

Revelation Chapter One

Many people shy away from a study of the book of Revelation, thinking it is just too hard to understand, or it is not intended for us to understand. Some people reason that whatever is going to happen in the future will happen, and we don't need to concern ourselves with studying about it. I believe these reasonings are proponents of Satan himself, because chapter 1:3 tells us that he who reads, hears, and keeps, or observes attentively, the words that are written in this book will be blessed. There is a reason for this blessing to be conferred upon those who comply with this admonition, and that is because this book contains "the Revelation of Jesus Christ."

The word "Revelation" is the Greek word "Apocalypses" which means, "unveiling", or "uncovering." Just as an artist spends much time painting a beautiful portrait, and one day it is unveiled for all to behold—even so, the book of Revelation is an unveiling of God's dear Son for all to behold in all of His glory and beauty. The word "Revelation" conveys the thought of a Spiritual illumination, not an intellectual finding. This is the only book in the Bible that portrays Jesus as He is today, the risen, victorious, glorified Christ. In contrast, the Gospels' portrayal of Him is mainly as the suffering Man of sorrows. How important, therefore, that we put much time in reading, studying, and seeking the Holy Spirit for understanding of this marvelous book!

According to verse one, this Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to Jesus by God, His Father. Jesus then made it known to the Apostle John by His angel. So it came from God to Jesus, to the angel, and then to John. All of this was for what purpose? "To show His servants things which must shortly come to pass." This tells us that the book of Revelation concerns future events. The phrase, "Which must shortly come to pass" could be read, "What must speedily happen," referring to the fact that once these things have begun, they will happen quickly.

Note that God wants to show "His servants." That includes all believers who are willing to devote themselves to a study of His Word. The word "servant" means, "a willing bond slave." John, in accordance to God's purpose, duly recorded what he heard and saw; and as mentioned above, a blessing is promised to all who read, hear, and keep those things that John recorded. These verbs in verse three are in the present tense, and imply the thought of continuing to read, hear, and keep. This blessing is the first of seven promised in the book of Revelation. (See chapters 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; and 22:7, 14). We will note the number seven often during our study of this book, which is the number that shows perfection or completion.

Why is this blessing promised in verse three? Because "the time is at hand." Revelation begins and ends with this statement (note 22:10). This is in direct contrast to God's instructions to Daniel, whom He told to "shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of the end." (Daniel 12:4, 9) Daniel received visions and revelations many years before the coming of Jesus—but John's revelation was given to him after Jesus' death and resurrection. Since that time, God desires His people to understand what is going to happen prior to and following the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John addresses the words of this prophecy to the “seven churches which are in Asia.” Now there were many more churches than these seven which had been established by the time John wrote this book, so the question arises, why these churches? The only answer is that they were divinely chosen by God to receive these letters because He is all-knowing, and because He knew these specific churches were a perfect representation of the whole church of God from the time of Jesus’ resurrection until His return for the rapture of the Church. Remember, the number seven is a number of completion.

If you are a believer today, then you are a part of the church, or body of Christ. Therefore, these letters are addressed to you as well as to the literal churches in Asia in John’s day. Thus it is important for us to understand what Jesus is saying through these letters, which are Jesus’ last words written to His people and that they are the only words spoken directly by Him to the church. Before His death and resurrection, His ministry was directed to the nation of Israel.

John’s salutation is “grace and peace.” It is only because of the mighty grace of God, that is, His bestowing upon us unmerited blessing and favor that we not only have peace with God, but also the peace of God fills our hearts in every circumstance of life. These blessings are from the three persons of the God-head: the eternal God, described as the One which is and which was and which is to come; the Holy Spirit, represented by the seven spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ.

To better understand many of the analogies of Revelation, we must refer to Old Testament examples. In reading Ezra 7:14 and Esther 1:14, we learn that ancient kings often had seven counselors near them to give advice, wisdom, or do their bidding. That is a picture of the office of the Holy Spirit, a description of which is seen in Isaiah 11:2.

The description of Jesus in verse five is as the “faithful witness” (prophet), “first begotten of the dead” (priest), and “prince of the kings of the earth” (king)—note Psalms 89:27. The word “loved” in this verse is in the present tense—His love is always present, and the proof of that love is that He washed us from our sins in His own blood. “Wash” means to cleanse and purify. As has often been said, our salvation is free, but certainly not cheap! Jesus shed His blood that we might be made a kingdom of priests unto God and His Father. One day, we will reign as kings with Him, but today, we are to enter into a priestly ministry by serving Him and interceding in prayer for others. It is no wonder John stops to exclaim, “To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Verse seven carries us forward to Jesus’ appearing in power and great glory when the entire world will behold Him and acknowledge that He truly is the Son of God. This coming is prophesied of in Psalms 86:9; Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 24:27; Philippians 2:10-11; and Revelation 19:11-16. Verse eight gives the first of three declarations in this chapter by Jesus Himself, that He is the All-inclusive One—alpha and omega being the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Every book that has ever been written, every word of instruction, comfort, knowledge, direction or information of any kind is given by utilizing only the few letters of the alphabet. Even so, in Jesus dwells all the fullness of God, and we are complete in Him. He is all we need! And He also is the Eternal One, “which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty (Omnipotent).”

When this revelation was given to John, he was probably in his nineties. No doubt he was the oldest living disciple of the original twelve disciples of Jesus, yet he doesn't hold himself up as being greater than his fellow believers, but addresses himself as their "brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." This is in reference to the suffering he had endured and continued to endure for the testimony of Jesus. Patmos was a small island in the Mediterranean Sea, approximately 10 by 6 miles, about 37 miles southwest of Miletus. It consisted of mainly rocky volcanic hills. History indicates that John was exiled to this barren place and forced to work in the mines.

It was during this time of hard toil and suffering that John was given this revelation of Jesus Christ. John was transported in spirit to the Lord's Day. This does not refer to Sunday, the first day of the week when Christians today meet together to worship the Lord. Instead, it refers to the "Day of the Lord," which is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments as being the seven years' tribulation, including the one thousand years' reign of peace.

While John was in spirit on the Lord's Day, he heard a voice behind him. This was Jesus speaking, Who again told John that He was the Alpha and Omega. He then gave John instructions to write what he saw in a book and send it to the seven churches in Asia, which He named. The Lord is specific and complete in all He does.

When John turned to see who spoke to him, he saw seven golden lampstands. It is significant that John did not see these lampstands until he turned and looked behind him. Remember, John is in spirit on the Lord's Day, which will begin at the end of this dispensation of grace in which we now live. This grace age, sometimes called the church age, began at the resurrection of Jesus and will last until the beginning of the Lord's Day. Therefore, the vision of the lampstands that John saw when he was turned has to do with events of this grace age.

The seven lampstands represent the seven churches (see verse 20), and these, in turn, represent the whole church, or body of Christ. Notice, these are lampstands—that which holds light, but not the light itself. Jesus is the Light, and each individual church or assembly is responsible to shine forth the light of Jesus to all. Also, each lampstand is separate from the others—each is to hear from the Lord Himself, as He speaks directly to them.

In the midst of these lampstands, or churches, John sees Jesus. The first description of Him is, "One like unto the Son of man." This immediately reminds us of His becoming a man so that He could give Himself a Sacrifice for our sins. In John 5:27, we read that God has given His Son authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of man. Because He took our judgment upon Himself, He now has authority to execute judgment—and it is in this manner that we see Him in the midst of the church.

Being clothed with a garment down to the foot was typical of the clothing of the high priests as they ministered to God. Jesus is our High Priest, and as such, He is always in our midst. Remember, He is seen here as the resurrected Christ, eternal in the heavens. The golden girdle about His breast speaks of His divine authority. His head and hair, white as snow, show His wisdom, glory, and purity (see Proverbs 16:31). His eyes as a flame of fire show His ability to pierce into the hearts of men and thus judge with righteous judgment. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3) Brass in scripture

represents judgment, as seen by the sacrifices on the brazen altar; so Jesus' feet like brass show that He stands in the righteous judgment of God.

I am reminded of the mighty roaring of Niagara Falls when I read that His voice was as the sound of many waters. The majestic power of the voice that stilled the stormy sea and raised Lazarus from the dead is the same voice that speaks softly to our hearts, changes the course of our lives and directs us in His will. Do you wonder that this is the revelation of Jesus Christ?

Jesus told John that the seven stars He holds in His right hand are the angels of the seven churches. The meaning of the word "angel" is "messenger." This same word is used in scripture of both heavenly beings and human beings, the context of the reference making it clear as to which is meant. Some have understood these in our reference to be heavenly beings that the Lord has put over each of His churches to guide and help them. However, John is giving these letters to the angels of the churches, and there is no place in scripture where we read that God gave a message to a human being to give to a heavenly being. Also, we don't read in scripture that God placed certain angels (heavenly beings) over individual churches. Further, there seems to be no distinction in the message given for the angel of the church, or the church itself.

In other words, what is said to the church is for the angel to give heed to also. Therefore, I believe these letters are addressed to the leaders, or pastors, of the churches. This shows how important it is for pastors to hear from God and their responsibility in relating God's Word to the church over which God has placed them. Jesus holds and guides these messengers, which also shows the responsibility of the congregation to receive the Word that a true shepherd brings to them as from the Lord.

John saw Jesus' face shining as the sun when he, Peter, and James were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Now once again John sees Jesus' countenance as the sun shineth in his strength. The whole world around us can be in total darkness, when suddenly the sun breaks forth in glorious beauty and mighty power as it rises over the horizon, bringing bright light that illuminates the whole sky—and darkness has gone! This is our Lord! No wonder that when John saw Him, he fell at His feet as dead. But Jesus touched him saying, "Fear not." Once more, Jesus proclaims Himself as the first and the last, the all-inclusive One. So there would be no question as to Who He was, He told John that He was the One Who lived as a man, died, but was now alive forevermore. He also now has the keys of hell and of death—that is, He has authority over man's death and over his life thereafter.

Verse 19 gives the divine outline of the book of Revelation. "The things which thou hast seen," speaks of what John saw as given in chapter one; "and the things which are," speaks of chapters 2, 3, and that which occurs during the church age; "and the things which shall be hereafter," is given in chapters 4 - 22.

The seven stars and seven lamps are called a mystery, showing that they are not to be understood as literal stars and lampstand, but that they represent other things. He proceeds with the explanation, concerning which we will study in the following chapters.

Introduction to Chapters Two and Three

Chapters two and three of Revelation record the only words Jesus ever spoke directly to the church on the earth. How important it is, therefore, for us to study these letters and pray for understanding of what is said. As mentioned in our last chapter, these seven churches were literal churches in Asia at the time this revelation was given to the Apostle John. They were divinely chosen by the Holy Spirit because the omniscient God knew these particular churches would represent the entire church during this age—the number seven being a number of perfection.

Also, note that there was a messenger to receive the letter for each church—not one leader of several churches. This shows the importance of leaders, or pastors, to receive understanding from God, and their responsibility to relate the message correctly to the church they serve. However, even though the message comes through the pastor, each individual is responsible to hear—for the admonition to each church is, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” And in this context, we read “churches” (plural), which shows that we can also learn from the message to each church.

Each lampstand is on its own base, giving forth its own light distinct from the others, although all are dependant on one substance, oil, for their light. Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. The only way a church or an individual can be a true light to the world is as the Holy Spirit is allowed to shine through them.

Several similarities concerning the churches are as follows:

1. Each letter was addressed to the messenger of that individual church.
2. Jesus, as described in chapter one, is the One who addressed each church.
3. Each letter was written by the moving of the Holy Spirit.
4. The first words used were always: “I know thy works.”
5. The exhortation to all but two of the churches: “repent”.
Of those two, Smyrna and Philadelphia,
 - a) there is no fault found,
 - b) the synagogue of Satan is mentioned
 - c) crowns are mentioned.
6. The last exhortation for all churches: “He that has an ear to hear, let him hear.”
7. A reward is promised to overcomers in each church.

The promises to the overcomers of the churches give a seven-fold view of the eternal possessions of God’s people, some future and some present:

1. Ephesus: partake of the tree of life—eternal life.
2. Smyrna: not hurt of the second death (lake of fire), but rather, given a crown of life (reigning).
3. Pergamos: partake of the hidden manna (Jesus, as Bread of Life), and given a white stone with a new name (acceptance and belonging).

4. Thyatira: rule over nations and receive Jesus as Morning Star (hope and assurance).
5. Sardis: clothed with righteousness of Christ and name written in the book of life.
6. Philadelphia: being made a pillar (support) in God's temple, and identified with God, Jesus, and the New Jerusalem in a special way.
7. Laodicea: reigning as joint-heirs with Christ!

As we study these rewards, we can see how Jesus uses Old Testament events to teach the church, which is in accordance with 1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened to them for examples; and they are written for our admonition . . ." The rewards promised to Ephesus and Smyrna remind us of the Garden of Eden. The manna promised to Pergamos was given to Israel while they were in the wilderness. Thyatira had the promise of Israel ruling the nations, showing Israel in the land of Canaan. Sardis takes us into the New Testament and being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Philadelphia is promised a special place in heaven. And Laodicea is given the promise of the highest reward, which is to reign jointly with Christ on His throne. Beautiful!

The letters to these churches can be studied three ways—historically, prophetically, and personally. We will note each of these.

Historically:

1. Ephesus—first approximately 100 years of the church, taking us to the end of the apostolic age. During this time the believers continued to labor fervently for the Lord, but as time continued, their good works became a substitute for loving the Lord supremely.
2. Smyrna—100-300 A.D. During this time the church endured terrible persecution until Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the state church in A.D. 312, which caused the persecution to cease.
3. Pergamos—300-600 A.D. With the cessation of such great persecution, the church became lax and worldly. During this time, the Catholic Church became stronger and more prominent.
4. Thyatira—600-1500 A.D. This is known as the "dark ages." During this time came the rise of Moslems, and they (along with Catholicism) were the cause of many martyrs.
5. Sardis—1500 A.D. to the end of this age. This started with the reformation and Protestantism, which began with strong faith. However, as time went on many Christians became lax once again.

6. Philadelphia—1700 A.D. to the end of this age. In the 1700's and 1800's, there were several mighty revivals that God brought to awaken His people to the fact that His coming is soon.
7. Laodicea— end of the age. Once again, the church as a whole has become lax and indifferent, having more professors of Christianity than true possessors.

Prophetically:

This shows the place the church has in heaven.

1. Ephesus—This church began as an overcoming church; yet, because they left their first love, those who do not repent will have their lampstand removed out of its place. In other words, they will not have the place of overcoming Christians in heaven. We will learn more concerning this as we continue our studies in Revelation.
2. Smyrna—This church represents all overcoming Christians who have died before the rapture. They are the “dead in Christ which shall rise first” spoken of in I Thessalonians 4:16 and will be raised at the time of the rapture (first rank).*
3. Pergamos—These Christians are non-overcoming because of worldliness. Their place in heaven will be as a servant (second rank). *
4. Thyatira—These Christians are non-overcoming because of evil doctrine and practice. They will also have the place in heaven as a servant (second rank).
5. Sardis—These are Christians who did not watch for the coming of the Lord, and therefore are of the second rank in heaven.
6. Philadelphia—These are overcoming Christians who will be alive at Jesus' coming for the rapture. They will rise up to meet Him in the air and reign as joint-heirs with Christ (first rank).*
7. Laodicea—These are “professors only” at the time of Jesus' coming, and not true Christians.

* Scripture does not use the words, “first rank” and “second rank” concerning believers in the church. However, for the purpose of explanation, we have used these terms to describe how we understand the different places God has prepared for those believers who are overcomers, in contrast to those who are in heaven but have not overcome—that is, they believed in Jesus and therefore have eternal life, but they were not willing to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him completely. Therefore, they will have a lesser place in heaven. As mentioned above, this thought will be made clearer as we continue our study of Revelation.

Personally:

Last of all, we can learn many wonderful personal lessons from a study of these letters.

1. Ephesus—All of their good works were not accepted because they had left their first love. This is the basis of all failure.
2. Smyrna—We must be willing to suffer for the Lord. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” II Timothy 3:12
3. Pergamos—We must be willing to not compromise in either doctrine or practice.
4. Thyatira—We can have many good works, but if our walk is not pure and holy, we will reap destruction.
5. Sardis—We must be watchful for Jesus’ coming.
6. Philadelphia—In order to be an overcomer for Jesus, we must not trust in our own strength, but keep His Word, not deny His name, and let no man take our crown.
7. Laodicea—We must be possessors of Jesus, not professors only, and go on to become joint-heirs with Christ. Romans 8:17

There are depths of meaning in these last words to the church by Jesus Christ that I believe we will not be able to grasp until we are in heaven with Him. However, the Holy Spirit is faithful to reveal more and more of Jesus to us as we prayerfully wait upon Him. “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!” (Romans 11:33)

In our next study, we will examine each of the seven letters in detail.

Revelation Chapter Two

The Church of Ephesus:

Jesus addresses the church of Ephesus as “He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand and Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.” It is awesome to think of Jesus holding His messengers in His right hand as He walks among the churches. As we noted before, these lampstands represent the universal church, and the stars, or messengers, represent the pastors of individual churches around the world. This shows the importance of pastors allowing Jesus to guide them, and illustrates their responsibility to hear from Him and relate His message clearly to their church. This does not say that at times Jesus does not speak to and through others also, but He usually speaks through the pastors. Therefore it is a serious thing to stand up against a true pastor who seeks the Lord for guidance, lest we find ourselves standing against the Lord, Who holds him in His hand.

As Jesus walks in the midst of the church, He sees and knows every problem, every need, as well as every victory taken, and He acts accordingly. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20) Jesus uses this description of Himself as He tells not only the church of Ephesus, but each of the seven churches, “I know thy works.” There is nothing hidden from Him, therefore His judgments are just.

Ephesus was a church that had many good works. They labored much for the Lord, even unto weariness and pain. They were constant in patience and cheerful endurance, unwilling to give up. They gave no place to evil in their midst or to false apostles. However, all of these good works stemmed from the natural man, therefore were of no value to Christ—because they had left their first love. They put their service for Christ ahead of their love for Him. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. When we become more occupied with good works than with spending quality time in fellowship with Jesus, we will soon leave our first (or chief) love and He is not pleased. When this happens, we must Remember, Repent, and Renew fellowship with Jesus. He admonishes the church of Ephesus to do the “first works,” that is, those works they did when they loved Him supremely.

The warning to the church of Ephesus (if they would not repent) was that Jesus would remove their lampstand out of its place, and thus they would no longer be a light for the Lord. This is true of either an individual assembly or an individual believer.

This church hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, deeds which Jesus also hated. The word “Nicolaitanes” comes from the word, Nikao, which means “to conquer or overthrow” and Laos, which means “the people of laity.” It is not clearly understood just what group or sect is meant by the Nicolaitanes; however, from the meaning of the word, it may refer to the order of the clergy asserting undue authority over the laity. Also, some teach that the Nicolaitanes was a sect which taught that what you do in your body does not affect your spirit, thus giving license to sin. Whatever is meant here, the church of Ephesus was in agreement with Jesus on this, and He commends them for that fact. Then He promises the overcomers that they will be able to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. That is, they will have eternal life and enjoy the blessings of heaven.

The Church of Smyrna:

The word “Smyrna” means “myrrh”. Myrrh is a bitter herb which must be crushed in order to emit fragrance. This expresses the terrible persecution brought upon the believers during the second and third centuries. Hundreds of thousands of Christians were martyred during this time by crucifixion, being thrown to the lions, being burned at the stake, and many other ways. How appropriate, therefore, that Jesus addresses this church as the One Who is the “first and the last, which was dead and is alive,” giving them blessed assurance that He is eternal, and because He lives, they will live also forever with Him.

Their works consisted of tribulation and poverty—not what we might consider good works—but Jesus’ assessment of them is, “but thou art rich.” Our riches are never determined by how much or how little we have of material possessions. The Apostle Paul described himself “as having nothing and yet possessing all things.” (2 Corinthians 6:10) Jesus also assures them that He knew what they had to endure from the blasphemy of those who claimed to be believers, but were really of Satan (see Romans 2:28-29). Any church which does not preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ is a synagogue of Satan, because he uses these false teachings to deceive many, leading them astray.

Then Jesus told the church of Smyrna to “fear none of those things which thou shall suffer.” That may seem like a strange admonition, to tell them that they will suffer, even unto death, but not to fear! This would be impossible for the natural man, but to those whose trust is in God, it is not only possible, but the suffering becomes a pathway to learning the grace and strength of the Lord. Paul prayed, “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.”

I am not certain what is meant by, “Ye shall have tribulation ten days.” Some have said that from Nero to 312 A.D., there were ten distinct edicts demanding that Governors seek out Christians and put them to death. (The last was under Diocletian, the tenth persecutor.) This may be what these ten days refer to, but I cannot say with certainty. A crown of life is promised to the faithful. This reminds us of James 1:12: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” Also, Romans 8:17-18: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together; For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Those who are willing to suffer with the Lord in this life will reign as joint-heirs with Him in heaven. The “second death” of verse 11 refers to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

The Church of Pergamos:

Jesus addressed this church as “He which has the sharp sword with two edges.” This tells us immediately that it is a church in need of judgment. Pergamos was the center of idol worship. However, even though they dwelled in the midst of idolatry (‘where Satan’s throne is’), this church was commended for holding fast to Jesus’ name and not denying His faith, even to the martyrdom of Antipas. According to tradition, Antipas was a believer who was roasted to

death during the reign of the Roman Emperor, Domitian (A.D. 81-96). However, some in the church of Pergamos held fast to the doctrines of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes.

We read about Balaam in Numbers 22-25 (see also Numbers 31:16; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11). Balaam prophesied for gain of this world's good, a mentality that is even prominent today! He also taught compromise with the ways of the world. Balak, who was King of Moab, attempted to bribe Balaam to curse Israel so they could be defeated. God would not allow Balaam to do this, so Balaam then instructed Balak to entice Israel to disobey God's commandments, and thus bring God's judgment upon them. These wiles of Satan have brought defeat to many all through the years. How important for us to know God's Word and obey Him only!

The church of Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, but with some in the church of Pergamos, those deeds became a doctrine as they gave place to them. Remember, the Nicolaitanes had to do with clergy exerting undue authority over laity. Therefore, it seems that these people took the analogy of Jesus' holding the stars in His hand too far—that is, they gave too much prominence to the leaders of the churches. The extreme of this practice can be seen in the teaching of the infallibility of the Pope. Jesus said He hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes and also the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. Again, how important for us to agree with our Lord in both doctrine and practice.

Verse 16 gives a solemn warning to this church to repent or face judgment from the sharp sword of Jesus' mouth. The Word of God is spoken of as a sharp sword, and by His Word He will bring judgment when needed.

The reward promised to the overcomers of this church is two-fold:

1. To eat of the hidden manna. Manna was the food God provided Israel during the forty-year period they wandered in the wilderness. Jesus spoke of that manna in John 6:32-58, teaching His disciples that He is the Bread of life. I believe it is called "hidden manna" in our reference to the church of Pergamos because the natural man does not understand how to partake of Christ as the Bread of life.
2. A white stone in which a new name is written. It has been said that in ancient times, when a person was tried in a court for a crime, if he was found guilty, he was handed a black stone; if he was found innocent, he was handed a white stone. Although I am not sure the white stone refers to this, it is possible. We do know that white symbolizes righteousness, and Jesus is spoken of as the Chief Corner-stone (1 Peter 2:4-8). Therefore, the main thought is to receive more of Jesus. The new name written in the stone shows ownership—we belong to Him.

The Church of Thyatira:

This church represents the universal church as it was during the dark ages (A.D. 600-1500). It was during this time that the Islamic religion became strong, as well as Catholicism. Jesus addresses this church as the Son of God, in contrast to the worship of man or idols, "Whose

eyes are like a flame of fire (able to pierce into the innermost being of all people), and His feet like fine brass (walking in judgment)". As this description suggests, Jesus knew all about them—their good works and their bad. He first mentions their good works: Love, service, faith, patience, and works; but then He tells them that even though they have some good works, He is not pleased with some of the things that they permit—namely, the same sins that were prominent during the time of Jezebel.

We read about Jezebel in 1 Kings 16:29-32 and 21:1-25. She was a prophetess who promoted idolatry, fornication, and total immorality under the guise of religion. The sins of idolatry and fornication have been prominent throughout the history of mankind, and they are often mentioned in scripture as things from which to flee. God will always give space (time) to repent, but if we refuse to repent of these evil deeds, His judgment will fall. I believe the judgments mentioned in verses 22, 23 take us down to the time of the seven years' tribulation when the false church will be judged. Note Jeremiah 17: 9-10.

Verse 24 tells us that there were some in this church who were not in agreement with the false doctrine nor the false practices that were so prevalent in their midst, and to them the Lord gives an encouragement to hold fast to what they have until He comes. The promise to the overcomers is that they will have a place of rulership over nations, ruling them with a rod of iron. It is said of Jesus that He will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:15), so the overcomers of Thyatira will be part of the true church who will rule under the leadership of Jesus. Jesus also promises them the Morning Star. This refers to Jesus Himself (Revelation 22:16), as our glorious Hope.

Revelation Chapter Three

Church of Sardis:

Jesus addresses this church as "He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." Sardis represents the universal church from the time of the reformation until the end of the age. During this time, the Holy Spirit (as represented by the seven Spirits of God) has been especially active in the church, usually working through the ministers (seven stars) to lead the church. Jesus' first words to this church, as with all the churches, was, "I know thy works." But here no good works are mentioned. This was probably a surprise to these people, because they evidently had works they thought would be accepted by Jesus as good. Instead, He tells them they have a name that they are living, but they are dead. How sad!

The root word of Protestantism is "to protest." At the time of the Reformation God revealed to Martin Luther that salvation is by faith, not by works. Luther then wrote his thesis, "The just shall live by faith," to protest the teachings of the Roman Church. Thus Protestantism was born. However, through the years, many Protestant churches have become as described in the letter to the Sardis church: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, but thou art dead." This is true not only of churches, but also of individuals (1 Timothy 5: 6).

Jesus then admonishes them to "be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, which are ready to die." There are many scriptures that instruct us to "watch" or be awake. It is a ploy of Satan to cause Christians to become lax, indifferent, and sleepy concerning the things of the Lord. "Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober"(1 Thessalonians 5:6) Skipping down to verse 3 in our chapter of Revelation, Jesus adds the warning that if they would not watch, He would come on them as a thief and they would not know when He would come upon them. This is how His coming at the beginning of the Tribulation will be for many Christians who are asleep. Jesus warns of this in Matthew 24:15-44; 25:13. Paul also warns of this in 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-8 and Peter gives this warning in 2 Peter 3: 10.

After Jesus tells the church of Sardis to be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die, He then continues to tell them their works are not perfect, or complete, before God; therefore, they need to remember what they learned from the beginning: to hold fast to those things, and repent. This reminds us of the letter to the Ephesian church when Jesus would not accept their works, but He admonishes them to remember from where they had fallen and repent and do the first works—those works which came from loving Jesus supremely. To repent, of course, means to turn completely away from what they were doing and have a different attitude towards those things.

From verse four we learn that even in a church where that lifeless condition existed, God had a few who had not become defiled by their surroundings, but walked in the righteousness of the Lord. The promise to these overcomers was that they would be clothed in white raiment. I believe we see the fulfillment of this in Revelation 19:7, 8, where the Lamb's wife is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the "righteousness of saints." The overcomers of the Sardis church are also promised that their names will not be blotted out of the book of Life, but will be confessed, or acknowledged, before God the Father and His angels. This indicates a public acknowledgment of these overcomers by Jesus to His Father. How wonderful!

The book of Life mentioned here speaks of a book in which God writes the names of all individuals born into the world. For those individuals who believe on Jesus as their Saviour, their names remain in the book of Life. However, if an individual lives his lifetime without ever acknowledging Jesus as Saviour, then his name is blotted out of this book of Life. This happens either at the time of his death, or at a time when he simply rejects God's plan of salvation and therefore becomes a "son of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). I believe only God knows just who those individuals are. We should never stop praying for the salvation of lost souls.

As with the letters to each of these churches, Jesus concludes this letter by saying, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

The Church of Philadelphia:

The meaning of the word Philadelphia is "Brotherly love," and this is a church that is true to its name. Whereas most of the church of Sardis were not watchful, but asleep at the coming of Jesus, the opposite is true of the church of Philadelphia. This church, therefore, represents believers who live at the time of Jesus' coming for the rapture and give Him first place in their lives. They love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).

Jesus addresses these believers first as, "He that is holy." His holiness is absolute; nothing can be added to it. He is perfect and complete in His holiness. The more we understand, realize, and accept His holiness, the more we will desire to walk in that same holiness, for He is in us. Peter wrote, "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Peter 1:15) Also, in 2 Peter 1:4, we read that we have been given "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these, ye might be partakers of the divine nature... "

Then Jesus addresses them as "He that is true." Jesus is Truth. There is nothing false or hidden about Him. He is perfect and constant in truth. Consequently, we can know truth. Have you ever wondered, "How can I know what is true and what is false?" The answer is, just get to know Jesus. The more we know and understand His Word and ways, the more we will know what is true.

Lastly, Jesus addresses the church of Philadelphia as, "He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth." Isaiah 22:22, 23 give a clear understanding of what Jesus is referring to here. "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. And I will fasten Him as a nail in a sure place; and He shall be for a glorious throne to His Father's house." These verses are a prophecy of Jesus reigning on the throne of David, which we also see in Luke 1:32 when the angel, Gabriel, told Mary that God would give her Son, Jesus, "the throne of His father, David." Therefore, when Jesus is seen as having the key of David and setting an open door before the Philadelphia church, we realize that He is speaking of the door right into His throne room and He is offering this church the privilege of entering in and reigning as joint-heirs with Him (Romans 8: 17).

This awesome opportunity is offered this church because of the three-fold commendation Jesus gives them.

1. "Thou hast a little strength." This could read, "You have but little strength." In other words, they were not strong in themselves, but had learned to relinquish their self-effort and live in the sufficiency of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). May the Lord help us to learn this lesson!
2. "Thou hast kept my Word." In 1 John 2:5, we read, "But whosoever keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected ... " In Psalms 119:101, we see the correlation between keeping the Word and walking in holiness. "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word." How do we keep His Word? I believe we have a clear explanation of this in Deuteronomy 6:4-9.
3. "Hast not denied my name." Jesus tells us in John 15:18-21 that the world will hate us and persecute us for His name's sake. Are we willing to endure persecution for Jesus? Are we willing to proclaim the name of the Lord, even though it brings ridicule from others? If we are ashamed to stand for the name of the Lord, our Christian walk will become more and more lax and worldly, and this will hinder us from entering that door to the throne room of Jesus. We are heirs of God when we are born again, but we will only become joint-heirs with Christ as we are willing to suffer with Him (Romans 8: 17).

Those of the synagogue of Satan, of verse 9, are ones who profess to be believers, but do not possess salvation. They have never accepted Jesus as their Saviour. Jesus will one day vindicate His true believers by causing those who only profess to believe, to worship before the feet of those who love Him. Verse 10 gives a wonderful promise to those who have kept the word of His patience. James 5:7, 8 admonishes us to be patient concerning the coming of the Lord. Why does Jesus here say, "My patience?" Because any true patience we may have is not from us, but from the Lord. As we give ourselves to Him, He works His characteristics in us. To those who have patience concerning the coming of the Lord, Jesus has said He will keep them from (Greek, "out of") the hour of temptation which shall come upon the entire world. The word 'hour' means, "A definite and limited time, a specific period." Since there has never been a time in which all the world has experienced a certain period of temptation (or trial), as mentioned here, this no doubt refers to the seven-year tribulation period which shall begin following Jesus' coming for the rapture of those overcoming Christians who look for His return (Hebrews 9:28).

Jesus follows this promise with the assurance, "Behold, I come quickly." The word 'quickly' does not have the meaning of soon, but rather, speedily. In other words, when it is time for His coming, He will speedily come and not delay.

Then the Philadelphia church is admonished to "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." This indicates that it is possible to give our lives completely to Jesus; to be among those who are offered the privilege of entering the door into His throne room as joint-heirs with Christ, and then lose that place by allowing someone to interfere with our complete submission to the Lord. Note Colossians 2:4, 8; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

Several promises are given to the overcomers of this church:

1. To be made a pillar in the temple of God. The church of the living God is called "The pillar and ground of the truth" in 1 Timothy 3:15. That is to say, the church is the support and foundation of the truth. In like manner, the overcomers of the church (those whom we identify as the "first rank") will be a support and strength in the temple of God; that is, in heaven.
2. "He shall go no more out." Christians do not belong to this world. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are strangers and pilgrims here. But when we get to heaven, we will finally belong and will never have to leave our home there!
3. "I will write on him the name of My God." We will be identified with our heavenly Father.
4. ". . . and the name of the city of My God." We will be identified with the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21).
5. ". . . And I will write upon him My new name." We will be identified with Jesus and His new name. We don't know what that name will be, but it will no doubt identify Him as Bridegroom. The overcomers of the Philadelphia church are the ones mentioned in Revelation 19:7, 8 as the "bride who has made herself ready." As the bride of Christ, they will be seated on His throne, reigning as joint-heirs with Him through eternity, identified with His new name. What a blessed hope is set before every believer! " Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1, 2)

The Church of Laodicea:

In this letter to the last of the seven churches, Jesus addresses them as, "The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." The meaning of the word Amen is "true." It speaks of that which is final, thus revealing Jesus as the final truth; He Who is complete. Nothing can be added to Him. He is all in all. The title, "Faithful and true Witness" depicts Him as the One on Whom we may rely. There is nothing false about Him. He is real and true in every aspect, thus a perfect witness or testimony of God. We read in Hebrews 1: 1-2 that God has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, "by Whom also He made the worlds." This describes Jesus as the "beginning of the creation of God." Colossians 1: 15-17 further describes Jesus as the Creator of all things.

This wonderful description of Jesus as He addresses the Laodicean church shows that they have absolutely no excuse for the pitiable condition they were in. There are no words of commendation for them. They were in a lukewarm condition, which can be very deceiving. That is why Jesus told them He would rather they be either cold or hot. Being cold would allow them to recognize their need and thus be more likely to make the changes needed. Being hot would have meant they were zealous for the Lord. But being lukewarm meant they thought they were doing well. They were deceived into thinking they were rich and needed nothing more.

Riches of this world are of no value whatsoever as far as our spiritual life is concerned. In fact, Jesus' assessment of them was that they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked! This is in sharp contrast to the church of Smyrna, which was a very poor church, and yet Jesus' assessment of them was, "but thou art rich." The difference in the two churches was that one loved Jesus enough to suffer much for Him even in their poverty, while the other gloried in their wealth and did not even realize they needed Jesus.

The church of Laodicea represents those people who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). There are many people who are very religious and claim to know the Lord, but Jesus will have to say to them when they stand before Him in that day, "I never knew you, depart from me you that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Jesus counsels each one of these people to buy of Him gold tried in the fire—in other words, to accept His divine plan of salvation. Isaiah 55:1 gives an invitation to everyone who thirsts to "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Eternal life with Christ cannot be bought with money; it can only be received as a precious gift when we believe on Him. This gift of salvation allows us to be clothed with that white raiment, which is the robe of righteousness, and takes away the shame of our nakedness. Then our eyes are anointed with the eye salve of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to see spiritual things. The work of the Trinity is seen here in the plan of salvation: Gold, the divine life from God, the Father; White raiment, the righteousness of Christ; Anointed eyes, work of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 19, Jesus assures this church that His rebuke and chastening of them is because of His love for them, and His desire is that they repent. Jesus proved His love for sinners by dying on the cross, atoning for their sin, that they might be saved. And in verse 20, He gives an invitation to all who will hear His voice, to open the door of their hearts so that He can come in to them and fellowship with them. He doesn't force Himself on anyone, but everyone has the blessed opportunity to have Jesus enter into their lives and dwell in them.

The promise to the overcomers of this church is that they will be given the privilege of sitting on the throne with Jesus, even as He overcame that which was before Him when He was on the earth and is now seated with His Father on His throne. A part of the promise to the overcomers of the Philadelphia church was that they would have the name of New Jerusalem written upon them. According to Revelation 21:9-10, the bride, the Lamb's wife, is seen as the New Jerusalem. We realize that city will be made up of more believers than just the ones who will be known as the Lamb's wife. However, she receives the name of the city to give her honor and recognition. In Romans 8: 16-17, we read that all children of God are heirs of God, but those that are willing to suffer with Him will be joint-heirs of Christ. The ones who will be joint-heirs with Christ are the same ones who will be seated on His throne with Him, and will also be the bride, the Lamb's wife.

This is more than we can comprehend with our natural mind, but by faith our hearts can reach out and lay hold of this hope that is set before us! What an awesome reality that this highest reward of exaltation with Christ is offered to the overcomers of this Laodicean church, which has not even seen their need of salvation! This communicates to us that salvation is offered to the entire world, and this place of reigning with Christ on His throne as His bride is offered to all who have received Him as Savior. However, just as everyone in the world will not accept

God's gift of salvation, neither will all believers accept the offer to be seated on His throne as His bride, reigning jointly with Him. Why? Because the price of reigning with Christ is suffering with Him. (2 Timothy 2:12)

In the parable of the sower (Matthew 13: 18-23), Jesus said, "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Those believers who bear hundredfold fruit are the ones who will have overcome as Jesus speaks of in verse 21 of our chapter, and they will have that place of reigning with Him on His throne. Other believers will have their place in heaven as servants or guests. However, Jesus died for the church, "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:26, 27, 32) What a wonderful hope is set before us! This is the prize of the high calling of God which the Apostle Paul mentions in Philippians 3:8-14. Also, note 1 Corinthians 9:24: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain."

Revelation Chapter Four

As we have previously noted, Revelation 1:19 gives a divine outline of the book of Revelation. John is told, "Write the things which thou hast seen (chapter 1), and the things which are (chapters 2-3), and the things which shall be hereafter (chapters 4-22)." So in chapter four, we begin to read about things that are future. The words, "after this" in verse one tell us that John is now writing about things that will happen after the events of chapters 2 and 3, which described the Church Age in which we now live. Between chapters 3-4, the rapture will have occurred; that is, Jesus will have come as described in 1 Thessalonians 4: 14-17.

Chapter four opens with a scene in Heaven. The voice telling John to "Come up hither" is a hint of the voice of the Lord calling His saints to rise and meet Him in the clouds. Verse two records that John was transported in spirit into heaven at that time, where he sees a throne being set, which is the throne of God. During this Church Age, God has been seated on a throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16) with Jesus at His right side. However, after the rapture, a time of judgment will begin. Therefore the throne being set up for Him here is a judgment throne. And yet, notice that there is a rainbow around about the throne, which is always indicative of the mercy of God. Even as the Lord pours out His judgment on the earth during the seven years of tribulation, His mercy will be manifest in many ways. He is a God of mercy and it is not His will that any should perish.

At this time, the first thing John notices about God is His beauty. His great glory is noted here without any attention being drawn to a physical form. He is described as like jasper and a sardine stone, with the rainbow around the throne like an emerald. The jasper is described in Revelation 21:11 as a stone most precious and clear as crystal. The jasper and sardine stones were the first and last stones in the High Priest's breastplate, which indicates that God is a God of all (the stones in the breastplate represented the 12 tribes of Israel). The sardine stone was ruby red and the emerald, a beautiful stone of light green color, reminds us of Jesus' shed blood and of His resurrection, which is a basis for judgment.

Next John sees 24 smaller thrones, on which 24 elders sit, clothed in white raiment with golden crowns on their heads. The word "elder" always implies dignity and wisdom (Proverbs 31:23). White clothing represents righteousness, and the crowns are representative of a victor's crown that has won rulership. Just as in the seven letters of chapters 2-3, Jesus uses many Old Testament examples to teach us. Therefore we understand much of Revelation by comparing it with Old Testament practices. In 1 Chronicles 24, 25, and 27, we read that there were 24,000 of the Levitical Priesthood arranged in courses of 24, so that there were never more than 24 priests on duty at any one time. These 24 represented the whole Levitical Priesthood. Also, there were 24 orders of priests appointed to praise God with instruments of song (12 in each order).

The title "elder" and the number 24 suggest that this is a group of Israel. The number 24 is a representative number, even as the 24 priests and singers were only a part of the total number of those who ministered in the house of the Lord in Old Testament times.

In Hebrews 11, we read that the Old Testament worthies of faith desired a "better country, better resurrection, and better thing." The Amplified version of Hebrews 11:40 reads, "Because God had us in mind and had something better and greater in view for us so that they

(these heroes and heroines of faith) should not come into perfection apart from us (that is, before we could join them)." I believe these scriptures point to the fact that these Old Testament worthies of faith (or overcomers) will be a heavenly people. This is in contrast to the nation Israel which will be an earthly people through eternity. So the 24 elders represent this group of overcomers from Old Testament times. They are in heaven with their God, ruling under Him, and in a place of great prominence. Hebrews 11:40 states that without us (the church), they would not be made perfect (or complete). But now it is time for the church to be in heaven with the Lord, so it is also time for the Old Testament overcomers to be made complete. This is clear by their position (seated on small thrones around God's throne) and the fact that they are crowned.

The lightnings, thunderings and voices of verse five show us that this is a time for the storm of judgment on a sinful world to begin. The Holy Spirit is seen here with the Father as the seven lamps of fire. (Zechariah 4:6)

When God gave Moses instructions for the Tabernacle in the wilderness, He told him to make a laver of brass for the priests for washing purposes. Also note 2 Chronicles 4:6 concerning the temple Solomon built. However in our heavenly scene, we have a sea of glass as a reminder of the purity that is always present, so there is no more need to wash in water.

Next, John describes the four beasts, or living creatures, that he sees in the midst and round about the throne. Before we determine the meaning of the description of these living creatures, we must determine whom they represent. According to Revelation 5:9-10, these living creatures, along with the 24 elders, praise God for redemption. They have come out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation. Therefore, they must be people who have been redeemed and are in heaven at this time. However, they are not seated and crowned, as the 24 elders are, which shows that there must be something yet to occur before they will be made complete, or before they will enter into their complete reward. At this time, they are in the midst and round about the throne of God. Later on, we find them assisting in judging the world (Chapter 6:1; 15:7). Compare this thought with 1 Corinthians 6:2 and Psalms 149:5-9.

The promise to the overcomers of the church of Philadelphia, in chapter 3:10, is that they will be kept from (or out of) the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the entire world. The four living creatures represent the overcomers of the church, or body of Christ, who have loved Jesus' appearing as did the Apostle Paul. (2 Timothy 4:8) Therefore they have been raptured at the coming of the Lord as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. They are those mentioned in Hebrews 9:28 as "them that look for Him."

As the scene in heaven opens in Revelation 4, we see both the overcomers of the Old Testament (24 elders) and also the overcomers of the New Testament church praising and giving glory to God. The four living creatures represent the overcomers of the church, indicating that they are from the four corners of the earth. They are full of eyes before, behind and within, which illustrates that they have discernment in all things. They manifest the characteristics of Christ that are revealed in the four gospels. Matthew reveals Him as a Lion (Kingly characteristic); Mark shows Him as a Calf (Servant); Luke, as a Man (Humble One); and John, as an Eagle (Son of God). 2 Peter 1:4 tells us that we may be "partakers of the divine nature." As God's people yield their lives to Him as a living sacrifice, and put Him first in their lives,

He works these characteristics in them, even as they are in Christ. Note Romans 8:29, "conformed to the image of His Son ..."

Not all believers are willing to give up their lives and let the Lord change them into His likeness. Those who do not follow Him in this manner will go to heaven, but not at this time. We see them as the "great multitude" in chapter 7, and will discuss them later.

These living creatures are the same ones Ezekiel saw in his vision in Ezekiel Chapter one and ten. However, the ones in Ezekiel are no doubt seen as overcomers while still on the earth, before the rapture, while John sees them after having gone to heaven. John sees them as having six wings. Six is the number of man, and these are redeemed human beings, yet heavenly, with complete mobility to do God's bidding. The 24 elders are seated, their place in heaven complete; but the living creatures are not yet seated and won't be until the marriage supper takes place in chapter 19. At that time, they will be granted the privilege of sitting with Christ in His throne, even as He overcame and is now seated with His Father in His throne. (Revelation 3:21)

The first words they utter are "Holy, holy, holy." They know and appreciate His holiness. How important it is that we recognize His holiness! Next, the living creatures acknowledge Him as Lord (Principal Ruler), God (Light), Almighty (All powerful), and the One which was, is, and is to come (Eternal One). Then the 24 elders cast their crowns before His throne and give God all the glory. They are not interested in their rewards—only in worshipping and glorifying God.

Verse 11 reminds us of John 1: 3 and Colossians 1: 16. God is seen here as the "Most High God." Everything He does is perfect! H. A. Seiss wrote in 1823, "The Lord fasten it on your soul and give each of us grace to let go friends, pleasures, comforts, home, country, freedom, life, everything, rather than let slip so blessed an opportunity for so great a prize." Amen!

Revelation Chapter Five

The scene opens in Chapter five with God seated on His throne, holding in His right hand a book that contains the title deed to this world. When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them dominion over all the earth. However, when Adam sinned, he lost that dominion and Satan, the one to whom Adam had subjected himself, became prince, or ruler, of the world. See Luke 4:6, John 12:31, 2 Corinthians 4:4.

In Leviticus 25:25-27, God gave instructions concerning redemption of a poor man's property. If a man lost his property because of poverty, a scroll was prepared. On the inside of this scroll was written every necessary detail required to purchase the property back again. The scroll was then sealed, and on the outside was written the names of those involved and the location of the property. If a near-kinsman desired to redeem the property, thus keeping it in the family name, provision was made for him to do so providing he met three specific requirements, namely:

1. He must be a near-kinsman.
2. He must be willing to redeem the property.
3. He must be able to redeem it.

This is an illustration of Jesus, our Redeemer, Who met all of these requirements:

1. He became a man, and thus became our near-kinsman.
2. He was willing to redeem (John 10:18).
3. He was able to redeem (2 Peter 1:18-19).

A beautiful example of redemption of property in Old Testament times is seen in Jeremiah 32:6-15. When the Jews were taken captive to Babylon, God instructed Jeremiah to purchase a piece of property which was located near Jerusalem and which belonged to his cousin, Hanameel. Jeremiah did this, manifesting his faith in God's promise that Judah's captivity would last only 70 years, after which time they would return to their land. Although Jeremiah, himself did not live to return and claim this piece of property, his kinsmen had the right to possess it.

Verses 2-5 of our chapter reveal that the opening of the book which God holds in His right hand is of great importance. John weeps, or loudly wails, because it seems that there is no man with authority to open the book. Remember, this book is the title deed to the world and contains the terms by which Adam's lost estate could be redeemed. Jesus, our kinsman Redeemer, wrought a complete redemption at the cross, and God has put all things in subjection to Him. However, in Hebrews 2:8, we read ". . . but now we see not yet all things put under Him." Satan is still the god of this world, and as such he usurps authority and blinds the minds of them who believe not. In Romans 8:21-25, we see that although we have been redeemed, we wait for the manifestation of that redemption, which will be our glorified bodies. Even so, the earth has been redeemed, but waits for the manifestation of that redemption also.

One of the 24 elders tells John that there is no need for him to weep, for the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed (or conquered) and may open the book and loose the seals thereof. The description of Christ, along with the elders' involvement, causes us to understand that the book has to do with Israel. And indeed, the complete redemption of all the earth, and therefore the promises to the nation Israel, was dependent on the opening of this book. Genesis 49: 9-10 is a prophecy of Jesus as the Lion of Judah. Since the lion is the king of the beasts, and the tribe of Judah was the ruling tribe of Israel, this is a description of Jesus as the mighty King. Next, Isaiah 11:10 reveals Jesus as the Root of David, denotes His becoming a Man, but a Man born of the kingly line of David. However, when John looked, he did not see a lion or a man or even a king—he saw a little lamb “as it had been slain.” This great King of Judah and Root of David became a Lamb, the perfect Sacrifice, and as such, He was able to open the book!

The Lamb is in the midst of the throne, living creatures and elders. They are all in perfect union. The Lamb has seven horns (complete power—Deuteronomy 33:17) and seven eyes (complete discernment—Zechariah 4:10). The seven Spirits of God show the complete union of Christ and the Holy Spirit in doing God's bidding in all the earth.

Verse seven is a fulfillment of Daniel's vision in Daniel 7:13-14. What an awesome moment this will be—the beginning of the fulfillment of all God's plans and purposes for the ages! It is no wonder that this causes the living creatures and elders, the redeemed ones in heaven, to fall before the Lamb in praise and worship. They worship Him with harps and singing. Music is a creation of God, a means of expressing His beauty, and there will be much of this expression in heaven.

The bowls of odours, or incense, are prayers of the saints of God that have come up to Him through the centuries, crying out for His will to be done in earth as it is in heaven. David prayed in Psalms 56:8 for the Lord to put his tears into His bottle. I believe God looked forward to these bowls of incense when He instructed Moses to have a perpetual offering of incense going up as a sweet savor to the Lord from the altar of incense in the tabernacle. It is instructive that God Himself gave Moses the recipe for this incense and all the ingredients came from spices which represent suffering. God was very particular that this incense be made exactly as He ordered and it could not be used for any other purpose (Exodus 30:7-10, 34-38). God is just as concerned and particular about the prayers of His saints. They are even now a "sweet savor" to Him. Note Malachi 3:16 and Psalms 141:2.

In chapter 4:11, praise was offered up to God as the Creator of all things. Now these redeemed ones sing a new song, praising the Lamb as their Redeemer. The word "redemption" has three basic word roots:

1. To release by paying a price
2. To purchase for one's self by a price duly and freely paid
3. To purchase from the power or possession of anyone--release from bondage.

The word used in v. 9 is the second meaning—to purchase for one's self by a price duly and freely paid. Jesus freely paid the price of our redemption by His blood! These redeemed ones have come out of every people and nation on earth. The pronouns "us" and "we" in vs. 9-10 include both the living creatures and the elders. There are some translations of the Bible that

have changed these pronouns to "they" and "them." However, if you will refer to the original Greek wording, you will see that the King James' version is correct in using "us" and "we." These living creatures are not angels. We see angels mentioned in v. 11 as distinct from the living creatures and elders. This distinction is also seen in chapter 7:11. As we have noted before, these living creatures are overcomers of the New Testament church, as the elders are overcomers of the Old Testament, and they all together praise the Lamb of God for His redemption work at Calvary.

These redeemed ones can now sing, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign over the earth," because the book will now be opened to make way for these things to occur.

Note the great number in heaven who will at this time praise the Lord "with a loud voice." It is as the "Lamb slain" that Jesus is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing! Remember that this book of Revelation is an unveiling of Jesus Christ. Let us pray that God will reveal Him to our hearts more every day.

Not only do the ones in heaven praise our Lord, but verse 13 takes us in time to the end of the seven years' tribulation—to the time when all creation will praise God as a result of the completion of redemption, which will be enjoyed after the opening of the last of the seven seals of this book. Just as the trees and plants burst into life in the springtime, and thus declare the glory of God, even so at this time all creation will in some way praise and glorify the Lamb. Read Psalms 148 and praise the Lord now for His great majesty!

Revelation Chapter Six

Revelation Chapters 4 and 5 reveal the heavenly scene immediately following the rapture. Chapter 6 relates what will happen on the earth following the rapture. Some have asked how long a period of time will there be between the rapture and the time these judgments will begin to fall. While we cannot say with certainty, I believe the examples Jesus gave us concerning the judgment in Noah's and Lot's generation are indications that the judgment of the tribulation period will follow soon after Jesus' coming for the rapture. See Matthew 24: 37-39 and Luke 17:26-30.

The opening of the seals of the book which contains the title deed to the world begins the judicial proceeding of our Redeemer to cast out the rulers of the darkness of this world, and bring in Jesus' kingdom of righteousness. This is the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, of which he wrote in Daniel 9:27. Because the Lamb was the perfect Sacrifice for sin, therefore He is worthy to begin these judgments on the rejecting world. Note who assists the Lamb in this judging—one of the four living creatures, or some of the overcomers of the church who are in heaven at this time. See 1 Corinthians 6:2.

The noise of thunder is an indication that a storm of judgment is coming. The words "and see" in verses 1, 3, 5 and 7 are in italics. This tells us that they are not in the original translation of the Bible and in this place they would be better omitted, since the word "come" is a calling forth of the four horsemen to begin their evil work. In answer to this call to come of the first living creature, a white horse appears with his rider going forth to conquer. He has a bow in his hand, but no arrow, which indicates that his conquering will be by diplomacy rather than by warfare. Daniel 8:25 tells us that the anti-Christ, along with the false prophet, will destroy many by "peace," which is what the white horse signifies. However, this is a false peace because it will last but a short while and will only bring a false sense of security to the people.

Israel became a nation again in 1948, but only hours after the papers were signed, war began, and there has been very little time since then that they have not had war in their land. Therefore Israel, along with all the nations in the world, is desperately looking for a solution to the problem of peace. If someone came up with that solution, the whole world would follow after that man. And that is just what will occur when the anti-Christ comes on the scene. This is when he will make a covenant with Israel at the beginning of the seven years' tribulation, according to Daniel 9:27. Then he will break that covenant at the middle of the week of tribulation.

Notice that John saw a crown being given to the anti-Christ at this time. I believe this indicates that he will not be known as a great ruler until after the rapture. That is why Daniel saw him as a "little horn" in Daniel 7: 8. But he will certainly gain prominence as the seven years progress.

This first seal does not appear at first glance to be one of judgment because it brings a desired peace. But this peace does not come from God, so it only brings a false security; a great deception. Jesus warned of this in Matthew 24:4.

Next, another of the living creatures calls for the second horse to come and a red horse appears which indicates bloodshed. Power "was given" to the rider of this horse to bring war on the

earth. It will be true at that time, as it was at the time of Jesus' crucifixion when Jesus told Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above." It will seem that the anti-Christ and his followers, guided by Satan himself, will be doing just what they desire; but God is still in control and they can only do what He allows. However, at this time God will allow great destruction to come on the earth by warfare. In 1 Thessalonians 5:3 we read, "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." This could very likely be the warfare that is described in Ezekiel 38-39 when Russia and her allies will come against Israel. Ezekiel 38:11 describes a people who have let down their guard and are at rest (note vs. 15-16). But God Himself will fight for Israel at that time, leaving only 1/6 of Russia's army. However, this war will be wide-spread, affecting the whole earth, according to Revelation 6:4. This will begin a time of tribulation this world has never before known!

Then the third seal is opened and another of God's saints calls for the black horse to appear. Famine always follows war, and this is no doubt what the black horse represents. Note Lamentations 4:8-9. The balances show that food will be rationed, allowing only a "measure" or a little over 1½ pints of wheat and three measures of barley for a "penny." In Jesus' parable of Matthew 20, a penny was the wage given for a day's work. This might be enough for one person to subsist on, but not for a family! However, the oil and wine were not to be hurt. A sign of the end-times is much eating and drinking (partying). Now God has produced a famine of wholesome food, but allowed the luxury of oil and wine, of which the people will soon grow tired. (Proverbs 21: 17) Another thought here is that oil and wine were used for medicinal purposes, and God in His mercy allows them to be in abundance.

Next the fourth seal will be opened, bringing forth the last of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. This horse is a pale green or leprous color, representing death. In fact, the name of him that sits on this horse is "Death," with "Hell" (or Hades) following. This death will come by warfare, famine, disease, and even from ferocious animals who no doubt seek people as prey because of the great famine. This death will continue until one-fourth of the earth's population has been killed. There are approximately six billion people in the world today, so during this time, approximately 1½ billion will die! That is beyond our comprehension. To illustrate the enormity of this number, one writer has given the example of counting: beginning with the number one and counting one number per second, it would take approximately 32 years to count to one billion! So can you imagine 1½ billion people dying in a short period of time—from a few months to perhaps one year? In contrast, during World War II, which was a terrible time of slaughter, there were about fifty million killed. That was supposed to be a war to end all wars, according to many.

One important distinction about this 4th horse is that it is said Hell, or Hades, followed with death. Hades is a place of torment and the place of waiting for the spirits of the unsaved. But the lake of fire is a different place and will be their eternal destiny. Therefore, since Death and Hell are seen together, I believe this judgment will come on unbelievers only. Remember that God brought different judgments on Egypt during Moses' lifetime, and some of these fell on the Egyptians only, sparing the Israelites (Exodus 8-9). We have this same distinction made here. But contrast this with the opening of the next seal which brings judgment on the believers only.

The living creatures are not involved in calling forth this judgment, showing that God does not order what is to follow. Even though He allows it to occur, this judgment is the result of men's anger. Many believers will be martyred at this time because of their testimony of Jesus. As soon as they are killed, their souls will go immediately to heaven, and their bodies will be raised at a later time. Under the altar was the place where the blood of the burnt offerings was poured, so the presence of these souls there shows completion of sacrifice. They gave their lives for Jesus and now wait and rest until they will be reunited with their bodies. They call for vengeance for "them that dwell on the earth," indicating that their tormentors are still alive on the earth. This is not speaking of martyrs of years past. This also shows that the doctrine of "soul-sleeping" is not correct. As soon as our bodies die, our souls are in heaven with the Lord.

A holy God demands vengeance for this sin. Contrast this with Acts 7:60 where the martyr Stephen, prayed for mercy for those who were killing him. This is an age of grace and his prayer was correct, but the age of grace will be over during the time of tribulation. Note Psalms 94. White robes of righteousness are given these martyrs, and they are told to "rest yet for a little season" until others like them also would be killed. I believe these martyrs are a part of that "great multitude" which we will study in chapter seven.

Then the sixth seal is opened. These seals follow one after the other, with probably very little time in between. Whereas the first five seals will come from the hand of man, this seal brings judgment directly from God. Thus no one has an excuse for not believing Him and turning to Him for mercy. This seal is no doubt the answer to the cry of the souls under the altar for vengeance for the blood of the martyrs. What a terrible time this will be for those dwelling on the earth! Imagine an earthquake so great that the sun becomes black, the moon becomes as red as blood, the stars of heaven fall to the earth in great numbers, and the heavens "depart as a scroll when it is rolled together!"

Isaiah 34:4 tells us, "The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll and all the host shall fall down as the leaf falls off from the vine and as a falling fig from the fig tree." This upheaval shall cause every mountain and island to be moved out of its place. Can you imagine the fear these events will bring to the hearts of the people? Verses 15-17 tell us that the world rulers and leaders, the rich and the poor—all alike will attempt to hide themselves in order to escape God's wrath. They realize and acknowledge this judgment as the wrath of the Lamb, but they are not willing to receive Him as their Savior and repent of their sins. How sad!

These are only the beginning of the judgments that will soon follow with the opening of the seventh seal. "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of FAITH and LOVE, and for a helmet the HOPE of salvation, for God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9, (Emphasis mine) God has not appointed His people unto wrath, so let us be awake and watchful for His coming and thus not be on the earth when these things come to pass, but be in heaven with our Redeemer.

Revelation Chapter Seven

Chapter 7 begins with the words, "After these things." After what things? After the opening of the first 6 seals. As we said before, these occurrences happen consecutively, beginning shortly after the rapture and continuing on through the seven years' tribulation. The 7th seal contains the 7 trumpets and the 7th trumpet contains the 7 bowls of wrath. Thus all of God's judgments for the world at this time are contained in the book that the Lamb takes from His Father's hand and opens.

As we will see in chapter 8, the first three trumpets to be blown affect the earth, trees, grass and the sea, bringing great devastation. However, in the first three verses of chapter 7, instructions are given to four angels, who stand on the four corners of the earth. They hold the four winds of the earth and do not allow these winds of judgment to blow until certain servants of God have been sealed with the seal of the living God. In Psalms 148:8, we read that God uses the stormy wind to fulfill His Word, and in Jeremiah 49:36 and 51:1, we see that God uses wind to bring judgment on the nations. Even so, in the end time God will bring destroying winds on the earth.

Who are these servants of God that are to be sealed and thus protected from some of the judgments that these winds will bring? They are described in verses 4-8 as being 144,000, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Since they are all Israelites, they cannot be a part of the church, for Colossians 3:11 tells us "... there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision" in the body of Christ. In our study of chapter 7 of Revelation, we see this group still on the earth, but in chapter 14, we have a picture of them after they have gone to heaven. There we see that they are redeemed from the earth; a heavenly group. They are described as virgins, indicating their purity. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and are completely committed to Jesus. They are called "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb," and are without fault before God.

In Romans 11:26, we read that "all Israel shall be saved," and we know that when Jesus comes back at the time of the battle of Armageddon, after which He will set up His throne, at that time Israel as a nation will look on Him Whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son. (Zechariah 12: 10) Then Israel will be "born in a day" (Isaiah 66:8), and God will put a new heart in them and He will be their God and they will be His people. (Ezekiel 36:24-28) But Israel's new birth as a nation won't occur until the end of the 7 years' tribulation. This company of 144,000 Israelites is sealed by God during the first part of the tribulation—that is why they are called the "firstfruits" unto God and the Lamb. They are a special people who love God supremely. They are the elect of Israel at this time and therefore have a special place with a special song before the throne of God and before the four living creatures and the elders. I believe we could call them the overcomers of Israel at this period of time. They are saved shortly after the rapture and will be taken up to heaven around the middle of the "week" of tribulation. They will, no doubt, be great evangelists for the name of the Lord during the first half of tribulation.

The sealing of the 144,000 is literal and visible, since it is said they were to be sealed "in their foreheads." In Revelation 14:1, we see that this company has the name of the Lamb and His Father's name written in their foreheads. The seal probably consists of these names. We have examples in the Old Testament of visible signs given for protection: a mark was given Cain

(Genesis 4:15); blood was put on the door posts of the Israelites (Exodus 12:13); and Rahab was protected by a scarlet thread (Joshua 2:18). Also, there is an interesting account of a similar sealing in Ezekiel's vision of Ezekiel 9:1-6. God desires to protect His own, even as He protects us today from so much of the evil of the world, for we also are sealed with "that Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). Ours is not a visible seal, but it is no less literal and real.

Notice that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted from the list of those being divinely protected from judgment at this time. They are replaced by the tribes of Levi and Joseph. The reason for this is apparent from a study of Deuteronomy 29:18-26 and 1 Kings 12:25-30. The tribes of Dan and Ephraim were some of the first ones to become involved in idol worship, and they continued in this idolatry for many years. God's great principle of reaping what we sow cannot be changed! However, Dan and Ephraim are included in the earthly inheritance spoken of in Ezekiel 48:1-7 because that was God's covenant promise to them, and God keeps His word! How wonderful are His ways!

While the first half of Revelation 7 is a scene on earth, from verse 9 through verse 17 the scene changes to a heavenly one. John beholds a "great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues." This is in contrast to the definite number given of the group from one nation only in verses 4-8. According to verse 14, this great multitude is a group of believers who has come out of the great tribulation. I do not believe that this "great multitude" represents merely those who will be saved during these first few months of the tribulation. No doubt many of them will be saved at this time. However, it is my conviction that this group includes those who, although they were saved during this church age, did not put Jesus first in their lives. They did not forsake all to follow Him. Thus far in our study, we have seen in heaven only the overcomers of the Old Testament saints and the overcomers of the church. But now after the 6th seal has been opened, (but before the 7th seal), this great multitude of believers is resurrected and stands before the throne and before the Lamb. No doubt the "souls under the altar" of chapter 6 are among this group, having now received their glorified bodies. This multitude is clothed with the righteousness of Christ. As they begin to praise God and the Lamb, all the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures join them in great praise and thanksgiving to God.

According to verse 15, the occupation of the great multitude is to serve God day and night in His temple—and what a wonderful occupation that will be! But yet, note the contrast between this and the promise Jesus gave to the overcomers in Revelation 3:21. At the end of the 7 years' tribulation, there will be a great marriage; the marriage of the Lamb and His wife. It is His wife that will be granted the privilege of sitting with Him on His throne. In Romans 8:17 we read, "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together." Also note 2 Timothy 2:12: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." This does not signify salvation. Jesus will never deny one who has believed on Him and become a son of God. But in this reference, the Holy Spirit speaks of reigning with Christ, which He will grant to those who are willing to suffer with Him. These are the overcomers who are seen as the four living creatures who assist the Lord in judging the earth, after which they will be joined to the Lamb as His wife. What a glorious opportunity is set before every person who has ever been born into this world! But how sad that so few will take advantage of this opportunity. (Note the comparison of four living creatures to a multitude which cannot be numbered!) Of course, four is a typical number here, but I believe the comparison is accurate. Accordingly,

salvation is offered to everyone in the world, but only the few will believe and accept what God has provided. Jesus said the way to life is narrow, and few there be that go that way, but the way to destruction is wide and many will go there. Study Ephesians 5:25-32 and see just why Christ died for us. Allow Him to sanctify and cleanse you with the washing of the water by the Word, that you may be able to enjoy all that He has provided for you as a "joint-heir" with Him.

But let us look again at the great multitude of Revelation 7. Even though they are not among the overcomers of the church, and thus will not have the beautiful relationship with Christ as His bride, nevertheless, notice the blessings promised to them in verses 15-17. They will serve God in His temple; they will experience no more hunger, thirst or pain. The Lamb will be in the midst of them, nourishing and leading them, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Will there be tears in heaven? Perhaps for a short period of time this great multitude will realize the great error they made in not being willing to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus while still on the earth. Perhaps at that time they will experience deep sorrow, but God will at once wipe away those tears and they will be forever happy serving Him. What a loving and merciful God we have! However, let us lay hold of the hope set before us of being seated on the throne with Jesus Christ, having that place of close fellowship with Him even as a bride with her Bridegroom. The apostle Paul said, "... forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Revelation Chapter Eight

In contrast to the loud, majestic praise to God and the Lamb, which will be heard in heaven as recorded in chapters 5 and 7, chapter 8 begins with about one-half hour of complete silence as a result of the opening of the 7th seal. This silence is no doubt in awe of the realization of the judgments that are soon to follow—the calm before the storm. Seven trumpets are then given to 7 angels who stand before God, ready to do His bidding. So the 7th seal contains these 7 trumpets.

God used trumpets in Old Testament times to warn of coming danger. Ezekiel 33:4-5 states, "Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet and taketh not warning; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head; he heard the sound of the trumpet and took no warning . . . But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul." Also, note verse 11 where God tells us that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but He pleads for the wicked to turn from their evil ways. So God will once again use the sound of a trumpet to warn the world of coming judgment, and "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21) How wonderful to see God's great mercy in the midst of this time of great disaster.

Next, we see another angel come and stand before the altar in heaven, having a golden censer. This angel is given much incense which he is to offer, along with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God. This censer and altar remind us of articles in the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 25-27). Hebrews 9:21-24 tell us that the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry were "patterns of things in the heavens," or "figures of the true." Heaven is a literal place with literal thrones, literal altar of incense, etc.

God instructed Moses to have the priests burn a "perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." (Exodus 30:8) Incense was symbolic of prayer and worship in the Old Testament, and the smoke of this incense ascended up before God in a continual worship of Him. Of course, this is a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ Whose giving of Himself for us as a sacrifice to God was a sweet-smelling savor (Ephesians 5:2). And even our lives become a sweet savor of Christ unto God as we walk in His love, doing His will (1 Corinthians 2:15).

There was an account of incense being offered up to God to make atonement for the sin of the people. This is given in Numbers 16:41-50, where the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, and the Lord was ready to consume them because of their rebellion. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in prayer of intercession. Then Moses told Aaron to take a censer and put fire from off the altar in it, then put incense on the fire to burn as a sweet savor to the Lord and thus make atonement for the people. Aaron did so, and the plague which had begun among the people was stayed—although 14,700 of them had already died before Aaron took the incense among them. The burning of the incense reminded God of the sacrifice of His Son, which was a sweet savor, and thus caused Him to show mercy. Even so, God's mercy is seen all through these trumpet judgments.

Jesus told His disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ... " All through the ages, the prayers God's saints have prayed for His will to be done have been reserved in heaven as sweet incense. These prayers are intricately woven together with God's will in bringing judgment upon the earth at this time of tribulation.

So now the angel fills the censer with fire and casts it into the earth, beginning the needed cleansing of the earth. The results of the sounding of the first trumpet will be disastrous. One-third of the trees and all the green grass will be destroyed. With that much vegetation gone, many disasters will occur, including lack of food, oxygen, food for animals, etc. These are literal judgments. Examples of similar judgments are found among the plagues God brought upon Egypt when Pharaoh refused to let Israel leave his land (Exodus 9:22-25).

When the second trumpet sounds, something like a great mountain is cast into the sea. This probably will be a large asteroid or meteorite, which will cause one-third of the sea to become blood, perhaps from the death of the sea life, as well as the death of those people in the ships which will be destroyed. This probably refers to the Mediterranean Sea, for all prophecy surrounds Israel and the land of Israel. Compare Exodus 9:19, 20 and Hosea 4:1-3 concerning this judgment.

Next, the third angel sounds a trumpet and a great star falls upon one-third of all the rivers and springs, which causes many to die from poisonous waters. This star is called, "Wormwood," which is a bitter, intoxicating and poisonous herb. When used freely, this herb produces convulsions, paralysis and death. God has given warnings through the years of similar judgments that will be wide-spread during these seven years of tribulation. One example was in the Aleutian Islands on March 21, 1823. There was a great volcanic explosion on that date and one of the results was that the river water assumed the color of beer and was so extremely bitter that it was unfit for use. Also read Jeremiah 9:13-16.

Some might attribute the first three trumpet judgments to exclusively natural disasters, but when the fourth angel sounds his trumpet, the lights of the heavens are affected. The sun, moon and stars are all darkened, leaving both one-third of the day and night in complete darkness. Can you imagine the fear that will grip the hearts of people when this darkness occurs after they have experienced the frightful disasters of the first three trumpets? If there are any who will have ears to hear, surely these occurrences will cause them to turn to the Lord in repentance, and to believe on His name. This is what God desires, for it is not His will that any should perish. (2 Peter 3:9)

In these first four trumpets, those things we take for granted are touched by God. Food is destroyed, distribution is hindered, water is limited, production is hurt—life in general will not go on as usual!

At this time, God sends an angel to fly through the skies, warning the inhabitants of the earth in a loud voice of the judgments that will come from the three trumpets which are yet to sound. These are called three "woes," which indicate that they will be far worse than anything that has happened so far. We might wonder what else God could bring that would awaken the people on earth; but, as we will see in the next chapter, there surely are terrible things yet to come on a Christ-rejecting world—more terrible than the human mind could imagine. How thankful we should be that God has provided a way of escape to all who will accept His gift of salvation through His Son, Christ Jesus. Remember, all of the church, or body of Christ, will be in heaven before these trumpet judgments begin. But let us pray earnestly for those around us who have not yet believed on Him that they, too, can escape not only the terrible judgments

of the tribulation period, but the eternal judgment of the lake of fire. God has provided a way out! Praise His name!

Revelation Chapter Nine

When the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, the first woe begins with a "star" falling from heaven to the earth, ". . . and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit." This "star" cannot be one of the heavenly bodies we call stars because a key could not be given to one of them. This star is called "him," and "he" opens the bottomless pit with this key. I believe this star is none other than Satan, himself. One of Satan's names is Lucifer, which means, "the day star, the shining one." Now Satan's present abode is not in the presence of God. However, according to Ephesians 6:11-13, the devil and his evil government are presently in the "high places," or the lower heavens—and it is from this place that John sees Satan fallen at the time of the sounding of the fifth trumpet.

The bottomless pit is the pit of the abyss which we read about in Luke 8:31. In that reference, the same Greek word is translated "deep." In 2 Peter 2:4 and in Jude 6, we read of angels that sinned and were cast down in "everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." At this time during the tribulation period, God will allow this pit to be opened, thus releasing these hordes of demons which come forth as locusts upon the earth. Yet they are different than the insects that we know as locusts. These locusts are shaped like horses prepared for battle.

Note the description of these creatures as given in verses 7-10. They are as horses, depicting great strength and boldness; their crowns depict ruling authority, and yet being crowns *like* gold, rather than crowns *of* gold, demonstrate them as imitators of the real. The faces of men show they have intelligence; they can think and act. The hair as the hair of women depicts weakness in the midst of satanic glory or renown; lions teeth demonstrate ferociousness; with breastplates of iron they are impenetrable; their wings show terror-filled swiftness; their tails are like those of scorpions—terror-filled torment. These demons of terror will fill the earth, bringing fear and torment wherever they strike.

And yet their power is limited! God is still in complete control, for He does not allow them to hurt the grass nor trees, those things that locusts would normally destroy. Could this have been in Jesus' mind when He told His disciples that He beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven, and then He gave His disciples "power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you." (Luke 10: 18) God does not allow these demon locusts to hurt the 144,000 servants of His who have the seal of God in their foreheads. Also, God limits these demons to *tormenting* only, not allowing them to kill; and the torment can last only five months. God's great mercy is seen through all of these restrictions, for remember that one-third of the trees and all of the grass was destroyed under the sounding of the first trumpet? So now God is allowing the vegetation to grow back as it should.

However, these five months will seem like an eternity to those who are being tormented in this manner. They will long for death, but God will not allow death to come for them during this time. God holds our breath in His hand (Daniel 5:23), and only when it is in His perfect timing will men be allowed to die. His ways are perfect! How much better for us to give our lives over to Him now and let Him change our hearts to follow Him completely. Proverbs 30: 27 states that the locust insect has no king, ". . . yet they go forth, all of them by bands. . ." However, this horde of locust-like demons does have a king whose name is given both in the

Hebrew, as Abaddon, and in the Greek, as Apollyon." The meaning of this name is Destroyer (opposite of Savior), revealing him as the destroyer of both Jew and Gentile. It is easy to see why this terrible judgment is called a woe.

Then the sixth trumpet is sounded, bringing forth the second woe upon the earth. The golden altar of verse 13 is the altar of incense that we studied about in chapter 8. Every year on the Day of Atonement, Aaron would apply blood to the horns of the altar of incense in the tabernacle, thus averting God's judgment on the people for their sins. But now, the cry is for judgment on those who have rejected Jesus' blood. What was a place of mercy becomes a place of Judgment in answer to prayers of saints who have prayed for God's will to be done and the world to be cleansed from sin.

The four angels that are bound are four evil angels. God's angels would not be bound. These angels are bound in the Euphrates River, which is near the place of the Garden of Eden where sin first entered the world. This is also near Babylon, which has always been a place of idolatry and a concentration of the evil of the world. According to Revelation 17 and 18, Babylon will be the religious and commercial center of the world during the 7 years' tribulation. So now God allows these evil angels to be loosed to bring forth even more of Satan's destructive power.

Whereas with the sounding of the fifth trumpet, death was not allowed, the sounding of the sixth trumpet brings death to one-third of the remaining population of the world. The opening of the fourth seal caused one-fourth of the population to die, so now with the death of one-third of all who are left, the world population will be only one-half of what it was at the start of the tribulation. These evil angels have been prepared and waiting for this specific time, and now God gives consent to their being loosed to begin their slaughter.

An army of 200 million horsemen comes on the scene, but this is not a normal army, for their breastplates are of fire, jacinth (smoke), and brimstone. And note the description of the horses—having heads of lions, with fire, smoke and brimstone coming out of their mouths, and tails like serpents. Their manner of killing was from the fire, smoke and brimstone, and heads of the serpents. This is a battle of Satan's army of evil spirits who have taken these forms and are bringing death and destruction, killing one third of the people in the world. If this were an army of humans, the people might have a chance to fight against them, but they have no power against this mighty force of demons that have been loosed to fill the earth.

We cannot imagine the terror this will bring to the entire world; and yet, instead of repenting for their evil deeds and turning to the God Who could save them, we read in verse 20 that they repented not of the works of their hands. Note the list of sins mentioned here—worshiping demons, worshiping idols, murders, sorceries (drugs), fornication and thefts. Do these sins sound familiar? There is no comparison of the frequency of these sins today with forty or fifty years ago.

The Apostle Paul told Timothy that in the last days, perilous times shall come, and they are here! Jesus said that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. In the days of Noah, we read that the earth was corrupt and filled with violence. The evil in the world is getting worse and worse, and men are going on their merry way, thinking that nothing is ever going to change. But Jesus is coming soon, and then everything shall surely

change! Let us be ready for His coming, and remember what Paul told Titus in Titus 2: 11-13: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Revelation Chapter Ten

Revelation chapters 10-14 are parenthetical in our study of the happenings of the tribulation period. In chapters 8-9, we studied about the six trumpet judgments; and while we read of the sounding of the 7th trumpet in chapter 11:15, it is not until chapters 15-16 that the seven bowls of wrath, which come forth from the sounding of the 7th trumpet, are described.

In point of time, we are right at the middle of the "week" of tribulation. Chapters 10-14 give information concerning conditions that have existed during the first half, as well as ones that will exist during the last half of this "week." Remember, these seven years are referred to in Daniel 9:27 as the last week of his vision of 70 weeks which were decreed for the nation Israel.

After the appearance of the great Satanic army of chapter 9 which kills 1/3 of the people on the earth (leaving only 1/2 of the population that was here at the beginning of the tribulation [see chapters 6:8]), John sees a mighty angel come down from heaven, who sets His right foot on the sea and His left foot on the earth. The word "mighty" means "strong and powerful." There is a difference of opinion as to just who this mighty angel is. Some see Him as a leading angel of the Lord to whom God has given this special place. However, because of the description given of this angel, and because of what we see Him involved in, I believe this is none other than Jesus, Himself.

This mighty One comes down from heaven clothed with a cloud. This is how Jesus left the earth (Acts 1:9) and how He will return for His bride (1 Thessalonians. 4:17). The Lord spoke to Moses through a cloud (Exodus 24:15-18; 34:5). He appeared to Aaron in a cloud (Leviticus 16:2). The glory of the Lord filled Solomon's temple in a cloud (1 Kings 8:10-11), and God spoke to Peter, James and John out of a cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5). These references all speak of God's great glory, and this glory will be apparent as Jesus is seen in Revelation 10:1.

The rainbow upon His head is a reminder of His mercy which He will manifest even in the midst of this time of judgment. The complete redemption of all the earth is dependent upon the open book of verse 2; and the judgment that must come because of Satan's unwillingness to give up what rightly belongs to God will be worse than the world has ever experienced. Hence, the rainbow is a promise that God remembers His covenant even at this time. When Jesus took this little book out of His Father's hand and opened it (chapter 5), it was as a little Lamb. But it is as a mighty messenger of God that we see Him formally take possession of what belongs to Him. This is shown by His setting His right foot upon the sea and His left foot on the earth. Read chapter 11:15 and Psalms 2:8.

The bright glory as of the sun is seen in His countenance and His feet are as pillars of fire. Fire both judges and purifies, and the presence of Jesus will do both. His power and majesty as a King is manifest by His crying with a loud voice as a lion roaring. This is described in Jeremiah 25:30-31. When Jesus cries with the voice of a lion, seven thunders utter their voices and John prepares to write what they have uttered. However, a voice from heaven—no doubt, God's voice—instructs John to seal up those things and write them not.

It is interesting that God does not allow John to write what the thunders uttered. Perhaps it is because we would not be able to bear them, even as Jesus told the disciples shortly before He was crucified that He had yet many things to say to them, but they could not bear them at that time (John 16:12). Whatever the reason, John did not write what the thunders uttered, so we do not know what it was. Perhaps it is more judgments that will follow before the bowls of wrath are poured out, for the word "thunder" would seem to speak of judgments. If so, they would probably be judgments that do not deal directly with the redemption of Adam's lost inheritance as contained in the little book. However, we will leave that with the Lord and not attempt to know what God has sealed!

We next see Jesus as He formally lays claim to what rightly belongs to Him by lifting up His hand to heaven and swearing by the eternal God Who created all things that there should be delay no longer. We read in Hebrews 6:13 that when God made a covenant with Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself. So for this same reason, Jesus, in our text, swears by Himself since He, along with His Father, is the Creator of all things. Daniel 12:7 gives a picture of this same scene, showing that it is now time for that final 3½ years of great tribulation to begin.

Verse 7 tells us that when the 7th angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God should be finished. This mystery is connected with Christ's taking possession of the world. Note in chapter 11:15 at the sounding of the trumpet, great voices in heaven declare, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." This was spoken of by the prophets, and is now being fulfilled. I believe that this mystery includes all that is in God's plan for the salvation of mankind and the redemption of the world. Of course, it also includes God's allowing Satan to be god of this world for a period of time, in addition to the "mystery" of Jesus' suffering and death before reigning as King over the earth.

Next, John is instructed to take the little book which is open and eat it up. At this point, John is representative of God's people, Israel; and taking the book is representative of their accepting the legal proof of their inheritance. When they eat the book, they are appropriating the inheritance which Jesus purchased for them. However, even as they are told that the book would be sweet in their mouth and bitter in their belly, when Israel begins to claim what God has given them, it will at first bring great joy. But as they actually begin to appropriate their inheritance, much bitterness and suffering awaits them—3½ years of suffering is yet to follow!

However, even though John is representative of the nation Israel at this point, the spiritual truth is also true regarding John personally. Realizing the future blessings God had for him and his people brought great joy to John's heart, and yet he went through much suffering even at the time he received this great Revelation of Jesus Christ.

This principle is also true for God's people today. In 2 Timothy 2:6 we read, "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruit." God's Word is sweet to our taste, but as we begin to appropriate this Word in our lives, suffering will follow. Again we read in 2 Timothy 3: 12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart, for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts." (Chapter

15:16) Yet Jeremiah was a man who suffered for the name of the Lord. So even though suffering is involved in following the Lord and appropriating His Word into our lives, the Apostle Paul said, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8: 18)

John was then told that he must prophesy again before many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings, and history tells us that John did this after being released from Patmos. As he represents Israel here, there will be believing Jews who will be witnessing for the Lord during the last 3½ years of the tribulation. God has always had a believing remnant on the earth, and there will be ones here all through the tribulation that will declare His Name to those around them. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

Revelation Chapter Eleven

As our chapter opens, John is given a measuring rod with instructions to "rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and them that worship therein." In 2 Thessalonians 2:4, we read of the anti-Christ sitting in the temple of God, "showing himself that he is God. And in Matthew 24:15, Jesus spoke of the abomination of desolation that will stand in the Holy Place, which is a part of the temple of God. Although Israel does not presently have a temple in their land, we realize from these references that during the Tribulation, they will have rebuilt their temple.

According to Daniel 9:27, the anti-Christ will make a firm covenant with Israel for one week (seven years). This covenant no doubt has to do with the offering of sacrifices in their temple as they did in the Old Testament times, because in the middle of that week, the anti-Christ will cause the sacrifices to cease and sit in the temple, presenting himself as God.

The temple has always been a very important part of Jewish life. In fact, it served as a focal point of their daily living. After the Israelites left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness, God gave Moses instructions to build a tabernacle from which He could communicate with His people, and from which they would offer sacrifices. This was their place of worship. Then, when they settled in the promised land, David desired to build a permanent structure, a temple, from which they could worship God with their sacrifices and offerings. However, because David was a man of war, God would not allow him to build the temple; but instead, had his son, Solomon, build it. Solomon's temple was a very large, beautiful temple. This stood for about 365 years before Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem and destroyed it.

A second temple was built by Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, about 520-515 B.C. In about 165 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, defiled this temple by ordering a sow to be offered on the altar. This temple, although much smaller and less ornate than Solomon's, stood through the years and was the focal point of Jewish life, even though there were numerous times of desecration and defilement. In 20 B.C., Herod the Great began to totally rebuild and enlarge the dimensions of the second temple. Work continued on this temple until approximately 64 A.D. It was in this temple that Jesus was dedicated shortly after His birth, and was recognized as the Messiah by Simeon and the prophetess, Anna. (Luke 2:22-38) Herod's temple was then destroyed by the Roman General, Titus in 70 A.D.

Through the years, the Jews have attempted several times to rebuild their temple. One such time was in 363 A.D., when they received permission from the Roman government for this purpose. They had stones piled, wood and other necessary materials purchased, and everything ready to begin building the next day. Suddenly, that very night, there was a great earthquake which caused the streets of Jerusalem to buckle and all of their materials were completely destroyed.

In our present day, there are several groups actively working towards the common goal of rebuilding the temple in this generation. Architectural plans for the third temple have been ready for sometime. In 1986, a group of rabbinical scholars formed "The Temple Institute" to gather necessary items for the temple, the tools of the temple, including the priests' garments. They contend that the problems Israel faces, as well as the problems that the world presently suffers, is a result of the temple's absence. However, all of this reveals Israel's continued

rejection of Jesus as the Lamb of God and their Messiah, the One Who gave Himself a sacrifice for their sins.

However, during the Tribulation, the temple will have been rebuilt, and John is told to measure it. This shows God's order. Every detail concerning the temple and its worshipers are placed under God's scrutiny and purpose. Just prior to God's judgment on Babylon, God told Belshazzar that He had numbered and weighed his kingdom and found it lacking. Therefore, judgment followed (Daniel 5). Even so, at this time in our study of Revelation, God will measure the temple, and the Israelites who profess godliness, but reject God's way of salvation, will be found lacking. Therefore, He will allow them to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles an additional 42 months (3½ years). The fact that the court which is without the temple is not measured at this time, but is given unto the Gentiles, shows that God allows the Gentiles to bring this judgment upon the Jews, fulfilling Jesus' words of Luke 21:24. The holy city refers to Jerusalem, and 42 months is the exact amount of time allotted to the anti-Christ (Revelation 13:5).

Verses 3-12 of our chapter give information concerning two men who will be witnesses for God during the first half of the week of Tribulation. These men are empowered by God to devour their enemies by fire, to prohibit rainfall during the time of their prophecy, to turn water into blood and to bring plagues on the earth whenever they desire. They are clothed in sackcloth, which is the clothing of the poor—showing that they are not interested in the wealth of this world.

Zechariah prophesied of these men as two olive trees and two lamp stands in Zechariah 4, calling them, "Two anointed ones that stand before the Lord of the whole earth." All prophecy has both a near and a far fulfillment. The near fulfillment of this prophecy was Jerubbabel and Joshua, who were the first two men to lead the remnant of Israel back to Jerusalem after the captivity in Babylon. The far fulfillment is seen in the two witnesses who will lead and help the believers of Israel at this time.

There has been much speculation as to who these two witnesses are. Many believe one of them is Elijah, fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi 4:5, and citing the fact that many of the miracles the witnesses will perform are similar to those of Elijah. As to the other witness, some think he is Enoch, because Enoch was translated without dying. Others think he is Moses come back with Elijah, because Moses was on the Mount of Transfiguration with Elijah (Matthew 17). While we cannot say for sure, I really do not believe God will bring back any of His men who have been in heaven all these years, and cause them to leave their heavenly home to live on the earth through the first 3½ years of tribulation, and then die at the hands of the anti-Christ.

Jesus said concerning Elijah's coming back that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of that prophecy (Matthew 11:13-14; 17:12-13). However, the Jews did not accept the message of John the Baptist, so God will at this time send two witnesses in the spirit and power of Elijah to fulfill His will. If John the Baptist could have been the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Elijah in Jesus' day, then another man (or two men), can be the fulfillment in the end time. God is never short of material. He has always had a remnant of true believers to do His bidding.

Why two witnesses? Both the law and the gospels call for two witnesses to establish important truths. Also, when Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the gospel, He sent them out by two's (Mark 6:7).

The miracles God allows these witnesses to perform show that God will be manifesting His power on the earth in physical and visible ways just as He did in Old Testament times. It is not until they have completed their ministry that God allows the anti-Christ, who is seen as the beast that comes out of the bottomless pit, to kill the witnesses. We will learn more of this "beast" in chapters 13 and 17. When the two witnesses are killed, they are not even given the respect of a burial; but instead, their bodies shall lie in the street of Jerusalem, which is called Sodom, because of the immorality prevalent, and Egypt, because of the materialism that will have engulfed its inhabitants. In verse 10, we read of the only time in Revelation that those that dwell on the earth will rejoice. What a terrible indictment against those who will receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, but instead will believe the lie of the anti-Christ. It appears that their dead bodies will be seen from all over the world, which would not have been possible before the invention of the television and satellites. Truly, all these things cause us to know that the coming of the Lord cannot be far off.

But notice what happens next! After 3½ days, they are resurrected from the dead and then translated up into the very presence of God while their enemies watch! Then, at the same hour (note God's perfect timing!), there is a great earthquake which causes one-tenth of the city to fall and 7,000 people to be slain. We read that the remnant that were not slain were frightened and gave glory to the God of heaven, but we don't read that they accepted His Son as their Savior at that time. How sad!

It is at this time that the second woe is said to be passed and the third woe is coming, which causes us to know that the two witnesses minister during the first half of the Tribulation. And now it is time for the 7th trumpet to be sounded. Matthew 24:14 tells us that the gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached "in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." This is what the two witnesses have been doing, and now the "end" or the last half of the Tribulation has come.

We now see the Lord taking what is rightfully His—the kingdoms of this world. This causes the 24 elders, who represent the Old Testament overcomers, to fall on their faces before God and worship Him. The four living creatures are not mentioned here because they are a heavenly kingdom, and the kingdoms of the world have to do with God's covenant to Israel.

Verse 18 again tells us the time has come to judge the unbelieving world and reward the believers. This verse takes in the last 3½ years, which is called the time of "Jacob's trouble" in Jeremiah 30:7.

Our chapter started with a temple on earth, which was not of God's will and it ends with the temple of God in heaven in which was seen the Ark of His covenant. This Ark contains God's righteous law, which has been ignored by the world. Therefore, God is right and just in the judgment which is to follow the warnings of the lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake and hail.

Revelation Chapter Twelve

The events of Revelation 12 surround two "wonders." The word "wonder" means, "A sign, indication, or token." So these wonders are signs of things the Lord wants us to understand. In chapter 11, we read of the Jews and their temple, the two witnesses in Jerusalem, the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord (which has to do with His covenant to His people, Israel), and the 24 elders, who are overcomers of Old Testament saints. These all point to God's plans for Israel. This first wonder, then, is a sign of Israelites who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah during Old Testament times, and also during the first half of the week of tribulation.

Israel is often referred to as a "woman" in the Old Testament writings, and here she is seen as a woman. In verse 1, she is seen in heaven, but in verse 2, she is on the earth travailing in birth. Part of believing Israel are already in heaven, in answer to God's promise to them of a heavenly city (Hebrews 11:16; 12:22), and part of them are on earth, as we have noted in our previous chapters.

This woman is clothed with the sun, which shows that she is a light to the entire world. In Romans 11:12, 15, the Apostle Paul tells us that the unbelief of Israel brought riches to the world by bringing salvation to the Gentiles, but that their returning to Jesus in faith will bring much more riches and blessing to the world. The moon under her feet shows that she stands in a place of victory and is a light during the night time of trials and suffering. Israel as a nation will not be this great light until the end of the Tribulation period, but those who do believe on Jesus will shine as the glory of the sun and the moon. The 12 stars upon her head no doubt refer to the 12 tribes of Israel. Note Genesis 37:9. As we read of this woman being with child and in pain to be delivered, we realize this is a time of much suffering for those on the earth, and especially for Israel.

The next wonder in heaven is a great red dragon that stands before the woman with plans to devour her child as soon as it is born. According to verse 10, this great dragon is Satan—the one who from the beginning of time has attempted to thwart God's plans for His people. Satan is called a serpent here, which is how he appeared to Eve. In the gospels, he is called the devil, which means "false accuser, or slanderer," and he is also called Satan, which means "adversary." These names give a perfect description of this evil one whose purpose is to deceive the whole world. From Adam and Eve, until the end times, Satan's great tool has been deception. That is why we are often told in scripture to "Be not deceived." How important for us to heed these warnings! "Submit yourselves, therefore, to God; Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

Referring back to the description of this great red dragon in verse 3, we see that he has 7 heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. During the Tribulation, Satan will control a league of seven nations and ten political leaders who will rule the world. We will study more about this in chapters 13 and 17.

In verse 4, we see the dragon casts 1/3 of the stars of heaven to the earth. Since this chapter is full of symbolic language, I believe the stars are also symbolic of evil angels which make up Satan's government of principalities, powers and rulers of the darkness of this world (Ephesians 6:12). Many Bible scholars believe that Satan was one of the leading angels in

heaven before he sinned against God. Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28: 1-19 seem to refer to Satan who became lifted up with pride, desiring to be as God. Therefore, God cast him out of heaven and many of the angels were also cast out with him because of sin in their hearts. God cast some of these angels down to hell, (2 Peter 2:4), but some were cast down to the lower heavens with Satan, which has been their abode all these years. But now at the middle of the week of tribulation, Satan casts his angels to the earth, on which they will wreck much havoc. Then the woman gives birth to a manchild. The word "man" means "manly, or brave and noble," and the word "child" shows relationship rather than maturity. This manchild will rule all nations with a rod of iron. It is said of Jesus (Revelation 19:15) that He will rule the nations with a rod of iron, which He will do. However, it is also said of the overcomers of the church of Thyatira that they will have power over the nations and will rule them with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:27). And now we read that the manchild will rule with a rod of iron. We realize from these references that Jesus will be the supreme Ruler, but there will be others under Him ruling in a lesser place of authority, which is what is indicated here. Then the manchild is said to be caught up unto God and His throne. This seems to be a "translation", that is, being caught up to God without having to go through death.

The question then arises—just who is this manchild? Many people believe the answer is Jesus—the woman being Israel, and Israel giving birth to Jesus. However, these happenings have to do with the middle of the Tribulation period, not 2,000 years ago; and, while it is true that Satan attempted to destroy Jesus when He was born as a Baby and throughout His time on earth, it is also true that Satan has attempted to destroy all of God's people, especially the Jews, and he will continue to do so until he is chained and cast into the bottomless pit. So now we see him attempt to destroy this group of believing Jews which is being represented here by the manchild.

Revelation 7 records the sealing of 144,000 Jews during the first half of the Tribulation. This was a special people and God protected them from many of the judgments by having His name put on their foreheads. We again see this group in chapter 14:1-5. At that time, they are in heaven before the throne of God, singing a song of redemption, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. As we studied in chapter 7, the fact that they are called "firstfruits" shows that they are the first ones to believe out of the nation Israel during this time. (Israel will turn to the Lord as a nation at the end of the Tribulation.) They are described as having no guile and being without fault before God, fitting the description in chapter 12 of being "manly." Sometime between chapters 7 and 14, this group of 144,000 overcomers of the nation Israel in the last days will go up into heaven, and I believe this explains the manchild being born of the woman in chapter 12 and then being caught up to God and to His throne.

After this, the woman, who represents believing Jews on the earth during the last half of the Tribulation, flees into the wilderness where God has prepared a place for her to hide from the terrible persecutions the anti-Christ will bring to those who profess Christ. God will miraculously feed and provide for her during the last 3½ years of tribulation. This reminds us of how God fed the children of Israel in the wilderness with manna from heaven and took care of them for 40 years during Moses' time. Our Lord has not changed! He is the same God today as He was in that day. Praise His name!

Verse 7 tells of a war that will be waged in heaven at this time between Michael and good angels and Satan and his evil angels. Michael will win this battle and will cast Satan and his

angels out into the earth. This will bring great rejoicing in heaven because the "accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night," Even though Satan's abode has been in the lower heavens all these years, he has still been allowed to go before the throne of God and bring accusations against God's people, even as he did in the time of Job. (Job 1:6-11)

Notice how Satan is overcome in verse 11 of our chapter. First, he is overcome by the blood of the Lamb. How marvelous that when Satan attempts to discourage us or bring defeat into our lives because of things we have done (or not done), we can say, "Get behind me, Satan, for I stand covered by the blood of Jesus." Then, Satan can be overcome by the word of our testimony. We can speak to others of the wonderful grace of God, and Satan has to flee. And, lastly, we can overcome him by being willing to give up our lives. Jesus said, "If you save your life, you will lose it, but if you will lose your life for Jesus' sake, you will save it." (Mark 8:35) Satan is a defeated foe and we can walk in victory even now!

However, even though there is rejoicing in heaven, the earth will not share in it. In fact, the reason for the third woe is given here: "For the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time." When he is cast into the earth, he loses no time before he begins to persecute the woman which brought forth the manchild. But at this time God miraculously protects her and helps her flee into the wilderness where He provides for her for 3½ years, or until the end of the Tribulation. Satan will attempt to destroy her as she flees by sending a flood of water after her, but the earth will swallow up the flood and she will be saved. Then Satan, still full of wrath at the woman, looks for other believers to vent his wrath upon, and he finds them in the "remnant of her seed." So there are still others on the earth who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, but will not be miraculously protected from the rage of Satan.

I believe we have a hint in this chapter, of ranks in Israel. The 144,000 will be translated before the last half of tribulation begins. The woman who gave birth to the manchild remains on the earth, but is protected during the last half of tribulation. And then another group, the remnant of her seed, is on the earth and not protected from the wrath of Satan during this time. Instead, they are probably martyred for their faith, and may be the ones of chapter 15 who stand on the sea of glass in heaven, praising the Lamb of God for His great and marvelous works.

Chapter 12 gives details concerning events right at the middle of the week of tribulation. This will be an awesome time. It is the time that Jesus spoke of when He said, "For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:21, 22) This is also the time when the anti-Christ will put himself up as God and will demand that all on the earth worship him. We will learn more of him and his terrible works in our next chapter.

Revelation Chapter Thirteen

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24: 23, 24) The 13th chapter of Revelation is a fulfillment of Jesus' words of warning in these verses. As John stands in spirit upon the sand of the sea, he sees a beast rise up out of the sea, having 7 heads and 10 horns and upon his horns 10 crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. We realize immediately that this description is a continuation of the symbolic language which was used in the previous chapter.

This beast reminds us of the four beasts which Daniel saw rise out of the sea, as recorded in Daniel 7. There, the four beasts represented four mighty kingdoms, with the anti-Christ coming from the last of these kingdoms, and seen as the "little horn." In our present chapter of Revelation, the beast described is the kingdom of the anti-Christ and his rule over it. This same beast is seen in Revelation 17.

In Isaiah 57:20, we read, "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The description of the "waters" of Revelation 17:15 is "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." So this beast rising up out of the sea is a picture of the anti-Christ rising up from the wicked political powers of the world. The 7 heads are a league of 7 nations that will be in power during the first half of the Tribulation, and the 10 horns are 10 powerful leaders who will have great authority even though they do not rule as kings. The horns speak of power, and the name of blasphemy upon the heads denotes the very worst kind of slander against the name of the Lord. The beastly characteristics of the ruling nations at the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles will be manifest in these political powers at the end of the Times of the Gentiles.

These beastly characteristics are seen in the further description of this beast, which is said to be like a leopard. This no doubt has reference to the leopard-like kingdom of Daniel's vision which represented the nation of Greece with its swiftness in conquering the world at that time. Even so, the anti-Christ will conquer swiftly when he begins his conquests. The feet of the beast were as the feet of a bear. Just as the bear of Daniel's vision represented Medo-Persia, which was well known for its cruelty, the anti-Christ and his kingdom will trample everything and everyone in their pathway. The mouth as the mouth of a lion shows the terror and devouring policies that will come from this beast, even as Babylon was represented by a lion in Daniel 7. Babylon had supreme control over all the world and brought fear and destruction to many. This will also be true of the anti-Christ and his kingdom throughout the 7 years of tribulation, but most especially during the last half of this time.

How could one man have such power, be so cruel, and yet have the whole world follow after him? Because it is the dragon (or Satan) who will give him his power and his throne and great authority. Remember Satan tempted Jesus by telling Him if He would bow down and worship Satan that he would give to Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" (Matthew 4:8-9). Jesus did not in any manner give place to Satan's taunts; but the anti-Christ, the man of sin, will become a puppet in Satan's hands, to do his bidding and bring destruction to the world. Jesus prophesied of this when He said, "The thief cometh not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy ... " (John 10:10)

"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." (Revelation 13:3) "One of his heads" speaks of the anti-Christ. During the first half of the tribulation, the anti-Christ will be one of the 7 political leaders. However, in comparing this chapter with Revelation 17, it appears there will be a war around the middle of the Tribulation. It is probably during this war that the anti-Christ will receive a deadly wound. At this time, evil spirits from the bottomless pit will enter into him and bring him back to life, controlling him completely. (Revelation 17:8) His coming back to life (a counterfeit of Jesus' resurrection) will cause the entire world to wonder after him and worship him. They will also worship Satan, who has given the anti-Christ his authority. So Satan will finally have what he has sought after ever since he rebelled against God—the worship that belongs only to God! Never before has God allowed Satan to give life to anyone. However, He will at this time allow him to do this. I believe the reason for this is found in the fact that the people "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) However, the anti-Christ's time is limited to exactly 42 months, or 3 1/2 years. God is still in control!

In verse 6 of our chapter, the anti-Christ is said to blaspheme God, His name, His dwelling place, and His people. He is truly a wicked man, ruled by Satan, and yet the world is deceived into believing that he is God, just as Jesus warned against in Matthew 24. During this time, many believers will be slain because of their refusal to bow down and worship the anti-Christ.

Verse 8 tells us that Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain from the foundation of the world. This is wonderful assurance that none of these events of the Tribulation is a surprise to God. He knew from before the world was created exactly what would occur, and He had everything planned out in order for His will to come to pass. He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and a God of love. Therefore, we can leave all things in His hands, knowing that His way is perfect! And when the exact time the Lord has allotted to the anti-Christ comes to an end, he who has taken people into captivity shall go into captivity, and he that has killed with the sword must be killed with the sword. This is the encouragement to God's people who are still on the earth during this terrible time.

Verse 11 introduces us to another beast, this one coming up out of the earth. This beast represents the third person of Satan's counterfeit trinity. Just as there is a Trinity in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—the counterfeit trinity is Satan, the anti-Christ, and the false prophet. The fact that this beast comes out of the earth shows he will come from the people of the earth—that is, non-political mankind, in contrast to the first beast that will come from the political nations. Satan is the god of the earth, and he empowers this man just as he does the anti-Christ. This beast is described as, "like a lamb." A lamb is a tame animal. He appears meek and harmless, and yet his words are those of a dragon (Satan). He has two horns, showing that he and the anti-Christ are the only prominent leaders at this time.

This second beast represents the false prophet, a religious man who will exalt the anti-Christ, even as the Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself, but exalts Jesus Christ (John 16:13, 14). Satan will empower the false prophet to do great miracles and thus deceive the world. Jesus spoke of an "abomination of desolation" that will stand in the holy place (Matthew 24:15). I believe this refers to the image of the anti-Christ that the false prophet will have the people

make. He will demand that everyone worship this image or face death. He will cause that image to speak and seem to have life. This reminds us of the image King Nebuchadnezzar made, no doubt of himself. He then ordered everyone to bow down and worship his image or be thrown into a burning fiery furnace (Daniel 3). The same death penalty, although by a sword instead of fire, will be given to those who will not worship the image of the anti-Christ.

This false prophet will also cause everyone on earth to receive a mark in their right hand or in their forehead. No one will be able to buy or sell unless they have the mark or the name of the anti-Christ, or the number of his name. This is probably an attempt to duplicate the sealing of the 144,000 servants of God which we read about in chapters 7 and 14. That group had God's name written in their foreheads, showing that they belonged to Him. So now the anti-Christ demands all people have his name or his mark written in their right hand or forehead to show allegiance to him. A few years ago, we could not understand just how this could be implemented to include everyone in the world. However, with the invention of the computer, it is easy to see how this could be accomplished. Even the image that will be made to speak will no doubt be a computerized robot that will look and seem to be alive. Every day there seems to be new technology that helps us understand more of these details of prophecy. An angel told Daniel that in the time of the end, "Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased." Surely we are getting closer and closer to the time of the coming of the Lord.

However, chapter 14:9-11 tells us of the terrible results of those who are willing to worship this image and take his mark in their hands or foreheads. The people will be faced with a decision to either avoid suffering and death for a short while by acquiescing to the demands of the anti-Christ, which will result in eternity in the lake of fire; or if they decide not to obey him, they will face the immediate death of their body, but will spend eternity in the presence of the Lord. There will be believers on the earth during this time, but no believer will worship the anti-Christ or take his mark. God will give them the strength needed to choose martyrdom instead.

The number of the anti-Christ is 666, which is the number of a man. Much has been theorized as to the meaning of 666. Many have attempted to identify the anti-Christ by equating this number with the names of different men, from Adolf Hitler to Ronald Reagan, among many others! However, I believe the real meaning of this number is yet to be understood. Suffice it to say, "6" is the number of man, and this number is applied to the counterfeit of the perfect Trinity. The number "7" stands for perfection. In God's time, we will understand the full meaning of 666.

It will be right at the middle of the Tribulation that Satan will empower these two men, the anti-Christ and false prophet, to do his bidding; and thus will begin the greatest time of trouble this world has ever known. In verse 4 of this chapter, we see the great military power the anti-Christ will have. In verse 7, his great political power is seen. Verse 8 shows the religious power that is his, and verses 16-17 show the great economic power he will have. However, all of this will come to a definite end after the exact number of 1260 days that God has allotted to him. At God's appointed time, He will cast both the anti-Christ and the false prophet into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone (Revelation 19:20). Then the true Christ, the Lamb of God, will set up His throne and reign forever and ever. What a glorious hope for every believer!

Remember, these seven years are referred to in Daniel 9:27 as the last week of his vision of 70 weeks which were decreed for the nation Israel.

Revelation Chapter Fourteen

This chapter has six main points to consider:

1. Scene of the 144,000 with the Lamb, vs. 1-5
2. Preaching of the gospel by an angel, vs. 6-7
3. Judgment pronounced on Babylon, v. 8
4. Judgment pronounced on those who worship the anti-Christ, vs. 9-11
5. Comfort for believers, vs. 12-13
6. Preview of Armageddon, vs. 14-20

The scene of the 144,000 standing with the Lamb on Mt. Zion is a heavenly scene. The highest mountain of Jerusalem was named Zion, and thus the name Zion was often used in Biblical writings to designate the city of Jerusalem. The writer of Hebrews said, "You are come unto Mt. Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels ..." (Hebrews 12:22) It is obvious from the text that the Mt. Zion of our chapter indicates the heavenly city.

I believe this group of 144,000 is the same group we studied about in chapter 7 and again in chapter 12 (the manchild). They were sealed in chapter 7 for protection from the judgments coming on the earth at that time. In chapter 12, they are translated from earth to heaven. And now they have taken their place before the throne of God, playing harps (the musical instrument of heaven!) and singing a song that only they could learn. Obviously, this is a very special group of believers who have both the Lamb's name and His Father's name written in their foreheads. The description of this group as not being defiled with women, but being virgins, indicates their purity. I don't believe this means that the 144,000 will be made up of men only; but, as the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:2), "... I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." That reference uses the word "virgin" to indicate holiness and purity, and I believe this is also inferred here concerning the 144,000. It is also said that they follow the Lamb wherever He goes, showing their commitment and dedication to Jesus.

Then they are called the "firstfruits unto God and the Lamb." As we have noted in our previous studies, this identifies the 144,000 as the overcomers of the nation Israel, which will be "born in a day," accepting Jesus as their Messiah. Zechariah tells of this in Zechariah 12:10: "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." Also, note Jeremiah 31: 33: "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Israel, as a nation, will recognize Jesus as their Messiah at the end of the Tribulation when Jesus comes back in power and great glory. However, individual Israelites who accept Him before that time and "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" will be the "firstfruits" and will have a special place in heaven before the throne of God.

It is further stated that "in their mouth was found no guile." This is in direct contrast to the lies of the anti-Christ that will abound on the earth during this time. Then it is also said that they are without fault. They are truly an overcoming group of believers at that time.

Verse 6 introduces the first of six angels who do God's bidding. We are still, in point of time, at the middle of the Tribulation. The anti-Christ, along with the false prophet, has gained ascendancy over all the earth, with Satan giving them great power. They have no doubt attempted to silence the gospel from being preached—but the gospel of God cannot be silenced! It was angels that announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds, and God will once again have an angel preach to all who dwell on the earth, telling them the good news of Salvation, and warning of the judgment that is to come. He will admonish them to worship God Who made the heaven, earth and seas, instead of worshiping the anti-Christ and his image. This is a fulfillment of 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."

Next, the fall of Babylon is announced by another angel. We will study more about this in chapter 17, but Babylon here refers to religious Babylon, or the false church. During the first half of the Tribulation, there will be a large ecclesiastical system that will have great power over all the earth. This system, known as the false church, will be exceedingly wicked and will cause all nations to partake of her wickedness. However, at the middle of the Tribulation, the anti-Christ will see that the false church is completely destroyed, in order to make room for himself to be revered as God.

Then, the third angel follows with a loud voice (so all can hear), warning of the consequences of worshiping the anti-Christ or receiving His mark. It is said that those who do so shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, bringing eternal torment, "in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." The unbelievers of chapter 6:16 cried out for the mountains and rocks to hide them from the face of God and from the wrath of the Lamb, but these cannot be hidden and the smoke of their torment will ascend up forever and ever. There is an eternal hell! Jesus told us in Matthew 25:41 that it is an everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. It never was prepared for mankind. But when people refuse to accept God's warnings and deliberately choose to reject the salvation that Jesus suffered and died to provide, then their eternal destiny will be with the devil and his angels in the lake of fire. Verse 11 says, "they have no rest day nor night." Compare verse 13, which describes those who die in the Lord: "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they might rest from their labors."

In verses 12 and 13, we again have words of comfort for those believers who have to suffer during this time of terrible tribulation; "Here is the patience (or a bearing up under, patient endurance) of the saints." Many believers will be martyred for their faith, but they are far more blessed than the ones who choose to worship the anti-Christ. The believers will receive eternal glory, and the unbelievers, eternal damnation.

The remainder of this chapter describes the judgments that are still to come upon the world because of man's rejection of God. The One Who sits on the white cloud is Jesus, the Son of man. John 5:27 says that God the Father has given His Son authority to execute judgment "because He is the Son of man." That is, because Jesus became a man, took upon Him the sin of the world, paid the penalty for that sin by His death on the cross; therefore, He has authority to execute judgment upon those who reject what He so freely offers to all: salvation. So now

that rejection is complete, and the harvest of the earth is ripe. That is, all nations of the earth are ripe for judgment; their wickedness has reached its fullness. However, note the fact that even at this point when Jesus is ready with His sharp sickle to reap the earth, He still awaits for God's command (which comes from the fourth angel) before acting.

The fifth angel comes out of the temple, directly from the presence of God, ready to assist in bringing the judgments. Then the sixth angel comes from the altar. We studied about this altar in chapter 8:3-5. At that time, an angel took a censer, filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth. This was followed by the 7 trumpet judgments. So here we again see an angel having authority over fire, and he cries to the angel before him to thrust his sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, "for her grapes are fully ripe." Following this action will be the 7 bowls of wrath which will be poured out upon the earth during the last 3½ years of tribulation.

The vine of the earth no doubt refers directly to Israel. Israel is called a vine, or vineyard in Isaiah 5; Hosea 10:1, and other references. The fully ripe grapes show that the fruit of Israel's wickedness has come to its full fruition. This vine will be cast into the "great winepress of the wrath of God, and the winepress was trodden without the city... "What resistance do ripe grapes have against the treading of man? This is the picture portrayed by these examples. This is described in Isaiah 63:1-6 and Isaiah. 34: 1-8.

The winepress is said to be trodden "without the city." The city is Jerusalem. Chapter 16:16 gives the location as Armageddon. Armageddon means, "Hill of Megiddo," and is located about fifty miles NW of Jerusalem. Joel speaks of the "Valley of Jehoshaphat" which is the same as the Kidron Valley, located just SE of Jerusalem. "Bozrah" is named by Isaiah as the place where the Lord treads the winepress. Bozrah is in Edam, which is SE of Jerusalem. Between Megiddo and Bozrah is approximately 175 miles, or 1600 furlongs.

Verse 20 says that blood will come even to the horse bridles. This seems impossible to imagine, but when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, so great was the bloodshed that the historian, Josephus, said the whole city ran down with blood to such a degree that the fires of many of the houses were quenched by it. And that destruction was just a small foretaste of how it will be when all the nations of the world are gathered together to fight against Israel. Read Zechariah 14:1-6. This describes what is known as the Battle of Armageddon, which will be the culmination of God's wrath poured out upon a Christ-rejecting world. Jesus Himself will come and fight for His people at this time. Oh, that men would give heed to God's call today and accept His plan of salvation!

Revelation Chapter Fifteen

Chapter 15 opens as John views another sign in heaven: seven angels have the seven last plagues. This sign relates back to the two signs he saw in chapter 12. The first one represented believing Israel and God's dealings with her during the Tribulation. The second sign represented Satan and his empire as it will be manifest during the Tribulation; and this third and last sign represents the full wrath of God which will be poured out as His final judgment upon the world. This sign is described as "great and marvelous," which indicates that the mighty judgments to follow will be awesome and astonishing. These seven last plagues which will be poured upon the earth cover the last 3½ years of Tribulation. This is called the "great tribulation" in Matthew 24:21.

Next, John saw a sea of glass mingled with fire. This is the same sea of glass mentioned in chapter 4:6, and is a reminder of the purity of all who stand here. It is the answer to the laver of the Tabernacle in which the priests washed their hands and feet before ministering in the Tabernacle. In the heavenly scene, it is a sea of glass rather than of water, because there is no more need for continual cleansing in heaven. There is no defilement there.

The fire mentioned here no doubt refers to the suffering this group of believers went through while on the earth. They have gotten the victory over the beast, his image, his mark and the number of his name—meaning they refused to bow down to him or give allegiance to him. Therefore, even though they endured suffering and martyrdom at his hand, they now stand in victory and sing praises to God. They are probably the remnant of the seed of the woman in the wilderness (chapter 12: 17), and also the "blessed ones" of chapter 14: 13. They have harps of God to play as accompaniment to their voices as they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

The song of Moses is recorded in Exodus 15. It is a song of victory that Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord after He gave them victory over Pharaoh (type of the anti-Christ) and his army by taking them through the sea. The ones of whom we read here in Revelation were victorious over the anti-Christ even though they had to go through death. They now stand on the sea in heaven, which indicates complete and eternal victory. This is only possible because of Jesus' sacrifice as the Lamb of God; hence, they also sing the song of the Lamb. They acknowledge God as being just and true even though they have been martyred. Their praise to Him is beautiful! They had witnessed all nations worshiping the anti-Christ, but they affirm here that all nations will one day worship the real King. "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." (Philippians 2:9-11)

After this time of worship in heaven, John beheld the heavenly temple of the tabernacle of the testimony opened. This was mentioned in chapter 11:19, and is at the same period of time, chapters 10-14 being a parenthesis that explains conditions and events surrounding the judgments that will come upon the world. The temple of God in heaven is the answer to the Holy of Holies in Moses' tabernacle in the wilderness. The ark was placed in the Holy of Holies, and the tables of law were placed in the ark. Moses' tabernacle was just a figure of the

true (Hebrews 9:24). Therefore the heavenly temple of the tabernacle of the testimony is a witness against the world of their direct disobedience of God's holy law. The very first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Then the next, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.....thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them." (Exodus 20:3-5) God is certainly just and true in all His ways!

So John saw seven angels come out of the temple, clothed in pure and white linen. Linen, in scripture, always indicates righteousness. Just who are these angels? In chapter 21:9, one of these angels told John he would show him the bride, the Lamb's wife, and the angel then showed John the holy city, New Jerusalem. Then note chapter 22:8-9, where we read that John fell down to worship this angel, who immediately said, "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." From these scriptures, we understand that these angels are not some of God's spiritual created beings, but rather, they are believers who minister as priests from the Most Holy place and agree with God in these judgments. That is why their breasts are girded with golden girdles, showing mercy is being restrained at this time. The overcomers of the church, depicted as the four living creatures, also assist with these judgments. (Note 1 Corinthians 6:2)

Verse 8 tells us that the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power. Smoke is often connected with the glory of God, and His glory is manifest here even at the time of judgment. In fact, divine judgment proceeds from His glory and holiness. The fact that no man was able to enter into the temple till the 7 plagues are fulfilled indicates that no one will be able to enter the temple to make intercession during the time of the Great Tribulation. This is truly an awesome 3½ years.

Revelation Chapter Sixteen

"He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Proverbs 29: 1)

Revelation 15 is an introduction to this chapter, which introduces the 7 bowls of the wrath of God. These mark the completion of God's judgment upon the world. So now a "great voice out of the temple," no doubt God's voice, gives instructions for the 7 angels to pour out these bowls upon the earth. The word "great" is found 11 times in this chapter, indicating the magnitude of these judgments. I believe that these bowls of wrath will overlap each other. They probably do not begin immediately after the anti-Christ becomes the ruler of all nations, which will occur at the middle of the Tribulation, as he will have a period of time in which to implement his demand for everyone to receive his name or his mark. Also, the false prophet will have the image of the anti-Christ made at this time, and the declaration will have gone out that everyone must bow down and worship his image or be killed. Then will follow the preaching of the gospel by an angel to all that dwell on the earth. He will warn of the judgment to come and encourage the people to worship God instead of the anti-Christ.

Sometime after these events, the first bowl of wrath will be poured upon the earth, which will cause all who have accepted the mark of the anti-Christ or have worshipped his image to have terrible sores, like boils, to fall upon them. This reminds us of the boils the Lord brought upon Pharaoh and the people in the land of Egypt because of their rebellion during Moses' time. (Exodus 9:9-11) It is interesting that God exempts the believers that are on the earth at this time from this awful judgment. This also parallels God's protection of the children of Israel from some of the judgments He brought upon Egypt. (Exodus 8:22-23) What a wonderful manifestation of His mercy and grace in this dark hour of judgment! Those who consent to worship the anti-Christ in order to escape death will have untold suffering to endure and eventual death, resulting in an eternity spent in the lake of fire. How true is Jesus' statement of Matthew 16:25, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

The second angel pours his bowl upon the sea and it becomes blood as of a dead man. When the second trumpet sounded (Chapter 8:8-9), one-third of the sea became blood and one-third of the creatures in the sea died. Now all of the sea is involved and every living thing will die.

Then the third angel pours his bowl upon the rivers and springs, causing them to turn to blood. Again, we are reminded of the judgments God brought upon Egypt when He turned their waters into blood (Exodus 7:20-21). Just as the judgments of those days were literal, even so these will be literal. Some people have attempted to spiritualize these things—one says they represent one thing, and another says they represent something else. But if we cannot take the Bible to mean what it says, then it is anybody's guess as to the interpretation. However, I believe these verses mean just what they say—all the water will become blood. And can you imagine the chaos this will bring to the entire world? There will be panic, sickness, disease, and mass confusion when water, the basic element of man's existence is turned to blood!

At that time, John hears the angel proclaim the righteousness of the eternal God as He gives blood to drink to those who have shed the blood of saints and prophets. Then another voice from the altar, the place of Jesus' sacrifice which the world has rejected, also affirms God's

righteousness in all these judgments. Jesus' blood was shed, and the blood of saints and prophets have been shed for the name of Jesus, so now it is right that God gives them blood to drink. Let no one even begin to think that God is unfair in these judgments!

Verse 5 tells us that God has an angel who has charge of the waters. Chapter 14: 18 speaks of an angel who has power over fire. It appears from these references and others, that God has assigned specific tasks to individual angels to do His bidding. He is a God of order.

Next, the fourth bowl of wrath will be poured out upon the sun, which will scorch men with fire from its heat. This will cause the worst cases of sunburn ever experienced. This terrible heat from the sun follows the waters being turned to blood, so men will already be experiencing terrible thirst, which will only get worse as the sun gets hotter. But even though they realize it is God Who has power over these plagues, instead of repenting and giving Him the glory due Him, they blaspheme His name!

Next, the fifth angel pours his bowl upon the throne of the anti-Christ, and his kingdom will be thrown into complete darkness. It appears that this darkness is limited to the sphere of the kingdom of the anti-Christ; so now, along with such pain that men gnaw their tongues, there is also the fear and panic that comes from complete darkness. Zephaniah 1:15 describes this: "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." And yet, instead of calling out to the true God in repentance, these men blaspheme Him. Mankind hasn't changed from the time of Pharaoh, for each succeeding judgment on the land of Egypt just caused Pharaoh's heart to become more and more hardened, even as will be true with the anti-Christ and his followers in the end time.

The sixth bowl of wrath is poured upon the river, Euphrates, causing its waters to dry up, to provide the way for the kings. This river is about 1800 miles long, is the eastern border of the land God gave to Abraham, and is a natural barrier between the East and the West. In Moses' time, God dried up the Red Sea for Israel's protection. Now, He will dry up this great river for their judgment!

In Zechariah 14:2, we read that all nations will be gathered against Jerusalem to battle. This will come to pass because of three frog-like unclean spirits that come from Satan, the anti-Christ, and the false prophet. These evil spirits will go forth unto the leaders of the whole world, and work miracles before them. This will result in their consent to come together to fight against Israel. This is not the first time God has allowed lying spirits to persuade kings to go where God wanted them to go—note 1 Kings 22: 19-23.

In verse 15, Jesus again warns that He will come as a thief. When the nations gather for this battle, they will not expect Jesus to come and fight against them. His coming will be sudden and unexpected. We will learn more about His coming at this time in chapter 19:11-20. The pronouncement of blessing to those who watch and keep their garments relates back to Old Testament times when Israel's temple guards would fall asleep. The High Priest would silently enter, slip off their priestly garments, and leave them to awaken with shame. In chapter 3: 18, Jesus counsels those who were lukewarm to buy white raiment that they might be clothed and that the shame of their nakedness would not appear. In other words, they needed to be clothed

with the righteousness of Christ. This is one last call to any who would believe, before the final judgment.

So now all the nations will be gathered together into a place called Armageddon, or the Mountain Of Megiddo. There are four places in scripture connected with the war of Armageddon:

1. Mountain Of Megiddo; Revelation 16: 16. This is NW of Jerusalem.
2. Valley of Jehoshaphat; Joel 3:2. This is a valley near Jerusalem which extends East of Jerusalem, across the Jordan River and then northward.
3. Bozrah and Idumea (Edom); Isaiah 34:6. Located SE of Jerusalem.
4. Jerusalem and Judah; Zechariah 12:2, 3 & 14:2-5.

This war will no doubt be fought from the Mountain Of Megiddo down to Bozrah and Idumea in Edom, but it will culminate in the city of Jerusalem when the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations. Zechariah 14:4 tells us that His feet will stand upon the Mt. Of Olives, which will cleave in the middle toward the east and toward the west. Half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south. This is probably the same time of the great earthquake which will cause the great city, Jerusalem, to be divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations to fall. This will include the great city of Babylon, which had become the commercial center of the world. This marks the end of the Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21: 24). The Times of the Gentiles started with Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in approximately 606 BC, and they will end with Babylon when the anti-Christ is in power. This mighty earthquake will be worse than any earthquake that has ever occurred, and will even cause every island to flee away and the mountains to disappear.

This is all the result of the 7th angel who pours out his bowl of wrath into the air, followed by a great voice out of the temple of heaven—probably the voice of God—saying, “It is done.” When Jesus completed His work of redemption on the cross, He cried out, “It is finished.” Now, at the completion of judgment upon a world that has rejected Jesus' work of redemption, the words, “It is done” are spoken.

Then great hail, each stone weighing about 114 pounds, will fall on the men who blaspheme God. Under the law, God told Moses that if anyone blasphemed the name of the Lord, that person should be stoned to death. Now God Himself sends stones from heaven upon the men who blaspheme Him. This was prophesied in the oldest book of the Bible, Job. He said, “Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?” But men continue to blaspheme!

The sixth and seventh bowls of wrath will be poured out right at the end of the Tribulation period. They describe the battle of that great day of God Almighty and the events surrounding it.

Revelation Chapter Seventeen

In previous chapters, we have noticed the unholy trinity, the counterfeit of the real: Satan, the anti-Christ, and the false prophet. These three attempt to take the place of God the Father, Jesus the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. In our present chapter, we have another counterfeit, the false church, which is an imitation of the true church of God. The true church is called Jerusalem in Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22, and Revelation 3:12. The false church is known as Babylon in Jeremiah 51:13 and Revelation 17. The woman that represents the false church is called "mystery Babylon" because she represents a great religious system rather than a literal city.

The meaning of the word Babylon is "confusion." Genesis 11 tells us of the confusion that was brought in that city when the people there decided to "build a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." This was man's first attempt at organized religion that was dependent upon man's works rather than upon God. So God caused them all to speak different languages, and thus scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth!

Babylon was the seat of idolatry, astrology, superstition, and every evil and immoral act. As such, it is a perfect example of the false church that will have great power over the world during the first half of the seven years' tribulation. During this time, there will be a joining of many of the cults and false religions of today. I believe we have seen the beginnings of this union over the past few years. There has been a great push for unity among the different denominations in Christianity, as well as attempts at unity between the Catholic Church and liberal Protestantism, along with more dialog and union between the Catholic Church and Muslims, Judaism and many others. This will evolve into a one-world religious system which will preside over all nations and peoples of the world during the first 3 ½ years of tribulation.

This religious system is called the "great whore" and "mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." This name is given to her because of the great wickedness that will come from her. She is seen "sitting upon many waters," and verse 15 explains that the waters are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues, teaching us that the false church will preside over all nations and peoples of the world at that time.

According to verse 2, the rulers of the nations will be joined to this great religious system—a joining of church and state—and the inhabitants of the earth will be intoxicated and spell-bound by her influence. This state of affairs has been true for many years in the Middle East. Islam has ruled many of the countries in that region, as the most important factor in everything from business to education and government. Also, it is a well-known fact that the Catholic Church has much power with governments. In 1984, the U.S. restored full diplomatic relationships with the Vatican and appointed an ambassador there. So the world is being prepared for this kind of a union.

Verse 3 tells us the angel carried John in spirit into the wilderness, a type of spiritual barrenness, and he saw this woman sitting upon, or presiding over, the beast that we studied about in chapter 13, or the anti-Christ. This also reminds us of the great red dragon of chapter 12. Satan, the anti-Christ, and the false prophet all work together during this time, influencing the seven nations and ten influential leaders who will be in power.

The woman is clothed in colors of royalty, having great riches and grandeur, yet holding a golden cup full of abominations and filth, which depicts the wickedness, corruption, and debauchery that will be coming from her. Isaiah 47 gives an apt and terrible picture of this great religious system that will have such power for a short while. According to verse 6, this false church will cause many Christians—ones who refuse to give allegiance to her—to be martyred and she will revel at the blood that is shed from them.

Next, the angel begins to explain to John the mystery of the woman, beginning with information concerning the beast she was riding on, which was the anti-Christ. In chapter 13, we learned that the anti-Christ will receive a deadly wound, resulting in his death, but he will come back to life again, causing the entire world to wonder after him. Verse 8 of our present chapter tells us that this man "was" (he was alive), and "is not" (he is killed), and "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit." That is, at his death, his spirit will descend into the bottomless pit, which is full of demons, and when he comes back to life, he will ascend out of the pit, no doubt indwelt by many of these demons. This will cause the unbelievers that dwell on the earth to wonder, or marvel, at this man, which will give him great glory.

We are also told that the anti-Christ will go into "perdition." Perdition is the place of final judgment on all sinners, or the lake of fire. So this verse gives us a view of the anti-Christ from his rise to power and acceptance by most of the world until his eternal damnation. The mountains of verse 9 refer to nations. (Nations are often referred to as "mountains" in scripture).

To better understand verses 10, & 11, we need to refer to a portion of scripture in Daniel 7. There, Daniel relates a dream in which he saw four wild beasts. These beasts represent four world empires. The last of these beasts had ten horns, which represent ten kingdoms that will be prominent kingdoms in the world at the time of the end. The "end" speaks of the end of Gentile times. As Daniel considered these ten horns, another little horn came up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked up. This little horn is the anti-Christ, as explained in verse 24. So when the anti-Christ comes on the scene at the beginning of the seven years' tribulation, he will subdue three of the ten kingdoms, leaving seven that will rule, the anti-Christ being one of the seven.

Daniel 11:40-43 names six kingdoms besides the one that the anti-Christ rules over. And while I cannot say with certainty, I believe that the ones named here could very likely be six of the seven kingdoms that will make up this league of nations in the end time. Look at these verses. The king of the South refers to Egypt; the king of the North is Syria; the glorious land refers to Israel; Edam, Moab, and Ammon make up what we know as Jordan; and Lybia and Ethiopia are named also. So there we have six of the nations and the anti-Christ will rule over the seventh. The king mentioned in verse 36 is the anti-Christ, and verses 40-43 describe a battle in which he conquers five of these nations. Jordan is the only one that will escape out of his hand.

Now let's return to verses 10 & 11 of our chapter in Revelation. I believe this same battle is described. As we have before noted, during the first half of the Tribulation, there will be a league of seven nations that will be world rulers who will be controlled to a great degree by the false church. However, at the middle of the Tribulation, there will be a battle in which five of these kingdoms will fall. The anti-Christ will be killed, then come back to life, and continue

to rule for a "short space" or 3 ½ years. That is the meaning in verse 11 of his being one of the seven, but is now the eighth. And again we are told that he will go into perdition!

However, after this battle, and after being raised from the dead, the anti-Christ will quickly become the world ruler. The ten powerful leaders, seen as the ten horns, will have much power and authority and will give all of their power to the anti-Christ. This will be a time of one-world government, with the leaders being of one mind. They will have such strength that they will ultimately even attempt to fight against Jesus Christ when He comes with His saints, at the end of the Tribulation. Notice the imagery here of a beast with ten horns fighting against a lamb—and the Lamb wins the battle because He is Lord of lords and King of kings!

Verses 16 & 17 bring us back to the beginning of the reign of the anti-Christ as world ruler at the middle of the Tribulation. He will use the false church to unite the people of the world, as well as the world leaders, into a unity that only religion can bring. Then, after achieving his objective through her, he will turn on her and the ten powerful men who work with him will destroy her, creating opportunity for the anti-Christ to exalt himself as God (II Thessalonians 2:4). However, neither these men nor the anti-Christ realize that they are just doing what is God's will! He is sovereign and is in complete control over all things.

The "great city" of verse 18 is Babylon, which shows that the headquarters of the false church will be in Babylon until she is destroyed.

Revelation Chapter Eighteen

"...and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." (Revelation 16:19)

Revelation 18 describes the fulfillment of the above verse. The words, "After these things" of verse 1 indicates that the events of chapter 18 will not take place until after the destruction of the false church, as described in the preceding chapter.

John saw another angel come down from heaven. This seems to be a different angel from the messenger who showed him the destruction of Mystery Babylon, for this angel is said to have great authority and the whole earth is lightened with his glory. He announces with a strong voice the fall of Babylon. Whereas chapter 17 spoke of religious Babylon, or the false church, our present chapter speaks of the literal city of Babylon, which will become the commercial center of the world during the last half of the Tribulation.

"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." (Isaiah 13:19, 20)

"Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein; and it shall be no more inhabited forever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." (Jeremiah 50:39)

The above scriptures are clearly yet to be fulfilled because there is at present a new Babylon that has risen from the ruins of the old. The following are some excerpts taken from the book, "The Rise of Babylon" by Charles H. Dyer, written in 1991:

"For nearly two thousand years, Babylon was the most important city in the world. It was the commercial and financial center for all Mesopotamia. The arts of divination, astronomy, astrology, accounting, and private commercial law all sprang from Babylon.

As recently as fifteen years ago, all that existed on the site of ancient Babylon were dusty ruins, or ruins of ruins. But as of February 1990, over sixty million bricks had been laid in the reconstruction of Nebuchadnezzar's fabled city. On the exact site of ancient Babylon, Saddam Hussein has reconstructed the Southern Palace of Nebuchadnezzar, including the Procession Street, a Greek theater, many temples, what was once Nebuchadnezzar's throne room, and a half-scale model of the Ishtar Gate. Hussein plans to rebuild the hanging gardens, once considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

The restoration of Babylon began in 1978. The Iraqis are determined that the new Babylon will look as nearly like the old as possible. Saddam Hussein has made rebuilding Babylon the focal point of Iraqi nationalism. There are plans for hotels, playgrounds, recreation centers, movie theaters, and temples.

When I attended the Babylonian Festivals in 1987 and 1988, guests from all over the world gathered there. There were ballet troupes, opera singers,

folk dancers, flamenco artists, and Bedouin dancers—all of these from different countries. “This is not just an Iraqi festival,” Munir Bashir told a writer for the Los Angeles Times. “It is a festival for the whole world, because Babylon was the capital of civilization once and has given the world so much.” Music and building and wedding celebrations continue in the city of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar was the only Arab ruler ever able to lead Arab armies against the Israelites and defeat them in battle. By rebuilding Babylon, Saddam Hussein was making himself the new Nebuchadnezzar, who also hoped to lead the Arab armies in victory over Israel. Colorful murals appear on the outer courtyard walls of the Nebuchadnezzar Museum in Babylon. One depicts Nebuchadnezzar supervising the construction of a temple, another shows him looking over the city he has built, and a third pictures him leading his army in battle against a city.

Saddam Hussein has rebuilt the temple originally constructed by Nebuchadnezzar. He is rebuilding the city of Babylon. But he has yet to lead his army in battle against a city, which the mural clearly shows to be the city of Jerusalem. Hussein wants to parallel the life of Nebuchadnezzar by leading his army against the Jews of Jerusalem!

Hussein's name means "one who confronts," and six days after becoming president, he confronted twenty-two of his rivals in leadership and had them executed."

I have quoted at length from Mr. Dyer's book on this subject to familiarize us with what has been going on in Babylon recently, all of which is a fulfillment of prophecies of both the Old and New Testaments. As we said before, Babylon will once again become the capital of civilization in commerce, business, pleasures and wickedness. This will be true of her during the last 3 ½ years of Tribulation.

Realizing the terrible wickedness of the present leadership of the country of Iraq, we can understand how Babylon will become the habitation of demons and the gathering center for every evil spirit. All nations will be caught up in her evil works, the rulers of the world will be joined to her, and the merchants of the world will become wealthy because of her.

In verse 4, God calls to His people to come out of Babylon that they would not be partaker of her sins, and thus partaker of the judgment that is to fall upon her. God initiated the nation of Israel with a call to come out of this same region. Genesis 12:1 tells of His call to Abraham to leave that country, and now at the end of the age He again calls Israel to leave this place of sin. This reminds us of the time when God took Lot and his family out of Sodom before sending judgment on that city (Genesis 19). It is not God's will that any man should perish.

Read Isaiah 13:19-21 and Jeremiah 50 and 51 and note how these conditions of Babylon and God's judgment upon her were prophesied many years ago. Her destruction will come suddenly and she shall be burned with fire, even as Sodom was burned. Whereas the leaders of the world caused the destruction of Mystery Babylon, the false church, when the city of Babylon is destroyed both the rulers of the world and the merchants of the world shall weep and mourn. This is because the source of their riches has gone up in smoke! Now, instead of being joined to her in her luxurious living and wickedness, they stand "afar off" weeping and

wailing because of their loss. It is sad that these men mourn so for loss of riches and yet feel no remorse at all for such unrestrained sin.

Verses 12 and 13 list some of the merchandise that will come from Babylon during her zenith of power, and the merchants will have been made wealthy from these things. All of the luxury and splendor that money can buy will be in abundance in this city. But then, "in one hour so great riches is come to naught!" When God moves, He moves swiftly. So now we see the total bankruptcy of big business. While this causes great lamenting and mourning on the earth, those in heaven are told to rejoice, for God has judged this terribly wicked place. Verse 21 is a fulfillment of Jeremiah 51:63, 64 and shows God's assessment of man's best achievements.

Verse 23 states, "for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived." According to Strong's Concordance of the Bible, the Greek word for sorceries is "Pharmakeia", meaning, "medication (pharmacy), (by extension) magic or witchcraft." These two things, drugs and witchcraft, are often seen together, and both will be rampant in this city of Babylon. Thus all nations will be deceived. Then verse 24 gives the terrible indictment upon Babylon for the blood of prophets, saints, and all that are slain upon the earth. No wonder the saints in heaven are told to rejoice at her destruction. God is always just and He judges righteously!

Revelation Chapter Nineteen

In chapter 18: 20, the saints in heaven are told to rejoice because the corrupt city of Babylon has been thrown down and will be found no more at all. This is a call for rejoicing that righteousness has triumphed over sin, and it brings forth a mighty paean of praise from a great multitude in heaven, proclaiming "Alleluia; salvation, glory and power of our God, for true and righteous are His judgments." The word, "Alleluia" is a word that expresses the utmost honor and praise. It is used four times in the first six verses of our chapter, and these are the only times it is found in the New Testament. The meaning of "Alleluia" is "Praise ye Jah, or Jehovah," and it is found twenty-four times in the Old Testament, where it is translated, "Praise the Lord." (See Psalms 106: 1 and Psalms 146-150.) We frequently hear this word used by people, saved and unsaved, in a flippant way, but it should never be spoken other than in the highest form of praise to our God.

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19) God avenges the blood of His servants at this time, and notice that this judgment lasts forever. The city of Babylon will be no more, but the sinners of that city will spend eternity in the lake of fire.

Next, the twenty-four elders and four living creatures, overcomers of the Old Testament and of the Church (body of Christ), fall down and worship God in agreement with Him in all He does, saying Alleluia, giving Him great honor. Following their praise, all of His servants will be told to praise Him, and verse 6 describes the praise that comes from everyone in heaven, sounding "as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." The word "Omnipotent" means "Almighty," and reveals God as the Absolute and universal Sovereign. What a glorious time of rejoicing that will be! All in heaven rejoice, not only because sin has been judged, but also because it is now time for the marriage of the Lamb. This great event could not take place before the culmination of judgment upon sin drew near.

The words, "is come" in verse 7 signifies a completed act. In God's great plan of salvation, the marriage of His Son has been completed since the foundation of the world! This was in God's mind when He formed a woman from Adam's rib and brought her to Adam to be his helpmeet. Adam said of her: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:23, 24) This is quoted in Ephesians 5:30, 31, with the following words, "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Verse 32)

Also, note verses 25 and 26 of Ephesians 5, which tell us that Christ gave Himself for the Church "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." So, will the whole Church (which includes every believer from the time of Jesus' resurrection until His return for the rapture) be included in the group of believers which make up the bride of the Lamb? Our verse in Revelation 19:7 states that His wife has made herself ready. The word "ready" means, "To get ready, prepared, to be adjusted, fit." In Ephesians 5 we read that Jesus desired to sanctify and cleanse the church with the washing of the water by the Word, that it would not have spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it would be holy and without blemish. In order to be adjusted, prepared and fit for this great honor of becoming the bride of

Christ, there must be cleansing by the Word. There must be the willingness to allow Christ to wash out the spots and iron out the wrinkles of our lives.

Now even as Christ gave His life for the sins of the world, and all who believe on Him may be saved; yet, it is only a few who will believe and receive this great salvation. Jesus said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Even so, that same principle is true concerning believers allowing Jesus to sanctify, cleanse, and prepare them for this place of honor in being a part of that company of saints who will make up His bride. Those are the ones mentioned in Romans 8: 17 as "joint-heirs with Christ." All children of God are heirs of God, but only those willing to suffer with Him—as this and many other scriptures affirm—will be glorified together with Him and reign with Him on the throne as His wife.

"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." (Revelation 3: 21) Oh, what a glorious hope is set before every believer, and what a rejoicing the realization of this hope will bring to all in heaven when this time finally comes!

There are three major aspects of weddings in Bible times, of which there is a beautiful parallel here:

- There was a marriage contract by the parents, with payment of dowry. Read John 3: 16 and 2 Corinthians 11: 2. The dowry paid was the blood of Christ.
- The wedding ceremony followed, and the bridegroom proceeded to the home of the bride and escorted her to his home. This relates to Christ coming for His people at the rapture. Note John 14:2, 3 and Revelation 19:7, 8.
- The wedding feast, which is seen as the marriage supper of Revelation 19:9.

Note that the four living creatures are not mentioned as such after this time, for they have now become the wife of the Lamb! The fine linen in which she arrays herself (which is the meaning of "being arrayed" of v. 8) is the "righteousnesses", or righteous acts, of the saints. God told Israel to do His statutes, "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He hath commanded us." (Deuteronomy 6:25) In Ephesians 2: 10, we read that we were created unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. And in 2 Timothy 2:16-17, we read that all scripture is given to us, "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." So God has provided a way for us to walk in good works, or righteous acts; and, if we will do so, our lives will become adjusted and fit for these fine linen garments.

Concerning linen, the Americana Encyclopedia states that flax which is made into linen must go through four different stages before it becomes the beautiful material from which garments are made. Following is a list of these stages, along with the spiritual parallels:

1. The plant is separated from weeds and trash. Salvation separates the sinner from the world.
2. The plant is then soaked in water to become soft. The believer becomes soft and pliable as he "soaks" in the water of the Word.

3. The flax is then dried by lying in the sun. God allows the heat of trials to further perfect us.
4. More soaking in water is involved to cause fermentation to take place.

Fermentation means a chemical change or transformation. The Apostle Paul said, "But we all, with open eyes, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed (Greek, transformed) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3: 18) As the believer continues to "soak" in the Word, he beholds the glory of the Lord and is thus transformed into the image of Christ by the Spirit of the Lord—not by his own efforts. Yet it is only as we yield to the working of the Spirit that He does this. He does not force Himself on us.

The marriage supper of the Lamb will be held in heaven at the end of the Tribulation and just prior to Jesus' return to the earth to fight for His people on earth at what is called the battle of Armageddon. Verse 9 of our chapter says that those who are called, or invited, to this marriage supper are blessed. This no doubt refers to the Old Testament overcomers who are in heaven, as well as ones who have gone to heaven during the 7 years' Tribulation. They will be the guests at the wedding. I believe the non-overcomers of the Church (the great multitude of chapter 7) will be there as servants (verse 5 and Revelation 7:15).

John again falls to his feet to worship the one telling him of these events, but is told that he is a fellow believer and not to be worshipped. The last phrase of verse 10 is a powerful statement concerning all prophecy, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Any prophecy that does not testify of and reveal Jesus Christ in all His beauty and glory is not true prophecy. "Testimony" means "a bearing witness of," and true prophecy bears witness of Jesus. Note that this is said immediately following the marriage of the Lamb, which shows that this event is the center and apex of prophecy concerning the Lamb of God.

The next scene is one of Jesus as a mighty Warrior coming down from heaven on a white horse with great power and glory. He is called Faithful, True and Righteous, which is in contrast to the rider on the white horse of chapter 6:2 who came to deceive and destroy, the anti-Christ. Jesus' eyes are as a flame of fire (even as He is seen in chapter 1:14), which enables Him to pierce into the very depths of the hearts of those He has come to judge, and thus His judgments are righteous. The many crowns on His head are "diadems," which is the crown of a king. This shows that He is the rightful King of all nations. The name written that no man knows but Himself probably refers to the name mentioned to the overcomers of the Philadelphia church in chapter 3: 12. That group of believers is representative of the overcomers of the Church, the bride of Christ, and His wife will be with Him when He comes to the earth at this time.

Jesus' vesture (His outer garment) is dipped in blood. Isaiah 63:1-6 describes this day of vengeance of the Lord, saying, "Their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments and I will stain all my raiment." His name is called the Word of God, which is what He has been called from before time began: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Man is fickle and is constantly changing, but our Lord never changes. Praise His name!

The armies of verse 14 are no doubt all of His saints in heaven. Jude told us of these in Jude 14 and 15: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed." These armies are also on white horses, indicating a victorious army. They are clothed in white linen, which shows that they are righteous and pure. These horses, as well as the one Jesus is said to be on, could possibly be literal horses—remember the horses and chariots of fire that Elisha saw when Elijah was taken up into heaven in 2 Kings 2:11. And also, we read of them in 2 Kings 6:17. However, I tend to believe that the horses of Revelation 6 are symbolic, and these in our present chapter are probably symbolic also, showing the power and victory in which Jesus and His army come to the earth at this time.

This coming of Jesus is described in Matthew 24:27-31. This is when every eye shall see Him (Revelation 1:7). His coming at this time is to fight the nations that have become so corrupt. He will smite them with the sharp sword that goes out of His mouth. Again, this speaks symbolically, for according to Isaiah 11:4, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked." The power of His Word was manifest in the garden of Gethsemane when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus and He said to them, "I AM HE." The soldiers immediately went backward and fell to the ground! The phrase, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron" means His rule will be one of absolute authority. Righteousness will reign and sin will not be permitted to be manifest.

This will be the culmination of the judgment upon the nations because of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Jesus will truly manifest Himself as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. This is the fulfillment of Daniel 2:35. Jesus' kingdom will fill the whole earth at that time. We read in Isaiah 13:9: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it." It seems that Jesus will go first to Edom (Bozrah) (Isaiah 34:6-8), then to Mt. Megiddo (Revelation 16:16), then to Jerusalem and the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2, 12). Next, His feet will stand on the Mt. Of Olives (Zechariah 14:2-4). We cannot be sure of this sequence of events, but it seems likely, from these scriptures.

Verses 17 and 18 of our chapter describe the terrible carnage that will result from this warfare. Neither wealth, prestige, nor any of man's attainments will preserve him from this destruction. It will come to all who have dared to stand against the God of heaven. Ezekiel 39:17-22 seems to speak of this same time as described in our chapter. Note verse 22: "... so the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord from that day and forward." This is the time the believing remnant of Israel will acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah and accept Him as their King. (Zechariah 12: 10)

Then the anti-Christ and false prophet will both be cast alive into the lake of fire. This horrible place that was prepared for the devil and his angels will be occupied by these two men who sold themselves out to the devil and deceived the whole world, then attempted to destroy even the Son of God! What audacity! These two men will experience the lake of fire one thousand years before the other sinners will be cast there. However, all of those who are left on the earth after the many judgments God has sent will at this time be slain by Jesus, and all the fowls will be filled with their flesh. What an awesome picture!

Revelation Chapter Twenty

Daniel 2 describes a dream God gave to King Nebuchadnezzar concerning four great kingdoms that were to rule the world. They were Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon, then Medo-Persia, next, Greece, and last, the Roman Empire. Since the rule of Rome, there has never again been a kingdom that has had power over the whole world. According to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, out of the Roman Empire would come ten smaller kingdoms which would be prominent in the end times and upon which a "stone cut out without hands" would fall, breaking these kingdoms to pieces. Then the stone would become a "great mountain" filling the whole earth. This stone cut out without hands is Jesus' kingdom that is sent directly from God, which needs the help of no man. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Daniel 2:44) This will be the answer to Jesus' prayer of Matthew 6: 10 when He prayed, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

After Jesus and His saints have come down from heaven and Jesus has cast the anti-Christ and false prophet into the lake of fire—all sinners have been slain and Satan has been bound and cast into the bottomless pit—then Jesus will be ready to set up His kingdom. "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one." (Zechariah 14:9)

In our present chapter of Revelation, there are five main subjects:

1. Judgment of Satan for 1,000 years (vs. 1-3)
2. Resurrection of the dead (vs. 4-6)
3. Millennium (vs. 2-7)
4. Satan's final judgment (v. 10)
5. Judgment of unbelievers (vs. 11-15)

In verse 1, John sees an angel who had the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. This angel is probably Michael, since he was the one who cast Satan out of heaven, which we read about in chapter 12. Now he binds Satan and casts him into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years. I doubt if this is a literal chain since Satan is a spirit, but the bottomless pit is literal and Satan's being cast there and not being loosed for 1,000 years is literal and real. What a time that will be when this great destructive adversary is no longer around to deceive people as he has done for so many years! However, after the thousand years are over, God will allow Satan to be loosed for a short time as a last test to mankind.

The next three verses speak of the resurrection of the dead. The first ones mentioned are those who were seated on thrones from which they had been given authority to judge. Once more we turn to Daniel for help in understanding these events. Daniel 7: 14 again speaks of Jesus' kingdom which will be set up as an everlasting kingdom never to be destroyed. Verse 22 tells us that judgment will be given to the "saints of the most High." These are Old Testament believers to whom God has promised to "plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more ..." (2 Samuel 7:10) Also, in Daniel 7:18 we read, "But the saints of the most High shall take (receive) the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." Zechariah 13:8, 9 tells us that the Lord will bring one-third of Israel through the fire

and they will say, "The Lord is my God." They will have gone through the Tribulation without succumbing to the demands of the anti-Christ, and when Jesus returns to fight against those evil nations, they will look upon Him and acknowledge Him as their Messiah. God has always had a remnant that would follow Him.

During the Millennium, the Lord will set judges over the land as He ordained at the first (see Isaiah 1:26, 27). Revelation 20:4 gives us the time of the resurrection of these Old Testament saints—at the end of the seven years' Tribulation. This is also the time of the resurrection of those believers who have been martyred during the last 3 ½ years of Tribulation. They will be raised to live and reign with Christ from the New Jerusalem during the Millennium. The martyrs of chapter 6:9 will be raised when the great multitude of chapter 7:9-17 are raised up into heaven. Those of chapter 15:2 are raised before the seven bowls of wrath are poured out. This attests to the fact that the resurrection of believers is in different stages.

Notice 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. Christ is the "First fruits" of the resurrection, and then, "every man in his own order (rank)." Then we read in Matthew 27:52, 53: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." These were no doubt at least some of the Old Testament overcomers who looked for a "better resurrection."

In 1 Thessalonians 4: 14-16, we read of the dead in Christ that shall arise. These refer to the overcomers of the church who have died before the rapture. The overcomers of the church who are alive at His coming will, of course, be translated, and not have to see death. Then the great multitude of Revelation 7 will be resurrected and go into heaven sometime during the first half of the Tribulation, before the seven trumpet judgments are poured out upon the earth. Next, the two witnesses are killed right at the middle of the Tribulation, and after 3 ½ days, the Spirit of life from God will enter into them and they will ascend up into heaven. (Revelation 11: 12) Close to that same time, the martyrs of Revelation 15:2 will be resurrected and stand on the sea of glass in heaven. And then the people we have been studying about in Revelation 20:4 will be raised at the end of the Tribulation to live and reign with Christ over the earth for a thousand years, which will be just the beginning of their eternal time of glory and blessing. All of these stages of the resurrection of believers are called the "first resurrection."

However, in John 5:28, 29, Jesus said, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." And so the unbelievers also will be raised from the dead, but their resurrection will be unto judgment. " There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24:15) The phrase, "the rest of the dead" in Revelation 20:5, speaks of the resurrection of the unjust which will not occur until 1,000 years after the resurrection of believers. The first sentence of verse 5 is a parenthetical thought. The last sentence, "This is the first resurrection," describes the resurrection of the just, on which he expounds in verse 6.

In these verses, we have the only place in scripture where we read how long the kingdom of Christ will continue on the earth. However, the kingdom age is one of the most frequently mentioned subjects in the Bible. This period of time is often called the Millennium, which simply means a thousand years. During this time God will bring the final testing of mankind

before the beginning of the eternal state. Jesus will be ruling as King of kings and Lord of lords. His rule will be one of righteousness and peace. Below are listed several facts that will be true of the Kingdom age:

- Form of government: Theocracy, Luke 1: 30-33
- Seat of government: Jerusalem, Isaiah 2; Zechariah 8:3; 14: 17
- Character of government: Righteousness, Isaiah 11
- One universal religion: Isaiah 2:3; Jeremiah 31:33, 34
- Earth will bring forth abundantly, Isaiah 35: 1; Joel 3: 18
- No wild animals, Isaiah 11: 6-9; 65: 25
- No sickness, Isaiah 35:5,6, 10
- Longevity of life, Isaiah 65:20, 22; Zechariah 8:4
- Israel, leading nation, Isaiah 60: 12; Deuteronomy 28: 13

However, when the thousand years are over, God will allow Satan to be loosed from the bottomless pit where he has been bound during this time, and he will once again deceive the nations from the four corners of the world and gather them together to fight against the "camp of the saints" (Israel) and the "beloved city" (Jerusalem).

Gog and Magog are mentioned once again as enemies of Israel. Gog is the leader, and Magog is the country involved. Ezekiel 38, 39 introduced these names to us, and it is not difficult to trace them back to the land of Russia and its leaders. These (along with several other countries) are the ones who will come to fight against Israel just prior to the Tribulation, and attempt to destroy her. However, God will intervene in Israel's behalf, leaving only one-sixth of Russia's army alive. And now Gog and Magog are once again mentioned as enemies of Israel. These are evidently descendants of the ones mentioned in Ezekiel, and their hatred again arises from the deception of Satan.

It is difficult to imagine that Satan could get together as many as the sand of the sea to fight against God's people, and thus against God, Himself. But remember, the carnal mind is enmity against God, and there will be many who will live in this beautiful place of righteousness and peace, and still refuse to accept the King of kings as their Savior. There will be only righteousness around them, for any sin that is manifest will be immediately judged. Satan will not be present to deceive them, and yet they will still reject God's salvation through His Son. Therefore, as soon as Satan is loosed, they will immediately fall prey to His wiles.

There will be many births during the Kingdom age because the life span will be 1,000 years, and only those persons who sin openly after the age of 100 years will have to die. Therefore, there will be a large population by the time Satan is loosed to deceive them into thinking they can win in this battle. But God sends fire down out of heaven which destroys them all. Then the final judgment comes upon Satan. He is cast into the lake of fire where the anti-Christ and false prophet still are, after 1,000 years, and they will all be tormented forever and ever!

Next it is time for the final judgment on all sinners. This will occur before a "great white throne" upon which Jesus is seated. Read John 5:22-29. Revelation 20:11 states, "...from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." We will speak more of this in our next

chapter, but we are reminded here of the holiness of our Lord, and nothing unholy can stay in His presence.

The "dead" of verse 12 are unbelievers who were dead in trespasses and sins, and have either died a natural death, or they were killed without having accepted Jesus as their Savior. These sinners are the "rest of the dead" of verse 5 who will be raised at the end of the thousand years to stand before this throne and be judged according to the books mentioned here.

The Bible speaks of several "books" that have to do with man's eternal state. A careful comparison of the scriptures listed below will reveal the fact that every person born into the world has his name written in heaven in a "book of life." These names remain in this book unless that person completely and finally rejects the wooing of the Holy Spirit to receive Jesus as their Savior. At that time God blots his name out of the book of life. If the person is still alive, only God knows if and when that final rejection happens. Of course, if the person has died in that state of rejection, it is then that his name is blotted out. Then there is a "book of life of the Lamb" in which every person's name is recorded at the time of his salvation. Those names will never be blotted out of that book! And last, our present text speaks of books in which are written the works of unbelievers. (Malachi 3:16 speaks of a "book of remembrance" that is written for those that love the Lord.) God is just and righteous in all He does, and even sinners will be judged according to their works, although the eternal destiny of each of them will be the lake of fire. (Scriptures: Exodus 32:32, 33; Psalms 69:28; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8)

According to verse 13, even though men's bodies have decomposed in the sea, or have returned to dust in the grave, they will receive a new body at the time of the resurrection. For an explanation of the phrase, "Death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them", "death" speaks of the grave where their bodies are, and "hell" (hades) is the waiting place of the unbelieving dead; where their spirits are. So both body and spirit will be cast into the lake of fire. This is called the "second death."

Revelation Chapter Twenty One

"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." (Revelation 21:1) Following the final testing of mankind during the thousand-year reign of righteousness and peace, and following the final judgment of all unbelievers at the Great White Throne, there will be the need for a new heaven and new earth that will be pure and clean. Jesus prophesied of this when He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Also, Isaiah 65:17: "For behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

Peter explains how the earth shall pass away. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3: 10) The words "pass away" mean, "to pass away from one thing to another." The main thought is transition rather than extinction. In other words, heaven (that which is the present abode of Satan and his evil angels) and earth, which has been defiled for so many years by sin, will be purged by fire and made completely new.

In the new earth, there will be no sea. This is interesting, because at least two-thirds of the total surface of the earth today is water. The sea gives life as we know it today. However, in John 4: 14, Jesus told the woman at the well: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Natural water will no longer be needed to sustain life in eternity. There is no way we can comprehend with our finite minds all that these scriptures relate, but as we meditate on them, we begin to get just a glimpse of what God has prepared for them that love Him!

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Revelation 21:2) This verse, along with verses 9 and 10, introduces us to the New Jerusalem, which is the eternal abiding place of both Old Testament and New Testament believers. Jesus has been preparing a place for His people all during this present Grace age (John 14:2, 3), and this chapter gives a description of that beautiful city.

In point of time, verse 2 takes us back to the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ, for it is at that time that Jesus will have come to this earth in power and great glory and will establish a reign of righteousness and peace on the earth. He will then appoint ones to rule from earthly Jerusalem before ascending up into the New Jerusalem with all His saints. He will reign as King of kings from heavenly Jerusalem, having ones ruling under Him on the earth. The saints that will ascend up to the New Jerusalem will include all of those who have been with Him in heaven before He descended to the earth for the Battle of Armageddon, as well as the Old Testament saints, and the martyrs from the latter part of the Tribulation, both groups of which are mentioned in Revelation 20:4.

There will remain on the earth at this time those Israelites who were miraculously protected by God during the last half of the Tribulation, known as the "woman in the wilderness," and also those who looked on Christ and accepted Him as their Messiah when He returned in power and great glory to fight for His people (chapter 19:11-16). These are the believers who will

remain on the earth during the Millennium. As mentioned in our last chapter, life will be prolonged during this time, and there will be many births. Therefore, by the end of the thousand years, the population will have become very large.

At the end of the Millennium, the unbelieving dead will be raised to stand before the Great White Throne and be judged, and the believers who are alive shall be changed from mortal to immortal. At that time, death will be swallowed up in victory! See 1 Corinthians 15:52-54. These believers are the ones who will inherit the earth in fulfillment of God's promise to Israel many years ago.

I have said that Jesus, with His saints, will set up a righteous kingdom on the earth and then He will ascend up into New Jerusalem to abide. I realize that this is in disagreement with many Bible scholars who believe that Jesus and His saints will remain bodily on the earth during the Millennium. While it is true that there are many scriptures which seem to indicate that He will rule on the earth, I do not believe it would be necessary for Him to be here bodily in order to reign as King. His place of residence could be in the New Jerusalem, which will be over the earth, probably visible from the earth, and yet He would still be ruling with a rod of iron, causing His will to be done. It is possible He could come and go at times, as He did after His resurrection.

My objection to the thought of Christ and His saints dwelling on the earth during the Millennium is that once God's people have been either translated or resurrected, they will have received their glorified bodies. They will be holy and undefiled. Many of them will have been enjoying the pleasures of heaven for some time. It is hard to imagine people in that position being placed on the earth again where, even though righteousness and peace will reign, there will still be sin, rebellion, and death. The Millennium is a final testing time for mankind, giving them an opportunity to reject sin and accept God's plan of salvation. The saints who have already enjoyed the blessings of heaven will not need this testing.

When John saw the holy city come down from God out of heaven, he heard a great voice say that God would now dwell with men. So God Himself shall dwell in that heavenly city. Oh, what will it be to be there, where God will dwell with us to fellowship and commune with us forever and ever! We are told that God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Some have said this simply means that there will be no tears in heaven. However, the wording seems to indicate that there will be tears for God to wipe away. If so, they are probably the result of our realizing just what Jesus did for us, and how little place we really gave to Him in our lives here. Death, sorrow, crying and pain, all a result of sin, shall be no more! What we are seeing here is the eternal state of the heavenly believers, which they will enjoy from the time of their translation or resurrection—although those still on the earth during the Millennium will not enjoy their eternal blessings until the end of the thousand years.

"It is done" in verse 6 means, "These things will come to pass." Then Jesus confirms once again that He is the First and the Last (see chapter 1:8, 11, 17). From the beginning of time and throughout eternity, He remains the Beginning and the End. Jeremiah called Him the "Fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:13). He is the source of life and He gives freely to all who will receive. This is a call to those who have been born on the earth during the Millennium, but have not yet received Jesus as their Savior. Even during the Millennium,

salvation is obtained by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Verse 7 is a call to people on earth for a personal relationship with God, and verse 8 is a warning to those who will not believe.

Then we have the description of the New Jerusalem which John saw descending out of heaven from God. Verse 2 describes the city "as a bride adorned for her husband." This shows the beauty of that city, for nothing is more beautiful than a bride adorned for her husband. Further, the city is called, "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Jesus said to the overcomers of the Philadelphia church of Revelation 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." The overcomers of this church are a type of those who will become the bride, the Lamb's wife. We realize from the description of this city that it will be made up of many more than the wife of the Lamb. However, even as citizens today will often honor men by naming their city after someone who has played an important part in its history, even so the New Jerusalem will be called "the bride, the Lamb's wife" to honor her.

Verse 11 says the brightness of the city is like a clear jasper stone. This stone is said to be gold in color, but it will be clear as crystal. There will be a wall around the city with twelve gates, on which are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. This reminds us that all divine blessings to the entire world have come through the nation Israel (Genesis 22: 18; Romans 11: 12), and it also reveals the fact that there will be people in heaven from all of the twelve tribes of Israel. Not all of Israel looked for an earthly inheritance. Note Hebrews 11: 10, 16; 12:22, 23. And there will still be angels ministering to God and His people in this city.

Verse 13 tells us that there will be three gates each on the north, south, east, and west. When God gave instructions for the order of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, He told Moses to have three tribes camp on each side of the Tabernacle, north, south, east, and west. That was a pattern of the eternal order! (Hebrews 9: 23, 24)

The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are in the twelve foundations of the wall of the city. Jesus told the twelve apostles that they would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel—so they will have an important place in this city.

The city lies foursquare, the length, breadth and height being equal. Some have thought it will be in the shape of a pyramid, but most Bible scholars believe it will be in the shape of a cube. We read in Amos 9:6: "It is He that buildeth His stories in the heaven...the Lord is His name." The word "stories" means "chambers, elevation, a journey to a higher place, stair, story." It appears that there will be something similar to this in the New Jerusalem, since it will be as high as it is long and wide. However the city will be fashioned, we know that every detail is ordered by God.

Twelve thousand furlongs is approximately 1,500 miles, or the distance from the eastern coast of the U. S. to the Mississippi River, or from the border of Canada to the border of Mexico. There is no comparison of the size of this city to any now in existence. The wall is 144 cubits high, or approximately 216 feet.

Jasper is mentioned again regarding the wall, and the city itself is said to be "pure gold, like unto clear glass." In other words, this city and everything in it will be so dazzlingly beautiful,

it is beyond description. The foundations of the wall are garnished with all manner of precious stones. The twelve gates are large pearls, and the street is pure gold. Precious and costly jewels will be in abundance. Instead of concrete and blacktop, precious metals will beautify the New Jerusalem, which will be enhanced by a river of water and luscious fruit trees. (Chapter 22:1-2)

There will be no need of a temple as a place for men to go to worship God, for God Himself, and the Lamb are the Temple of it. Their presence will always be in our midst. And there will be no need for the sun or moon to give light in this city, for the glory of God and the Lamb will be the light thereof. In 1 John 1: 5, we read that God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all—and there will be no night in New Jerusalem. We won't need to rest, for we will never be tired! This dazzling city will reside over the earth and become the light for the earth.

"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 unto it." (Verse 24) Zechariah 14:14 tells us that the nations which are left after the Battle of Armageddon will go up to earthly Jerusalem to worship the King. This will bring glory and honor unto New Jerusalem where the King resides.

The fact that the gates are not shut at all makes us know this is a heavenly city, for verse 27 tells us that only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of Life can enter, and there will still be people on the earth during the Millennium who are not saved. Verse 27 assures us that there will never be anything that defiles allowed to enter New Jerusalem. We might have the question as to whether or not an angel in heaven could rebel as Satan did long ago, bringing defilement to the city. But that will never be the case. We will reign in that magnificent city with our heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, forever and ever.

What a hope is set before all believers! And what a glorious hope is set before the overcoming Christians of this Grace age, to reign as joint-heirs with Christ, the wife of the Lamb. Let us watch and be ready for His coming!

Revelation Chapter Twenty Two

Revelation 22 continues the description of the New Jerusalem. The last verse of the previous chapter, along with the first two verses of this chapter, reminds us of the Trinity, Who will ever be present in the heavenly city. The Lamb's book of life depicts the Son; the water of life, the Holy Spirit; and the tree of life, God, the Father.

There is a pure river, clear as crystal, that will proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. With all of men's efforts, they have not been able to keep the rivers in this world free from pollution, but this river will be pure, clean and beautiful! That is because its source is God and the Lamb.

Verse two reminds us of the Garden of Eden. The first two chapters in the Bible give God's description of creation and the beautiful garden that God prepared for man. The last two chapters give a description of the heavenly city that God has prepared for His people. Everything in between tells of man's rebellion and God's great grace in continuing to draw us unto Himself in order that we can enjoy His presence and love for eternity. Because of man's disobedience, sin entered the world, causing God to banish man from the Garden of Eden so that he could not eat of the tree of life and live forever. In the heavenly city, the tree of life will be available to all of its inhabitants, for they have already partaken of Christ, Who is eternal life (1 John 5:11-13).

There will evidently be many fruit trees in this city which will bear a different kind of fruit each month. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." This reminds me of Song of Solomon 2:3: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Since there will be no need for healing of nations in the New Jerusalem, this must refer to the nations on the earth that will benefit from the New Jerusalem in the heavens. Verse 3 again assures us that there will be no more curse in this beautiful city, as Satan brought into the Garden of Eden, for sin cannot enter where God and the Lamb are.

The great multitude of chapter 7: 15 is at least some of the ones who will be serving God, although no doubt many of those in heaven will also serve Him, being right in His presence and having His name in their foreheads. This shows that they belong to Him and are accepted by Him (compare Exodus 28:36-38). Again, we are told that there will be no night there. We will never grow weary nor have need of rest, and there will be only light, the marvelous light of the Lord Jesus Christ that will surround His saints as they reign with Him forever and ever.

Verses 6-10 take us back to the first chapter of Revelation. The meaning of the word, "faithful," is "worthy of confidence, that on which we may rely." There is not much in this world in which we can have complete confidence, but the Word of God is faithful and true! God desires that we have understanding of these things which must shortly come to pass—that is, they will speedily be done when it is God's timing for them to begin. Compare verse 7 with chapter 1: 3. This book begins and ends with a promise of blessing to those who keep, or observe, the words of this prophecy. Jesus Himself mentions three times in this chapter that He is coming quickly. He also told the Philadelphia church in chapter 3: 11, "Behold, I come quickly." How important it is for us to ever keep this hope before our minds and hearts.

John was overwhelmed with all that he had seen and heard, so he fell down to worship the messenger who showed these things to him. However, he was again told that the messenger was his fellow servant, one of God's saints, and John should worship only God. This demonstrates that it is wrong for us to worship anyone but God.

When God gave Daniel the prophecy of his book, God told him to "seal up the words of this prophecy, even to the time of the end." In contrast, John is told just the opposite— "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand." The time has been "at hand" since Jesus' death and resurrection. Therefore, we know it is God's will that we understand the writings of this book, which is a "Revelation of Jesus Christ."

Verse 11 shows the unchangeable character of the eternal state. Then Jesus states the second time that He is coming quickly. As we mentioned before, the word "quickly" does not have the thought of "soon," but rather, "suddenly, swiftly, with haste." It has the thought of promptness, or on time. God has an appointed time for the coming of His Son, and when that time comes, Jesus will promptly return. At that time, He will reward every man according to his work. In 1 Corinthians 3: 12-15, we read that we will be rewarded or suffer loss according to our work. Also, note 2 Corinthians 5:10; Mathew 16:27; 2 Timothy 4:8. These verses speak of our rewards. Note the last reference in which the Apostle Paul speaks of which awaits him because he has finished his course and kept the faith—then he says this same reward awaits all those also who "love His appearing." If we love Christ's appearing, if this hope is ever before us, guiding us in our daily decisions, we also will receive a crown of righteousness, which will be given to all those who have overcome. Jesus describes it in chapter 3:21: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."

Once again in verse 13 Jesus tells us that He is "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." (Note chapter 1: 8, 11; 21:6). Jesus is all-inclusive. I believe John 1: 1-3 is an apt description of His being Alpha and Omega.

The correct rendering of verse 14 is, "Blessed are they that wash their robes..." In order to have the right to the tree of life and to be able to enter into the gates of the city of God, we must have our robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. We will be rewarded according to our works, but our works have nothing to do with our entering into heaven. The way of salvation is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledging that He died for our sin and rose again for our justification. When we believe on Him and accept Him as our Savior, we become a son of God and have the right to enter into this beautiful city of God. Outside of this city are all sinners—those who have refused God's great salvation, and will therefore spend eternity in the lake of fire.

Churches are mentioned in verse 16 for the first time since chapters 1-3 where Jesus spoke to the seven churches of Asia. These seven churches represent the New Testament church, or body of Christ, which will be complete by the time the seven years' Tribulation begins. Jesus sent His messenger to testify of these things in the churches, so we can understand what is going to come to pass.

Jesus is the Root and Offspring of David, that is, He was before David and then was born of the lineage of David. This is how He is known to Israel. The Bright and Morning Star is how

He is known to the Church (Revelation 2:28). It is always a blessing to see the morning star in the heavens just before dawn, assuring us that the night is gone and the day will soon appear. It is a star of hope, and Jesus certainly is our Hope of a bright new day.

Verse 17 again gives an invitation for salvation. Have you noticed how many times these last two chapters have held out this hope to all who will hear? The Holy Spirit and the bride of Christ are in agreement in inviting all who will to come to the Lord. What a beautiful invitation to all who are thirsty to partake of the water of life which is without charge. This salvation cost our Lord so much, His very life, yet it is offered freely to all who believe.

Verses 18 and 19 are solemn warnings to everyone who hears the prophecy of this book. We are not to add to or take away from the words of this prophecy. The Apostle Paul said, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8, 9) Also, Proverbs 30:5-6: "Every word of God is pure... add thou not unto His words lest He reprove thee and thou be found a liar." Satan added to the Word of God when he tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, and he still attempts to deceive people in the same way. It is this kind of deception to which these verses refer. To add to or take from the words of this prophecy is to reject God.

Jesus Himself is a witness of these things, and He concludes the words of this prophecy by affirming for the third time in this chapter, "Surely I come quickly." John hastened to add, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus." Is that the cry of your heart? "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:11-13) Jesus is coming soon—it could be today! Let us watch that that day will not take us unawares!