confess the Lord openly before others, even if it means persecution. The Lord acknowledges those who acknowledge Him. It is just that simple.

PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13)

We now come to the church of Philadelphia. The church of Philadelphia, like the church of Smyrna, received no reproof from the Lord. This church is representative of the Methodist revival and the Holiness movement led by John Wesley in the 1700's.

The city of Philadelphia was founded by Attalus II Philadelphus, king of Pergamum, 160-138 B.C. It was so named to commemorate his love for his brother, Emenes II, whom he succeeded. Philadelphia means "brotherly love." The city was situated as the gateway to the high plateau of the province of Asia. It was founded to be a missionary center for the diffusion of the Greek language and culture in foreign lands. These three factors in the establishment of the city have their spiritual counterparts in the message of Christ to the church in that city.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

There was an atmosphere of love in Philadelphia. As it was in the natural, so it was in the spiritual. The city had an open door for the propagation of the Greek culture and language in other lands, and the Lord promises this church in verse 8 an open door for the propagation of the Gospel.

3:7 - *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”* The Lord introduces Himself as He that is holy—meaning the One who is the very essence of holiness. This is the church that typifies the Feast of the Day of Atonement and, historically, the Holiness movement of John Wesley’s time.

In actuality, this is the message that the Lord has been sounding forth throughout the world ever since the Yom Kippur War in 1973, namely the message of heart purity and heart circumcision—holiness unto the Lord. Christ also reveals Himself to this church as Him “that is true.” Not only is Jesus Christ the very embodiment of truth (Jn. 14:6), but He is genuine through and through. Oh, to be like Him and have that truth on our inward parts (Psa. 51:6) and to be sincere to the nth degree, having no alloy or mixture in us whatsoever.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Lord declares that He has *the key of David*. This phrase occurs only one other time in Scripture in Isaiah 22:20-22, where the significance of it is revealed. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

The shoulder is the symbol of government (Isa. 9:6). Therefore, the key of David is the spiritual authority to open and shut doors. Jesus is the One who has the power to open doors that no one can close and to shut doors that no one can open.

3:8 - *“I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”* The Lord says He knows that their works are good and pure. Therefore, He has set before them an open door in the spiritual realm that no man or spiritual power can shut. The Philadelphian church was a missionary church which had an open door to the nations.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Truly, we want the blessing of the tribe of Joseph, whose branches went “over the wall” (Gen. 49:22). We want to have a ministry to our surrounding areas, but we also want to have an inheritance in the nations of the earth and be a blessing to other congregations throughout the world.

These devout believers were also commended for keeping the Lord’s Word and not denying His name, even though they had *little strength*. This does not refer to spiritual weakness, but to the fact that this local church was small in number. It is far better to have a relatively small church of believers that are totally sold out to the Lord and committed to Him than a thriving church of half-hearted Christians. The believers in Philadelphia remained true to the Lord. They refused to call Caesar *Lord*. They only had one Lord, and that was Jesus Christ.

3:9 - *“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.”* The synagogue of Satan refers to those Judaizing Jews who claimed to be true Jews, while in fact, they were opposing the truth that is in Christ.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Please note with reference to the synagogue of Satan that the Apostle Paul gives the definition of a true Jew, as mentioned before, in Romans 2:28-29: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Also, Solomon makes reference to the false congregation in Proverbs 21:16—“The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the *congregation of the dead*.”

They were assured that the Lord loved them. Again, it is seen how this paralleled the city of Philadelphia, which was built because of the love which King Attalus II had for his brother, King Emenes II. We need this same assurance that the Lord loves us. Yes, Christ died for all the world, but the Scriptures clearly state that “the righteous Lord loves righteousness” and “He loves those who are righteous” (cf. Psa. 11:7).

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

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

they were commended for keeping the word of His patience, which suggests not only being faithful to the Word, but also suffering because of the Word of God.

From this church, we have a wonderful example of the church of the 18th and 19th centuries, which was filled with a holy devotion to the Lord and a burning desire for the souls of men and women. This was the church that revitalized and revived the zeal for missions. Many missionary societies were founded during that period. It was the era of such notable leaders as John Wesley, William Carey, and William Booth.

The Lord rewarded them by keeping them from the temptation that was to come upon all the world to try them. This would refer, historically, to the ten specific persecutions perpetrated by the Roman Emperors, which are listed in our comments on the church of Smyrna. Obviously, one does not pass already purified gold through the fire again. Nor would the Lord pass those dear and loving Philadelphian Christians through the trials that had but one purpose—to try the faith of those who still had much alloy in their lives.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

3:11 - *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”* Now there comes a warning for believers in all ages—“Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” How important it is to realize that the Lord has set before all believers a race to be run and a prize to obtain—a crown.

Yet regrettably, so many Christians do not complete their course, falling short of the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus for their lives. As a result, the crown that should have been theirs is passed on to someone else who is worthy of it.

Reuben lost his firstborn portion and the double blessing because of immorality. It was given, instead, to Joseph, who obtained it through purity. Judas lost his apostolic ministry because of his betrayal of Jesus, and Matthias claimed the position that he forfeited.

This alarming truth that we can lose our crown is vividly portrayed in the book of Esther. Because of her pride, obstinacy, and disobedience to her husband, Vashti, the queen of the Persian Empire, was deposed. The crown, which should have been hers, was passed on to someone more worthy—the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

wise and virtuous Esther. Let us, therefore, ever walk humbly before the Lord with a holy fear of losing our eternal crown.

3:12 - *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”*

Those who overcome will receive these blessings:

1. God Will Make the Overcomer a Pillar in His Temple. Those who overcome all the onslaughts of the enemy and withstand the winds and pressures of life will be made pillars in the temple of God. We want to be a pillar in the church where God plants us and support the leadership; we also want to qualify for a ministry in the millennial Temple; and we want to be formed into pillars for the Heavenly Temple.

Pillars speak of strength and stability. They support and hold up the weight and pressure of a building. The stability and durability of a temple depends on its pillars. We want to believe God for this promise that was given to the overcomers in the Philadelphian church. We want to be as the pillars in

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the Temple of Solomon, which were called Jachin and Boaz (see 1 Kgs. 7:15-22). *Jachin* means “He establishes” and *Boaz* means “In Him is strength.”

It is interesting that this promise of being pillars is given to the church in Philadelphia because the city was prone to have earthquakes and shakings. If anybody needed stability it was the Philadelphian church. In A.D. 17, the city was leveled by a great earthquake. The emperor Tiberius helped them rebuild. Therefore, the promise of being a pillar that would go out no more was very meaningful to these believers.

The Philadelphian church was like a pillar to Christianity. Even when Islam flooded across Asia Minor, Philadelphia remained true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember this, however: if the Lord promises to make you a pillar, expect to encounter great pressures and onslaughts of the enemy, but also know that God will cause you to stand firm.

2. The Overcomer Will Go No More Out. God promises to establish the overcomer in the pathway of righteousness and as a pillar in His temple that will never depart from it. So many begin the race and start out so well, but then they go off course.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

What a blessing it is to be planted in the Lord's house as pillars and as trees of righteousness (see Psa. 92:12-13). We want to be firmly rooted and established in the Lord's house and remain in it. Remember, Christ said that "the servant of sin will not remain in the house forever" (Jn. 8:34-35).

3. God Will Give the Overcomer a Triple Name. The overcomer will also receive a triple name from the Lord. The Lord promises to write upon him "the name of My God, the name of the city of My God (New Jerusalem), and a new name." This is a promise the Bride of Christ will inherit, because she will bear the name of her Heavenly Bridegroom. When a bride marries, she takes on the name of her husband. This automatically accords her the following privileges—she is identified with him and becomes part of him, and takes upon herself his position and authority.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Therefore, when the overcomers of the Philadelphian church were accorded the privilege of those triple names, it meant that they were immediately identified:

1. With God Himself, being a true son or daughter of the living God.
2. As an inhabitant living in the city of God—the New Jerusalem.
3. As having the new name of Christ, which means to enjoy all the privileges of the rewards that Christ Himself shall enjoy (see Rev. 19:12-13).

How believers need to pray that the Lord will develop in their lives the same character as He did in the Philadelphian church. They had the love of God perfected in their lives. They were given an open door to the mission fields of the world. These precious saints imparted truth and holiness to others. They remained faithful to the end, held on to their crowns, and fulfilled God's will for their lives.

3:13 - *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* Oh, to have an ear to hear the precious rewards that await a faithful church.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

LAODICEA (3:14-22)

The city of Laodicea was enlarged by Antiochus II, King of Syria, and renamed for his wife, Laodicea. It was an extremely wealthy city, being renowned for its banking establishments, for its medical schools that specialized in an ointment to cure certain eye afflictions, and for a luxurious clothing from the wool of its sheep flocks. The city was situated at the crossroads of the main thoroughfare from Ephesus to Syria, with those roads coming from Pergamum and the Hermus Valley to Pisidia and Pamphylia.

Hot spring waters from Hierapolis flowed through aqueducts to Laodicea, where they became lukewarm, and from there on to Colosse, where they became cold. Laodicea was devastated by an earthquake in A.D. 61. Refusing the help offered by the Roman senate, the population rebuilt the whole city with their own funds. It was a city and, regrettably, a church, that was very self-confident and self-sufficient.

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.”* The Lord introduced Himself in a very

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

significant manner, declaring that He is the *Amen*, or the Ending. Clearly, this is the last of the seven churches that the Lord addressed, and it speaks of the last day Church which will complete the Church Age.

The Lord also revealed Himself to the Laodicean church as the Faithful and True Witness. In other words, what He was going to say to them was indeed the truth and not the false security into which they had lapsed. This message came from the One who was the beginning of the creation of God, as seen in Proverbs 8:22-23, where it says of Christ: “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.”

3:15-16 - *“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 spew thee out of my mouth.”* In addressing the Laodicean church, the Lord finds nothing that merits commendation. In fact, He says these believers were neither hot nor cold but lukewarm. Their spiritual condition paralleled the condition of the waters that flowed through the city from the hot springs of Hierapolis. The waters of Laodicea

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

were tepid. Everyone loved the hot springs in Hierapolis and the cold waters in Colosse, but nobody liked the lukewarm waters in Laodicea. In the natural, you either want your drinks very hot, such as coffee and tea, or you like them very cold, but no one likes lukewarm drinks.

The church of Laodicea was lukewarm in their Christian experience. There was a certain insipidity in their Christian walk. They lacked fervor. There was no burning zeal for souls, nor a desire to press on in God for perfection. Because of this, the Lord says that He is going to vomit them out of His mouth. The Lord despises Christians that are halfhearted and noncommittal and living on the perimeter (see 1 Kgs. 18:21). The Lord wants every believer to be fervent and totally committed to Him.

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.”* The Laodicean church was very proud and self-confident. They were indeed rich and increased with goods, naturally and financially. However, they lacked the true riches of Jesus Christ. Spiritually, they were poor, blind, and naked.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Christ spoke of this arrogant attitude of being self-sufficient in His parable in Luke 12:16-21. “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

The Laodicean believers thought life consisted in the abundance of things they possessed. However, true wealth is when we are rich toward God. We should seek to be rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4), rich in good works (1 Tim. 6:18), and rich in faith (Jas. 2:5). And may we find all of our sufficiency in Christ, for He is the All-sufficient One and we are complete in Him.

As we have already stated, Laodicea was one of the wealthiest cities in the world at the time of the writing of Revelation. When it was devastated by an earthquake in A.D. 61, the Laodiceans refused

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Roman aid and rebuilt their city themselves. No wonder Laodicea could boast it was rich and had need of nothing. In fact, “We are rich and have need of nothing,” was their reply to the Roman emperor when he offered to help rebuild their city. This proud and independent attitude, unfortunately, also crept into the church.

Although they were financially rich, they were spiritually bankrupt. Although they could provide healing ointment for the cure of several eye diseases, they were spiritually blind. And again, although they were renowned for their luxurious clothing, the Faithful and True Witness declared them to be spiritually naked—not being clothed upon with the garments of God (righteousness, praise, etc.).

3:18 - *“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”* These refer to the city’s three main sources of wealth—banking, production of wool cloth, and medicines—for which they were renowned. The Lord counsels them to buy of Him gold tried in the fire. The city of Laodicea was extremely wealthy and affluent. The city was flooded with gold coins, but the Lord tells them they lack the true riches.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Scripture interprets Scripture. From First Peter 1:7 we have the interpretation of *gold tried in the fire*. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, the Lord is counseling them to buy faith, which is only received through severe trials. He tells them to pay the price for real faith, which is the true gold and riches that one should desire, that they may be rich. Faith makes us rich toward God.

“*White raiment, that thou mayest be clothed.*” Now the Lord tells the Laodiceans to buy white raiment. This must have really hurt them because they were famous for their wool and clothing. White raiment is the clothing of Christ, the angels, and the saints of the Lord. It symbolizes purity. Isaiah 1:18 says, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Then we read in Daniel 11:35 of the last days, “And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.” When Christ was transfigured, His clothing shone as white as the light (Mt. 17:2). We

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

want to be clothed with pure, white spiritual garments, and we do not want them to be spotted by the works of the flesh (Jude 1:23).

The thought of appearing naked before the throne of God is expressed also in Second Corinthians 5:1-4: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” In Revelation 16:15 the Lord says, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

“Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” The Lord then goes on to counsel them to anoint their eyes with eye salve. This must have been particularly galling to them since Laodicea was a medical center specializing in salve for the eyes.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Here again is a lesson that the people of God today need to learn. Our spiritual eyes need to be anointed. Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18).

It takes the illumination of the Holy Spirit for us to be able to understand the Word of God and His purpose for our lives. We should pray the prayer of the psalmist every time we read or study the Word of God: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psa. 119:18).

3:19 - *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”* The Lord chastens those whom He loves. True love tells people when they are wrong, hoping that they will see the truth and change. Paul said in Hebrews 12:6-8: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye [illegitimate], and not sons.” True sons are those who receive correction. If

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

sons or daughters do not receive the correction of their father, they would be considered illegitimate children. (See Proverbs 13:24; 23:13-14; 27:6; 29:15,17.)

Psalm 94:12 pronounces a blessing upon those who receive the Lord's chastening: "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." We should be happy when the Lord corrects us, knowing that He loves us and He wants to make us more like Him (Job 5:17). Paul said in First Corinthians 11:32, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." The Lord corrects us so that we will not be condemned with the world.

The greatest punishment people can receive from the Lord is for Him not to correct them and to let them go their own way (see Hosea 4:17). It is the crushed grape, and not the untouched grape, from which the costly wine flows. There is no surer way to let a child end in ruin than by giving him his own way. It is a fact of life that the best athlete and the finest scholar receive the most demanding training.

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."* How gracious of the Lord to give this careless,

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

self-satisfied church an opportunity to know Him in such an intimate way as to be their supper guest. Realizing the graciousness of the Lord and our responsibility of responding to Him with matching grace and thankfulness of heart, I will now relate a personal experience to illustrate the Lord's dealings with the church of our day, typified by the Laodicean church of Revelation.

When I was pastoring a church in the western United States many years ago, this Scripture was made very real to my wife and me. It was a church that for the most part had not embraced the Pentecostal message and experience. The Lord made it clear to us that we were to introduce the message of speaking in other tongues as the valid sign of having received the Pentecostal experience according to Acts 2:4. Many of the dear saints embraced and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit with signs following, as did the former pastor who had retired and had become a member of the congregation.

One morning in a prayer meeting, an elder spoke in tongues; and before the interpretation could be given, one of the deacon's wives said in a very loud and defiant manner, "No!" It was nearly midday, and I thought the wisest action would be to close the meeting, which I promptly did. Going into the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

parsonage a few minutes later, I saw the candlestick of God passing across the wall. It was an awesome experience, and I felt so clothed upon with the holiness of God, that I was literally awestruck.

Less than an hour later I received a phone call from one of my parishioners informing me that this deacon's wife was now in the hospital. It was totally unexpected, for she had been perfectly healthy and well during the service. That night, however, the Lord gave a similar vision to another elder and also to a member of the congregation. The vision was of the Lord standing outside the hospital room. The interpretation they gave me was, "Oh, everything is just fine with our sister because the Lord is outside her room."

However, that was not the interpretation the Lord gave me. He spoke to this effect: "She is a self-satisfied Laodicean Christian who thinks she needs no more. I stand knocking at the door of her heart, desirous of meeting her in a fresh way and of baptizing her in the Holy Spirit, but she will not receive Me." How tragic for this dear sister. But what about us? Perhaps we have been baptized in

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the Holy Spirit and we think that we have attained unto everything, when in actuality the Lord has so much for us in this day and age.

Jesus taught in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Ours must ever be the attitude of the poor in spirit so that by His grace we may receive all that the Lord has for us. Let us think of the Lord’s parable in Luke 18:9-14: “And [Jesus] spake this parable unto certain [ones] which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” God resists the proud and the self-righteous. When the Lord comes to us longing for fellowship, may we be quick to respond to His drawings and seek His face diligently.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

3:21-22 - *“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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* This is the promise that the Lord offers to each one of us throughout the Word of God. He wants us to rule and reign with Him. It is especially a truth that the Holy Spirit is quickening in our days. But let us remember some of the qualifications.

Paul said in Romans 5:17, “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” To reign in life, we must receive the abundance of grace and also be righteous. An abundance of grace is only given to those who have an abundance of trials, so welcome to a life of trials, dear ones, if you desire to rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, even as King David said, “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord” (2 Sam. 23:3). May we take to heart the message of the Spirit to the seven churches, but especially the message to the church of Laodicea, which typifies the church of our days.

Part Three

THE CLOSING YEARS OF THE CHURCH AGE - 4:1 - 19:21

Now we have come to a new section in the book of Revelation. After the messages of the Lord to the seven churches, John sees a door open in heaven. A voice tells him to “come up” and John is shown

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

certain things which would take place after his lifetime. Chapters 4 through 19 are a picture of the closing years of the Church Age, leading up to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.

These chapters are very important for every Christian to understand because we are living in the days when these things will be fulfilled before our very eyes. There are many things in Part Three that are difficult to understand, but by the illumination of the blessed Holy Spirit we will try to bring clarity to much of the confusion associated with these chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

A DOOR OPENED IN HEAVEN (4:1-11)

4:1 - *“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.”* This door is distinguished from the open door that was placed before the Philadelphian church, which was a geographical door for service. This is a heavenly door that leads into heavenly vistas. The express purpose of this was to show the Apostle John things that would

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

come to pass *in the future*. Chapters 4-19 are distinct from the messages to the seven churches in chapters 2-3, which were present events for the period in which John was living.

The Throne of God

4:2-3 - *“And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 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.”* Here is an awesome description of the majesty of God Himself. He is described as being like a jasper stone, revealing His majesty. The sardine stone speaks of judgment, and the emerald symbolizes His mercy.

There is a rainbow around the throne of God. This is also seen in Ezekiel’s vision of the throne of God: “Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD” (Ezek. 1:28 - NIV). The seven colors of the rainbow speak of the seven Spirits of God that surround the throne.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Heavenly Hierarchy

4:4 - *“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”* These twenty-four elders are the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the Lamb. It is clear that they are from the redeemed of men and are the supreme governing body of heaven of those from the human race.

Revelation 5:8-10 tells us more about these twenty-four elders: *“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. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The twenty-four elders are the select of the elite group of king-priests. They offer golden vials full of prayers of the saints and also sit upon heavenly thrones in the immediate vicinity of the throne of God.

4:5 - *“And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”* We are clearly told that the seven lamps before the throne are the seven Spirits of God. Their names and functions are given to us in Isaiah 11:2: “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.” They are also symbolized by the candlestick in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle of Moses. Lightnings and thunderings and voices all speak of *judgments*, as we see in Exodus 19:16,18-19: “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. ... And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.”

The Four Beasts (or Living Creatures)

4:6-7 - *“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. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.”*

The “sea of glass like unto crystal” before the throne speaks of the absolute purity that surrounds the throne of God. This throne, which is the central point of all heaven, is in the midst of this sea of glass. We are also told that there are four beasts, full of eyes in front and in back, that envelop the throne of God. These four living creatures, as they are called in Ezekiel chapter 1, are also spoken of in Isaiah 6.

As one carefully studies these passages, one is made aware of the co-habitation that exists in the throne of God. First, there is God the Father, as seen in Revelation 5:1: “And I saw in the right hand

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.” And there is also the Son, the Lamb of God, as seen in Revelation 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 four beasts also surround the throne of God.

Revelation 4:7 describes these four beasts: “And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.” Their four faces reflect the universal character of Christ. They reveal His different aspects.

- **The lion** - reveals Christ as the King of kings
- **The calf** - reveals Christ as the High Priest
- **The man** - reveals Christ as the Son of Man
- **The flying eagle** - reveals Christ as the Son of God who soars into heavenly places

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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 to come.”* These four beasts have six wings, which would give them perfect mobility. They can move upward, forward, backward, and sideways.

They are full of eyes, for they are the eyes of the All-seeing One. We read in 2 Chronicles 16:9, “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” These four living creatures do not rest day or night, giving glory to God at all times. This is also one of the characteristics of God, as seen in Psalm 121:4: “Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

The perpetual cry of these four beasts is, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty” (cf. Isa. 6:3). Holiness is the fundamental aspect of the nature of God. Because God is holy, He desires His children to be holy too. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says, “But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” (NKJV).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Leviticus 20:7-8 says, “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you.” This suggests that holiness is necessary to be able to keep the commandments of God.

We must define what true holiness is. Holiness literally means to be separated and set apart body, soul, and spirit from anything that displeases the Lord in thought, word, or action. It is being separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil. However, this separation only constitutes one aspect of holiness. If we want to become holy, we also must be wholly joined unto God who alone is holy.

The four living creatures continually glorify the Son, of whom it is said that He *was* (signifying that He lived upon earth), and *is* (signifying that He is alive), and *is to come* (speaking of His Second Coming). One of the primary ministries of the four beasts is to worship God the Father and the Son.

This desire of the Father for worship is confirmed by the Son in John 4:23-24, where He said: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

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.”* The living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the Lord continually. Giving glory to God means to magnify and exalt His attributes and power in the realm of His character and creative feats. Giving honor to God means to esteem Him above all others; and giving thanks to God means to be grateful for all that He has done for us. We should continually worship the Lord in our hearts and with our lips, and give Him thanks for all things. In reality, we have so much to thank the Lord for. I complained that I had no shoes until I saw someone with no feet.

4:10-11 - *“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, 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.”* As the living creatures pour out their adoration for the Lord, the elders respond by

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

worshipping Him. The reason why God desires worship should be explained here. Worship is actually for our benefit, since we become like the object or person we worship.

This is seen in the negative sense in Psalm 115:4-8: “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: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. *They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.*” It is a fact that we become like the object or person we worship.

The elders cast their crowns before the throne because it is so evident that everything we have is because of Him. We are nothing without Him, and something only because of Him. Therefore, the elders cry out, “Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power, because Thou hast created all things.” We would not exist unless He had created us, but we were created for His pleasure. Therefore, we need to pray for grace to render our lives as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto the One who is seated upon the throne.

THE BOOK WITH THE SEVEN SEALS (5:1-14)

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.”* Revelation chapter 5 opens with the word “and.” Therefore, it follows chronologically from chapter 4 where the Apostle John has seen the throne. Now John’s eyes and focus are directed toward the right hand of the Majesty on high—God the Father. In His right hand there is a scroll with writing on both sides, and it is sealed with seven seals.

The opening of these seals will, therefore, be the key to that which will come to pass subsequently in the rest of the book. In fact, the seals are associated, as we shall later see, with judgments. The opening of the seals will release a series of three separate judgments upon the earth, namely:

1. The seven seals
2. The seven trumpets
3. The seven vials (the last seven plagues)

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

5:2-5 - *“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”*

The question is: Who is worthy to open the seals of judgment? There was no one found worthy in all of heaven or in the earth to open the book. Then one of the elders declared to the weeping John that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed to open the book. This speaks of the Davidic lineage of Christ who, like David of old, prevailed over all his enemies. Jesus defeated our prime enemy, Satan, upon the Cross. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only One found worthy to open this book and the seven seals.

The price to open these seals was phenomenal. There is a sense that a price had to be paid. No one was able to pay this price except the Son of God who gave His life as a ransom for all. Christ was

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

found worthy to open the book because as the spotless Lamb of God He sacrificed His life for us (Rev. 5:9-10). Praise His blessed name.

The fact that heaven and the Godhead themselves are governed by the need to be justified in all their actions is something that merits our attention and earnest appreciation. This is a subject that must be discussed in some detail. The Godhead can command worship, not only for who they are, but for what they have done (their works). They command worship in Revelation 4:11 because of the splendor and wisdom of their works in creation. But now we are going to see that the Son of God will receive the honor of opening the seals; this is the subject of a new song of adoration in Revelation 5:9.

5:6-7 - *“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. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.”* In turning, John saw the slain Lamb of Calvary standing in the midst of the throne area and in the midst of the four living creatures and the elders. Next to the Father, Christ has

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the sole preeminence in heaven. This is not only a dignity that was conferred upon Him by the Father, but one that He merited.

Philippians 2:7-11 says of Christ: “But [he] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Because of His obedience to the Father to go to the cross and die for mankind, Jesus has obtained the preeminence. Thus He could come and take the book out of the hand of His Father.

5:8-10 - *“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. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred,*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” At this moment, the four living creatures and the elders fell down before the Lamb of God that has taken away the sins of the world. He has not only redeemed us, but as the Word of God consistently says, He has made us kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth. This must ever be our vision to qualify or to be found worthy by the Lord to rule and reign with Him, throughout the millennial reign that follows this dispensation.

Kings and Priests

Christ is the King of Kings, but He is also the High Priest of our faith (Heb. 3:1). He is a King-Priest. The combining of these two offices is seen first in Scripture in the life of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18), who was the priest of God and also the king of Salem (former name of Jerusalem). Christ, who descended from David through the tribe of Judah, is a king by descent. However, there were no promises given to the tribe of Judah about the priesthood. Yet, God made Christ the High Priest of our faith after the order of Melchizedek. God desires to transform us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this involves being made king-priests.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

God's original intention for the children of Israel was that they would all be kings and priests unto Him. The Lord said to them in Exodus 19:5-6 after He had brought them out of Egypt: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." The condition for becoming this kingdom of priests was that they had to obey His voice and keep His covenant.

However, it was not long before the Israelites began to disobey the Lord, even to the extent of building a golden calf to worship as their god (Ex. 32). After this time, the priesthood was given solely to the tribe of Levi, and the kingship and throne of Israel were given exclusively to the tribe of Judah. Thus God's desire for all of His people to be kings and priests unto Him was never fulfilled in the nation of Israel. Yet the purposes of God will always come to pass. Therefore, the Lord in the New Testament era has given this promise of being king-priests unto us as believers.

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

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

marvellous light.” We are called to be a royal priesthood. The Greek word for royal means “kingly in nature,” and it is a derivative of the Greek word “basileus” which is the word for “king” (cf. Rev. 5:10; 19:16). Thus we see that we are called to become kings and priests, and to reign with the Lord. However, as with Israel we must diligently obey the voice of the Lord and keep His covenant in order for this promise to be realized in our lives.

A king rules and reigns, and the Lord wants to teach us to reign in this life to prepare us for a throne in the Millennium and in eternity. If we do not rule in this life, we will not rule in eternity. It is in this life that we qualify and prepare for the first resurrection and to rule and reign with Christ. A king is a conqueror, and we must be more than conquerors in every situation (Rom. 8:37). The key to triumphing over circumstances lies in our attitude. We must not complain, but overcome every trial and temptation in order to be a king.

The purpose of a priest in the Old Testament was to offer sacrifices. In the Old Testament they offered animal sacrifices, but in the New Testament the sacrifice the Lord desires is our body and our

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

life. As Paul tells us in Romans 12:1, we are to present our bodies as “a living sacrifice” unto the Lord (cf. Heb. 10:5).

5:11-12 - *“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; 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.”* Then John heard an innumerable number of angels extolling the Lamb of God. Let us examine the rewards Jesus received for His blameless life of obedience to the will of His Father. Jesus has been given:

- **Power** - After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto His disciples and said, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Mt. 28:18). All power belongs unto the Lord.
- **Riches** - All the wealth of heaven is at His disposal, and yet for our sakes He became poor.
- **Wisdom** - Jesus Himself is the epitome of wisdom, as seen in Proverbs 8. Also, He is made wisdom unto us (1 Cor. 1:30). He is our wisdom!
- **Strength** - One of the great attributes of a leader is to be strong and firm in his decisions and purposes, also having the strength to bring them to pass.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

- **Honor** - Jesus has been given all honor, which means to be lifted up and take the preeminent place. Colossians 1:18 says, "That in all things He might have the preeminence."
- **Glorify** - This means to be covered with the very character and majesty of God Himself. 2 Peter 1:17 says of Christ, "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- **Blessing** - It is to receive the universal abundance of God's goodness both in the material and spiritual realms. Jesus is blessed of His Father.

5:13-14 - *"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. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."*

The Apostle John then heard every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea saying, "Blessing and honor and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne (which is the Father) and to the Lamb (the Son) for ever and ever." This is a repetition of what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 2:10-11, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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.”

All shall have to confess that the Godhead is worthy. All their enemies, all those who have criticized and opposed them, will have to confess that they are worthy. Why? Because they have proven themselves to be so in the work of creation and in their redemptive program for mankind. They have shown and demonstrated their love and wisdom. Therefore, the four living creatures and the elders fall down and worship the One who lives for ever and ever. The One who was despised upon earth is exalted in heaven for all eternity. He is truly worthy.

CHAPTER SIX

THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS - (6:1-17)

In Revelation chapter 5 the Lamb of God prevailed to open the book with the seven seals, and in Revelation chapter 6 we now come to the actual opening of the seals. These seven seals are judgments that will take place at the end of the Church Age.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The First Seal

6:1-2 - *“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 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.”* Only the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has the privilege of opening the seven seals. With the opening of the first seal, there was a noise of thunder, which in Scripture generally presages judgment. The first four seals which release the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, as they are universally called, certainly do bring the most awesome catastrophes upon the earth.

The rider upon the white horse was given a bow and a crown and he went forth conquering and to conquer. Clearly, this angel is from God, since he is riding on a white horse. At His Second Coming, Christ will return upon a white horse, as will all those who accompany Him (Rev. 19:11-14). This angel is going forth to conquer the enemies of the Lord and to realign the nations for the end times.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Second Seal

6:3-4 - *“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”*

The rider upon the red horse has the power to take peace from the earth, signifying very clearly that the inhabitants thereof will kill one another. This is somewhat like what we already see today in type in the former country of Yugoslavia. Undoubtedly, there will be many wars, civil and otherwise, breaking out everywhere, especially when the seals are opened.

The Third Seal

6:5-6 - *“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou [harm] not the oil and the wine.”*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The rider upon the black horse has a pair of balances in his hand so that he may bring economic distress upon the nations. So there will be a scarcity of food at this time. A measure of wheat for a penny would mean probably a loaf of bread for a day's wages. Three measures of barley, which was inferior at least in New Testament times to wheat, was given to Roman soldiers as a punishment. This angel is given instructions not to bring judgment upon the oil and the wine at this time.

The Fourth Seal

6:7-8 - *“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”*

The name of the rider upon the pale horse was death, and hell followed with him. Clearly, these four horsemen come to remove many sinners from the face of the earth. They are given power over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword, hunger, death, and the beasts of the earth. Thus, in reality, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, who are the beginning of sorrows (opening up the tribulation

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

period), bring calamities upon the earth in the realm of wars and civil anarchy. Guns will be possessed by large numbers of the population, even in civilized nations and countries. Killings will become alarmingly frequent, and violence will increase on every hand. There will be widespread food shortages that will result in rationing in many places.

Added to this, there will be, for the fourth part of the earth, additional distress in the form of the angel of death visiting them in a manner reminiscent of the tenth plague upon Egypt.

The Fifth Seal

6:9-11 - *“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

With the opening of the fifth seal, John sees a company of martyrs in heaven. These souls of the faithful slain are from all dispensations, speaking in unison, undoubtedly moved by the Spirit to ask the Lord, "How long, O Lord?" We have a similar cry in the Spirit from the lips of the psalmist in Psalm 13:1-2: "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?"

The reason for this question, especially in this passage of Revelation, is so that the Lord may indicate a very important truth. All those appointed to be killed or martyred must first suffer before the Lord can take vengeance upon their enemies and remove them. In other words, at the time of the opening of the fifth seal there are still many others who are going to be martyred.

This has relevance for our lives. When the Lord gives His reasons in Revelation to those under the altar, we then understand that our trials do not just affect our lives, but God has things to accomplish in the lives of others through our trials. As it is written in Romans 14:7, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Another truth that surfaces here in this passage of Revelation is that there are a certain number who are ordained to become martyrs. This is comforting, realizing that all things are sovereignly determined by God. Thus it is not necessary to be fearful or anxious concerning the future trials and ordeals that are coming upon the earth in these last days. We are in His hand, and what has been predetermined for us before the foundation of the world will come to pass. Whether we have the privilege of martyrdom or of being preserved through the Great Tribulation has already been decided by an all wise and loving Heavenly Father. That which is best for us in His wisdom will be so. Therefore, let us rejoice and be glad, for grace will be given according to heaven's purpose for us.

The Sixth Seal

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.”* The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, mentions an earthquake with respect to the last days, locating it in or near the city of Zion. (See Isaiah 29:1-6.) However, this earthquake spoken of by Isaiah would seem to be fulfilled in Revelation 11:13, when the tenth part of the city of Jerusalem falls. It may, however, be covered in

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Joel 2:30, “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke,” when it is speaking of wonders in the earth.

The Lord Himself speaks of *earthquakes* occurring in the last days in Matthew 24:7. This great earthquake that takes place with the opening of the sixth seal could be responsible in part for the realignment of mountains and islands mentioned in verse 14. The sun becoming black is mentioned in Joel 2:31, “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.” We should note at this juncture that there could be a period of time intervening between the events of Revelation 6:12 and the Second Coming (mentioned in Matthew 24:29-30).

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.”* The question long posed is: Are these literal stars? Certainly, when we look at Revelation 12:4, when the dragon with his tail draws the third part of the stars of heaven and casts them to the earth, they must be taken as angels. (For a further commentary, please see the discussion on Revelation 12.)

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

However, when the sun and moon are mentioned, which are obviously to be taken literally, the stars must be literal as well. Thus at this point we are going to see catastrophic happenings in the form of meteorites of all sizes and dimensions striking the earth.

6:14 - *“And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”* This verse and the preceding are mentioned in Isaiah 34:4, *“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.”* This is associated with the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the author has been privileged to see in vision form the following:

6:15-17 - *“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; 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: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

We are accustomed to seeing our Lord's face as we contemplate Him. It is a face full of gentleness and exuding the sweetness of His lovely nature. However, that which the inhabitants of the earth see as the heavens depart like a scroll is a face of great severity. His eyes are so terrifying. The analogy is that of a judge who is in the process of pronouncing some awesome sentence upon a malefactor. And certainly, that would be true because that is who He is—the Righteous Judge of all the earth, filled with wrath against the ungodly sinners. In His presence, none shall be able to stand who have not known His saving grace.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SEALING OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD (7:1-8)

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

These four angels are the first of the four trumpets that sound when the seventh seal is opened.

7:2-3 - *“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying,*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” The sealing of the righteous is to protect them in time of judgment. During the time of the last siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, there was also the sealing of those who were counted worthy.

We read of this sealing in Ezekiel 9:4-6: “And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.”

7:4-8 - *“And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.”

In the book of Revelation, there are two groups of 144,000. The question is: Are they the same company or are they different? Well, Scripture makes it very clear that they are two different groups. Those in chapter 7 are the preserved of Israel. They are from the twelve tribes of Israel, whereas those in chapter 14 are the redeemed from among men. Thus there is a clear-cut distinction made between these two groups. Therefore, that is the interpretation we must accept. Also, there is numerical proof of two groups of 144 in type in the Old Testament in David's Tabernacle. 1 Chronicles 25:7 says, “So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the LORD, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight (or 288—made up of two groups of 144).”

Returning now to the 144,000 sealed of Israel, we note that the tribe of Dan is missing, and is replaced by Manasses (or Manasseh), the elder son of Joseph, giving Joseph the double portion among the tribes. The reason for this is found in the prophecy relative to Dan by his father Jacob in Genesis 49:16-17: “Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. 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.”

Dan was conceived through an act of jealousy on the part of Rachel. Genesis 30:1-6 says, “And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel *envied* her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God’s stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. And Rachel said, *God hath judged me*, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

therefore called she his name Dan.” Jealousy is the spirit that not only energizes Satan, but also the Antichrist—the man of sin who will arise in the last days.

The number *twelve* signifies government. Therefore, 12 x 1,000 (the number of the millennial period) signifies government during the Millennium. 12 x 12 x 1,000 equals 144,000—signifying the twelve courses of months during the year. In the Old Testament priesthood, the priests performed their office usually only one month per year.

THE GREAT MULTITUDE IN HEAVEN - (7:9-17)

7:9-12 - *“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; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 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, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

After seeing the sealing of the 144,000, John then sees a great multitude of people in heaven. This is an innumerable group of saints from all nations, kindreds, peoples, and languages. God will have a people that will serve Him out of every race and ethnic group. This is why the Gospel must be preached in “all nations” (Mt. 28:19).

7:13-17 - *“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 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. 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. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”*

These believers are clothed with white robes. This large number of saints, we are told, comes forth from the Great Tribulation. They are made up of all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues. They

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

have palms in their hands, speaking of righteousness, for they have partaken of the righteousness of Christ. This group stands in contrast with the group that welcomed the Lord on Palm Sunday when He triumphantly entered Jerusalem, and then became partisans to His crucifixion. This group faithfully laid down their lives for Him. He shall reward them by leading them to the living fountains of heavenly waters and wiping away all their tears of anguish and suffering.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL (8:1)

8:1 - *“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”* Because there is no other reference in Holy Scripture to a period of half an hour, we will be silent where Scripture is silent. We can only say that before the seventh seal is opened (which opens the period of the woes to come upon the earth), all heaven with awesome solemnity ceases its activities of praise and joy because of the judgments that are about to be released upon the earth. It is almost like the silence that falls upon the onlookers of an execution, even though the one to be executed merited his judgment.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

It is very clear that the seventh seal opens up the seven trumpets. Thus it is absolutely undeniable that the three sets of judgments in Revelation—Seals, Trumpets, Vials—are chronological and sequential. The seven trumpets cannot take place until after the seven seals are completed. It is also clear that the seven vials are the last seven judgments to be poured out and they cannot take place until after the seven trumpets. Therefore, there is no other way to view these judgments but as chronological. They cannot take place simultaneously or run parallel to each other. This is very clear from the book of Revelation.

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS - (8:2 - 9:21; 11:15-19)

8:2 - *“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.”* The opening of the seventh seal was not a judgment in itself, but the opening up of the next series of judgments called the seven trumpets. These seven trumpets are also called woes. John saw seven angels in heaven which were each given a trumpet. These trumpets are invariably referred to also as the seven voices, since the trumpet did not give a loud blast, but rather it was used to talk through (cf. 8:13).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

8:3 - *“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.”* First, we are introduced to another angel, standing by the altar. In the book of Revelation, we are consistently introduced to the Heavenly Temple, its furniture, and the ministry in the Temple:

1. The fact that we are kings and priests (1:6)
2. The blood sacrifice of Jesus (1:5)
3. The seven golden candlesticks (1:12)
4. The seven spirits of God, of which the golden candlestick is symbolic (3:1)
5. The souls of the martyrs under the altar (6:9)
6. The altar again (8:3)
7. The golden censer (8:3)
8. Incense (8:3)
9. Golden altar before the throne (8:3; 9:13)
10. The Ark of the Covenant in the Heavenly Temple (11:19)

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

This incense offered upon the altar was made of stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense (Ex. 30:34). Stacte, like myrrh, speaks of meekness. Onycha speaks of laying down one's life. It is the attitude of Esther—"If I perish, I perish" (Es. 4:16). Galbanum speaks of tears (cf. Heb. 5:7). Frankincense speaks of faith.

The incense, which is in actuality the prayer life of the Lamb of God upon earth, was offered with the prayers of the saints. The prayers that are all made in the name of Jesus are thereby sanctified and accepted by God the Father because of the sacrificial life of His Son. Thus, the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

8:4-5 - *"And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."* Thus the prayers and the incense were poured out as judgments upon the earth and released the trumpet judgments. This is God avenging, as He promised, His elect which cry day and night unto Him. Christ

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

said in Luke 18:7-8: “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.”

THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

8:6 - *“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”* It is the presentation of the prayers of the saints unto God (intermingled with the incense) at God’s appointed time that causes the trumpet judgments to be released upon the earth. In this we can see once again the sovereignty of God in the timing; for it is obviously God who energizes the angel to offer, at this time, the incense and the prayers.

The First Trumpet

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.”* The first trumpet (or the first angel to sound his trumpet) brings judgment upon all the green grass. A third part of the trees are destroyed, which must also cause harm to the animal kingdom, since they are dependent upon the vegetation.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Second Trumpet

8:8 - *“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood.”* With the second trumpet, the third part of the sea will become blood. This is very reminiscent of the power that was given to Moses when he was sent as the Lord’s emissary to Egypt. This will be the same power manifested by Moses in the last days. As one of the two witnesses, he will prophesy for 1,260 days during the tribulation period along with Elijah.

During the period of the seven last plagues of the wrath of God (which are poured out in the very last period of judgments), the angel in charge of the waters gives the reason for this just retribution upon mankind in Revelation 16:6: “For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.” In this second trumpet judgment, only a third part of the sea is turned into blood.

8:9 - *“And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.”* The consequence of this burning mountain being cast into the sea is that it

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

kills a third part of the creatures and destroys a third of the world's mercantile fleets and navies. This would surely bankrupt the mercantile insurance companies of the world, such as Lloyds of London, England.

The Third Trumpet

8:10-11 - *“And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; 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.”*

Now the source of the waters are smitten. (The name of the star is probably the name of a fallen angel.) A third part of the waters will become bitter because of the wormwood. Wormwood is a plant native to Palestine and Europe. It is not actually poisonous, but in ancient times bitterness was associated with poison. Many people will die because of the terrible effects of wormwood.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Fourth Trumpet

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.*” Now the third part of the heavenly bodies are smitten. A third part of the sun, a third part of the moon, and a third of the stars are smitten so that there is darkness.

When the sixth seal is opened, we are told that the sun becomes black. Therefore, we must conclude that the duration of this judgment is a comparatively short space of time and then conditions are normalized again (as was the case in the plagues that struck Egypt).

For example, we read in Exodus 8:15, “But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite [or relief], he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.” This appears to be the case throughout the time of the tribulation period covered by the book of Revelation. The emphasis upon *the third part* seems indicative of the fact that the third part of the heavenly host rebelled with Lucifer against God.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

8:13 - *“And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!”* As we have mentioned before, the seven trumpets or voices are also termed woes. Four have sounded, and now an angel is sent to proclaim with a loud voice through the midst of heaven that three more woes are about to sound. We shall see that these are even more awesome than the preceding ones.

CHAPTER NINE

The Fifth Trumpet

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.”* In very clear terms, we have stated that the star that falls from heaven is a fallen angel. A fallen star is always associated with an angel or a saint. Here it is speaking of an angel because he is given the key which literally opens the shaft of the abyss (or the bottomless pit) to release a horde of fallen angels. Thus, from this and many other scriptures, we know that hell is in the center of the earth (cf. Ezek. 31:16).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

9:2 - *“And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.”* Many who have had the privilege of seeing hell are aware of the following aspects: Smoke emanates from fiery furnaces that also give the only light in that terrible foreboding place. The bottomless pit is really bottomless, and the wretched that have been adjudged worthy to be placed therein experience the sensation of falling forever.

In visions I have had of hell, I heard the never ending cries of the damned. It appears that as all are not equal in heaven, so that is true in hell. According to one’s lifestyle, so also is one’s eternal place.

Since the Lord spoke more of the horrors of hell than the pleasures of heaven, it would seem appropriate to contemplate at this point what He taught concerning the eternal state of the damned, as well as some other Scriptures about hell.

Christ said in Mark 9:43-48: “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

We read in Isaiah 66:23-24: “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” And Peter said in 2 Peter 2:4, “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.”

When the bottomless pit is opened, it will be apparent to every living creature. It will be like a gigantic volcano erupting, spewing out lava and smoke to the extent that the sun and air will be darkened.

My wife and I were flying from Toronto to Portland on the very day that Mount Saint Helens erupted in the state of Washington, U.S.A. The cloud of volcanic ash was so vast that it was easily thirty miles

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

long at the time we flew alongside it. For those on the ground it obscured the sun, and the air was darkened. It was a small foretaste of what it will be like on the day when the pit is opened.

9:3-5 - *“And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.”*

Here is a description of a company of fallen angels, who at the time of the rebellion in heaven did not retain their former positions, as Jude 1:6 remarks, “And the angels 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.”

This particular company is described as being like locusts, which are ravenous by nature. Also, they have tails like scorpions whose sting, while not deadly, affects the nervous system, inducing an

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

almost insupportable pain. About angels, we are told in Psalm 104:4, “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.” Those who have seen angels know that they can take the form of beasts of indescribable proportions. Thus it is with this particular company of fallen angels.

Their purpose is to torment men for five months, or 150 days, which is the comparable time period of the flood in the days of Noah. Genesis 7:24 says, “And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.” The composition of 150 is 15 (meaning divine separation, as seen in Genesis 7:20) x 10 (signifying divine commandment or justice). Thus the torment of 150 days or five months is divine justice for their murders, sorceries, etc. (see Rev. 9:21).

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 torment of the sting of these hellish scorpions will be so terrible that men will desire death, but because both the power of life and death come from God, they will not have the power to die. Knowing personally such terrible and agonizing suffering in the life of my own wife, we can understand—yet, of course, not approve of—why those who suffer such terrible torments in this life with painful disabilities desire to terminate their lives in the hope of finding relief in the hereafter.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

This brings up a hotly debated subject that is going on worldwide concerning man's right to die or take his own life in certain extreme situations.

May we take a moment to try to explain why the Lord permits such extreme suffering even on the part of His own children at times. The Lord said in Matthew 18:8-9: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." Sometimes the Lord permits, and even ordains sickness and suffering in order to wean people from this world. The numbers who have turned to the Lord for salvation on their bed of sickness only eternity will reveal.

Those who have tried to commit suicide, and in the mercy of God have been brought back from the chasm of hell itself, do indeed testify that they were reproved on the grounds that they were challenging the infinite wisdom of a loving God. Hence, the purpose of these woes is to seek to

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

induce those who are afflicted by these fallen spirits to turn to the Lord. And therefore, in His wisdom, death is not granted to them, as this would defeat the whole purpose of the trial.

9:7-10 - *“And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.”*

The appearance of these fallen angels being half animal and half human could only portray the perversity of character of those who left their former estate even as Jude 6 declares. Having rebelled against God, they have lost the sweetness and simplicity of the divine nature with which they were once imbued and have been confined to the darkness of the pit until such an hour as here indicated. Even as we contemplate such monstrosities from the relative calmness of our earthly abodes, we

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

cannot help but see their like in those around us who have given themselves over to homosexuality and similar evil practices.

The Apostle John describes these locusts as having the shape of horses prepared for battle. On their heads are crowns, and their faces are like the faces of men. However, they have hair like a woman, which is not unlike the homosexuals of our day and age. Their teeth are as the teeth of lions, and they have golden crowns upon their heads. This means that they once had kingly positions in heavenly realms, since the lion is the king of all beasts. They also have breastplates of iron, which was common for horses in olden times when they went to battle. Also, being angels, they have wings which make the sound of chariots of army horses running to battle. And their tails are like scorpions.

9:11 - *“And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.”* This Apollyon (or destroyer) is the same fallen angel that met Christian in the valley of humiliation as recorded in John Bunyan’s book *Pilgrim’s Progress*. This angel is as fearsome an adversary as mortal man would ever wish to encounter. Thus, as we contemplate these awesome woes, let us have firmly established in

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

our minds and hearts that they are sent by an ever loving Heavenly Father whose ultimate purpose is to give mankind a foretaste of hell, that they might turn to the Savior of the world, and believing in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life.

9:12 - *“One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.”* Thus, in His great compassion, the Lord gives mankind the chance to repent. Through these woes they are given not just one opportunity, but three, to contemplate eternal judgments and their consequent punishments. We are clearly told that the fifth trumpet is the first of the last three woes. The sixth trumpet is the second woe and the seventh trumpet is the third woe. This is very important in our consideration of the time frame of these judgments, as we shall consider in a moment.

The Sixth Trumpet

9:13 - *“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God.”* It is worthy of note that these judgments which are poured forth upon the inhabitants of the earth come from specific positions in the heavenlies associated with the temple of God. Thus the second woe comes from the four horns of the golden altar. This was the place in the Tabernacle

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

of Moses where the sacrifices of incense were offered up, symbolizing the prayers of the saints. In response to these prayers of mercy, undoubtedly the wicked are being given opportunities to repent through these woes.

The Loosing of the Four Angels

9:14 - *“Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.”* A voice from the four horns of the altar told the sixth angel with the trumpet to loose the four angels which are bound in the Euphrates River. Some notes on the importance of the Euphrates River are necessary at this juncture of our study. It is in the northernmost boundary of the nation of Israel, as promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:18: “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”

It is also a river associated with the judgment of Babylon, since this great city was built on both sides of the Euphrates. Jeremiah 51:63 says, “And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates.” Thus the Euphrates is associated with judgment, as we shall see again later in Revelation 16:12. We must also remember that Babylon was raised up by God to judge His people, Israel.

9:15 - *“So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind” (NKJV).* These obviously are also a part of those angels who left their previous estate, rebelled against God with Lucifer, and were bound in chains for this particular day of their release to bring judgment upon mankind. Their purpose is to slay, in effect, one third of the population of mankind. Together with the destruction of one fourth part of mankind by the fourth seal judgment, the population of the earth is being decimated. These four angels are associated also with a vast army of horsemen, which are hordes of evil spirits.

9:16 - *“And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.”* This army of 200 million is comparable to the total population of the United States of America, which is one-fifth the population of China or India. It is an army that none could stand against. Their description is equally awesome.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

9:17 - *“And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.”* It is reminiscent of the description of the all-conquering army of the Babylonians in Joel 2:1-11. “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array” (Joel 2:1-5).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

“Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” (Joel 2:6-11).

9:18-19 - *“By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.”* By these three—the angels, the horsemen, and the horses—a third part of mankind were killed. The reason why the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

horses can kill is that their power resides in their mouth and in their tails, which have serpents' heads. It is through them that they can hurt mankind.

As we have stated before, the whole purpose of these woes is to bring men and women everywhere to repentance and to show them in the land of the living something of the eternal punishment of hell. Yet, regretfully, what does the Word of God say their reaction will be?

9:20-21 - *“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”*

This is a principle of mankind that is enunciated by the Lord in Luke 16:19-31 in His teaching of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man who was being tormented pleaded with Abraham who was in paradise to send Lazarus to witness to his family to spare them from going to hell. Abraham replied to him, “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” This rich man was relentless: “Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” Abraham again replied, “If

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

The truth of the matter is simply this—if our hearts are not changed by the new birth and the laws of God are not written in the fleshly tables of our hearts, then no end of judgments will cause us to repent. This is equally true in the Millennium, when the devil will be bound.

Isaiah 66:23-24 tells us: “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

Thus, during the millennial reign of our Lord—a time of righteousness—sinners will receive adequate warnings of the eternal damnation and torments that await them if they do not repent. Yet regretfully, many, having had the opportunity by God to look into the pit and see the end of all who rebel against God, will still choose to walk in their wicked ways. The key, as always, is to meditate often in God’s Word, and as Psalm 1:1 states, to avoid evil companionship.

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN THUNDERS - (10:1-7)

10:1-4 - *“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: 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, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.”*

Revelation means “the unveiling.” However, although the book of Revelation has the signification of “making clear” or of “opening that which was sealed,” this particular passage speaks of an event that, in the wisdom of God, will remain veiled to the children of men in the land of the living, at least until the actual event takes place.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

That being so, it behooves us to adopt the attitude of David in Psalm 131:1-2 with respect to these matters—“LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.”

We likewise shall not seek to inquire into the matter of the seven thunders, but rather be content to turn our attention to those matters that the Word records in this blessed book.

10:5 - *“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven.”* It is of great interest that this angel is standing upon the sea. As we shall see in later events in the book of Revelation, there are notable events that are going to take place around this sea, which is, of course, the Mediterranean Sea. *The sea* in Scripture is always the Mediterranean Sea, unless otherwise stated.

Also, John was on the Isle of Patmos, which was in the Mediterranean.

10:6-7 - *“And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

therein, that there should be time no longer [or there will be no more delay]: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

At the end, therefore, of the sounding of the seventh angel, not only shall time be no more (meaning that God's plan for mankind during this dispensation would have come to its completion), but God's purpose for His saints also will be fulfilled. The mystery of God is declared in Colossians 1:27: “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

This phrase “there should be time no longer” literally, and more accurately, means *there will be no more delay* (NIV, NKJV). In other words, when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the seven vial judgments will be poured out very shortly thereafter, bringing the period of wrath to an end.

THE LITTLE BOOK (10:8-11)

10:8-11 - *“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

Then John was given a little book by the angel standing upon the sea and the earth. When he ate the book, it was as sweet as honey in his mouth, but it became bitter in his belly. This little book was possibly a further prophetic message that the Apostle John had to deliver to the churches.

It is reminiscent of the scroll Ezekiel ate, as recorded in Ezekiel 3:1-3: "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Lord desires the truth (as David says in Psalm 51:6) to become real in our innermost parts and to be indelibly written upon our hearts. The prophet must become his message. We obtain *authority* in God's Word when we experience and live our own message (cf. Mk. 1:22). As preachers, teachers, and Christians, we must become the living Word. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:2-3: "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE - (11:1-2)

11:1-2 - *"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple [the outer court] leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Here is another scripture that clearly shows that there will be a temple built in the last days in Jerusalem. It is called the Temple of God, and as such, could only be built in Jerusalem. It is obviously not speaking of a heavenly temple because the Gentiles could not tread the temple in heaven under foot. Also, the Antichrist would hardly be content to appear in or desecrate anything less than a bona fide temple. Furthermore, the two witnesses also minister in Jerusalem.

Let us now consider a few other scriptures that substantiate the rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem. Speaking of the Antichrist himself, Daniel 11:45 says, "And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." This is clearly speaking of the temple of God, as shown from the writings of the Apostle Paul. When quoting this same verse from Daniel 11:45, Paul makes reference to the Antichrist, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4).

Daniel 9:27 also mentions the Antichrist: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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

The NIV translation reads, “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

This was quoted by our Lord Himself in Matthew 24:15: “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:).” Here we have the Lord Himself confirming that the Great Tribulation begins right after the abomination of desolation is offered.

Thus the summary of the events of the last days is as follows: The Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel for seven years. Halfway through this period, after about three and a half years, the Antichrist will break the covenant by offering up the abomination of desolation. This could very well be a swine, just as Antiochus Epiphanes IV desecrated the temple years before by offering a swine. This commences the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Another factor to bear in mind is that John was told to take note of those who were worshipping in the temple. It would suggest, therefore, that the Jews return to the Old Testament form of animal sacrifices as they will later in the Temple of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40-48), which will be built during the millennial reign of Christ upon earth.

Then we must consider the point that the abomination of desolation is offered in the holy temple while the outer court is governed and dominated by the Gentiles. This would probably mean that the Gentiles would be permitted to control the outer court, but the temple itself would be open to the Jews only. This was the situation during the time of Roman rule in Israel. The Jews were allowed to put non-Jews to death who were caught within the temple precincts.

THE TWO WITNESSES (11:3-12)

11:3 - *“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.”* The beginning of this period of the two witnesses’ testimony must be prior to the last days of the Antichrist since he will kill them. The two witnesses are readily identifiable.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

11:4 - *“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.”*

This is a direct quotation from Zechariah 4:14, which says, “These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” The question is this: Where do we find in the Gospels two men who stand by the Lord? While Jesus was transfigured upon the mount, Moses and Elijah appeared and stood with Him in Matthew 17:1-3: “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and [Elijah] talking with him.”

These two prophets are mentioned together in Malachi 4:4-6: “Remember ye the law of *Moses* my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you *Elijah* the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” It is impossible for Enoch to be one of the two witnesses, as

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

some have suggested, because he has no relevance to Israel and did not perform any recorded miracles.

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.”* The miracles that the two witnesses perform are uniquely attributable to Moses and Elijah (cf. Ex. 7:20; 8:1-12:29; 1 Kgs. 17:1; 18:41-45; 2 Kgs. 1:10-12).

They will have power over waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every kind of plague as often as they will. This miracle was performed by Moses, as recorded in Exodus 7:19: “And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Elijah had power to shut heaven so that it did not rain in the days of his prophecy. James 5:17 tells us, “[Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.”

There follows, as we have mentioned before, an explanation of the fact that the Beast (or the Antichrist) will make war with Moses and Elijah and kill them.

11:7-12 - *“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. 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. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. 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*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.”

After Moses and Elijah complete their three and a half year ministry, the Antichrist will kill them. Their bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days. Then the Lord will raise them from the dead, and they will be taken to heaven in a cloud.

Christ said in Matthew 23:29-31: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.” As ever, the children of Israel will be agreeable to the killing of Moses and Elijah. The murders will take place in Jerusalem where our Lord was crucified.

We tend to think of Jerusalem as being the Holy City, and certainly I did. When my wife and I were flying into Tel Aviv for the first time, having been subjected to all the ways of the heathen in Asia, I said to the Lord as we were about to land, “At last we are in Your land and all will be upright and full

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

of goodness.” Then the Lord quickened Revelation 11:8 to me where Jerusalem is described as Sodom and Egypt. Bless my soul, it was not long before I realized that the Jews are far from being sanctified at this time.

A GREAT EARTHQUAKE (11:13-14)

11:13 - *“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”* Seven thousand people will be killed in this earthquake, and the survivors will be terrified and give glory to the God of heaven. This earthquake cannot be presumed to be the earthquake mentioned in Zechariah 14:4, which cleaves the Mount of Olives in two because that earthquake takes place when the Lord returns with His saints.

The Lord’s coming does not occur until after the last seven judgments of the vials. Therefore, this is a different earthquake than the earthquake that will take place at the Second Coming. Remember, Christ Himself said there would be many *earthquakes* in the last days leading up to His return (Mt. 24:7). During this earthquake, a tenth of the city of Jerusalem will fall. This symbolizes in itself God’s

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

judgment (remembering that ten is symbolic of Divine justice and commandments, on God's part). Seven thousand people will be slain in this earthquake. *Seven thousand* speaks of the fact that there are seven thousand years of man's existence upon earth.

There are two groups of seven thousand in Scripture—the group here in Revelation 11:13 and a group of seven thousand faithful saints in 1 Kings 19:18, where the Lord said to Elijah, “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” This group speaks to us that God has a remnant who serve Him in every generation and He preserves them. There has been a faithful remnant in every year since man's existence. The seven thousand slain in the earthquake represent the wicked throughout the seven thousand years of man.

11:14 - *“The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.”* The first and second woes are associated with the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets, which are already past. The seventh trumpet, therefore, will release the third woe.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

THE SEVENTH ANGEL SOUNDS (11:15-19)

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.”* Now the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the last of the seven trumpets. This is the third woe, which embraces the vial judgments. It would appear not to be a single blast; rather, it includes all the events of the final judgments. This is evident from the phrase used in chapter 10:7, “In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.” This signifies a period of time as well as several events. The seventh trumpet heralds the seven last plagues, which are very rapid and complete the judgments of God.

11:16-18 - *“And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name,*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.” This seventh trumpet is preparing the way for the introduction of the outpouring of the wrath of God through the vial judgments which will certainly bring profound and widespread destruction upon the earth and mankind alike.

11:19 - *“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”* We note that again a piece of furniture of the temple is mentioned—the Ark of the Covenant, which contains the tables of the Law. Thus we are going to see the judgments associated with the breaking of the laws of God coming upon the inhabitants of the earth.

There is an interlude at this juncture, and the chronological sequence of events in the matter of judgments is taken up again in chapter 15. It is worthy of note that after the sixth seal and sixth trumpet there are interludes in which the Apostle John is shown other events that seem to be taking place *concurrently* with these judgments.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST (12:1-17)

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.”* Throughout the

Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, there are *two women*. One represents the ways of God and the other, the ways of evil. Some examples are Sarah and Hagar, Hannah and Peninah, Wisdom and the strange woman; and now in the book of Revelation, the Glorious Church and the Mystery Babylon, which we shall study when we come to Revelation 17. This wonder in heaven is clearly the Church of Jesus Christ.

As any wife, she is clothed upon with the glory of her Husband, the Sun of Righteousness. The moon is a symbol of a woman because it reflects the glory of the sun, her husband. Notice the interpretation of the dream of Joseph by his father, Jacob, in Genesis 37:9-10: “And [Joseph] dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" In Joseph's dream the moon represented his mother, Rachel. So it is clear that this woman represents the Church. *A crown of twelve stars* represents the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. (For further explanation, please see the commentary on the Heavenly Jerusalem in chapter 21.)

12:2 - *"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."* This woman, the Church, brought forth a man-child. Thus out of the Church will come forth a special group of mature believers called the man-child. This is developed more in verse 5.

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."* This dragon is none other than Satan himself. The identity of this dragon is revealed in verse 9: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." The dragon has seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns on his heads.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

12:4 - *“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.”* When Satan rebelled and was cast out of heaven (cf. Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:13-17), it is worthy of note that he took one-third of the stars (or the angels) with him. However, two-thirds of the angels remained faithful to the Lord in the rebellion that preceded this creation. In the last days, Satan will seek to devour the man-child.

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.”* This man-child is also mentioned by Isaiah: “Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompense to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Isa. 66:5-8).

This man-child will rule the nations with a rod of iron; they are co-heirs with Christ. They will partake of the same promise given to the Lord Jesus in Psalm 2:8-9: “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.”

There are three groups of Christians mentioned in Revelation chapter 12 which correspond to and parallel groups of three mentioned elsewhere in the Word of God:

1. *The three sections of the Tabernacle of Moses*: the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the Outer Court.
2. *The three heavens*, as mentioned by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:2: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.”
3. *The three groups of believers according to the journey of the children of Israel*—those in the Promised Land, those in the wilderness, and those in Egypt.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

4. *The three groups of Christian maturity—fathers, young men, and children*, according to the Apostle John in 1 John 2:12-14: “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. 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.”

The three groups of believers in Revelation 12 are:

1. *The Man-child*—which is raptured at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Revelation 12:5 says, “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.”
2. *The Woman*—who is protected through the tribulation. Revelation 12:14 says, “And to *the woman* were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”
3. *The Remnant*—that is persecuted during the tribulation. Revelation 12:17 says, “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.”

Suppositions must be based upon very sound Scriptural types. The Lord Jesus Himself gave us one very important key when He said in Matthew 24:37, “But as the days of [Noah] were, so shall also the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

coming of the Son of man be.” Therefore, the days of Noah give us keys to understanding the last days. There were three distinct groups of people in his days, which correspond to the three groups spoken of in Revelation 12:

1. *Enoch*—who was raptured prior to the flood.
2. *Noah*—who was preserved through the flood.
3. *Those who were sometimes disobedient*—who were not spared from the judgment of the flood (see 1 Pet. 3:20).

Thus we see that a very select group in the Church called the *Man-child* will come to maturity and be raptured (caught up to heaven) at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The *Woman* will be preserved during the tribulation.

Yet there is a third group of believers called the *Remnant of her seed* which will be persecuted during the tribulation, and many of them will be killed.

12:6 - “*And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*” This group of believers will be

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

preserved and protected for 1,260 days. This company of believers is analogous to the eight people who were preserved during the flood in Noah's day. They went through the flood, but they were protected. This is clearly what will happen to these believers. They will be here on earth during the Great Tribulation, but they will be protected.

12:7-9 - *“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*

There will be a war in heaven midway through the seven year period. Michael and his angels will war against Satan and his angels, casting them out of heaven. This tells us that the devil still has access into heavenly places although he no longer holds his former position. It is only when Michael and his angels stand up that the devil and his angels are cast out, as we read also in Daniel 12:1, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

12:10-11 - *“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. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”* There are three conditions specified here for overcoming Satan in the last days:

1. *The shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ* — As we walk in the light, as He is in the light, His blood cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7).
2. *The word of our testimony* — Let us have a day by day experience of the Lord, living by every word that is proceeding from Him (Mt. 4:4).
3. *Loving not our lives unto death* — Let us become a living sacrifice, picking up our cross daily (Lk. 9:23) and being crucified with Him.

12:12-16 - *“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.”

At this point Satan knows he has a very short time period left, and he persecutes the Church in all of his fury. In fact, we are told later that he only has 1,260 days to bring torment to the children of mankind. The first thing the dragon tries to do is to destroy the woman. However, she is protected and given a safe haven in the wilderness. He then goes after the remnant of her seed.

As many commentators have noted, the correct interpretation of the woman is the key to understanding much of what follows in the book of Revelation. That she corresponds to Israel is

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

without contestation. As we have already noted, the dream of Joseph aids us greatly in the understanding of this phenomenon.

However, which Israel is she, since Scripture calls the Church *the Israel of God* in Galatians 6:16? The woman is both in heaven and on earth. She would appear, therefore, to be the composite body of true believers of Jews and Gentiles, since that is also the composition of the Heavenly Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:12-14).

For her to be uniquely earthly Israel would be difficult, since the man-child company has the promises of Christ, and these promises were also given to a Gentile church (see Rev. 2:26-27). Certainly, the man-child could not be Christ because of the chronological setting of this chapter, as well as the other events in this period. Satan is cast out of heaven at the middle of the seven year period. At this same time, the man-child will be raptured. This commences the Great Tribulation. Thus the man-child could not possibly be our Lord Jesus. Therefore, these factors point to a rapture of a select body of believers at this time.

Another interesting feature is that this also marks the third great genocide in Scripture.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

1. At the birth of Moses
2. At the birth of Christ
3. At the time of the Great Tribulation

At the bringing forth or birth of the man-child, Satan seeks to kill him (this group). There is this evil desire to kill the baby that comes from the womb. Today, we see the genocide of the unborn through the liberal abortion laws in so many countries. This is Satan at work again.

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.”* The third group of believers, the remnant of the woman’s seed, is persecuted by Satan. Many of these people will be killed during this time of trouble.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE UNHOLY TRINITY (13:1-18)

In Revelation chapter 13 we see what is called the *unholy trinity*. The unholy trinity is comprised of the *dragon*, who is Satan (the fallen angel Lucifer), the *Beast*, who is the Antichrist, and the *false prophet*.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Satan always seeks to duplicate everything the Lord does. Thus he will also seek to duplicate the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

In the last days the unholy trinity shall arise and manifest itself. Satan, being cast out of heaven at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, will energize a man who once lived called the Antichrist. A third member, the false prophet, will draw attention and worship to the Beast and Satan by means of great signs and miracles. Satan knows his time is short, and he will seek to draw as many souls unto himself as he can.

The Antichrist—The Beast

13:1 - *“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.”*

John is clearly upon earth in verse 1, standing on the shores of the great sea, the Mediterranean Sea. He sees a Beast rise up out of the water. This Beast is more commonly called the Antichrist.

The Old Testament counterpart of this revelation was given to Daniel in Daniel 7:2-7: “Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 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. 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 between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo *another*, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, 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."

These four beasts represent four kingdoms that in succession reigned over and persecuted the nation of Israel. The first beast, likened unto a lion, is the kingdom of Babylon. The second beast, likened unto a bear, is the Medo-Persian kingdom. The third beast, likened unto a leopard, is the Grecian empire. The fourth beast, which had teeth of iron, is the Roman Empire. This beast had ten horns.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

These ten horns speak of the ten kings that will arise in the last days within the confines of the old Roman Empire (see Rev. 17:12). They are an extension of the Roman Empire, which, in actuality, has really never ceased to exist. The Beast John saw is the Antichrist. He had seven heads and ten horns. Some further information is now given concerning this Beast.

13:2 - *“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.”* The leopard speaks of the Grecian Empire; the bear, the Persian Empire; and the lion, the Babylonian Empire. (Please see our book on *Daniel* for further explanation.) Therefore, these three former empires must rise again in the last days, and the Beast will rule over them.

The fact that this Beast (the Antichrist) has ten horns tells us that he also comes from the revived Roman Empire that will be composed of ten kings. The fact that his body is like a leopard also speaks of the swiftness of his ascent into power, as we witnessed historically in the case of that great Grecian king, Alexander III, familiarly known as Alexander the Great. The Antichrist most certainly will

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

be energized by Satan as Christ was by the Holy Spirit. Satan will give him his power, his seat (or throne), and great authority, since they will try to duplicate the roles of the Father and the Son.

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.”* One of the great difficulties in the book of Revelation is the difference between the heads of Satan and Antichrist. Satan’s seven heads are crowned (Rev. 12:3), showing that he rules over these kings or nations, while the Beast has crowns only upon the ten horns. Therefore, the Antichrist rules over these ten kings, as is clear from Revelation 17:12-13: *“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. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”*

As we have already said, these ten kings will reign in the confines of the old Roman Empire, as is seen from the image in Daniel 7:23-24: *“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,*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

and break it in pieces. 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.”

Let us now consider these seven heads of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:1). What are they, and what do they represent? These seven heads are the same as the dragon possesses except that the dragon's heads have crowns (Rev. 12:3). These seven heads are therefore the seven kingdoms that have afflicted Israel since her inception as a nation, and certainly from the time when she was in her own land. They are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the ten kings (the ten horns) that shall arise in the confines of the old Roman Empire in our days.

Revelation 17:10 tells us, “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.” The five kings (or kingdoms) that had fallen (at the time of John) would be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. The one who *is* would have been Rome, the sixth kingdom. Then the seventh kingdom would be the kingdom of the ten horns, which is called a kingdom in Revelation 17:17, not kingdoms.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Many object to these seven kings being kingdoms and not actual kings, since the Greek clearly says *kings*. However, in Daniel 7:17 these kingdoms are referred to as kings, whereas they are actually kingdoms. Therefore, the interchangeability between *kings* and *kingdoms* is Scripturally justified. Furthermore, we have the fact that Satan, who has plagued Israel since her inception, has done so through these seven kingdoms and not just simply at the time of the Roman Emperors.

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?”* It is clear here that the Beast is energized by Satan. The Beast will be a man of war. This is substantiated in Daniel 11:38-42, where he is called the *king of the north* who will make war against many nations, including Egypt, whom he will overrun. It is clear, then, that the Antichrist will be a great military leader.

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.”* The Antichrist will obviously claim to be God and reject the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus and the Father. Daniel 11:36 says of this man of sin, “Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done” (NKJV).

Power was given to him to continue for forty-two months. This signifies that this particular period of his life of blasphemy will last that amount of time. According to Daniel 9:27, “He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week (or seven years): and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” The Antichrist will *force* a covenant upon Israel for seven years. Then he will break it, and that will start the last forty-two months of his reign, which will be a period of tribulation.

13:6 - *“And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”* Daniel 7:25, likewise speaking of the Antichrist, states that he shall speak great words against the Most High. His anger will be against those in heaven (those who will partake of the blessedness of the kingdom from which he is excluded).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

13:7 - *“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”* Daniel 7:25 says, “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: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.” Thus in many passages of the Word of God there is this solemn warning that just as the Antichrist will have power over Moses and Elijah to kill them, so too will he have power over the rest of the saints in the predeterminate will of God. It also appears that he will rule over many nations.

13:8 - *“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”* It is clear that the Lord is going to send strong deception so that those who love their wicked ways will embrace the Antichrist.

This is brought out by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10: “And then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteous-ness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

The reason God allows Satan to present this man is so that the world is forced to make a decision. All the righteous will come to Christ, and all the wicked to the Antichrist. The world will be crystallized into two camps. The Antichrist will even draw the wicked out of the Church, leaving a perfected Church.

As one looks very carefully at this verse, we see that in actuality, the Lord has written our names in His book before the foundation of the world. This is because of His foreknowledge. Many Scriptures will substantiate this, as well as the fact that Christ, in the foreknowledge of God, went to the cross before this world was created (1 Pet 1:19-20). This is quite natural, because the Father has all knowledge and power. He has foreordained all things.

However, we must pause here so that all Scripture is carefully balanced. God does not predestinate men or women to hell, for He desires all to be saved; but He foreknows those who will accept and receive Him as their own personal Savior, and He knows those who will not.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Lord is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). He desires that “all men would be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Please read Romans 8:29-30 very carefully.

13:9 - *“If any man have an ear, let him hear.”* This is the same admonition that is given after each letter to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. What a solemn warning here to consider and take heed, especially to this chapter on the Antichrist. So many teach amillennialism, which denies virtually the coming of the Antichrist. What sorrow and tragedy for such believers! It will be a time of great persecution as the following verse declares.

13:10 - *“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”* The followers of the Antichrist must suffer in like manner as they have caused the saints to suffer. The Antichrist himself will be defeated and destroyed by the Lord Jesus. Thus the saints are comforted concerning their adversaries.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The False Prophet

13:11 - *“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”* As has been aforementioned, there will be great deception because of the desire of Satan to counterfeit God and to appear to be as God. We will see, therefore, the unholy trinity seek to counterfeit the blessed Holy Trinity.

In particular, this applies to the second beast, who will seek to do the work of the Holy Spirit, in that he will exalt the first Beast (the Antichrist) as the Holy Spirit exalts the Christ of God. This beast is called the *false prophet*. He will have the appearance of a meek lamb, but he is full of the devil and speaks the words of Satan.

13:12 - *“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.”* He will lead in the worship and glorification of the Beast. The false prophet is Satan’s counterfeit of the Holy Spirit, who glorifies the Son of God and leads the saints in worship of Him (Jn. 16:14). And here again, we have mention of the fact that the first Beast will have his deadly wound healed. This could mean that he

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

actually dies and resurrects or that he is simply brought back from the dead since he is a man from the past, as certainly is stated in many other Scriptures.

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 God of heaven permits the false prophet to do wonders to bring to pass His purposes. God will allow those who love unrighteousness to be deceived and follow the Beast.

13:14 - *“And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.”* The purpose of the image is to satisfy those who love idolatry. This image reminds us of the image erected by Nebuchadnezzar the Great in Babylon years before, as recounted in Daniel 3:1: “Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.”

Incidentally, when the numerical value of the words of Daniel 3:1 is calculated, it comes to 4,662, which equals 7 x 666— the number of the Beast according to Revelation 13:18. (Remember, every

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Hebrew letter has a numerical value.) Therefore, the image of Nebuchadnezzar was the forerunner of the image of 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.”*

This is identical to the situation we find in Daniel 3:4-6: “Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” Orders will be given to kill all those who do not worship the image of the Beast. But remember, beloved, just as God kept Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, He can preserve us too.

Also, in the giving of life to the image, we are reminded of the Grecian superstition that is found, for example, at the Parthenon in Athens where the people would ask counsel of an image. However, in

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

those days, the voice from the image would be that of a very small person hidden in the base of the image.

The Mark of the Beast

13:16 - *“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.”* Scripturally, a mark was given literally in the case of Cain by God Himself to preserve him from being killed by those who found him. This was because he had murdered Abel. Genesis 4:15 says, “And the LORD said unto [Cain], Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.”

Another mark was given at the time of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar in Ezekiel 9:4-6: “And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.”

The other account of God giving a mark is in the book of Revelation where a select 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel are sealed by a mark to protect them from the seven trumpet judgments (Rev. 7:3). Thus, in the desire of Satan to counterfeit the work of the Lord, he is requiring a mark to be placed upon all his devotees in order that they may buy and sell in the last days.

13:17 - *“And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”* The infamous mark is either a particular insignia, the name of the Beast, or the number of his name. With respect to the number of his name we are told:

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.”* Therefore, the Antichrist’s number will be a compilation of the letters of his name, which is common in the Greek and Hebrew alphabets.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SEVEN VISIONS OF LAST DAY EVENTS (14:1-20)

1. The Firstfruits (14:1-5)

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.”* In the first vision, John sees the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ—standing upon Heavenly Mount Zion. With Him are 144,000 saints who have the Father’s name written in their foreheads. These 144,000 are in contrast to those who bear the mark of the Beast. They have the Father’s name written in their foreheads.

This group of 144,000 is different from those in chapter 7. They must not be confused with each other. The group in chapter 7 is exclusively from the twelve tribes of Israel, whereas the group in this chapter are the redeemed from the earth. Also, one group is in heaven and the other is on earth. Significantly, there were 288 singers in the Tabernacle of David (1 Chron. 25:7). 288 divides into 2 groups of 144. This is a type of these two groups of 144,000 in the book of Revelation.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

14:2 - *“And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps” (NKJV).* This voice would appear to be that of the Lamb Himself, singing in the midst of His people. Psalm 22:22 says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” The Apostle Paul quotes Psalm 22:22 in Hebrews 2:12 as referring to Christ.

The thought of many waters also has the connotation of purity, and being linked with thunder, it also has a sense of awesomeness that befits the Majesty on High. This group is singing to the accompaniment of their harps, showing their adoration for the Lamb. David was called the sweet psalmist of Israel because of his odes of adulation and adoration to the Lord.

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.”* This group of the 144,000 redeemed from the earth are granted a new song. David was given a new song to sing after the Lord delivered him from a horrible pit. He said in Psalm 40:3: “And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it,

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” It is a song that this particular company of the redeemed alone can sing, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

14:4-5 - *“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. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”* These saints are reminiscent of the remnant of Israel, as depicted in Zephaniah 3:13: “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”

We are told they are sexually pure and have the privilege of following the Lamb wherever He goes. This is perhaps the greatest honor of all, to be continually in His lovely presence. In every sense, they are the firstfruits unto God. They are just like the Lord Himself, made in His lovely image and likeness. These are the “cream of the crop,” and they are granted privileges that other believers in heaven will not have. Therefore, there is clearly a difference among believers in heaven. Some are

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

closer to the Lord than others. Some are called *the least in the kingdom of heaven* and others are called *great in the kingdom of heaven* (Mt. 5:19). We must be pure in order to attain unto God's best.

The importance of sexual purity to the Lord is obviously shown by this scripture. There are, however, several confirming passages that we would like to quote here at this juncture. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour."

Added to this is the sixth beatitude in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." That is why King David cried out after his sin with Bathsheba in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Let us seek to live a holy life and pray that the Lord will create in us a clean heart.

THREE WARNINGS

In the next three visions, there are three warnings given.

2. The Everlasting Gospel (14:6-7)

14:6-7 - *“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, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”* One of the features of the last days, according to the Lord Himself is the universal preaching of the gospel, as recorded in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

From the book of Revelation and the other passages dealing with eschatology, it is very clear that the Lord is going to give everyone in these last days the opportunity to know the truth. The clear message is to repent and turn to the living God, which echoes the message of Psalm 2:10-12: “Be wise now

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” Repentance was the message of Christ during His earthly ministry, as seen in Matthew 4:17: “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” In visions that the Lord has most graciously given me, I have seen the last day revival. In these visions of revival, I saw whole nations reject the truth because of their love for unrighteousness.

3. Babylon is Fallen (14:8)

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.”* This is an ever-developing message, and it must be understood in the light of both Old Testament prophecy and the book of Revelation.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The origin of the city of Babylon is found in Genesis 10:8-10: “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter [against] the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter [against] the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.”

Babylon, situated on the banks of the Euphrates, was built by Nimrod, who is the arch-type of those who rebel against God. Along with his wife, Semiramis, and an illegitimate son Tammuz, Nimrod was the progenitor of all heathen worship. Also, it was at Babel that an attempt was made to build a tower that would reach to heaven. The inhabitants of Babel were seeking to make a name for themselves by force of arms.

Nimrod was later deified and known as the god of forces. We will devote more attention to Babylon as we study chapters 17 and 18, but suffice it to say that throughout her history Babylon has been the source of all heathen cults, and is therefore roundly condemned by the Lord. Thus in many Old Testament passages there are verses which declare the Lord’s judgments upon this city.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

4. Judgment Upon Those Who Worship the Beast (14:9-12)

14:9-12 - *“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 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: 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. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”*

The same awesome judgment pronounced upon the Beast is also pronounced upon those who follow him. This is consistent with the judgments of God throughout the Word of God. For example, those who supported the rebellious Korah and his companions suffered the same fate. “They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation ... But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD ... Now

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah” (Num. 16:33,41,49).

Relative to the judgment upon those who bear the mark of the Beast, we must note that it is eternal torment, never ending and perpetual. The Lord Jesus warned in Mark 9:44, 46, 48 of the fact that judgment is eternal without respite: “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” This is confirmed by the prophet Isaiah: “And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Isa. 66:24).

This judgment is to comfort the saints who keep the commandments of the Lord, assuring them that those who have persecuted them will end up in the lake of fire for ever and ever. It is to encourage the saints to endure, remain steadfast and loyal to the truth, and resist the Antichrist. The next oracle gives the promise of eternal reward for the overcomers.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

5. The Blessed Dead (14:13)

14:13 - “*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*” Though this is a favorite text for funeral orations, it applies especially to the time of the tribulation period. It is the second of the seven Beatitudes of the book of Revelation, and it contains some very important doctrinal truths.

First, only those who die *in the Lord* are blessed—not just those who die. How we die is so important. As it is written in Ecclesiastes 11:3, “And if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.” Second, there is only rest for the godly. The others have no rest day or night, as Isaiah 57:20 declares, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

Third, their works shall follow them. This is also mentioned by Paul in 1 Timothy 5:24-25: “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

What we have sown in this life will surely follow us into the hereafter—for the wicked, their sins; and for the righteous, their good works and the seed that they have sown in many hearts and lives.

Let us also govern our lives by Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy 6:18-19 to do good, be rich in good works, ready to give, and willing to share—for those who do are “storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life” (NKJV). This life is so fleeting. Let us major in good works, as well as a life of faith; for surely, faith without works is dead.

6. The Foreshadowing of the End Time Harvest - (14:14-16)

14:14-16 - *“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 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. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”* The Son of man is readily identified as none other than our precious Lord Jesus Christ, as we see from Daniel 7:13-14: “I saw in the night

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Thus we have the scene and event that Daniel depicts in Chapter 7.

Several other New Testament scriptures confirm that this is the Lord Himself. It is the harvest of the elect described in Matthew 24:30-31: “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.” Now there is another harvest. The harvest (or judgment) of the wicked follows, as we see in the next oracle, which completes the seven visions of chapter 14.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

7. The Harvest of the Wicked (14:17-20)

14:17-20 - *“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was [trampled outside] the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”*

The angel who comes out of the heavenly temple is the angel who harvests the wicked. There are some points that we should note here. First, the angel is commanded by another angel who has power over fire. If this angel is viewed together with the angel who has power over the waters, they give us an understanding of the fact that God has created angels with very specific ministries.

Those who have had their eyes opened at times by the Lord will know that there are angels who are responsible for very specific geographical locations. For example, at times when God has opened my

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

eyes, I have seen angels at busy intersections controlling traffic. (This subject is treated in more detail in our book on *Angelology*.)

Second, the statement is made that the grapes are *fully ripe*. This is easily understood from nature. Fruit must be ripe before it can be harvested. This truth is repeated throughout the Word of God. There is an appointed time for judgment and rewards, and that time depends upon those involved coming to spiritual fruition (for good or for evil). Another example of this is found in Genesis 15:16: “But in the fourth generation they [the seed of Abraham] shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is not yet full*.” This judgment upon the Amorites was apparently accomplished by Joshua, who broke their power when he destroyed their five kings in the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 10:1-43).

The great winepress of God’s wrath which was trampled outside the city has reference to Isaiah 63:1-4: “Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?; I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger,

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My [redemption] has come” (NKJV).

This is speaking of the Second Coming of the Lord when He will defeat His enemies. Also, it has reference to Joel 3:12-13: “Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!” (NIV).

Thus, to summarize these last two oracles concerning the reaping of the just and the wicked, it appears that the reaping of the just occurs first, and the wicked are left to endure the last vials of His anger. The fact that some are taken and others are left is proven by the Lord’s own words in Matthew 24:40-41: “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” This applies to the first reaping. This is implied in the subsequent parable concerning the faithful and unfaithful servants in Matthew 24:42-

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

51, in which there is a strong admonition to be ready at His coming, for then He will divide the wicked from the just.

Revelation 14:20 says in the NIV, "They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia." The length of the blood bath of the wicked is given as approximately two hundred miles (1,600 stadia), which is the length of the east border of Israel. It will take place toward the east of the city of Jerusalem in the valley of Jehoshaphat and upon the mountains of Judea.

Therefore, these seven oracles give us the chronological sequence of the happenings which are substantiated, as we will see, a little later in the following chapters. Reference will be made to these visions when more detailed accounts are given of the events alluded to in them.

THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES (15:1 - 16:21)

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 subsequent accounts deal with the pouring forth of these seven vials (or bowls) which the angels are given by one of the four living creatures. These vial judgments constitute the third and final expressions of the outpouring of God's wrath upon mankind. Although the vial judgments have a certain similarity to the seals, they are not the same. Rather, they are an ever-increasing amplification of the wrath of God being poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth, which began as the seals were opened.

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.”* We have a glimpse of a heavenly scene where we are shown those who have the victory over the Beast. The sea of glass mingled with fire relates to the fact that they have come through the trial of their faith, which has been tried by fire. They have resisted the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Antichrist and loved not their lives unto death. Therefore, they are rewarded with the privilege of standing upon the sea of glass, praising the Lord who preserved them by His power.

15:3-4 - *“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. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”* The song of Moses is found in Exodus 15:1-21, albeit another is recorded in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. However, the song in Exodus harmonizes more with the Song of the Lamb and is generally accepted as that which was taught throughout the centuries at an early age to the pious Jew. It was sung in the Early Church, and parts of it have been put to music in our days. The two songs flow together.

One of the central themes of both songs is the glorious triumph of the Lord over all His foes. It is the Lord's judgments that will cause all nations to come and worship Him. This will occur during the millennial reign after the Lord returns.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The time period is very important because prior to this there is the rebellion spoken of in Psalms 2:2-3, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” Also, Joel 3:2 speaks of the nations coming against Jerusalem in the last days: “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”

15:5-6 - *“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.”*

Throughout the book of Revelation we see that certain parts of the temple of God in heaven are mentioned in relationship to subsequent events that take place on earth. There is a profound reason for this. In particular, the seven angels with the last plagues come out of the tabernacle of the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

testimony, which is the Holy of Holies. It is here that the two tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments are located.

It is significant that these angels come from the Holy of Holies because the inhabitants of earth are being punished for not keeping the Ten Commandments (cf. Isa. 24:5-6).

We, in turn, must ask the Lord to engrave these commandments upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. In writing this particular portion, I was made aware again of the absolute necessity of this personal experience in our lives, that we may be spared from these judgments, and above all, have a right to enter the heavenly temple of God.

It is emphasized that the seven angels are clothed in pure, white linen, which speaks of righteousness. It is the pure alone who will be found worthy to pour forth the wrath of God upon the disobedient inhabitants of earth. Their golden girdles symbolize their kingly and priestly functions. The noble and sacred nature of their office is illustrated in Daniel 10:5: "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man [an angel] clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz."

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

15:7 - *“And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.”* It is noteworthy that the living creatures who were responsible for the revelation of the seven seals to John are also involved in giving the seven vials filled with the wrath of God to the seven angels. These four living creatures are filled with the awesome holiness of God and also have a manifestation of the Gospel message intrinsic in their very nature. They were the ones chosen to be instrumental in this end-time judgment which is the Divine punishment for violating the commandments of God and for offending the very essence of His divine nature, which is holiness.

The fact that God is mentioned as living for ever and ever has significance in the context of these judgments, since they are primarily directed toward those who follow the Beast. The Beast will claim to be God, but he is only a man who will perish and come to naught.

15:8 - *“And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.”*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

In this instance, we see the manifestation of the power and glory of God. He is preparing to move against the one who has risen up of old against His supreme power and wisdom. Therefore, no man shall now be able to enter the temple of God until these plagues are fulfilled.

It is almost as though God is arising in His majesty to show that He alone is supreme. Man, the object of His creative powers and wisdom, will be shown one more time the greatness and majesty of God. This is so that we, as members of Adam's race, might know that "power belongs to God alone." Psalm 62:11 says, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." This is a lesson that the Lord wishes to engrave indelibly upon our hearts forever.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Pouring Out of the Seven Vials

16:1 - *"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."* The commandment to pour out the vials is now given by a great voice from out of the temple that could well be the voice of the Lord Himself. If it is by

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

an angel, certainly it is by the Lord's express command, as all things in heaven above and earth below are clearly directed by the Majesty on high.

Surely, this is the counterpart to what Isaiah heard: "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompense to his enemies" (Isa. 66:6).

THE SEVEN VIALS

The First Vial

16:2 - *"And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore [foul and loathsome sore] upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image."* This is a selective judgment upon those who have received the mark of the Beast. The third angel of the seven oracles in chapter 14 spoke a note of warning to those who were upon earth, detailing the eternal judgment of those who would accept the mark of the Beast. Observe here that judgment begins upon earth for those damned and wretched souls.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Second Vial

16:3 - *“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea [or every living thing that was in the sea died.]”* The sea is smitten by being turned into blood, and every living soul suffers because of it.

The Third Vial

16:4 - *“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.”* Now the rivers and fountains of waters become as blood. This certainly is similar to the judgment that Moses caused to come upon Egypt and apparently upon Israel during the time of his second ministry with Elijah in the last days, as enunciated in chapter 11. God is, however, eulogized because of these judgments.

16:5-6 - *“And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.”* It is clear from these and many other

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

scriptures, such as Revelation 13:7, that the Antichrist will kill many of the saints. There will be wholesale martyrdom of many of the elect.

Thus, those who have perpetrated these martyrdoms will be judged, not only in the afterlife, but also while still here upon earth. They caused the blood of the martyrs of Jesus to flow. Therefore, they will drink blood as a just retribution for their blasphemous cruelty. Another angel echoes the just judgments of God in this respect.

16:7 - *“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”* The Lord’s judgments are righteous. They have shed blood—blood, therefore, shall they drink. This is the manifestation of the statement made by the Apostle Paul, “We reap what we sow” (cf. Gal. 6:7).

The Fourth Vial

16:8-9 - *“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God,*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.” This is a foretaste of the eternal judgment that awaits them in the lake of fire. Those writers, such as John Bunyan who have seen the state of the damned in the lake of fire, tell us that it is as though waves constantly spew up the souls of the damned whose voices of moaning can be heard crying out, “Water, water, water.”

Such was the case of the rich man in the account given by the Lord Himself in Luke 16:23-26: “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.” In hell, of course, the rich man would very much like to have repented and been given another opportunity. But here on earth, in the time of the last judgments, when repentance

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

is still possible, those afflicted with the precursor of eternal torment choose to curse the Lord instead of pleading for His clemency.

It is clear that even at this late moment in the dispensation of time, repentance is still possible for the sons of Adam's race, except for those with the mark of the Beast. There is another truth worthy of note here. There is no question at this time that the inhabitants upon earth know that these plagues come from God. Seemingly, there is universal recognition that Satan and the Beast do not have the power to prevent these calamities from coming upon their adherents. At this point, there is no question that God is all powerful, not the ones who claim to be God. So even when there is no more deception and the truth is plainly known, still the afflicted choose not to give glory to the one and only true God.

The Fifth Vial

16:10-11 - *“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.” Darkness is now poured out. Now comes selective judgment upon the capital city of the Beast, which would be the rebuilt city of ancient Babylon. The False Church is Rome, but the Antichrist would also have his seat in Jerusalem at this time (see 2 Thess. 2:4). His kingdom is plunged into darkness reminiscent of the ninth plague in Egypt as found in Exodus 10:21-29. It is specifically stated that the kingdom of the Beast is engulfed in darkness.

This indicates that the Beast only reigns over a selective section of the earth, namely the restored Roman Empire of the ten kingdoms (a point that will be enlarged upon in the next chapter). It is evident that men are still feeling the effects of the first plague because of their pain and their sores. Yet in spite of this awesome affliction, they still refuse to repent, even when they can perceive that all is lost.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Sixth Vial

16:12-14 - *“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 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. 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.”* Though the judgments of the Lord have been falling in ever increasing severity, still the work of the evil ones continue. Deception raises its ugly head again with the release of three spirits to call the kings of the east to the great battle of Armageddon.

The Euphrates will dry up again, reminiscent of the account in Isaiah 44:27, when the prophet foretold of the drying up of the Euphrates River at the time of the taking of old Babylon in the reign of Belshazzar by Cyrus, king of Persia. The Euphrates is the natural fortification that impedes the progress of invading armies from the east who wish to descend upon, not only the modern day land of Iraq, but the whole of the Middle East, including the pleasant land of Israel.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The three spirits from out of the mouths of the unholy trinity are given power to work miracles, to go forth to the kings of the whole earth, and to bring them to Armageddon. Armageddon is the last great battle which has been predetermined by God that He may destroy His adversaries once and for all. Verse 16 clearly states that it is God who gathers them all to Armageddon. How sovereign is our God! His will is always performed, whether by the unholy trinity, the unclean spirits, or the kings of the world. In the end, all will simply fulfill His holy will and come to the last great battle, which is called “the great day of God Almighty.” The wicked will be induced to come. And yet, they will think that the idea originated with them. Romans 11:33 says, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

The Third Beatitude of Revelation

16:15 - *“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”* Now interspersed in this account is the third beatitude. The warning of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus is about to take place at this point in the events of time. This warning and admonition is re-echoing our Lord’s own explicit teachings in Matthew 24:42-

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

44: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

This same warning was repeated by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:2: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

Thus, even at this late hour in the history of events, many are still going to be caught off guard. These are the elect, because obviously the wicked have already made their decision to follow the Beast and to take his mark. We must further conclude that many of the elect are not martyred by the unholy trinity, or this warning would be superfluous.

The Last Battle



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Battle of Armageddon

16:16 - *“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”* The Greek word *Armageddon* is a transliteration of the Hebrew word “har megiddo,” which literally means “the mountain of Megiddo.” Armageddon (the mountain of Megiddo) is located in the plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel, which is about fifty-five miles from Jerusalem as the crow flies. This valley is about fourteen by twenty miles in size. It is located near the city of Megiddo. King Josiah died here in battle with Pharaoh-necho (2 Kgs. 23:29-30). It will be here that Christ defeats the Antichrist in battle.

The Seventh Vial

16:17-21 - *“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.”

The seventh vial is accompanied by a great voice out of the temple indicating that the judgments of God are at an end with respect to those rained upon earth from heaven above. The great earthquake which causes the city of Babylon to be divided into three parts is distinct from the earthquake associated with the second woe of the sixth trumpet judgment mentioned in Chapter 11:13, which struck the city of Jerusalem bringing repentance upon the occupants. This earthquake strikes at the very heart of the empire of the Beast—his capital city. The text suggests that the earthquake will demolish other cities as well.

Thus, we see that when Babylon falls (being the dominant one), others will be brought down as well. The day of Babylon’s judgment, therefore, is at hand. *Islands and mountains disappearing* could signify a great geological upheaval as this vial is poured forth. And with respect to men, God uses (as He has done in past dispensations) a very heavy hail to destroy the wicked, as He did in the time of

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Joshua: “And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword” (Josh. 10:11).

Also, Ezekiel clearly prophesies of a great hail in the last days, as well as mountains being thrown down in Ezekiel 38:18-22: “And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man’s sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.” Thus, it would appear that Ezekiel was declaring the outpouring of the seventh vial with particular respect to Gog and Magog, which are places in modern day Turkey.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT WHORE (17:1-18; 19:1-5)

17:1 - *“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.”* There are two women throughout the Word of God who portray:

1. The true Church or Israel (the good woman)
2. The false church or Babylon (the strange woman)

A woman in the Word of God signifies:

1. The epitome of goodness—the good woman
2. The epitome of evil—the strange woman

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Thus, here a woman will be used to represent the false church (or, as it is called, the false religious system, mystery Babylon). One of the seven angels (who pour out the last seven plagues upon the earth) shows the Apostle John the judgment of the great whore. This same angel is used to show John the Lamb's wife. Thus we see the two women at the end of time in all their glory—the whore in all her filthiness and the Lamb's wife in all her purity.

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.”* This woman who sits upon many waters signifies, in one sense, a geographical place. Ancient Babylon was situated literally upon the waters of the Euphrates, which flows out into the Persian Gulf, while ancient and modern Rome are situated upon the Tiber.

The emphasis upon the fact that the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her relates to the fact that all heathen religions were and are steeped in immorality of the most debasing kind. This certainly was true of ancient Rome, which was fittingly spoken of as “the glory of the Empire and the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

sewer of the nations.” However, there is the sense not only of physical immorality, but spiritual debasement too. This now needs to be addressed in some detail.

17:3-6 - *“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 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: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 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 [amazement].”*

The woman, called mystery Babylon, is the false religious system that had its origin in the city built by Nimrod, the one who rebelled against God. It was called by its founder “bab- El,” meaning *gate of God*. Because of the desire to build a tower to gather rebels, it was smitten by God and became known as “Babel,” which simply means *confusion*.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The wife of Nimrod, Semiramis, and her illegitimate son, Tammuz, introduced the concept of the worship of the mother and child. The image of the queen of heaven with the child is at the root of many heathen religions. Also, there are mysteries that involve priestly absolutions, cakes offered to the queen of heaven, and purgatorial purifications.

Therefore, although Babylon had long since been destroyed, the mysteries of those rites had been preserved through the High Priest who had fled with his followers to Pergamos. Later, they went to Italy, and eventually Rome became the headquarters of these mysteries. The High Priest wore a mitre upon which was engraved the name *Pontifex Maximus*, meaning “bridge builder.” The High Priest claimed to be the bridge between God and man. This title was appropriated by Julius Caesar, and later, Constantine became both the head of the church and the bearer of the title of the High Priest of these Babylonian mysteries. Then the title became the right of the popes, which they hold to this present time.

It is not the purpose of this book to enlarge upon the similarity of the Roman Catholic church and other religious systems with ancient Babylon; this has been eloquently accomplished by the late Rev.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Alexander Hislop in his book entitled *The Two Babylons*. Our purpose is simply to identify from Scripture the woman whom John saw as mystery Babylon. We believe this will be very clear as we continue to examine the succeeding verses in this chapter.

History does serve to teach us many lessons, as well as give us understanding of the future. History is not haphazard. It is guided and directed by an all wise God who is masterminding His redemptive plans, not only for individuals, but also for the nations of the earth.

17:7 - *“And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.”* Thus, the angel intends to make the identity, not only of the woman but also of the Beast who supports the woman, very clear. He now concentrates on the clues to the identity of the Beast.

17:8 - *“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”* First, we are told that the Beast *was*, which means that the Beast lived prior to the writing of the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

book of Revelation. We are then told that the Beast *is not*, meaning that he was not alive at the time of John.

The Beast will ascend out of the bottomless pit. He is the counterfeit Christ. But whereas Christ was, is and is to come (descending from heaven), the Beast was, is not, and ascends from the pit. The Beast will, therefore, be clearly identifiable for Christians but will completely deceive those whose names were not written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world. No one has ever returned from the dead; therefore, all the world will be enamored with the Beast and serve him. Now the angel returns to the identification of the woman.

17:9 - *“And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains [or seven hills], on which the woman sitteth.”* We are told in verse 18 that the woman is a city. What is the city that was known as the city that is built upon seven hills? Roman poets and writers have always alluded to Rome as the city built upon seven hills on the east bank of the Tiber. We must also remember that this was written at the time of the Apostle John when the Roman Empire held sway. That was the common name of the capital city in Latin, *urbis septis colis*, or *the city of the seven hills*.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Identifying the woman, mystery Babylon as Rome, the Scriptures then state that she has drunk the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus (17:6). It is helpful at this point to give illustrations that support these allegations.

We select a period known infamously as The Slaughter of the Innocents or The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre on August 24, 1572. The Queen Mother of France, Catherine de Médicis and her son Charles IX signed a treaty with the Huguenots, the French Protestants, granting them religious freedom. Having lured them and their leader, Prince de Conde, into a false sense of security, they slew them. Thousands of Protestants were martyred. Pope Pius V celebrated this event in Rome by striking a medal. His successor, Pope Clement VIII, called the later toleration of the Protestants a cursed thing. Let us beware, dear ones, mystery Babylon will show her true colors again in these last days. The blood of the saints will again flow.

There are, of course, many types of the Antichrist in history. I wish to mention just one at this juncture, namely Adolf Hitler, to illustrate how careful the Church must be at this time in the events of this world. Adolf Hitler persecuted the Jews and was responsible for the annihilation of,

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

conservatively, some six million of them. We know, also, that he terrorized those who opposed him and his regime by placing even his own people in concentration camps. These facts alone, which were well-known not only abroad but also in Germany, should be sufficient to identify him as a monster.

However, because he also virtually eliminated unemployment, brought the country back into a sound economic position, and furthermore instituted a system of law and order that ended all kinds of overt criminal activities that had plagued the country, many of the church pastors and leaders hailed him as their Messiah. They became brown-shirted followers of the Nazis, whose symbol was the crooked cross.

When the Antichrist appears, I fear that many church pastors and leaders will likewise follow him because they have not fixed their sights upon Christ and Christ alone, nor have they made the Word of God their daily staple food. Ignorant of the Word, they will cry out with the crowds, "Peace, peace, peace" and blindly and willingly follow the Beast. There was evidence enough to show that Adolf

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Hitler and his Third Reich or kingdom was diabolical, but they chose to follow him for the loaves and fishes. May we, beloved, take earnest heed.

17:10-11 - *“And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.”* Now, by the grace of God, we must seek to unravel the mystery of the seven kings. They are the seven heads of the Beast, but also of Satan himself. This passage suggests that it concerns those who have ruled at the instigation of or have been energized by Satan. The solution must be found in Scripture.

The Beast is only one of the seven heads (he is of the seven but he is the eighth). Therefore, he represents a king who lived prior to the giving of the book of Revelation (that is, prior to the late first century A.D.), but is now dead. The Antichrist, therefore, is from one of the five kingdoms before Rome.

Satan, however, energizes all seven. Let us examine Scripture to see where Satan, the devil or the dragon, is associated with kings or kingdoms. Clearly, in Ezekiel 29:2-3: “Son of man, set thy face

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.” Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is identified with the dragon. This is not the Pharaoh of the Exodus, but another Pharaoh. Thus we would say that Satan not only energizes this one Pharaoh, but in actuality the whole kingdom of Egypt.

We also read in Jeremiah 51:34, “Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a *dragon*, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.” From this verse the king of Babylon is identified also as the dragon, meaning that he was energized by Satan.

The Beast is likened to an hybrid animal with the feet of a bear, which represents Persia, and a lion which represents Babylon, as well as a body which represents Greece. Therefore, it would not be amiss to state that these seven heads represent the nations (and their kings) that have afflicted

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Israel—namely Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome (the present kingdom in the time of John). Rome is the sixth kingdom.

Therefore, the one kingdom that must come would be the kingdom (singular) of the ten kings. They will be ten united nations in the confines of the Old Roman Empire. The Beast will be the eighth king, or the eleventh horn (Dan. 7:8,11,20,21). He is from one of the five fallen kingdoms. The Beast cannot be from Egypt because he is called the King of the North (Dan. 11:40). Egypt, which is south of Israel, is called the King of the South.

The Antichrist is the eighth king. He is a king who lived during the time of the first five kingdoms. He is the eleventh horn who arises *after* the ten kings (the seventh kingdom).

17:12 - *“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as*

The Seven Kings (Kingdoms):

1. Egypt
2. Assyria
3. Babylon
4. Medo-Persia
5. Greece
6. Rome
7. 10 Kings - Resurrected Roman Empire

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.” These ten kings are readily identified through Daniel 7:23-24: “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. 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.”

The Beast comes after the ten kings arise. These ten kings flow out from the fourth kingdom of Daniel’s vision. The vision Daniel received of four kingdoms begins with Babylon (the third kingdom to rule over Israel). Thus in Daniel’s vision the Roman Empire is the fourth kingdom, but historically it is the sixth kingdom that ruled over Israel.

From within the confines of the Old Roman Empire these ten kings will arise. They are called a kingdom, meaning that they are very clearly joined and linked together—separate but united. They reign for *one hour*, or for a very brief time, and their power is derived from the Beast.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

17:13 - *“These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”* These ten kings will give themselves to the Beast, who in turn will subjugate or subdue three of these ten kings, presumably because they do not wholly follow him (see Dan. 7:24).

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.”* These ten kings within the confines of the Old Roman Empire will make war along with the Beast against the Lord at the battle of Armageddon. Those who descend from heaven with the Lamb are *called, chosen, and found faithful.*

Called

Being called is one of the foremost prerequisites of the ability to follow the Lamb. He Himself stated in John 6:44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” We cannot presume to enter into His presence, for as with any earthly monarch, no one can enter into the presence of royalty unless he is bidden.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

This is illustrated Biblically in the life of Esther, Queen of Persia. Although she was the wife of the reigning King Xerxes she dared not enter into her own husband's presence without being called first. Esther said, "All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days" (4:11).

Chosen

Christ declared in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen." Therefore, many in this life are given the opportunity, but how few pass the tests, for we are chosen in times of testing and affliction. Isaiah 48:10 says, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." As with life in general, it is one thing to be called to a position, job, post, or to take up an appointment, but it is quite another thing to be

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

retained in that place. One must prove, after getting an opportunity in a job, that one is able to do it. If we prove ourselves, then we are chosen to keep that position.

Virtually everything in life is conditional upon being able to do the work for which one has been called, invited, or given an opportunity to prove oneself capable. Thus, it is in the kingdom of heaven. Many are given the opportunity to be saved, but how few continue in the way of light. Not only is this true in the maintenance of one's spiritual level, but also of going on in the Lord. We need, by His grace, to go on to all that He has purposed for our lives. To be chosen requires long periods of trials, as Isaiah says, in the furnace of affliction. There are no easy paths to glory; and these trials are necessary to bring us to perfection, that we might be counted worthy to follow our blessed Lord wherever He goes. This brings us to our third qualification.

Faithful

Even when one has qualified for a post, the next question is this: Is one faithful in performing the duties associated with the position? In the Scriptures, we are told that two men in particular received

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the commendation of being faithful—Abraham and Moses. Abraham is actually called *faithful Abraham* (Gal. 3:9), and it was said of Moses that he was *faithful in all his house* (Heb. 3:2).

These three levels of being called, chosen, and found faithful correspond to the three categories of Christians of whom the Apostle John writes in I John 2:12-14—little children, young men, and fathers. Another analogy would be the three sections of the Tabernacle of Moses—the Outer Court, Holy Place, and Holy of Holies. The first group know that they are saved, the second category of Christians are becoming the Word made flesh, while the third are those who are having the laws of God written upon their hearts of flesh.

17:15 - *“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”* The angel now turns again to the woman, the whore—mystery Babylon. This reaffirms the fact already stated that mystery Babylon has influenced virtually all nations from the beginning of time. All have been contaminated with the mysteries of iniquities that have literally sent millions upon millions into a Christless hell because they trusted in her sorceries for their eternal redemption.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The saying of the Mass and the confessional stem from Babylonian rites. The appeal to and prayers to the queen of heaven have been in vain. Their adherents have been duped, and to their eternal chagrin, have fallen into the bottomless pit. How the wrath of God is reserved for her, with whom the nations committed fornication of every sort! But the Lord destroys her by His chosen evil powers. The very one in whom mystery Babylon trusts will be the one who will destroy her, as we see in the next verse.

17:16 - *“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.”* Others trusted in her, and she deceived them. Therefore, in the poetic justice of God, she will be destroyed by the allies of the Beast—the ten kings. History only serves to confirm this fact. In his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Church*, Malachi Martin enumerates occasions when Rome and the Vatican were plundered by Spanish, German, and Italian troops.

During the reign of Clement VIII in 1525, Malachi Martin tells how the only sounds that could be heard for ten days were the wailing of women, crying of children, and the screams of men being tortured.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

History, Holy Scripture assures us, will be repeated when the armies of the ten kings again invade Rome and destroy the whore and her followers. It is God who has purposed to destroy the whore, and has put within the hearts of the ten kings this desire to destroy Rome in order to fulfill His holy will.

17:17 - *“For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.”* It will be the very ones whom the whore relies upon for her power that will destroy her. All through the history of the Roman Church, she has played politics with the rulers of those kingdoms around her. They, in turn, have often seen her treachery and marched against her. So will it be in the last days. And now, who is this whore, this mystery Babylon? The last verse of chapter 17 makes it abundantly clear.

17:18 - *“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”* There can be no doubt about what is being said here. Only one city at the time of John *reigned* (present tense) over the whole earth, and that was Rome. It was that great city.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

And as verse 9 states so clearly, it was the city built upon the seven hills. Rome, and Rome alone, could fit that description. The woman, Mystery Babylon, is the Roman Catholic Church, centered in Rome.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Old Roman Empire



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE FALL OF BABYLON (18:1-24)

The destruction of modern-day Babylon, which is the ancient city in Iraq already in the process of being rebuilt, is now addressed, and a record is given of the multitude of her sins. The prophecy commences with the visitation of a great angel coming down from heaven. The account now switches from Mystery Babylon—Rome—to the literal city of Babylon. (See *Appendix* for more details on the difference between Mystery Babylon and the city of Babylon.) There is, however, in this chapter a certain flow still between the city of Babylon and the False Church. There could be dual fulfillments and dual applications of many of these verses.

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.”* As in examples of previous judgment scenes, those involved exude the highest degree of holiness and light. This angel, whose role is to announce the downfall of that wicked city, concludes a series of prophecies relative to this event which has extended virtually from the time of its founding by Nimrod, approximately four thousand years ago.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

When the rise of Neo-Babylon was prophesied by Isaiah, so was its ultimate destruction. This was repeated by the prophet Jeremiah. The city of Babylon will rise again in the last days only to be destroyed again, and spiritual Babylon (Rome) will fall as well. Many of the phrases used in this prophecy are repetitions of those found in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Let us now study the unfolding of events chronologically as given in this chapter.

18:2 - *“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold [or prison] of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and [hated] bird.”* This is in itself a quotation from several Scriptures. Isaiah 21:9 states, “And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.”

Also, Isaiah 13:19-22 says, “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.”

Therefore, we have the authority again to link the two Babylons—natural Babylon (the city in modern day Iraq) and spiritual Babylon (Rome). Now the angel begins the recitation of the evils of Babylon.

18:3 - *“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”* It is amazing how often fornication is mentioned in connection with Babylon. We must consider this from both a historical perspective and a modern day situation.

Historical Babylon was the center of heathen rites and religious systems. Associated with these practices were immorality and debauchery of the basest kinds. Actually, they are too terrible to be specified in a book of this nature.

And spiritual Babylon, the church of Rome, is also charged with fornication. No one who has undertaken even a precursory study of Church history can fail to realize that immorality has plagued

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the false church. Even some of the popes have been condemned for the most licentious conduct while actually holding that office.

The other condemnation is that they have lived lavishly. The merchants waxed rich because of the false church. This is understandable because of the luxuries in which they have indulged themselves. Their church buildings alone are literally treasure houses in many instances. In the following verse there is a truth that is of prime importance for our day and age.

18:4 - *“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”* This verse should be treated or interpreted in two ways. From a historical point of view, we know that before the children of Israel were actually in Babylonian captivity, the prophet Isaiah foresaw not only the captivity some one hundred years later, but also the reluctance of Israel to leave Babylon when the opportunity arose with Cyrus’ decree to rebuild the temple.

Therefore, he thunders out in Isaiah 52:2,11-12 with true prophetic urgency to those about to be forever engulfed in the world of paganism by their refusal to leave Babylon: “Shake thyself from the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion ... Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your [rear guard].”

As one studies the Restoration Period, it is remarkable that there were three separate groups who left Babylon for Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Yet the vast majority of the Jews elected to stay in Babylon. They presumably loved the security and comforts of Babylon. Thus history repeats itself. Many of the Lord’s people are in places today that are not moving on in God; these churches or fellowships have no progressive vision and no vision for revival. Yet so many Christians choose to remain there.

It reminds me of a vision I received in the 1960’s. The essence of the vision was of the Charismatic revival when nearly every denomination was visited by the Lord with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this vision, I saw the River Jordan at flood time overflowing its banks. For miles, the ground, which

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

was generally arid, became covered with water. But then I saw the waters recede, and many pools of water were left. Many people played in these puddles of water, but they later dried up.

The interpretation the Lord gave me was that revival was coming, but the Lord's purpose was for His people to come to the mainstream. If they continued to camp in their denominations that were not Pentecostal, then that which they had received would eventually disappear, and they would become spiritually dry again.

The Catholic church (through the good Pope John who opened the windows of his church to the Holy Spirit) saw congregations receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, the word of the Lord was: "Do not stay in your church and witness to those who are there. Get out and be where the rivers of living waters flow!" An analogy the Lord gave me was as follows: The Lord's people are like trees. Where a tree is planted determines how it will grow. A tree planted in the wilderness will be stunted, but a tree planted by the rivers of water will bring forth fruit in its season, "his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psa. 1:3).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Therefore, the Lord said to me, “Tell My people to go where the waters of life are flowing that they may bring forth fruit unto perfection.” So, dear ones, come out of Babylon and go to a congregation where the Holy Spirit is moving. Please do not be as those Jews who remained in Babylon when God was moving in Jerusalem. They stayed with the past and did not partake of the fresh move of God.

Also, to remain in modern day spiritual Babylon means to partake of her sins and judgments. God limits a day. In these last days, He will punish Babylon for all her past sins.

18:5 - *“For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”* It is important to understand the judgments of God. Let us review a few verses. Ecclesiastes 3:15 says, “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.”

The Lord Jesus Himself said exactly the same thing when addressing the sinful city of Jerusalem in His days in Matthew 23:34-36: “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.” Thus, He goes on to say that their house will be left unto them desolate, by reason of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Living in our days, and perhaps not being students of church history, we fail to recognize the terrible sinfulness of the Roman church through the centuries. It is literally saturated with the blood of martyrs. The inquisition instituted by Pope Innocent III in 1230 was responsible for the torturing and slaying of hundreds of thousands of Protestant believers. During the time of the Reformation, again there were wholesale murders of Evangelical saints. This will be repeated with vigor and cruel ferocity by them again when the Antichrist comes into his full power.

But God remembers the past. All those souls under the altar in Revelation 6:9-10, who were slain throughout all generations, must be avenged by a holy God. The Roman Empire was responsible for the slaying of the Head of the Church, our blessed Lord Jesus, through the office of their procurator Pontius Pilate. It continued with the ten specific persecutions under subsequent emperors. God has

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

not forgotten this, and judgment time has now arrived, with quotations from Jeremiah 50:15: “Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.”

The thought of double retribution is contained in God’s judgments upon Israel. The Lord raised up Babylon to judge Israel for their sins, as seen in Jeremiah 16:18: “And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin *double*; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things.” Spiritual Babylon will now inherit the same fate; they will now be judged.

18:6 - *“Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.”* This follows Jeremiah 50:29, “According to all that she hath done, do unto her.” Again, this is speaking of natural Babylon.

There now follows a condemnation of her life of luxury, so hated by the Almighty because of the pride and arrogance it reveals. The daughters of Zion were likewise condemned and punished in Isaiah 3:16-17: “Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore, the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.”

18:7 - *“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.”* This latter phrase is a quotation from Isaiah 47:8: “Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.”

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 Lord God who judgeth her.”* Such baseless self assurance will be rewarded by a three-fold judgment of death, mourning, and famine. This will fall upon her in one day. The witness of the judgment is in accordance with that which fell upon Babylon of old at the time of Belshazzar as recorded in Daniel 5:30: “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

18:9 - *“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.”* The ten kings will make a full end of her, while the other kings will mourn because of her. It is obvious from this scripture that Babylon will be totally consumed by fire, and the inferno will be so great (as we shall see in the following verse) that the kings of the earth will stand afar off.

18:10 - *“Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”* This has already been confirmed by the prophet in Isaiah 25:2: “For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.” Also, Isaiah 47:11 says, “Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.” Then comes the second of the dirges. The first was that of the kings of the earth, and now we hear that of the merchants, who have been made rich by the lust for riches of the false church.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

18:11-16 - *“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 thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. 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 merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!”*

The above passage is very similar in character to the lamentations pronounced over Tyre as recorded in Ezekiel 27. The prince of Tyre is a type also of Satan himself. It is worthy of note that the cause for the original fall of Lucifer is given in Ezekiel 28:14-17: “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth;

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.”

Twenty-eight items of merchandise are mentioned in these verses in connection with Babylon. The fires that consume Babylon will be a foretaste of the eternal torments of the lake of fire.

18:17-19 - *“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 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, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.”* The third

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

dirge is that of the mariners. The suddenness of the destruction is emphasized by the thought that is repeated three times—“in one hour is thy judgment come; thou art come to nought and made desolate.” Thus, as with Tyre, so it is with Babylon. The merchants and the sailors lament because their source of wealth has been destroyed by a blazing inferno.

18:20 - *“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.”* Then there is a commandment for the heavens to rejoice with the holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged them, pouring judgment upon those who took their lives.

18:21 - *“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”* That the overthrow of Babylon will be violent is demonstrated in this verse. In type, this was played out by the prophet in Jeremiah 51:60-64: “So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.”

When one studies this book carefully, it is amazing that nearly 10 percent of the book of Revelation is taken up with the condemnation and destruction of Babylon. From this we can understand the staggering monumental size of its sins that have engulfed virtually the population of the world in one form or another since the time of Nimrod. Then one starts to comprehend God’s holy hatred for Babylon and for all that it represents. It shall be destroyed with violence for it has perpetrated violence from its inception. Thus, the angel continues to reiterate the finality of its overthrow.

18:22-24 - *“And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.” The joy and rejoicing of Babylon are silenced for all times because of the multitude of her manifold wickednesses with which she has beguiled mankind.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Climax of the Judgment of the Whore

19:1-5 - *“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: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.”* This section is a continuation of chapter seventeen concerning the judgment of the great whore. The anger of God is

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

so great because both natural and spiritual Babylon have corrupted the face of God's handiwork upon earth. She has slain the prophets and the apostles, and now God is avenging their blood that she shed. The judgment is so great that the smoke of her torment will arise forever and ever. This is an eternal torment. Beloved, in His patience and longsuffering, God has limited a day. In God's appointed time, He will judge our enemies.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB (19:6-10)

As we have often said, there is the theme of two women that flows throughout the Word of God. One represents all that is good and pure, while the other is the strange woman, who leaves the paths of righteousness to go in the way of sin and becomes all that embodies evil. Thus did mystery Babylon begin her ways of evil as she left the ways of the righteous Noah and went into the secret paths of darkness, becoming the mistress that governs the false church. However, all heaven is now commanded to praise the Lord.

19:6-7 - *“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” What a contrast. Here is the fullness of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-11, the one in whom the heart of her husband does safely trust. Here is the wife of the Lamb of God.

As a wise bride, she has *made herself ready*. What does this mean? Basically it signifies that she is filled with the virtues of her Heavenly Bridegroom, the fruit of the Spirit. Like the woman of Proverbs, she is industrious and wise, looking well to her household, she is guarding her heart with all diligence, for she well knows that out of it flows the issues of life (Prov. 4:23).

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.”* We must never forget that we are what we are by the grace of God. Without His grace, we are nothing. It is by His divine favor alone that we have eternal life, salvation from hell, and the right to make our eternal abode in heaven’s glories.

Thus this verse opens with that thought of grace in that the Lamb’s wife was arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. Oh, that we realize, beloved, our need to be dependent upon the grace of God; for it is only by His grace that we can qualify to be among the company that constitutes His Bride.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

It is clear that we must be clothed upon with His righteousness and His purity, as the Apostle Paul states in Philippians 3:9: “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Our cry must always be, “Oh, God, create in me a clean heart.”

Now we are going to be introduced to a truth that has been found in several other scriptures in the Word of God and which now finds its fulfillment here.

19:9 - *“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”* The Lord Jesus Christ often referred to the Jewish wedding feast to demonstrate certain spiritual truths about His Second Coming. Therefore, it is important that we briefly review some of the salient points of the Jewish wedding customs before considering verse nine.

In patriarchal times it was considered the duty of the father of the bridegroom to secure a bride for his son. This is illustrated when Abraham told his servant Eliezer what kind of wife he should choose for

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

his son Isaac (Gen. 24:3-6). “To take a wife” was the normal Biblical expression, and the action was expressed in the ceremonial taking of the bride from her father’s house.

This generally occurred one year after the betrothal, which is equivalent to our engagement. This year was to enable the bridegroom to prepare a house for his bride as we see in the words of Christ in John 14:1-3: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Thus, after the house was ready, the father of the bridegroom would designate the time for the bridegroom to come and take his wife.

There are the companions or friends of the bridegroom who accompany him to the bride’s house. John the Baptist said in John 3:29, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” Likewise, the bride was accompanied by her maidens, called virgins, who composed the wedding party which the bridegroom took back to his own home.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The exact time of the bridegroom's coming was not known, as evidenced in Matthew 25:5-6: "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." The actual wedding was celebrated with a feast. Those attending the feast were the wedding party and the guests. For the guests, there were special garments.

Those without a garment were rejected, as the parable makes clear in Matthew 22:11-14: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

To summarize, that which we have been saying is this: in a wedding, there are basically the following groups:

1. The bridegroom
2. The bride
3. The friends or companions of the bridegroom
4. The companions, maidens, or virgins in the company of the bride
5. The wedding guests

Thus, when we come to the fifth beatitude of the book of Revelation, the blessed are those who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. These believers are not the Lamb's wife, but others who are privileged to be at the marriage supper. Many questions now are raised, such as: Who are the guests, and how do they differ from the bride herself?

The Song of Songs helps answer these questions. Solomon, typifying the bridegroom, says in Song of Songs 6:9, "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.” Here we see some of the heavenly groups—daughters, queens, and concubines. But above all is His dove, His undefiled. Having seen all these wonders, John then continues.

19:10 - *“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* One of the truths in this verse lies in the importance that is paid to prophecy. It is stated that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. In fact, basically the whole of the Word of God is bathed in prophecy. The Word is written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Himself.

Therefore, we see why Paul warns against the quenching of the Spirit in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20: “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.” How we need to heed also the admonition of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:1: “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Also seen in verse ten is the fact that the true angels refuse to accept worship, which belongs rightfully unto God alone. Yet the false angels seek deluded souls to worship them.

In the following verses we now see the Lord appearing after the marriage feast, a fact that is substantiated in Luke 12:35-37: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST - (19:11-21)

19:11 - *“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.”* The Lord Jesus is called *Faithful and True*. Isaiah 11:5 says of Christ, “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” Being called *faithful* even as Moses who was faithful in all his house suggests firmness, reliability, stability, and adherence to that task that has been entrusted to

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Him. This task is to completely fulfill the will of God for His life now and eternally. *True* means being filled with truth, for He is the Word incarnate. Included is also the sense of being genuine. Certainly none but He is truly genuine, meaning in one sense, a vessel purified from all dross or in which there is no mixture.

It is made clear now that He is going forth to make war against the enemies of truth and justice. He is riding upon a white horse. This in itself is a type of kingship and rulership, since in olden times, as with David, the judges, kings, and rulers rode upon white mules or donkeys. "In righteousness, He doth judge and make war." This last war, which is Armageddon, will judge the powers of the unholy trinity and defeat them.

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."* Those penetrating eyes as a flame of fire speak of the all-seeing eyes of Christ. His eyes are penetrating and before Him all is naked. Those many crowns speak of His victories. Certainly, one of these crowns would be the crown of righteousness which Paul speaks of in 2 Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

19:13 - “*And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*” The Lord’s garments are *dipped in blood*. The blood on His garments speaks of His blood-bought victory upon the cross, and also His victory over His enemies, whom He will slay when He comes again.

We read of His coming in Isaiah 63:1-6: “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the [winepress]? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my [redemption] is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.”

The Palestinian targum translates Genesis 49:11 this way: “How beautiful is the King Messiah! Binding His loins and going forth to war against his enemies. He will slay kings with princes and make the rivers red with the blood of their slain. His garments will be dipped in blood and He Himself with the juice of the winepress.”

The Lord of heaven and earth appears as the Word of God. Here we have a further picture of Christ, the Word of God Incarnate, whom John depicted in his Gospel. “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” (Jn. 1:14).

19:14 - *“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”* These are the elect, the redeemed. The Lord said in Matthew 24:31, “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 Revelation of Jesus Christ

It is interesting and important to note that wherever judgment is to be meted out, those unto whom the honor is accorded to mete out the judgment are always described as the epitome of purity. The authority of Christ lies in the fact also that He could say in John 14:30, “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” Christ lived a pure and separated life, and the devil had nothing in him, no power over Him. If we want to rule and reign with the Lord, we must be pure in heart as well.

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.”* This passage is analogous to Isaiah 11:4: “But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

Christ will rule with a rod of iron. This is mentioned prophetically in Psalm 2:9, as well as in Revelation 2:27. Certainly, when He returns, it will be in vengeance. Not only will He smite the nations with a rod of iron when He comes, which is ironic in that the last kingdom is of iron (the resurrected Roman

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Empire), but He will also rule with a rod of iron in the Millennium. There will be no deviation from the laws of God as there is today. Then God speaks of treading the winepress of His anger. This has already been mentioned in Isaiah 63:1-6 with respect to verse 13. Thus here in this verse there are three aspects of judgment mentioned. Namely:

1. The sword in His mouth
2. The rod in His hand
3. The tramping of the winepress by His feet (see also 14:19)

19:16 - *“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”* There will be no mistake whatsoever when the Lord comes as to His identity. The writing (a sign) on His clothing across His thigh will be seen by all as He rides upon His horse. This writing declares that He is the KING OF KINGS and THE LORD OF LORDS—the supreme ruler of the universe under God the Father.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Final Battle

19:17-21 - *“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 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. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”*

This supper, when the flesh of the slain are consumed by the birds of the air, is explained in more detail through the lips of the prophet in Ezekiel 39:17-20: “And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD.”

This judgment will take place upon the mountains of Israel. According to Isaiah 63, it will be upon the mountains of Edom as well. In Revelation 14:20, the judgment will be presumably to the east of the city of Jerusalem throughout the length of the nation, some two hundred miles. This will be the extent of the invading armies' territory that they already will have occupied.

The Antichrist and the kings of the earth will gather themselves to this battle, which is very similar to what Nimrod attempted in the construction of the tower of Babel. How impossible and futile it is to

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

fight God, yet the Beast and his cohorts are so deceived that they are attempting the ridiculous. The result is clear.

And stated by God about two thousand years before the event, the Beast and the false prophet are both cast alive into the lake of fire, as well as the deceived—all those who accepted the mark of the Beast. I cannot help but reminisce over the events that took place at the collapse of Nazi Germany when it was learned that Adolf Hitler had committed suicide. So many of the young elite of the nation committed suicide as well. Why? All their aspirations had been demolished because they were built upon a man who was a monster.

Therefore, I am certain that this will be the end of all those who follow the Beast when they find out that he has been cast into the lake of fire. They will be totally demoralized. What will be infinitely worse for them is that they will be doomed to the lake of fire, burning with brimstone, as we have seen in chapter 14:9-10. As we read in chapter 19:21, the remnant of the armies will be slain by the sword that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord Himself.

Part Four

THE MILLENNIUM - 20:1-15

In Part Four we are going to look at the Millennium. This is the thousand year period that starts immediately after Christ's Second Coming. The Jews will be restored to the land at this time, and Christ will reign from His throne in Jerusalem. David will be the prince of Israel (under Christ), and the overcoming saints of God who have qualified will rule and reign with their beloved Lord.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Judgment of Satan

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 a little season.”*

Again, we see that angels, who are the messengers of God and who execute His will, are used here for the purpose of binding Satan. It is important to note that it is the Lord Himself who has the keys of hell, as we read in Revelation 1:18: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” This angel is simply His emissary. Thus Satan is bound for one thousand years, because at the end of the millennial reign of Christ upon earth, he is needed to deceive the wicked nations again. We see, therefore, two very important truths here.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

First of all, there will be rebellion in the Millennium—a fact re-emphasized in Zechariah 14:16-19: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

Also, Satan is completely under the control of God. He is used by God for His eternal purposes. As soon as that purpose has been concluded, then Satan, as we see in verse 10, will be cast into the lake of fire with the Beast and the false prophet. Therefore, during the thousand year reign of Christ upon earth, there will be no demonic activity, but original sin will be there because of the Adamic nature inherent in mankind.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

20:4-6 - *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

The First Resurrection

There are two specific resurrections:

1. The resurrection which takes place at the Second Coming of Christ.
2. The general resurrection which takes place after the thousand year reign of Christ upon earth.

Not all Christians will participate in the first resurrection. This is only for the overcoming saints who will be resurrected and receive their glorified bodies to live and reign with the Lord during His

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

thousand year reign upon earth. This is made very clear in the Word of God. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:10-11: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the [out] resurrection [from among] the dead.”

Paul’s desire and goal was to qualify for the first resurrection spoken of in Revelation 20:5-6. This word “resurrection” Paul uses in Philippians 3:11 in the Greek is a compound word used only here meaning the *out-resurrection from among the dead*. This implies that only some of the dead are raised at this time, not all of them. Paul wanted to be in this special, select group of “called out ones from among the dead.” Obviously, if it could be automatically assumed that one will be resurrected at this time just because one is a believer, Paul would never have striven and longed to qualify to be in this group.

Thus only a select group of believers who are holy will be resurrected at this time. They will receive their glorified bodies and rule and reign with Christ during His millennial reign. They will be kings and priests and will teach the nations God’s statutes. The rest of the saved and unsaved will not be

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

resurrected until after the Lord's thousand year reign, when all shall appear before the Lord to give an account for their lives (Rev. 20:12-15).

The qualifications of the first resurrection may be briefly stated as follows:

1. Experiencing Philippians 3:10-11, which includes:
 - a.) Knowing God in an intimate way
 - b.) Knowing the power of His resurrection
 - c.) Knowing the fellowship of His sufferings
 - d.) Being made conformable to His death
2. Those who are beheaded for their witness, having refused the mark of the Beast, are included in the first resurrection.
3. Also included are those who are *blessed* and *holy*—meaning that they have been counted worthy by receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness as it says in Romans 5:17, and that they are holy in every sense of the word.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Last Great Battle

20:7-10 - *“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. 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. 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.”*

Satan will be released after a thousand years for a short season and go out to deceive Gog and Magog, which are (as Josephus tells us in his book *Antiquities of the Jews*) the grandchildren of Noah descended through Japheth who inhabited the area that the Greeks call Galatia. The Greeks call Magog's descendants the Scythians. Both of these are placed in what today would be the country of Turkey.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The prophet Ezekiel was eloquent against these two countries as we see in Ezekiel 39:2-7: “And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.”

Ezekiel 39:2-7 reveals that Gog and Magog will be some of the principal antagonists of Israel before the Second Coming. Then at the end of the Millennium, as seen in Revelation 20:7-10, they again will be deceived by Satan into coming against the beloved city, Jerusalem. Again, they will be destroyed,

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

this time eternally. As we have already mentioned, Satan will be confined to the lake of fire forever and ever after he has concluded his usefulness to God.

The Great White Throne Judgment

20:11-15 - *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

This will be the most awesome event in the annals of the history of mankind when everyone will stand before the throne of God. This is the moment when true justice will be meted out for everyone. The face of judgment is so austere that the earth and the heaven flee away from the One upon the throne.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

It will assist us to understand this truth if we consider some of the Scriptures that deal with our ultimate accountability and responsibility for our actions, words, and deeds that we have done in this life.

- 1 Corinthians 3:13: “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: “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. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”
- Galatians 6:7: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”
- Matthew 5:19-20: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

- Matthew 12:36-37: “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”
- Romans 2:5-13,16: “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

Therefore, a book is written in which all of our deeds and thoughts are recorded. We shall be judged accordingly. May God grant that we shall receive grace to live the rest of our lives in the light of the judgment seat of God, majoring in love and wisdom. The all important question is this: Is our name written in the Book of Life? If it is not, we will be cast into the lake of fire along with all the damned who are in hell. This is the second death.

Part Five

THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

21:1 - 22:21

21:1-3 - *“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. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

From this Scripture we see that the dispensation of this creation will pass away after the Millennium. And as the Lord says in verse 5, “Behold I make all things new.” The former things are passed away, as described 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 for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” (See also 2 Peter 3:12-14.)

We are introduced to the Heavenly Jerusalem adorned as a bride prepared for her husband. The purpose of the Heavenly Jerusalem is that it is a habitation for the Lord. It is the tabernacle or dwelling place of God, even as we are the temples of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16).

21:4-5 - *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 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.”* And again there is the assurance that the Lord will wipe away all of our

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

tears, which speaks of the former sorrows of this life, for all things are passed away and they shall not come into remembrance any more or come into our minds. This is one of the most gracious attributes of the Godhead—God forgets. And we, too, will be able to forget all the heartaches of this present dispensation.

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 water of life freely.”* One of the Lord’s titles is the Alpha and Omega, meaning that which He begins He will surely finish. Thus, we are privileged to contemplate, through the revelation communicated to John the Beloved, that which the Lord has purposed from before the foundation of the world.

1 Corinthians 15:24-26 says: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” We shall be able to drink of the fountain of life abundantly. And as He said Himself in John 10:10, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

21:7 - *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”* Now comes the promises to the overcomers. May we say at this juncture in our study that it is so important to realize that all the promises of God are uniquely to those who *overcome*. This is true with respect to the messages to the seven churches. Those promises, likewise, are only applicable to those who overcome. Therefore, by the grace of God, we must cry out for grace to get the victory over the flesh, the world, and the devil, and be like those in chapter 12:11 who loved not their lives unto death. The Lord says to the overcomers that He will be their God and they shall be His sons.

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.”* Now there is a list of eight categories of the wicked who will have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second death.

1. The fearful are those who judge God to be unworthy of their trust. They refuse to exercise faith, but lean upon the arm of flesh for their help. They are ashamed of Christ, and afraid of what family

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

and friends would think of them for being identified with Christ. The fearful shrink back from following Christ, especially in the last days when it could cost them economic loss and even their lives.

2. Unbelievers are those who doubt what God has said. They refuse to believe His promises and His Word. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” The unbelievers are those who even doubt the existence of God. As a result, they will perish.

3. The abominable are those who are unclean. This word is used of believers in Titus 1:16 who profess to know God but deny Him by their works, being contrary in their ways so that their works are not becoming to the life of a Christian.

4. Murderers are those who break the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” and as surprising as it may sound, those who commit the sin of abortion also commit murder and will not be permitted entrance into the kingdom of heaven unless they repent.

5. Whoremongers are those who habitually commit fornication and all kinds of sexual impurities like homosexuality and lesbianism. They will spend eternity in hell.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

- 6. Sorcerers** are those who practice and condone witchcraft in whatever form. (Jealousy and rebellion are as the sin of witchcraft because they lead to witchcraft—remember King Saul.)
- 7. Idolaters** are those who worship idols either tangible, in the form of other gods, or intangible (those who worship people and other objects of affection rather than God).
- 8. Liars** are those who do not love the truth and do not speak the truth, as Paul states in 2 Thessalonians 2:10: “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” A person in this category *loves* falsehood.

While one might summarily dismiss this group as being those who are non-Christian, we think a further study would tend to view this group as also being those who are in the Church and fall under the category described in Proverbs 5:12-14: “And [they will] say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Another passage that would support the contention that this is a solemn warning to Christians that are erring from the faith would be 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, where Paul says: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? *Be not deceived*: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” This is a warning to believers not to be deceived, as well as to the unredeemed. Let us walk in true liberty and not be entangled by the works of the flesh.

The Lamb’s Wife

21:9 - *“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”* It is of interest that the seven angels who are used by God to administer the last seven plagues have the privilege of revealing the two women—mystery Babylon, the false church, and the true Church, the Lamb’s wife (or Heavenly Jerusalem). Compare chapter 17:1 with 21:9. They show forth His judgments upon the just and the unjust so that all may fear and tremble.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

21:10 - *“And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”* This mountain is, of course, the Heavenly Mount Zion spoken of by Paul in Hebrews 12:22: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.” See also Revelation 14:1-5 for the apex of this mountain.

Zion is the hill of the Lord spoken of by David in Psalms 15:1, where he said, “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” Then the qualifications follow: those who walk uprightly, practice righteousness, and speak the truth in their hearts (Psa. 15:2-5). It is upon Mount Zion that the Heavenly Jerusalem is built, and it shall descend out of heaven to the new earth.

21:11 - *“Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”* The glory of God is manifested as a bright light, but also through the goodness of God. When Moses pleaded with the Lord to show him His glory, the Lord replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Ex.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

33:19). Thus the glory of God is also the manifestation of His goodness, grace, and mercy. And in one sense, the whole of creation and all the events thereof are simply and uniquely the expression of His goodness.

The jasper stone is of varied colors, but this particular variety is clear like crystal. It speaks of a stone without distortion through which the glory of God and His attributes are perfectly manifested. It is this purity of intent and motive that the Lord seeks to work out in our lives through many grindings and breakings (as Job 41:25 declares that “by reason of breakings they purify themselves”). These breakings of God purify us of all corruption of the flesh, the world, and the devil so that by His grace the Lord Jesus can more perfectly be seen in and through us.

The Wall and Gates of the City

21:12-14 - *“And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

In this very beautiful description of the Heavenly Jerusalem, we see that it is a composite of earthly Israel and the Church. Paul said in Ephesians 2:13-20: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”

The twelve tribes are those enumerated in chapter 7 and not the original tribes, since Dan has been excluded and replaced by Manasseh. Likewise, the foundations would not be the original twelve

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

apostles, because Judas lost his bishopric, as recorded in Psalm 109:8, and is replaced by Matthias, as recorded in Acts 1:20-26.

The arrangement of the gates, three on each side, is in accordance with the order of encampment in Numbers 2. May we simply state at this point that as the tribes went up, tribe by tribe, unto Jerusalem of old in Psalm 122:3-5, so too in the New Jerusalem the tribes will enter through their own gate.

Therefore, it would appear that all saints have their own spiritual tribes and enter in through their respective gate. For this reason, we believe that the Lord can show us our tribe according to His will. This revelation of our spiritual tribe will help us understand, by comparison with the prophecies that were given to the tribes by Jacob in Genesis 49 and Moses in Deuteronomy 33, something of the Lord's particular purpose for our own lives. Our spiritual tribe reveals our calling, promises and ministry.

The Measurements of the City and Wall

21:15-17 - *“And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.”

The measurements of the city and walls reveal the intent and ministry of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Being multiples of 12, which is the number of government, they reveal the destiny of the heavenly city, which is to co-rule with her heavenly Lord and husband throughout the ages to come. The city is foursquare, which indicates that it is a universal or complete rule. It is 12,000 furlongs. In our modern system of measurement, it would be 1,500 miles cubed. The base of a cube this size in the U.S.A. would stretch from the border of Canada to the border of Mexico and from the Pacific Coast to approximately Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. The city would be approximately half the size of the mainland of the U.S.A.

This serves to illustrate another truth—a believer could be in heaven and yet not be in the New Jerusalem. This is clear when we consider in verse 24 that there are nations who come to the New

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Jerusalem, yet are not part of it. Obviously, New Jerusalem will be in the center of the new earth, even as present day Jerusalem occupies that geographical position.

The Foundations of the Wall

21:18-20 - *“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 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, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.”* When my wife and I were in Africa, we had the privilege of being in the Rand Refinery to see the process by which gold comes from the mine. Gold that is 88 percent pure is said to be inferior in quality. It is then subjected to the extreme temperature of 1100 degrees centigrade to bring it to a 99.996 percent degree of purity. (Incidentally, the last alloy to be purified from gold is silver).

In spiritual matters, it is the Lord who sits as the refiner. We read in Malachi 3:2-3: “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire,

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness." The Lord will have a spotless Bride. He will "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). The Holy City is like glass, without distortion, that perfectly reflects the image of her Heavenly Bridegroom.

The Twelve Foundations

These twelve foundation stones represent the twelve Apostles (see v. 14) and are therefore different from the stones mentioned in the breastplate of the High Priest, which represent the twelve tribes of Israel. No instructions are given concerning the order of the apostles to enable us to match the stones with the appropriate apostle and therefore, we will be content to be silent where Scripture does not address an issue.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Twelve Gates

21:21 - *“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”* The pearl is a symbol of suffering because it is produced at great cost by the oyster, the cost of extreme irritation. Some time ago, my wife and I were in a university town church. After the service, students from the university gathered around us asking questions. One question asked was, “Why do some oysters produce pearls and others do not?” The answer I gave was something like this: “Some oysters do not pick up foreign matter, which becomes the nuclei around which the oyster secretes, while others do.”

This answer, however, was not sufficient for the students. The next question followed, “Why do some oysters pick up foreign particles and others do not?” And I said, “I don’t know!” It was late at night, but an enterprising student suggested we phone the marine biologist professor, and he most graciously provided the answer. When oysters move and seek to go on, they stir up foreign matter which then penetrates the mantle of the oyster. The oyster that reclines at the bottom of the sea or stream rarely

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

stirs up the foreign matter. Thus the oyster who wants to go on is the one which will produce the pearl.

So, too, is it with Christians. Those who wish to stay at one level or another rarely have hardships or sufferings. But those who seek ever to go on in their spiritual walk and who desire to be made more conformable to the Lord are the ones who experience the fellowship of His sufferings. They are those, of whom Paul speaks, that “through much tribulation and many hardships enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). They are those who are qualifying to be among that company called the Bride of Christ.

It is conditional—if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:17). “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1:29). “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12). “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Therefore, may we conclude that the pearly gates of the holy city are opened to those who have been partakers of the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10). He is the suffering Savior; therefore, His Bride must partake of those selfsame sufferings.

"The street of the city was pure gold." Gold speaks of divinity, and it speaks of the Bride's being a partaker of that divine nature that her Heavenly Bridegroom emanates. 2 Peter 1:4 says, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Our nature must be purified from all alloys of the flesh, the world, and the devil. This can only be accomplished by the fiery trials of our faith. Peter also said, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

21:22 - *"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."* Whereas we are distinctly informed that there is a temple now in heaven (chapter 15:5,8), in the new

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

heavens and new earth there is no need of this temple. The reason is that the saints of the Heavenly Jerusalem are so purified that the Lord can dwell with them without the intermediary of a temple.

Thus at this juncture in the annals of time the Lord has consummated His most fervent desire, expressed in Exodus 25:8: “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” It has ever been the Lord’s desire to dwell directly and intimately with man. Because of His inherent holiness and our innate sinfulness, His wish cannot be fulfilled entirely until the time of the new heavens and the new earth.

21:23 - *“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”* Neither the sun or the moon are now necessary because the Lord’s glory can be directly manifested and supported by man.

Up until this point, we have been limited by our own sinful nature, as have even the holiest of the saints while upon this earth and in this tabernacle of flesh, as described in Daniel 10:5-9: “Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.”

The Nations of the New Earth

21:24-26 - *“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 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 honour of the nations into it.”* Often unnoticed in the study of eschatology and the judgments of the last days is the Lord’s statement in Matthew 25:31-33: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” Therefore, those on His right-hand side will inherit the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

But then He said in Matthew 25:41,46: “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ... And they shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

We can discern which nations will be acknowledged in the new earth by the way they treat those who are in distress. We should seek to influence our governments to be mindful of this awesome truth and enact legislation to help the needy. Now again we have an awesome warning concerning the fate of the wicked.

21:27 - *“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* A truth that is repeated throughout Holy Scriptures is that the end of the wicked is to be denied access to the blissfulness and blessedness of the redeemed. Also, we must ensure that our names are written in

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the Lamb's Book of Life and that they are not blotted out through our neglecting the Lord's salvation. Remember, only those who endure to the end will be saved.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Pure River of Water of Life

22:1-2 - *“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”* This is likened to the waters flowing from the millennial Temple recorded in Ezekiel 47 which will bring life and healing to those in the reign of Christ upon earth, immediately after His Second Coming.

In the new earth, this water of life flows from the very throne of God. There is a principal street in the city of New Jerusalem that is on either side of this river. These trees of life, growing along the side of the river, bare twelve manner of fruits, one for each month. Therefore, we know that time will be measured in the same way it is now with monthly cycles. Each month will have its own particular fruit

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

and the leaves of the trees will be for the healing of the nations. Thus there will be natural healing for whatever may ail one during this eternity of bliss in the new earth.

22:3-5 - *“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: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”*

In the new earth, the curse that was placed upon the creation because of Adam's sin will finally be removed. In the new earth, there will be no curse because of the refined nature of its inhabitants. The servants of God will be able to look upon Him; therefore, because of this they will be like Him (1 Jn. 3:2). And His name will be in their foreheads because they will be only doing His will.

There will be no night in the new earth because there will be no evil. Night is synonymous with evil (cf. 1 Thess. 5:5-7). The Lord God will be their light. Like their Lord, they will neither slumber nor sleep (Psa. 121:4). Also, His servants shall reign as kings and priests for ever and ever. The whole

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

purpose of creation was to produce such servants who love and adore Him and desire simply to contemplate their precious Lord and become more and more like Him.

22:6 - *“And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”* This statement is a reaffirmation of chapter 1:1 that the Lord sent His own personal angel to John to show him the things that were going to come to pass throughout the remaining generations and dispensations of the purposes of God for mankind, culminating in the blessedness of the new heaven and the new earth.

This was certainly that for which the apostles were hungering and thirsting. 2 Peter 3:13-14 says: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Sixth Beatitude

22:7 - *“Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”*

And again, the hope is pronounced of the soon return of our blessed Lord. But how important it is to keep the sayings and admonitions of this book! This is a warning that is repeated again and again in the next few verses.

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 showed me these things.”* Overcome by the ecstasy of these revelations, John prostrates himself again as he did in chapter 19:10 at the feet of the Lord’s messenger. But the messenger of the Lord replies in the next verse:

22:9 - *“Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”* All true angels will not accept worship; they deflect all praise and worship to the Lord who alone is worthy. It is significant that this angel goes on to mention the fact of keeping the sayings of this book. Then we see a directive that contrasts this book with its sister book in the Old Testament—Daniel.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

22:10 - *“And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.”* The book of Revelation has been relevant from the beginning of the Church Age until now. The reason for this is that there are messages of comfort for those from the early church era throughout the whole of this dispensation for those undergoing persecutions and trials.

The book of Daniel, however, terminated with a directive from an angel in Daniel 12:4: “But 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.” The book of Daniel was sealed in Daniel’s time, but now, however, it is being opened by the Holy Spirit, for its message is particularly relevant for the Church in these last days. Now we come to one of the most awesome verses in the Word of God.

22:11 - *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”* This is a Scripture that was made very real to me personally through the means of a vision.

In this vision, I saw a stream of light that was intensely pure stretching out before me. This was the path of righteousness, as defined in Proverbs 4:18: “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Yet, this stream divided into two streams, the one going to the right and the other going to the left.

The one on the right seemed to be as perfectly pure as the other, but as it continued, I saw that the light began to decrease and become gray. Then the waters became increasingly murky. I could see many unclean creatures in the waters. Eventually, it flowed into a dark forest, and finally down into the pit. The one on the left flowed up and up until it found its end in Mount Zion, the Heavenly Jerusalem. There it flowed to the right hand of the Lord of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord then spoke very clearly to me that His Church would divide in these last days.

One area the Lord spoke to me that would divide the Church is the issue of divorce and remarriage (and this is happening already today). Those who advocate such impurity will be diverted to the stream on the right, and their way will become more and more murky as they compromise more and more with other issues that will arise in these last days.

The awesomeness of this verse is apparent when one considers that it is the saints who are addressed in this verse. Those who have chosen the way of the unjust and the filthy are told that they

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

will remain in that path. There will be no return to the paths of the just. The righteous will be made even more righteous, and they shall remain in the path of righteousness. The Lord will cause them to walk in His ways, as He promised in Ezekiel 36:27: “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”

Those who have chosen to flow in the stream of the righteous will receive additional grace to move on into the life of holiness. There is a distinct difference between a righteous person and one who is holy. The patriarch Lot is an example of this. The Apostle Peter declares he was a righteous man (2 Pet. 2:7-8). But he could not have been termed holy, for his desires were governed by the things of this world, which is not so with one who is holy. Daniel is an example of a holy person, one who refused the allurements of this world in order to fully and wholly follow the Lord. May he be our example. This verse is followed by others which complement and enforce this message.

22:12 - *“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”* We note again the ominous warning that we shall be rewarded according to our works. It is a reminder along with Revelation 20:13 that every one will be judged according to his works.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Paul also reminds us in 1 Timothy 5:24-25: “Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden” (NKJV). As the Lord Himself stated in Mark 4:22, “For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.”

22:13 - *“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”* Now the Lord reminds us of the fact that He, being the Alpha and Omega, not only begins, but also finishes that which He has purposed. The book of Revelation reveals the ending of the works of God which were ordained before the foundation of the world. Also, for us personally, we have this confidence as expressed by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Seventh Beatitude

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.”* Now the seventh beatitude clearly states that being blessed by the Lord is dependent upon keeping His commandments. If we so do, we shall have right to the tree of life as mentioned in verse 2.

22:15 - *“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”* Now also, there is this very important statement that those and only those who keep His commandments will have the eternal right to enter through the gates of the city. The converse would be that those Christians who do not keep His commandments and enter into eternal life naked, as in 2 Corinthians 5:3, will not have the privilege of entering through those twelve gates.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Those outside of the kingdom are:

1. *Homosexuals* - a dog is a male prostitute
2. *Sorcerers* - those who are channels for the spirits of demons to work all kinds of evil
3. *Whoremongers* - those who are sexually unclean
4. *Murderers* - those who are responsible for taking the lives of others
5. *Idolaters* - those who worship idols
6. *Those who love and make lies* - those who do not have the love of the truth in their hearts; not only do they lie, but they love doing it

22:16 - *"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."* Now the Lord Himself, in addressing the Apostle John, states emphatically that He has sent His angel to testify of these things in the churches. Thereby, we have the additional assurance that these future events are of the utmost importance for the churches, and that this book of Revelation must be taught so very much in our day because the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

day of His soon appearing draws nigh. The teachings of His Second Coming promote hope and holiness in all those who embrace these blessed truths and make us ready, by His grace, to be part of the Bride without spot or blemish.

Also worthy of note is that the Lord emphasizes that He is the root and offspring of David. In so doing He establishes His Messianic rights to the throne of Judah and as the true King of Israel. Jesus is also the bright and morning star which hails the dawning of the new day.

22:17 - *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* And the Spirit and the Bride say come. The Bride is completely at one with the blessed Holy Spirit, as is illustrated in Acts, where the apostles could say “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us” (Acts 15:28). We need to know the blessed Person of the Holy Spirit in a more intimate way.

“And let him that heareth say come.” Those who truly hear, pick up the message and echo the blessed call to others. *“And let him that is athirst come and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* This invitation is very similar to the one given by the Lord Jesus Himself in John 7:37 on

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” Then the Lord Jesus gives a most solemn warning:

22:18-19 - *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the word of this prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the Holy City and from the things which are written in this book.”*

Note the contrast in this blessed book. In Revelation 1:3 a *blessing* is pronounced upon those who read or hear the reading of this book; and now a *curse* is pronounced upon anyone who adds or takes away from this book in any form. Would not this alone suggest the importance and value the Lord Himself places upon the things written herein?

22:20 - *“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”* The book closes with the Lord Himself testifying of these very things.

22:21 - *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”* And then the Apostle gives his personal salutation and blessings to the recipients of this book. May the Lord grant that we be ever

those who meditate often upon, and above all, obey the commandments contained in this most blessed of all books. Amen and Amen.

EPILOGUE

In concluding this brief study on this most glorious of books, we offer you an approximate table of events as recorded in the Apocalypse. There are the three tiered judgments which are the seven seals, followed by the seven trumpets, and climaxed by the seven last plagues or vials of His wrath.

Then, paralleling these in sequential order, are the two witnesses; the manifestation of the Antichrist in all his fullness; the marriage supper of the Lamb; and the battle of Armageddon when the Lord appears in His glory to defeat Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet.

After this, there will be the millennial reign of Christ upon earth, followed by the New Heavens and the New Earth. We trust and pray that this study has been a blessing to you and has helped you to have a clearer appreciation of the end-time events. May the Lord richly bless you!

APPENDIX

MYSTERY BABYLON (ROME) AND THE REBUILT CITY OF BABYLON

Appendix by Brian D. Alarid

Reasons Why the Ancient City of Babylon Will Be Rebuilt in the Last Days

1. Ancient Babylon was never *suddenly* destroyed, as prophesied in Jeremiah 51:8: “*Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.*” Isaiah 13:19 compares the final destruction of Babylon to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: “*And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*”

Babylon fell to the army of Darius, under the command of Cyrus, in 539 B.C., virtually without a fight. Belshazzar and the Babylonian army, in a drunken stupor, were taken totally by surprise. Although the Medes and the Persians captured Babylon in 539 B.C. and took the city *in a day*, they did not totally destroy Babylon. The destruction of Babylon did not occur until much later in history. It was destroyed in stages over a period of years. Babylon withered away *gradually*.

2. The description of literal Babylon by Jeremiah in chapter 51 is very similar to the one given by John in Revelation 18.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

3. Babylon is said to be destroyed during *the day of the Lord*, which is an Old Testament term referring to tribulation and last day judgments. Isaiah 13:6 says, *“Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.”*
4. According to Isaiah 14, Israel will enter into God’s rest after Babylon is destroyed. Since this has not yet happened, this event still must be in the future.
5. Archaeological discoveries have shown that bricks and stones from ancient Babylon have been reused for building purposes. This is contrary to the prophecy of Jeremiah 51:26: *“And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.”*
6. The vision of the woman in the ephah in Zechariah 5:5-11 indicates a return of wickedness and commerce to Babylon. *“Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said,*

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.” This was spoken nineteen years after Babylon’s fall. Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C., and this prophecy of something *yet to come* was given by Zechariah in 520 B.C., in the second year of Darius (cf. 1:7).

7. The description in Revelation 18 of the fall of Babylon is best understood if taken literally.

THE TWO BABYLONS IN REVELATION 17 & 18

Revelation 17 is clearly referring to Rome and its false religious system—the Roman Catholic Church. This has been the accepted interpretation of Mystery Babylon over the centuries. It was the view held by the Reformers, Jerome, Augustine, and most conservative Protestant Bible teachers over the years. The Babylon in chapter 17 is spoken of as “Mystery Babylon” and as a “Woman who is sitting

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

upon the Beast.” Revelation 17:18 says, “*And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth [present tense, is reigning] over the kings of the earth.*” The great city that was reigning at the time of John was Rome. This is very clear-cut.

However, John then receives a completely different revelation by another angel that comes down from heaven in Revelation 18:1. Although there were no chapter divisions in the original, this marks a new vision, another angel, and another revelation of a different city than the city spoken of in chapter 17. This city is no longer spoken of as Mystery Babylon or as Spiritual Babylon, but it is very plainly called “Babylon the great” (18:2) and “that great city Babylon” (18:21). The word city is used seven times in five verses in Revelation 18 to describe this Babylon. It is clearly not referring to a religious system. The word city is used only once in chapter 17 to describe Mystery Babylon—the Roman Catholic Church (17:18)—and this was to expose its identity.

One thing that must always be remembered about Bible prophecy is that although it is true that there are spiritual fulfillments of many of the Old Testaments prophecies, there must always be the natural, literal fulfillment of them too. Not a few Bible teachers have erred in their interpretations of the

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Scriptures because they have failed to apply this hermeneutic Bible principle. The natural interpretation of any verse must never be *spiritualized* away.

This is important, for example, when we consider the temple Ezekiel was shown (ch. 40-48). While it is true that the Church is the temple of God, there must also be a literal fulfillment of this prophecy when the Lord comes again. Also, one could reason that Elijah will not come in the last days because he already came in the person of John the Baptist (Mt. 11:14; 17:10-13). Therefore, to avoid erring in our interpretation of the Scriptures, it is best if we follow the rule of thumb that prophecy can have spiritual fulfillments, but it also must have a literal fulfillment.

This truth is absolutely the case when dealing with the prophecies concerning Babylon. There were many Old Testament prophecies concerning Babylon that were never fulfilled. Although many of them can be seen fulfilled in Spiritual Babylon (Rome), they must also be fulfilled literally. Revelation 18 is pointing to the city of Babylon, which must therefore be rebuilt in the last days to be judged, and for all the prophecies of its destruction to be fulfilled.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

There are many striking similarities between Jeremiah 50-51 and Revelation 18. Let us now compare several of them. Remember, Jeremiah chapters 50-51 were referring to the actual city of Babylon situated upon the Euphrates. Therefore, in many of these comparisons we will see that Revelation 18 must be referring to the city of Babylon, and not Rome. In many of the verses of chapter 18, however, you will find verses that also apply to Rome. That is because Scripture can have dual applications and fulfillments.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

COMPARISONS BETWEEN JEREMIAH 50-51 & REVELATION 18

Babylon of Jeremiah 50-51

Babylon of Revelation 18

BABYLON WILL BE BURNED WITH FIRE

51:58 - *"The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire ..."*

18:8 - *"She shall be utterly burned with fire."*

MERCANTILE SYSTEM DESTROYED

50:37 - *"A sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed."*

18:11 - *"And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more."*

18:15 - *"The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing."*

VENGEANCE

50:15 - *"Take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her."*

18:6 - *"Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double."*

4. THE LORD WHO WILL JUDGE HER IS STRONG

50:34 - *"Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name: he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon."*

18:8 - *"For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."*

5. THE SLAIN OF THE EARTH ARE IN HER

51:49 - *"As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth."*

18:24 - *"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."*

6. THE WICKED WILL BEMOAN HER DESTRUCTION

51:41 - *"How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!"*

18:9 - *"And the kings of the earth ... shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning."*

COMPARISONS BETWEEN

**MYSTERY BABYLON (CH. 17)
& BABYLON THE GREAT CITY (CH. 18)**

Mystery Babylon - Rev. 17

Babylon the Great City - Rev. 18

TITLES

- The Great Whore
- The Woman
- Mystery Babylon
- The Mother of Harlots and Abominations in the earth

- Babylon the Great (cf. 16:19)
- That great city Babylon

* All the titles of Mystery Babylon point to: (1) a Church, by the distinction of a woman (cf. 12:1); and (2) a religious system that embraces idols (Mother of [idolaters] and [idols] of the earth)

* All the titles of the Babylon in Revelation 18 point directly to a city—the rebuilt city of Babylon—not a religious order.

REFERENCES

- Revelation 17; 19:1-3

- Revelation 18; 14:8; 16:19

SIMILARITIES

A. BOTH ARE CLOTHED WITH SIMILAR GARMENTS

17:4

1. Purple
2. Scarlet color
3. Gold
4. Precious stones
5. Pearls

18:16

- * Fine linen

 1. Purple
 2. Scarlet
 3. Gold
 4. Precious stones
 5. Pearls

B. BOTH HAVE CAUSED OTHERS TO COMMIT FORNICATION

17:2 - *“With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication.”*

18:3 - *“The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her.”* (cf. 18:9)

C. BOTH HAVE KILLED THE SAINTS AND ARE FULL OF BLOOD

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.”*

18:24 - *“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”*

D. BOTH WILL BE BURNED WITH FIRE

17:16 - *“[The ten horns shall] burn her with fire.”*

18:8 - *“She shall be utterly burned with fire.”*

E. BOTH WILL BE MADE DESOLATE

17:16 - *“[The ten horns] shall make her desolate.”*

18:19 - *“Alas, alas, that great city ... for in one hour is she made desolate.”*

DIFFERENCES

1. Mystery Babylon is called *the whore* (17:1,15,16: 19:2); whereas this word is not used of the city of Babylon. (This is the same Greek word, *porne*, used for “harlot” (17:5). It means “an idolater.”)
2. Mystery Babylon *sits upon many waters* (17:1). In other words, it is a religious system that exists in nearly every nation of the earth. This is not said of Babylon the Great in Revelation 18. Surely the city of Babylon will have an influence upon the nations, but this is to signify that the Babylon spoken of in chapter 18 is a localized place.
3. The two Babylons are called by very different and distinct names, as we noted before.
4. Mystery Babylon is destroyed by the ten horns (17:16); Babylon the Great is destroyed by the Lord Himself (18:8; 18:20).
5. Babylon the Great’s judgment comes suddenly, as in one hour; this is not said of Mystery Babylon.

Mystery Babylon—Rome

She is called “the Mother of Harlots” (*Idolaters*, in the Greek) and “the Mother of Abominations” (*Idolatry*, in the Greek). The Catholic Church is the mother of idols and idolaters, producing false worship through the idols of Mary and other saints.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The word *woman* is used to refer to Mystery Babylon (the Catholic Church) six times in Revelation 17. This is very interesting because we have already noted in Revelation how a woman refers to a church (see Rev. 12).

Babylon the Great—The Rebuilt City of Babylon

Thus, from all the verses and evidence above, it appears that the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt. This process has already begun. It is very interesting that throughout history Babylon is a city that has been rebuilt again and again, and history will repeat itself once again in the last days.

Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt and enlarged this city of antiquity to its greatest height and beauty during his reign (circa 605-562 B.C.). It is estimated that the city in its zenith had a population of one million people and covered an area of nearly eight square miles. Later, after years of laying waste, Babylon was in the process of being restored to its former grandeur by Alexander the Great when he died there in 323 B.C., in the midst of a reconstruction of Nebuchadnezzar's southern palace.

The city of Babylon, about fifty miles south of Baghdad, has undergone extensive archaeological excavations since the 19th century. The Berlin museums and the German Orient Society undertook

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

excavations there between 1899 and 1917; and since 1979, Iraq has adopted a large-scale restoration program. A number of monuments have already been excavated.

The restoration of Babylon was impeded during the Gulf War in 1991, but there are still current plans to continue to rebuild the city. Today, Alexander's theater has been restored. It now stands at nearly sixty-five feet high, and seats up to 4,000 people. Saddam Hussein intends to fully restore Babylon to its former glory. In 1993 artists and musicians from over twenty countries attended a huge arts festival in Babylon. During the two-week festival, on one particular night alone, over 100,000 people walked the streets of this ancient city.

Judging from the Scriptures, it seems that the reconstruction of Babylon will indeed be completed in the last days, only for Babylon to be destroyed again by the Lord. Before our very eyes, we can see this beginning to be fulfilled. Yes, God's Word is always true, and seeing Bible prophecy being fulfilled should cause us to put our hope and trust in His eternal Word.